

UDMO, In The Know

March 2026



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We have been Awarded!



Palo Alto County Gaming Development Corporation has awarded UDMO Head Start in Emmetsburg; \$3,736 for Enhancing Early Learning Opportunities.

Accepted by
Chantel Kloucek & Tracy Fischer.



Palo Alto County Gaming Development Corporation has awarded UDMO Outreach in Emmetsburg; \$10,975 for Facility Safety & Accessibility Upgrade
Accepted by
Tiffany Harris & Tyler Henderson.

Pork in the Pantry project brings \$2,000 of pork to food pantries



The Hamilton County Pork Producers completed the delivery of pork provided in partnership with grocers, a value of \$2,000 to food pantries in the county.

Pork in the Pantry is the project that is promoted through the Iowa Pork Producers Association which partners with local grocers and county pork producers for the food pantries in Iowa.

The first delivery was to the Jewell food pantry last week. This week they met at the Fareway Grocery store in Webster City to distribute pork loins and ground pork.

In the photo are, left to right: Mia Patterson of the Stratford Food Pantry, Adam Slaymaker, Fareway meat department manager, Jamie Flugstad of Upper Des Moines Opportunity and Gene Gourley of the Hamilton County Pork Producers.

Daily Freeman-Journal photo by Kolleen Taylor





Executive Director Report
Julie Edwards
March 2026

🌟 Agency Highlights & Program Updates

FEMA

Reimbursement has been received for flood damages to the UDMO facility in Spencer.

Community Foundation Time

Community Foundation grants continue to support important work across UDMO programs. Please refer to Shakira's section of the newsletter for a full listing of recent grants received. These resources make a meaningful difference in expanding services to the communities we serve.

Strategic Planning

UDMO leadership and board members met on March 12 to continue refining the agency's new strategic focus and priorities.

An updated strategic planning draft will be presented at the March Board Meeting for further review and discussion.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed feedback, ideas, and perspective during this process. Your input is helping shape the future direction of the agency.

Grant Submission for New Programs

UDMO has recently submitted two grant applications that would expand services within our region.

Shared Visions Home Visitation

- Service Area: Clay, O'Brien, and Osceola Counties
- Award notification expected: May 8
- Focus: Supporting families through home visitation services

Thrive Iowa

- Service Area: Humboldt, Pocahontas, and Wright Counties
- Award notification expected: May 8

Thrive Iowa is a community-led initiative designed to move families from crisis to career using a collective impact model supported by Restore Hope. The initiative focuses on strengthening family stability across 13 Social Determinants of Health, with particular emphasis on:

- Family preservation
- Preventing child welfare crises
- Building long-term economic stability

Program Leadership

Following the resignation of the Family Services Director, interim leadership has been assigned to maintain continuity of services.

- Outreach Coordinator: Heather Lundberg
- FaDSS Coordinator: Ashley Cooklin

We appreciate their willingness to step into these roles and support program operations during this transition.

Upcoming Meetings & Key Dates

Finance Committee Meeting: Tuesday, March 17 at 1:00 PM

Board of Directors Meeting: Tuesday, March 24 at 5:00 PM

Strategic Planning Session:

- May 13 in Graettinger
- 9:00 AM – 3:30 PM
- Board members are encouraged to attend



HR MONTHLY NEWS

February 2026

Key Updates

- 90 out of 94 employees completed the 'New Years Rest-olution' Challenge
- Employees were recognized on March 6th for Employee Appreciation Day with 2 additional hours of leave
- Leave of Absence and COBRA modules in UKG are nearing completion and ready for roll out. Staff will not experience any disruption

Staffing & Recruitment

- Open Positions:
- Housing Case Manager – Fort Dodge
- Program Specialist – Graettinger
- FaDSS Coordinator
- FaDSS Specialist - Remote



Outreach

Heather Lundberg, Outreach Coordinator

Hiring- All positions are currently filled. Webster County welcomes Ashley Tuttle to the team, she started March 10th and Clay County is excited to have Sarah Bush joining UDMO March 17th.

Fundraising Wrap Up

Palo Alto's St Patrick's Day Meat Raffle will be drawn on March 17th. Thank you to our UDMO team for selling tickets and going through the parade and representing UDMO



- LIHEAP (Low Income Household Energy Assistance Program) starts Oct. 1st for a household with an elderly (60 years of age or older) and/or a disabled household member. Everyone else can apply Nov. 1st thru April 30th.
- Anyone that applies for Liheap and are eligible, cannot be disconnected from their electric or natural gas from Nov. 1 – April 1. This is known as the Moratorium on winter disconnections.
- LIHEAP APPLICATIONS: For February, Outreach took and processed 321 Liheap applications. This report from State includes Online applications in it.
- YTD TOTALS: From 10-01-2025 to 2-28-2026 - Total applications 4,100.
- LAST YEAR AT THIS TIME: 3,856 applications were processed.
- ONLINE LIHEAP APPLICATIONS: For February, 22 applications were received. YTD: 164.



Housing Report February 2026 – Tanya Petersen, Housing Director

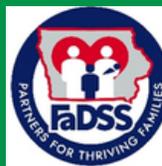
91 households received rental assistance in the month of February.

★ Special Announcement ★

Our UDMO Youth Homelessness Demonstration Project (YHDP) launched on March 1st. This project is designed to assist youth ages 18-24 secure stable housing for up to 24 months as long as they remain income eligible. To apply please contact the call center at 833-739-0065.

The application process has opened for the Tenant Based Rental Assistance (TBRA) program. Application deadline is May 1st and awards will be announced in August.

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 days.



Ashley Cooklin-FaDSS Coordinator

We are currently at 78 families, 1 in recruitment, and 24 on the waiting list. We are looking to fill a FaDSS Specialist Spot in the Pocahontas and surrounding counties including BV, Hamilton, Webster, and Wright. Nothing new in February except we did attend FaDSS Day on the Hill the 3rd.



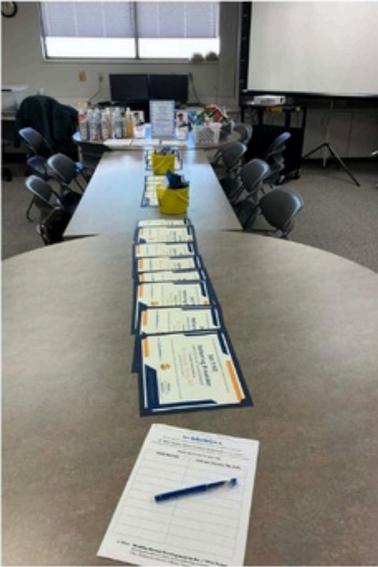
Shakira Meyer –
 Director of Program Development, Compliance & Reporting

UDMO continues to pursue supplemental funding to strengthen and expand our programs. Over the past two months, we are grateful to have received several Community Foundation grants that will support Outreach and Head Start services across our region.

UDMO is also actively pursuing new grant opportunities to expand programs that assist individuals and families throughout our 12-county service area. In addition, the agency recently received FEMA reimbursement for expenses incurred to repair the Clay County UDMO Outreach office following the June 2024 flood.

Our team is also engaged in strategic planning for Fiscal Years 2027–2029 and looks forward to sharing goals that will further support the individuals and families we serve, strengthen our staff, and build stronger communities.

UDMO Funding Requests Update:					
Recent Foundation/Organizational/Trust Grants Submitted & Status: January 2026	County	Program	Submitted/ Pending	Amount Awarded	Not Funded
Homeland Security – Emergency Management FEMA Reimbursement Grant	CL	Repairs – Awarded		X	
Enhance Hamilton Foundation	HA	HA Combo CO2 Detectors		\$ 1,500	
Humboldt County Community Foundation	HU	HU Coats for Kids		\$3,000	
Palo Alto Gaming Development Corporation	PA	PA HS-Mini Grant Classroom Materials		\$ 3,736	
Palo Alto Gaming Development Corporation	PA	PA Outreach – Entrance Upgrades		\$10,975	
Clay County Community Foundation	CL	CL HS-Outdoor Play Equipment		\$TBD	
Wright County Charitable Foundation	WR	WR Client Services	X		
Sheldon United	OB	Client Services – Sheldon		\$1,000	
Still Pending from Summer/Fall 2025 – Award Spring 2026					
Dickinson County Good Neighbor Fund	DI	Client Services	X		
Belmond Area Community Trust	WR	Client Services Belmond	X		
Program Grants Submitted and Status: February 2026	County	Program	Submitted/ Pending	Funded	Not Funded
Head Start 1303	Emmet	Roosevelt HVAC	X		
Head Start/Early Head Start – Continuation	BV, CL, DI, EM, OB, OS, PA	Annual Submission	X		
Shared Visions – Iowa Department of Education	BV, CL, EM	Comprehensive quality Preschool program	X		
Shared Visions – Iowa Department of Education Home Visitation	CL, OB, OS	KIDS Home Visitation	X		



1ST FIVE Peer Consultations

MARCH 2026



**2026
CHAMPION
PEER CONSULTANTS**

**CSA-1
DR. AMY
JOCHIMS, MD**

**CSA-4
DR. ANDREA
MCCLOUGHLIN, MD**



DR. ANDREA MCCLOUGHLIN, MD

WHAT IS A 1ST FIVE PEER CONSULTANT?

.....
A 1st Five Peer Consultant is a practicing primary care provider who partners with the 1st Five program to strengthen early childhood developmental support in local clinics. They serve as a clinical champion, offering a provider's perspective to ensure 1st Five remains practical, relevant, and aligned with real-world clinic needs.



DR. AMY JOCHIMS, MD

WHAT DO PEER CONSULTANTS DO FOR 1ST FIVE?

- Advise on clinical processes concerning 1st Five referrals
- Support peer education on screening & referring
- Strengthen clinic partnerships
- Assist with 1st Five concerns/questions from peers

WHEN DO PEER CONSULTATIONS OCCUR?

.....
Each 1st Five area subcontracts with their consultant for a minimum of 2 consultations per year or as the need arises.

"EVERY STRONG SYSTEM STARTS WITH SOMEONE WILLING TO SPEAK UP. PEER CONSULTANTS HELP ENSURE NO CHILD AND NO FAMILY GOES UNHEARD."

WHY CONSULTATIONS MATTER?

Peer consultants strengthen the bridge between clinical practice and community support. Their leadership helps ensure families receive timely, appropriate care and that providers feel confident and supported in the process.



UDMO
Helping People. Changing Lives.





Enrollment:

Early Head Start with 183 children and Head Start Preschool with 254 children.

Disabilities:

Early Head Start students served on IFSP's: 12

Head Start Preschool students served on IEP's: 23

Total served: 35 Target: 47

TEACH – CDA, 2 year or 4-year Degree:

CDA certification completion: 1

Associates degree in progress: 3

Bachelor degree in progress: 1

Coaching:

Teachers – 4 and Home Base Teachers – 5

It Takes a Community:

· PBIS Update: The team reviewed the Benchmarks of Quality (BOQ) and identified key focus areas, including strengthening staff buy-in and refining procedures for responding to challenging behaviors. These topics will be emphasized during the Head Start All Staff Training in August. In addition, two classrooms in Spencer were selected as Model PBIS Classrooms in Iowa after successfully applying and being accepted. The state will visit to present certificates recognizing their achievement

· Sibley: During our Bread Study, children enjoyed a memorable field trip to Pizza Hut in Sibley, where staff welcomed them warmly, guided them in making their own personal pizzas, shared a behind-the-scenes tour, answered questions, and displayed the children's artwork in the restaurant before sending everyone off with a treat and frisbee.

· Storm Lake: With the retirement of our beloved Lisa Bethune, whose presence and dedication will be deeply missed, we are pleased to welcome Rosa Marquez as our new Home Base Coach. Rosa, a member of the Storm Lake community, has spent this transition period shadowing Lisa and is well prepared to step confidently into her new role.



Head Start Snapshots



Spencer Cooks Featured: Sheri, Sue & Denita with Administrative Coordinator Michella!
Thank you all for being so amazing.



Featured: Program Coordinators Angie, Dee R, Chantel and Dee G. Central Office training with Sarah Ennis.



Storm Lake: Renovations from the Nutrition grant has allowed Storm Lake to get an updated cafeteria (new paint, new flooring and new equipment).



“Weatherization Report for February 2026”-Kyle Dietrich-Weatherization Director

Number of Families Served in February 2026: 10

Number of Families Served in FY 2026: 20

Goal for 2026: 110 Homes

The Weatherization Department had another strong month in February. Our team successfully completed 10 homes, which meets our monthly production goal and keeps us on track with our overall program targets. Thank you to everyone for your continued dedication and effort in maintaining this level of productivity.

Below are a few program updates from the State Weatherization Program:

DOE FY26 Funding Update

Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) funding for FY26 is projected at \$369 million, which represents an increase of \$3 million over FY25 enacted levels. The funding breakdown is as follows:

- \$329 million – Base Weatherization Assistance Program
- \$10 million – Training and Technical Assistance
- \$30 million – Weatherization Readiness Fund

LEWIS System Update

Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) will begin testing the Weatherization module within the LEWIS system this week. Once testing is completed and the module is ready, SME agencies will be onboarded first. Additional agencies will then transition to the system over the following months.

The State will also work directly with agencies and their contractors to ensure a smooth implementation process.

SME Agencies include:

- H.A.C.A.P.
- East Central Iowa
- SIEDA
- Southeast Iowa
- West Central

Priority Lists

Agencies have received priority lists for the Big Three utilities:

- Alliant Energy
- Black Hills Energy
- MidAmerican Energy

Priority lists for municipal utilities, RECs, and deliverable fuels will be distributed to agencies in the near future.

Updated lists are expected to be available in time for Program Year 2026 (PY26), beginning July 1, 2026.

As we move forward, we remain committed to maintaining strong production goals, delivering measurable results, and effectively assisting clients with their energy needs throughout the 17-county service area we proudly serve. Thank you for your continued hard work and commitment to the program.

MARCH

Newsletter

JESSIE HANSEN, EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES

WHAT'S HAPPENED

1st Five:

1st Five Pilot Program was put on hold temporarily due to the State needing to conduct a needs assesment prior to moving forward.

CARES:

The State is exploring opportunities to expand Resource Navigation in our area with current contractors.

WHAT'S TO COME?

Site Visits:

Early Childhood Iowa Subcontracts

Home visiting services in Winnebago/Palo Alto Counties

- Winnebago completed on February 18th
- Palo Alto's review is on March 18th

MIECHV (Webster County):

- March 24th in Fort Dodge

*Applying for Shared Visions to expand home visiting services in Clay, Osceola, and O'Brien Counties.



WHAT'S IMPORTANT

- MIECHV Enrolled/Capacity: 6/48
- MIECHV Pending Enrollment: 2
- CARES Program Referrals: 15
 - Car seats, Clothing Vouchers, Food
- ECNCI Winnebago Enrolled/Capacity: 10/12
- ECNCI Palo Alto Enrolled/Capacity: 14/10