

In The Know, July 2025



Thank you to Haley Reed, CPPC/DeCat with HHW CPPC (Hamilton, Humboldt, & Wright County Community's Partnership for Protecting Children) for your generous food pantry donation to all 3 counties. Your food pantry donation will help address the summer food insecurities of families with children within these counties.

Upper Des Moines Opportunity, Inc was honored and greatly appreciates your pantry donation. Many of the items you selected easily could be prepared by children. This donation will help feed many families this summer.

Meredith Mickelson ~1st Five~



Stacie Coppinger- Humboldt



1st/Five car loaded at Walmart!



Jamie Flugstad- Hamilton



Chris Whipple- Wright



Executive Director 2

Human Resources 3

LIHEAP 3

KIDS 4

1st/Five 5

CACFP 6

Weatherization 6

Compliance/Reporting 7

Housing 8

Early Childhood 8

FADSS & Outreach 9





Program Highlights

Congratulations to Shakira Meyer!

Please join us in celebrating **Shakira Meyer**, Compliance Director, for earning her **National Certified ROMA Implementer** designation. Shakira successfully completed a rigorous four-phase certification process that included training, portfolio development, and a final exam. This is a significant professional achievement—well done, Shakira!

- **Head Start:** CACFP audit scheduled for July. Staff training and preparation for the new school year begins in August.
- **Child Care Assistance:** Awaiting site approvals for each Head Start location.
- **Outreach:** Healthy Kids Iowa distributions are ongoing and well received.
- **KIDS:** Preparing for Iowa Family Support Credential

Legislation & Advocacy

Your voice matters!

We are preparing for an active advocacy season at both the **state and federal levels**. Each UDMO program is creating an educational video to support these efforts.

Have you seen our latest **success stories** on social media? If not, take a moment to check them out and share the impact of our work!

Upcoming Meetings & Important Dates

- **Finance Committee Meeting:** Tuesday, **July 22 at 1:00 PM** (*Note the date change*)
Board of Directors: No meeting scheduled for July



Tiffany Harris– HR Director



SAVE THE DATE: Thursday September 18th, 2025 @ The Shores, Emmetsburg 9:00am – 2:30pm

***Mandatory All Staff Inservice**



July Service Anniversaries:

Megan Noyes, HS Teacher – Sheldon, 4 years
 Colette Elser, Home Base Teacher - Spencer, 4 years
 Kim Graham, Home Base Teacher – Estherville, 6 years
 Melea Neilsen, HS Teacher – Storm Lake, 6 years
 Paige Bunkofske, EHS Teacher – Estherville, 7 years
 Joanne Tewes, HS Teacher – Storm Lake, 8 years
 Amy Loerts, Assistant Teacher – Sibley, 10 years
 Maria Villalobos, Home Base Coach – Estherville, 11 years
 Chantel Kloucek, ECP Coordinator – Estherville, 11 years

EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH IS ON HOLD ---- STAY TUNED FOR OUR NEXT RECOGNITION OPPORTUNITY!

Work Comp Incident Report Recap:

April 2025: 2 incident reports
 May 2025: 4 incident reports
 June 2025: 0 incident reports
 Incident YTD Total: **14**

Shelly Charapata– Energy Program Director



- **ECIP/CRISIS:** For June, 129 households received ECIP-Crisis funds in the amount of \$33,906.49.
- **In July we will start work on our AE letters (Automatic Eligible households) and instructions for staff and will distribute to all Outreach offices sometime in August.**

KIDS Program



Iowa Family Support Network Credential



What is the Iowa Family Support Credential?

It is a credentialing process was designed for home visiting programs that are not currently credentialed through a national process (Parents As Teachers or Healthy Families America) and do not have access to an outside evaluation.

Programs have to show evidence of how they are meeting **over 150 quality standards** for home visiting services.

***It is required by Early Childhood Iowa to receive funding.**



What is the process for the IFSC?

1. Policies and procedures are submitted through a technical assistance process over the course of a year
2. Once the technical assistance process is completed, peer review is requested and is accepted into the peer review process.
3. File reviews are conducted on families participating in services to ensure policies and procedures are being completed.

What is your part in the Peer Review Process?

- Board Members, Community Partners, Families, Staff and Administration is asked to participate in the interview process to show adherence to the policies and procedures
- Participate in the Program being awarded the credential and help celebrate the hard work going into the IFSC!



How long is the Credential good for?

The Iowa Family Support Credential is good for five years. Renewal typically starts again in the third year.

***The KIDS Program was last credential in 2019, however due to COVID there was an extension provided to all Programs participating.**

Find more information here:

<https://lsiowa.org/ifsc/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Iowa-Family-Support-Standards-August-2022.pdf>[site.com](https://www.lsiowa.org/site/2022/08/22/ifsc-standards-august-2022/)

CLOSING GAPS & CONNECTING FAMILIES

Contact: CSA-1

Teresa Ball

tball@udmo.com

(712) 298-6751

Counties Served

CSA-1

Clay, Dickinson, Emmet,
O'Brien, Osceola, &
Palo Alto

Contact: CSA-4

Meredith Mickelson

mmickelson@udmo.com

(712) 298-6292

Counties Served

CSA-4

Calhoun, Hamilton, Hardin,
Humboldt, Pocahontas,
Webster, & Wright

Why 1st Five Iowa HHS Is Essential for Early Mental Health?

- **90% of brain development occurs before age 5**, shaping emotional regulation, communication, and learning capacity.
- **Social-emotional development is foundational**- yet often under-addressed compared to physical and cognitive milestones.
- **63% of pediatricians rely solely on observation**, which identifies only **30% of children with developmental concerns**.
- **Only 1 in 6 children with developmental issues** are identified before school—leaving educators to manage unmet needs.
- Children who miss early milestones face **greater risks of school failure, behavioral challenges, and juvenile delinquency**.
- **1st Five bridges the gap**, connecting families to **timely, tailored local resources** that support healthy development.

NEW & IMPROVED

1st Five Referral

Form *(revised July 2025)*

Fax to:

(712) 377-6165

- 1) **NEW:** English & Spanish
- 2) Electronic fillable forms
- 3) Child birth up to 5
- 4) Referrals accepted from child's primary care provider obtains the parent/guardian signature on Release of Information
- 5) Focus on developmental delays-concerns, screening tools used, and how 1st Five can help offer support family.



Upper Des Moines Opportunity, Inc -- 1st Five team

L-R: Teresa Ball (Site Coordinator), Jessie Hansen (Project Director), Kristi Radtke (DSS Family Worker), Meredith Mickelson (Site Coordinator), & Karhyn Alcantara (DSS Family Worker)

Becky Carlin– CACFP Coordinator



Monthly Board Report:

Counties Served: Buena Vista, Clay, Dickinson, Emmet, Lyon, O'Brien, Osceola, Palo Alto, Pocahontas, and Sioux.

CACFP had 33 providers submit claims for June. I have one provider currently on maternity leave, scheduled to return on July 7th. Recruiting efforts are still underway.

CACFP In-home Providers served the following meals in June:

| | June 2025 | June 2024 |
|-----------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Breakfast: | 4,172 | 4,595 |
| Lunches: | 4,586 | 4,957 |
| Snacks: | 4,697 | 5,123 |
| Suppers: | 4 | 89 |
| Total Meals Served: | 13,459 | 14,764 |
| Providers Served: | 33 | 38 |

Kyle Dietrich– Weatherization Director

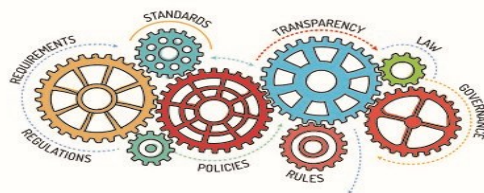


Number of Families Served in May 2025: **10**

Number of Families Served in FY 2025: **60**

Goal for 2025: **110 Homes**

-
- In June we had our Annual IWAC Retreat where the State Employees and the Weatherization Program employees meet and go over policy and procedures and also speak of all changes new and in the future.
 - We discussed major changes in the policy and procedures and will get a final copy as soon as it is approved by DOE (Department of Energy).
 - H3E Funding needs to be all spent before September and UDMO should have no issues with that contract dollar amount being used up on clients homes.
 - 6 million dollars has been received by the state for our Heap Funding for the whole state of Iowa for the WZN Program as soon as they get to it they will allocate that money to each individual agency. We will let you know when we receive that funding and that dollar amount.
 - LEWIS system for the Weatherization program is still being worked on and they are sorting out the bugs so that program will work efficiently with our program. The good news is we don't have a time frame to start that program so we can continue to use our old system till this is corrected.
 - The state is working on our priority list. Hopefully we will see the priority list by end of summer.
 - The state is also asking it mandatory that for pre and post tune and clean pictures on all furnaces of the blower motor and secondary heat exchanger from the HVAC Contractors and also would like to see much more Lead Safe Work Practice pictures from the Insulation contractors on our Clients homes.



Community Action in Motion: Sharing Our Impact

At **Upper Des Moines Opportunity, Inc.**, the work we do each day makes a lasting difference in the lives of individuals and families across Northwest and North Central Iowa. Whether it's helping a family through a crisis, supporting children in early childhood programs, or connecting neighbors to vital resources, our impact is real — and growing.

We are one of **16 Community Action Agencies** across Iowa committed to assisting individual and families. Recently, **Iowa Community Action Association (ICAA)** launched a new effort to highlight the incredible stories and successes from across the state — including ours! These stories capture the heart of what we do and the lives we touch. You can read and share these inspiring stories on the ICAA Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/IowaCAA>

Together, we are Community Action. Together, we are change.

UDMO Funding Requests Update:

| Recent Foundation/Organizational/Trust Grants Submitted & Status: July 2025 | County | Program | Submitted/Pending | Amount Awarded | Not Funded |
|---|------------|---------------------------|-------------------|----------------|------------|
| Homeland Security – EM FEMA Grant | CL | Repairs – App in Process | X | | |
| Sheldon United | OB | Client Services – Sheldon | X | | |
| POET | OB | Client Services | | | X |
| POET | PA | Client Services | | | X |
| POET | WE | Back to School | | | X |
| POET | WR | Back to School | | | X |
| Teresa Treat Stearns | HA | Client Services | | \$4,000 | |
| United Way | BV, CL, OB | Client Services | X | | |
| Dickinson County Good Neighbor Fund | DI | Client Services | X | | |
| Dickinson County Endowment Fund | DI | Milford Head Start | X | | |
| CPPC – CPW Cluster | CA, PO, WE | 1 st Five | X | | |

| Program Grants Submitted and Status: July 2025 | County | Program | Submitted/Pending | Funded | Not Funded |
|--|--------|---|-------------------|--------|------------|
| Tenant Based Rental Assistance (TBRA) | All | Housing | X | | |
| CSBG FY26 Application | All 12 | Outreach + Co-funding: HS, SV, SWVPP, WRAP & KIDS | X | | |

Housing Report– Tanya Petersen Housing Director



109 households received rental assistance in the month of June.

Our application is in for the Tenant Based Rental Assistance Program (TBRA).

We submitted our application for the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Project. The rental assistance project is designed to target individuals 18 – 25 years of age. ***UPDATE* – We have been awarded \$851,894.00.**

Staff Success Story

A local landlord reached out, they knew of someone that was looking for an apartment and was in need of a “hand up”.

A single momma with 2 young boys relocating to Fort Dodge, leaving an unhealthy situation. She had 30 days to find a place and get moved. This wasn’t an anticipated move and she did not have the necessary finances to start over. UDMO was able to utilize the TBRA program. We assisted her and her boys. Helping secure them housing by paying the deposit and monthly rental assistance. At a recent check in she stated they were settled in and loving life and the boys were very happy with where they were living.

Statewide Crisis Line Update: Clients in need of rental assistance should call the Statewide Crisis Line at 1-833-739-0065 to complete the intake process. Normal business hours are 7am – 8pm. Clients calling outside of these hours will need to leave a message and wait for a call back. Call backs are being made usually within 1-3 business

0-5 Early Childhood Programs– Sarina Smith



Enrollment:

Fully enrolled in Early Head Start with 183 children and Head Start Preschool with 289 children.

Disabilities:

Early Head Start students served on IFSP’s: 20

Head Start Preschool students served on IEP’s: 39

Total served: 59 Target: 47

TEACH – CDA, 2 year or 4-year Degree:

CDA certification completion: 7

Associates degree in progress: 1

Bachelor degree in progress: 1

Coaching:

Teachers – 6 and Home Base Teachers – 2

What’s Happening:

Advocacy in Action: Advocacy remains a top priority for our program. We are actively preparing for our trip to Washington, D.C. in September to meet with legislators and elevate the voices of our families and communities.

Investing in Professional Growth: We are looking forward to seeing everyone at our all-staff in-service on August 13th! This is a time to reconnect, recharge, and kick off the new program year together with energy and purpose.

Excellent Trainings: On June 18th, staff had the opportunity to engage in a powerful training led by Michelle Huntress. The session was a tremendous success and sparked meaningful reflection across our team.



FaDSS:

Enrolled Families: 77

Target # of families per month: 76

Families in Recruitment: 8

Families on Waiting list: 48

Outreach:



HIRING: Clay County Outreach Specialist



Shut Down Weeks for all Outreach offices:

All offices will be closed the following dates. There is a phone number for families to reach Alisa during these weeks in the event of an emergency.

July 21-25

August 18-22



BACK TO SCHOOL APPLICATIONS:

Outreach offices are now taking applications for our Back to School programming-please contact your local county offices for more information. The offices that are now accepting are BV, Clay, Dickinson, Emmet, Hamilton, Humboldt, Palo Alto, Pocahontas, Webster and Wright.

Fundraisers



Palo Alto: selling raffle tickets for a summer meat bundle. If you are interested in selling or purchasing any tickets please call Alisa at 515-570-0767

Webster: selling raffle tickets for a ½ hog. If you are interested in selling or purchasing any tickets please call Alisa at 515-570-0767

