



Iowa Department of Human Services

Comm. 472 (Rev. 9/17)

# 2017 Update on Community Partnerships in Iowa



## Protecting Children is Everyone's Business



*Supporting Families and Strengthening Communities*

# A Comprehensive, Strength-based Approach to Protecting Children

## OUR HISTORY

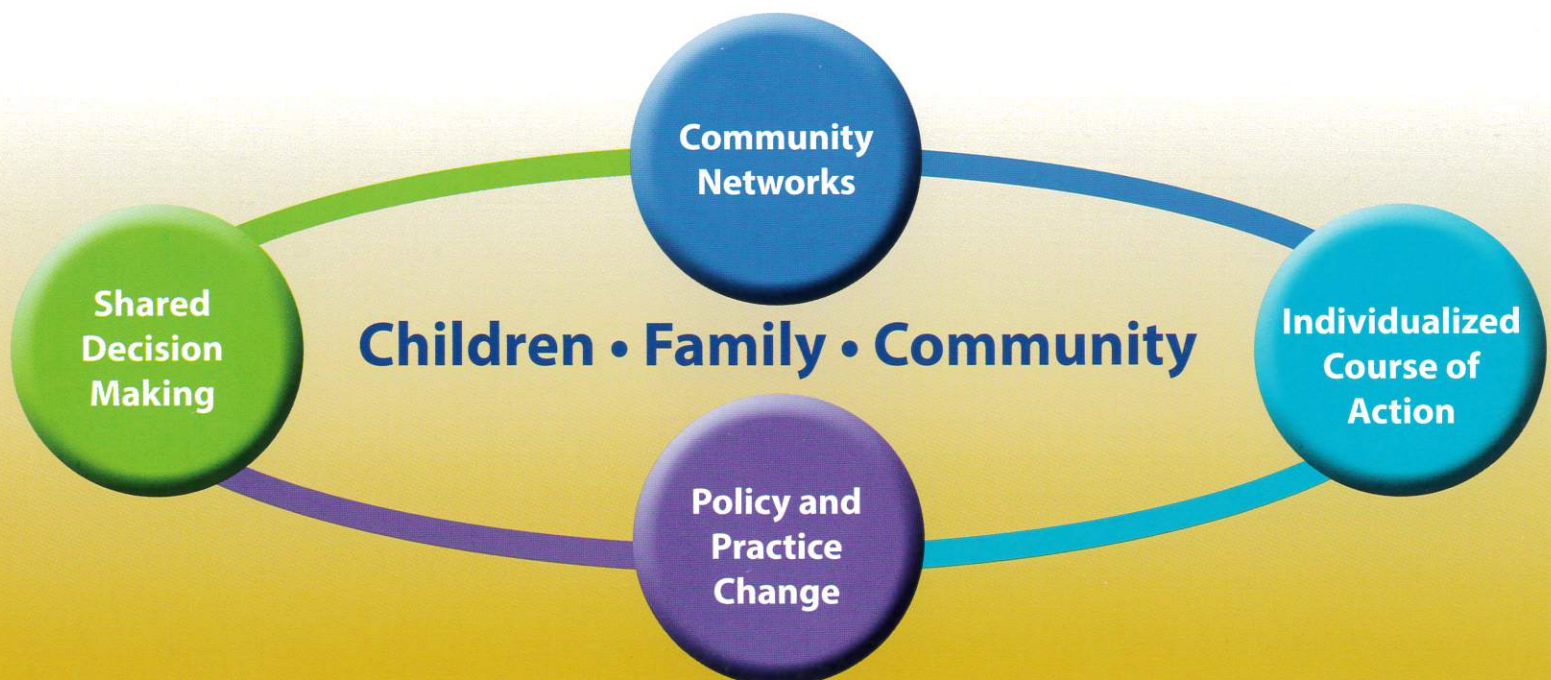
Iowa's Community Partnership approach grew from initial work in Cedar Rapids in 1995 and now encompasses the entire state. Several new policy and practice changes in Iowa have been promoted, piloted and implemented through Community Partnership efforts. Family Team Decision-Making, Parent Partners, and Youth Transition Decision Making are examples of these efforts. Trainings, professional development opportunities, and train the trainer programs have been developed and implemented to support improved practices and ensure quality and consistency across the state. State and regional networking opportunities, workshops and forums create an on-going learning community of stakeholders.

## WE BELIEVE

- Parents and youth need to be full partners in shaping supports and services for themselves and their communities.
- Children should be with their own families, whenever possible.
- Families are stronger when all members, including caregivers, are safe from abuse.
- There is no substitute for strong families to ensure that children and youth grow up to be capable adults.
- Families need supportive communities to help them be strong and offer a sense of belonging.
- Children can best be kept safe when families, friends, residents, and organizations work together as partners.
- Services and supports need to be closely linked to the communities in which families live.
- Government alone, through the Department of Human Services (DHS) agency, cannot keep children safe from abuse and neglect.
- Efforts to reduce abuse and neglect must be closely linked to broader community initiatives and priorities.

## OUR APPROACH

Community Partnerships for Protecting Children (CPPC) is a community-based approach to child protection. Partnerships work to prevent child abuse, neglect, re-abuse, safely decrease the number of out-of-home placements, and promote timely reunification when children are placed in foster care. The long term focus of the Community Partnerships is to protect children by changing the culture to improve child welfare processes, practices, and policies. The Community Partnership approach involves four key strategies which are implemented together to achieve desired results.





# Strategy

## Shared Decision Making

### Purpose

Provide leadership for collaborative efforts that promote community responsibility for the safety and well-being of children.

### Activities

- Recruit broad and diverse membership to set the direction and oversee implementation of the four strategies and local efforts
- Identify and assess community strengths as well as gaps in services and supports
- Develop plans and leverage resources to fill priority gaps
- Agree on measures, evaluate outcomes, and share accountability for outcomes

### Shared Decision Making in Action

Transportation can be a major barrier for families accessing services. A number of shared decision making teams have created innovative solutions to address this issue by coordinating car pools and car donation programs and accessing resources for bus passes, gas cards, and bicycles.

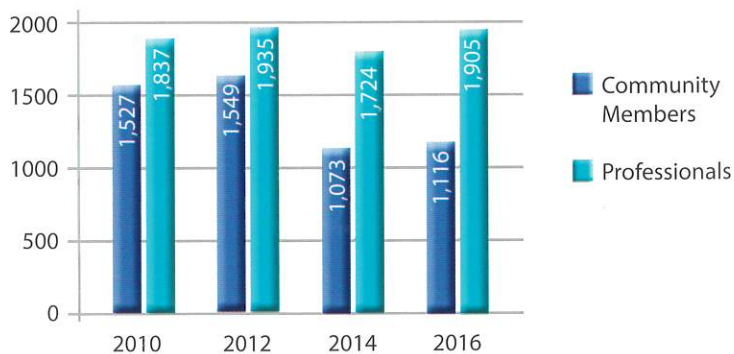
Community Partnerships are founded on the principle of shared responsibility for the safety of children. Partnerships are guided by organized shared decision making committees that include a wide range of community members from the following groups:

- public and private child welfare and juvenile justice
- parents and youth, including those with prior system involvement
- education and early childhood
- physical and mental health
- domestic violence and substance abuse
- volunteers, non-profit, and faith-based
- law enforcement and legal
- local government
- business and civic

Parents, youth and the Department of Human Services are essential players in the collaborative work of local Partnerships.

These decision making groups are engaged in assessing and responding to the needs of children and families in the community. This includes planning, implementing and evaluating the strategies and activities of the local Partnership. The group is also responsible for educating their local community about the importance and community benefits of children's safety and well-being.

**Number of Community Members and Professionals Involved**





# Strategy

## Neighborhood/Community Networking

**N**eighborhood/Community Networking focuses on engaging and educating partners and promoting community involvement to strengthen families and create safety nets for children. In addition, Partnerships build linkages and relationships among professionals and informal support systems. As Partnerships gain experience, and as additional resources become available, Partnerships initiate more structured responses to address community-identified needs such as Parent Partners, Circles of Support, Transitioning Youth, and Neighborhood Hubs.

### Purpose

Promote cooperation and form alliances to provide more accessible and relevant informal and professional supports, services and resources for families whose children are at risk of abuse and neglect.

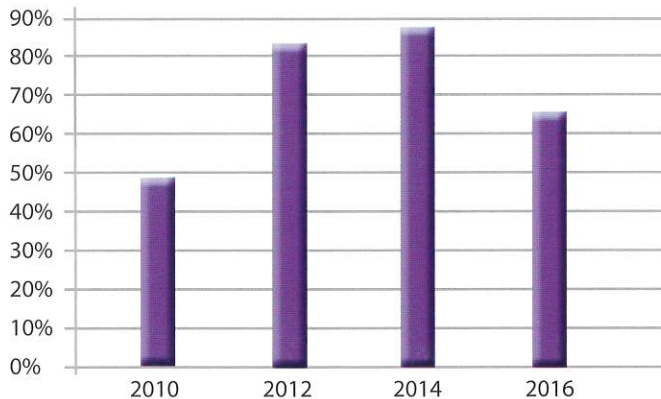
### Activities

- Increase awareness
- Marketing materials and newsletters
- Presentations and discussions
- Community events
- Establish and maintain multiple linkages and relationships among informal and professional supports and resources
- Multi-disciplinary cross trainings
- Ongoing opportunities for peer learning, information-sharing, and networking
- Joint planning efforts
- Community Resource Fairs
- Develop and implement community based responses

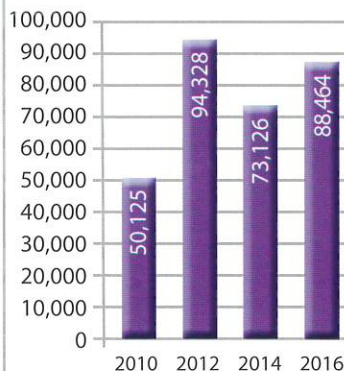
### Neighborhood Networking in Action

Several Community Partnerships host monthly lunch and learns for professionals and community members to build relationships and share information.

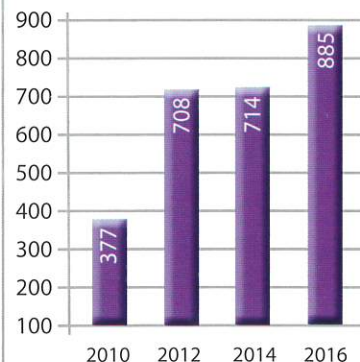
**Percentage of Sites Implementing One or More of the Following Networking Strategies:**



**Number of Participants**



**Number of Networking Events/Activities**





# Strategy

## Individualized Course of Action (Family Team and Youth Transition Decision-Making)

### Purpose

Genuinely engage families and youth to identify strengths, resources, and supports to reduce barriers and help families succeed.

### Activities

- Work with the Department of Human Services (DHS) to strengthen and expand the use of quality Family Team Meetings for families that come to the attention of the child welfare system
- Educate and engage partners
- Promote best practice
- Assist with evaluation
- Identify and recruit informal supports and community resources
- Build capacity to offer community Family Team Meetings that include: agreed upon referral process, training and support of facilitators, and tracking and quality assurance activities

### Individualized Course of Action in Action

A major success of Community Partnerships has been the adoption of the Family Team Meeting process as the preferred method of making decisions in child welfare cases. More recently, Community Partnerships have begun offering community family team meetings as a way to prevent formal child welfare involvement for vulnerable families.

Every family has strengths, which may be temporarily overshadowed by challenges they are facing. Family team approaches seek to identify and build on those strengths so the family can successfully address issues of concern. This approach is family-centered, strength-based, and focused on engaging families in an authentic way.

The family team meeting process begins by engaging and preparing the family and their support partners. A family team meeting is then convened, bringing together the family with formal and informal supports to develop a tailor-made plan. This family-driven plan is designed to support the family and ensure the safety and well-being of the children in that family. Action plans identify the resources, supports and specific activities to be carried out by parents, friends, extended families, and their support network. These plans adapt to cultural, ethnic and racial norms that vary from family to family.





# Strategy

## Policy and Practice Change

### Purpose

Improve policies and practices to reduce barriers and increase accessibility and relevance of services that lead to positive family outcomes.

### Activities

- Gather and utilize data and community insights to identify and assess needs for policy and practice change
- Explore opportunities to implement best practices
- Facilitate parent and youth input
- Implement and evaluate change within the context of the community

### Policy and Practice Change in Action

Community Partnerships have promoted the implementation of the Parent Partners. Parent Partners is an approach that promotes innovative changes in social work practice that is unique because it not only celebrates individuals that have overcome obstacles through change, recovery, and accountability, but also uses their skills to mentor families who are currently navigating through DHS as their children are in foster or kinship care. Parent Partners demonstrate advocacy and effective communication, while holding families accountable.

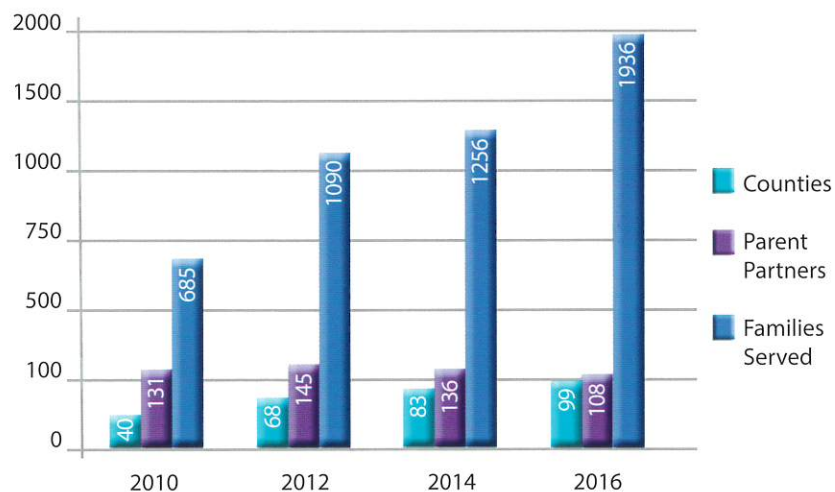
Ongoing evaluation of how well families and children are being served is important to achieving desired results. Communities need to routinely assess their efforts, identify gaps and barriers, and chart courses to improve policies and practices. Partnerships test innovative approaches, promote best practices, and influence system changes to better serve families and protect children.

Parents and youth who have real life experiences with the child welfare system are key contributors to the development of policy and practice change. Involving community members, as well as families and youth directly impacted by the child welfare system, significantly changes the conversation about policies and practices related to child protection.

Partnerships work to develop and implement plans to address specific barriers and to incorporate best practice approaches in the delivery of services. Examples include:

- Promoting authentic family and youth engagement
- Reducing minority disproportionality and disparity in the child welfare system
- Expanding the availability and enhancing the quality of family team meetings
- Implementing youth-centered transition planning for youth leaving foster care

**Participants in the Parent Partner Approach by Year**

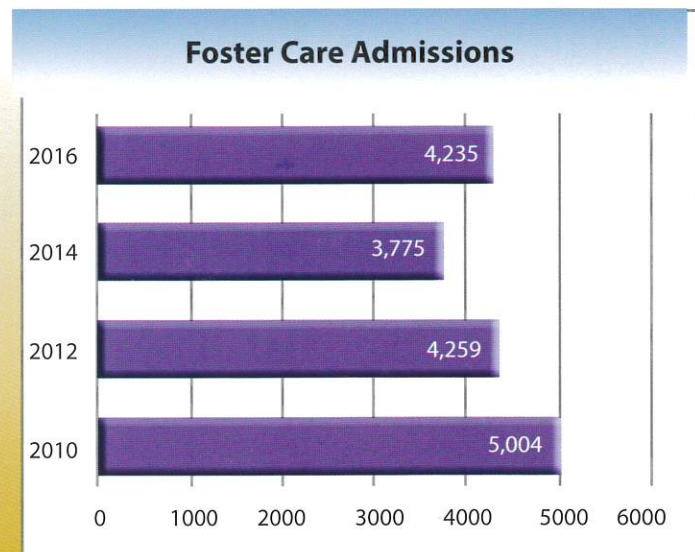
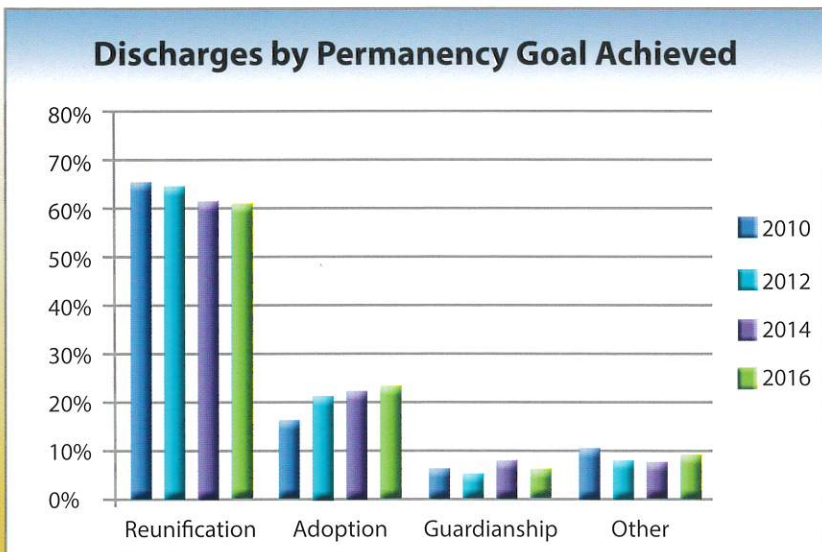


# Long Term Collective Impact of Community Partnerships



## IMPROVING OUTCOMES

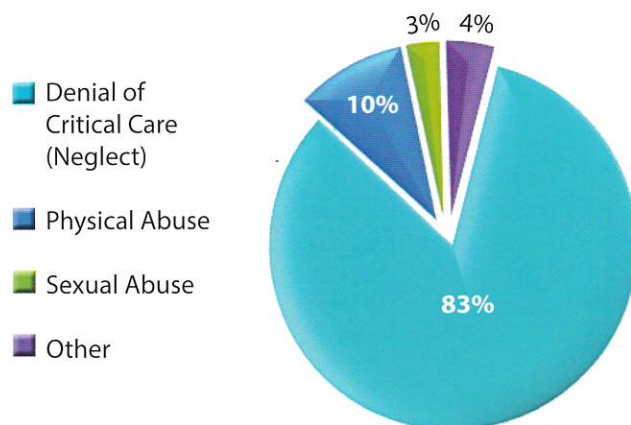
A whole host of factors contribute to child well-being, permanence, and safety. Community Partnerships for Protecting Children are positioned to play an important role in continuing to improve these outcomes through the enhancement of community resources and implementation of the four strategies. These strategies are focused on changing child welfare cultural response by engaging communities, families, youth and agencies to work as partners. The following charts are examples of outcomes that CPPC is committed to improving.



# Overview

**P**hysical and sexual abuse is very serious and has traumatic impact on a child's growth, well-being and development. The most frequent type of child abuse is Denial of Critical Care (sometimes referred to as neglect). Denial of Critical Care is defined as the failure on the part of a person responsible for the care of a child to provide for the adequate food, shelter, clothing or other care necessary for the child's health and welfare when financially able to do so or when offered financial or other reasonable means to do so. The majority of underlying issues of Denial of Critical Care are substance abuse, domestic violence and mental illness. These issues often lead to lack of proper supervision of children and the safety of children becomes a concern.

## Founded and Confirmed Child Abuse Reports by Type, 2016



## MILESTONES AND TIMELINE

- 1995** Edna McConnell Clark Foundation provides funding for 4 national pilot sites including Cedar Rapids
- 2000** DHS hires state CPPC coordinator and Prevent Child Abuse Iowa begins host forums and events
- 2001** First statewide CPPC conference is hosted by Prevent Child Abuse Iowa  
Edna McConnell Clark Foundation provides funding for 5 Iowa pilot sites
- 2002** Child Welfare Policy and Practice Groups provides Family Team Meeting (FTM) training & recruitment of Iowa FTM trainers
- 2003** Iowa's federal program improvement plan (PIP) and Better Results for Kids DHS redesign identifies statewide rollout for FTM and CPPC  
State legislation allocates CPPC funding
- 2004** Prevent Child Abuse Iowa provides fulltime associate CPPC coordinator
- 2005** In partnership with the Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence, a fulltime position provides technical assistance/training
- 2007** CPPC implements statewide and each Decat is allocated funding  
Prevent Child Abuse Iowa starts CPPC AmeriCorps program  
Parent Partners is implemented in 11 counties
- 2008** In partnership with Youth Policy Institute of Iowa, Transitioning Youth Initiative and Dream Teams are implemented in 9 counties  
Iowa's CPPC is highlighted in national publication by Andrew White  
First Parent Partner Summit is held
- 2009** Receives Federal Midwest Child Welfare Implementation Center (MCWIC) grant to expand Parent Partners statewide
- 2010** MCWIC begins Parent Partner evaluation
- 2011** Partnered with ISU for fulltime Domestic Violence Liaison  
Parent Partner outcome database is developed and implemented
- 2012** Partnered with ISU for fulltime Transition Youth Specialist  
Standards and funding allocations are implemented for Transition Youth Decision Making (Dream Teams)  
Parent Partners is operational in 68 counties and statewide contracting infrastructure is developed.



*Communities throughout Iowa that share decision-making, facilitate policy and practice change, promote family team decision-making and expand community networks to keep children safe from abuse and neglect.*

<http://dhs.iowa.gov/community-partnership-for-protecting-children>

