

# The Iowa Foster and Adoptive Parents Association Legislative Priorities 2012

The Iowa Foster and Adoptive Parents Association (IFAPA) members are 6,802 voices strong. Iowa's foster, adoptive and kinship families provide children with an opportunity to grow and thrive in safe and nurturing homes.

## Iowa DHS Foster Care and Adoption by the Numbers 2011

2,367 number of licensed foster parents as of December 8, 2011

3,119 number of children in family foster care as of December 2, 2011

850 children adopted through foster care

212 trainings provided by IFAPA to foster, adoptive and kinship families

Approximately 2,000 families were provided support by IFAPA staff each month

Approximately 450 youth aged out of foster care

### 1. Protect Child Welfare Programs and Provide Ongoing Services to Families and Children

#### ⇒ Continued Funding for the Contract to Provide Support and Training to Foster, Adoptive and Kinship Families

Children in foster care present unique parenting challenges. IFAPA is a statewide association which provides peer-to-peer support and training through conferences, six and three hour trainings, and support groups to assist these families. Foster, adoptive and kinship parents need programs, resources and supports to provide for the ongoing needs of Iowa's children in out of home care.

#### ⇒ Explore/Create a Statewide Certified Foster Care Respite Program

Parenting children who have been abused or neglected can be difficult. Iowa currently allows for respite to only be provided in the home of licensed foster parents. This limitation requires children to leave their foster home for respite and foster families report it can be difficult to find another foster family to provide the needed break. IFAPA is requesting revision of Code of Iowa Section 156.8(7) to allow for expansion of respite options for children in foster care. A certified respite program would allow for respite to be provided in the licensed foster family home by certified respite care providers. A pilot respite program has been successfully operating in four Northeast Iowa counties in partnership with the social work department at Wartburg College, Waverly, Iowa.

#### ⇒ Continued Support of the Foster Care Program

3,119 children are placed in foster family care. Children come into foster care with many unmet needs. Foster parents are there to help children heal and receive the needed support, love and guidance. IFAPA supports maintaining foster care reimbursements at the current eligibility and benefit level.

#### ⇒ Continued Support of the Adoption Subsidy Program

8,586 children receive monthly adoption subsidy payments (June 30, 2011). Adoption subsidy is available for children with special needs to assist the family with ongoing expenses and help provide vital services, treatments, and therapy. Adoption subsidies enable families to provide permanent homes for children who may not otherwise be able to be adopted. IFAPA supports maintaining the adoption subsidy program at the current eligibility and benefit level.

#### ⇒ Support Revision of the Child Abuse Registry

The Child Abuse Registry was designed to protect children. The registry must also protect those who may be wrongly accused of abuse. IFAPA supports continued revision of the registry to expedite the appeal process and make it easier to be removed from the list when appropriate. Many Iowans have lost or been denied employment, lost their foster care license, or had children removed from their home during the lengthy appeal process.

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## 2. Provide Access to Mental Health, Nutritional, Medical and Dental Care for Iowa's Children.

Children who are in foster, adoptive and kinship families often enter the system with neglected medical, dental, nutritional and mental health needs. Mental health services, nutritional programs, and oral and dental health services are necessary tools to address the needs of all children. Continued funding for the Children's Mental Health Waiver will provide needed mental health support and services to some of Iowa's vulnerable children.

### ⇒ Support Continued Redesign of the Mental Health and Disability Service System

Children and families need a consistent and equitable mental health and disability service system. IFAPA supports continued redesign of the children's mental health system to address the unique and specific mental health needs of children.

## 3. Support Programs and Funding for Youth in Care

Youth in foster care deserve to have their needs met and their interests protected. This includes the right to privacy, the right to have accessible educational programming, and the right to be protected from discrimination. All children and youth need healthy connections that last beyond their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday and each youth should be given every opportunity to be a success in life.

### ⇒ Support Aftercare Programming for Youth in Care

Aftercare provides necessary funding to benefit eligible youth who age out of foster care to ensure they have the supports needed to become productive and successful adults. AMP (Achieving Maximum Potential) is an effective support system for older youth in care and those who have aged out. AMP supports are available to help guide youth and provide valuable information on best practice in foster care.

### ⇒ Support Continued Exploration of the Option of Extending Foster Care in Iowa

The Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act created a new opportunity for states to access federal funds to support extending foster care past age 18. IFAPA supports the Iowa Children's Justice Initiative to explore this option and do what is best for youth.

## Iowa Foster and Adoptive Parents Association (IFAPA)

invites you to the:

## LEGISLATIVE BREAKFAST

Thursday, February 16, 2012

7am to 9am

Iowa State Capitol - Legislative Dining Room - Ground Floor

*For 39 years, the Iowa Foster and Adoptive Parents Association (IFAPA) has been a voice for Iowa's foster and adoptive children through the support it provides to the parents of these children. IFAPA empowers, supports and advocates for foster, adoptive and kinship families across Iowa. IFAPA provides peer support, training and resources to promote safety, permanency and well-being for Iowa's children.*