UDMO

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# IN THE KNOW NEWSLETTER

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October 2026 Edition
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This photo got missed last month.

A big thank you to these 3 ladies. Ashley-HR, Michele-Fiscal, & Becky-CACFP. They represented UDMO in the Graettinger Labor Day Parade! (Becky retired from Central office on 9/30/26. We thank her for her contributions, and willingness to chip-in when needed!)



2026 All Staff-The Shores, Emmetsburg IA
Thank you and Photo Credits: Eric Johannsen, Aerial Solutions







Check out page 4. for more candid All-Staff shots!





# From the Desk of Executive Director

Julie Edwards

October 2026

As we move into fall, I want to take a moment to recognize the dedication, teamwork, and resilience that make UDMO special. From staff development and program advocacy to welcoming new leadership and working through technology challenges, our team continues to show its commitment to the families and communities we serve. Thank you for all you do!

## 🌟 Celebrating Our Team: All-Staff In-Service

Our recent All-Staff In-Service provided an opportunity to learn more about UDMO programs, review data from the past year, explore current services, and build connections across our agency.

A special thank-you to our Leadership Team and Professional Development Committee for planning the event. Committee members led an engaging team-building activity based on The 5 Languages of Appreciation in the Workplace. Thank you to everyone who contributed their time and talents to make the day a success!

We also received feedback from 105 employees who attended. Responses were primarily positive, with many highlighting the value of connection and team building.

Employees identified three top training interests for the future:

· Technology and work efficiency

· De-escalation and children's behavior

· Team building, communication, and relationships

These suggestions will help guide planning for our next All-Staff Training, scheduled for June 15, 2027.

And a special thank-you to Eric Johannsen from Spencer for donating his time, skills, and drone to capture our all-staff photo!

## 💻 Working Through Technology Challenges

In September, UDMO experienced an email database issue that affected every employee and continues to impact some daily operations. Our IT Director, Elisa Umschied, has been working diligently with third-party support and our in-house IT team to resolve the remaining issues.

Although data loss was minimal, addressing the problem has required approximately 50 hours of outside support and more than 40 hours of in-house IT time.

I appreciate everyone's patience, flexibility, and understanding as we work through this challenge. Our team's resilience and willingness to work together have been especially evident during this time. Thank you for helping keep our services moving forward!

## 👋 Welcome to UDMO Leadership!

Please join me in welcoming Allison Hanson, who has accepted the Client Services Director position. Allison will oversee LIHEAP, Weatherization, Outreach, and Housing. We are excited to welcome her to this leadership role and look forward to the support and collaboration she will bring to these important services.

## 🏛️ Advocating for Head Start and Our Families

UDMO continues to advocate for policies that support children, families, and the communities we serve. UDMO submitted an official response to the proposed changes to Head Start's Performance Standards.

In addition, Shakira Meyer, our Compliance Director, traveled to Washington, D.C., to advocate on behalf of Head Start. During her visit, she met with Senator Grassley and representatives from the offices of Representatives Feenstra and Senator Ernst.

Thank you to Shakira for representing UDMO and helping ensure that the needs of the children and families we serve remain part of these important discussions.

## Executive Director-Continued

❤️ Help Us Connect Families with Services
We continue to work toward enrollment goals for Head Start and Webster County's MIECHV program. Thank you to everyone who has referred families! We are making progress, and every connection matters. Please continue sharing information with families who may qualify for these services.
Families can visit www.udmo.com for enrollment information for all Head Start locations and Webster County's MIECHV program.
Your referrals help connect children and families with opportunities, resources, and support when they need them most.

🎉 Come Celebrate with Us!
We are excited to celebrate the newly renovated Emmet Office!
Please join us for one of these upcoming events:
· Ribbon Cutting: October 14 at 11:30 a.m.
· Open House: October 21 at 11:30 a.m.
We look forward to sharing this space and celebrating this improvement with our partners and community members!
📅 Mark Your Calendar: October Board Meetings
· Finance Committee: Tuesday, October 20, at 1:00 p.m.
· Board of Directors: Tuesday, October 27, at 5:00 p.m.
💙 Thank You for Being Part of UDMO!
Every day, our employees, board members, and community partners contribute to UDMO's mission in meaningful ways. Whether you are providing direct services, supporting staff, guiding agency decisions, advocating for funding, or connecting families with resources, your work makes a difference.
Thank you for your continued commitment to UDMO and the people we serve. I appreciate the care, dedication, and teamwork you bring to our agency.
Together, we are making a difference—one family, one community, and one opportunity at a time!




**TIFFANY HARRIS**
**Human Resources Director**

## HR MONTHLY NEWS

**Key Updates:**
**· Save the Date – All-Staff Event: Based on survey results, our next all-staff event will be held on Tuesday, June 15, 2027, at The Shores in Emmetsburg. Please mark your calendars! We are currently gathering quotes and exploring speaker options for the event.**
**· Insurance Renewal: Medical insurance rates came back with a 12.5% increase, while Dental and Vision rates remain unchanged. We are working collaboratively as a team to explore options to help reduce the medical increase.**
**· Medical Premiums: After the agency absorbed medical premium increases for the past two years, the increase will be passed along to employees this year. We understand that changes to benefit costs affect everyone and are working to make thoughtful decisions for the agency and our staff.**
**· Open Enrollment: Open Enrollment will run November 1–15 and will be completed through UKG. Please watch for additional information and instructions to ensure you complete your enrollment within the designated timeframe.**

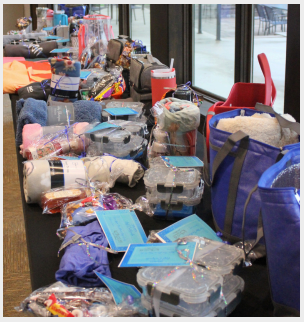
# All Things All-Staff 2026!

An informative and team building day was held on September 17th, at The Shores in Emmetsburg. Policy information, program information, ROMA Training, special guests.
The Five Languages of Appreciation in The Workplace.
A popcorn bar, a dirty soda bar and even a packed prize table!
Interacting with staff that we don't get to see all the time.
A special thanks to all those who work behind the scenes to make the day run smoothly!!
All-Staff Day is meant to be informational and fun!!





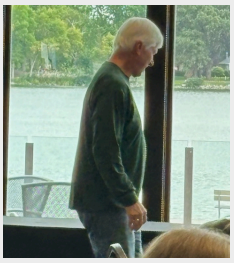














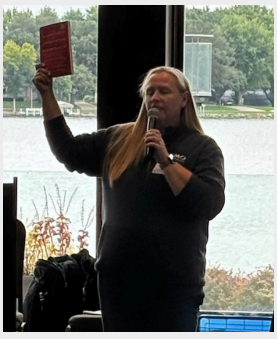




















# 1ST FIVE

October 2026

## Strengthening Connections Across Iowa

September was a month of connection for our 1st Five team. We attended the UDMO Agency Inservice, where staff from all UDMO programs and locations engaged in hands-on learning and collaboration. Several on our team also attended the 1st Five Statewide Fall Collaborative in Ankeny, strengthening partnerships with our 1st Five cohorts, Iowa HHS, Child Health Specialty Clinic (CHSC), and Kansas University's data management researchers. Both events deepened relationships and support for unifying 1st Five work across Iowa.



**CSA1**
**Kristi Radtke, DSS &**
**Teresa Ball, Coordinator**
ph: (712) 298-6751
tball@udmo.com

Counties Served: Clay, Dickinson, Emmet, O'Brien, Osceola & Palo Alto



**UDMO Inservice-**
**Emmetsburg**
**Karhyn Alcantara &**
**Jessie Hansen,**
**Family Services Director**



**CSA4**
**Meredith Mickelson, Coordinator**
**& Karhyn Alcantara, DSS**
ph: (712) 298-6292
mmickelson@udmo.com

Counties Served: Calhoun, Hamilton, Hardin, Humboldt, Pocahontas, Webster & Wright



**UDMO**
**5-Year**
**Staff**
**Appreciation**

# EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

JESSIE HANSEN

SEPTEMBER 2026

## KIDS- MIECHV



OurSeptember Parent Group was a HUGE HIT! We had a total of 9 familes (14 total adults and 13 children) attend. The Fort Dodge Fire Department brought a full size fire truck where the children got to sit inside of it and the Fire Fighters talked with parents about fire safety!

Our caseloads also continue to grow as we work to get more referrals from our partnering agencies.



## ECI -HOME VISITATION

We recently attended a Mom & Me class hosted by Winnebago and enjoyed seeing families spend quality time together with their children. Families participated in a fun craft and learned ways to bring reading into their children's everyday lives to encourage early learning and growth

We also got the developmental kits delivered to our home visitors and are working on creating additional kits filled with activities and resources to support children's learning and development for another home visitor.



## CARES

We continue to support our clients by connecting them with the resources and services they need. We were also able to deliver a pack 'n play to a mom who was in need' of a safe place for her infant to sleep. We are grateful to be able to provide support and help families get the items they need

Our staff also continues to participate in trainings that keep us up to date on important information, programs, and community resources. This helps us provide the best support possible to the families and communities we serve.

# Program INFO

## Ashley Cooklin, FaDSS Coordinator

FaDSS had a great time at our two day All Staff training. We are still working to build up our capacity and in need of more referrals. Coordinator Ashley will be stopping into the Outreach offices over the next month with some brochures that includes more information on our program.

## FaDSS All-Staff Meeting 2026






# OUTREACH

## Heather Lundberg
## Administrative Coordinator

**Outreach currently has two openings for Specialists. Tayler Carranza in Emmet took a position with Energy and Elaine George has accepted a new position.**
**Postings are out and interviews will begin shortly.**

**Christmas applications are available for Adopt-a-Family and Santa for Seniors.**



# LIHEAP

## Shelly Charapata, Energy Director

· We were able to do a mass mailing for the 2,359 Automatic Eligible (AE) applications for the upcoming Liheap season. Fiscal team; Joan, Deb, Tyler helped accomplish this along with Becky, Dawn, Allison and myself. Thanks to everyone that helped! We really appreciated it. Outreach will be very busy processing these applications.
· Vendor agreements have been sent out to all of our 82 heat, electric and deliverable fuel vendors in our 12-county service area. We have received all vendor agreements back except for 2.
· Liheap (Low Income Household Energy Assistance Program) starts Oct. 1st for a household with elderly (60 years of age or older) and/or a disabled household member. Also, any household in a crisis related situation may apply for Liheap in Oct. Everyone else can start applying in Nov. Liheap ends April 30th.
· ECIP/CRISIS: We spent all of our allocated FY26 ECIP amount of $350,339.00. This was used from Oct. 2025 to Sept. 2026. We did run out of ECIP in Sept. We will start up with ECIP again in Oct. with our new contract amount0601.

**Head Start**
By: Julie Edwards

Enrollment:
As part of the Full Enrollment Initiative Head Start Leadership has started to accept children as the program strives to fill 35 slots. We will be integrating children and families into the program. So far in October we have accepted 13 children which left 22 open slots. We will continue to provide monthly updates.

To assist our team as we strive for full enrollment our Head Start Leadership Team participated in Training and Technical Assistance to support us as we progress towards our original enrollment number of 289. Documentation expectations were clarified.

**Early Head Start continues to remain fully enrolled at 183**

**Disabilities: Total Served: 26 children Target: 47 children**
**Early Head Start students served on IFSP's: 8**
**Head Start Preschool students served on IEP's: 18**

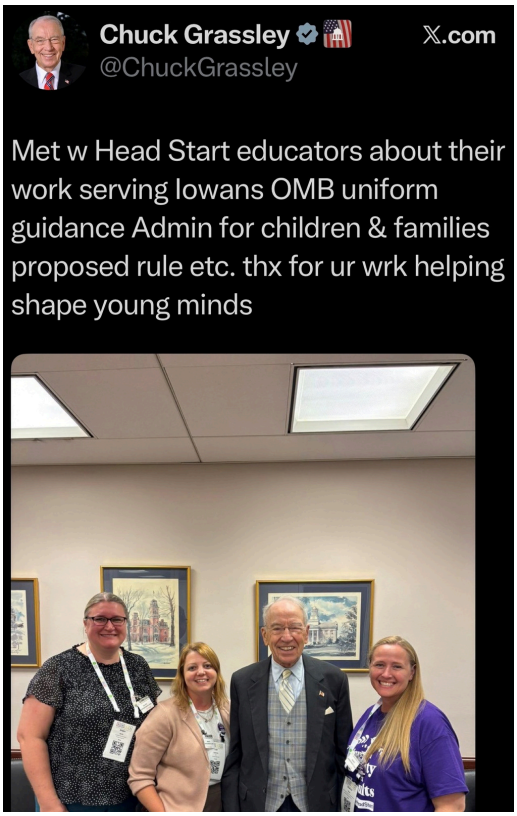
Annual Parent Training: October is a big annual event for Policy Council members as it when we welcome new members. Head Start Policy Council is a formal leadership and decision-making group required for every Head Start program, giving parents a direct voice in program operations and governance

Over $1.4 Million Awarded: UDMO Leaders were successful in a multi-year attempt to secure funding for ongoing energy needs at Estherville's Head Start building. This will allow heating upgrades and the majority of windows to be replaced. Special thanks to Tyler, Fiscal Director and Shakira, Compliance Director for determination to continually revise and resubmit until we had success!

CLASS Monitoring FY27:
The Office of Head Start has notified the program that we will have a virtual monitoring experience between. Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) evaluates the quality of teacher-child interactions in Head Start preschool classrooms. The program will have from November 16, 2025 through January 13, 2027 to record and upload videos from the classrooms selected.

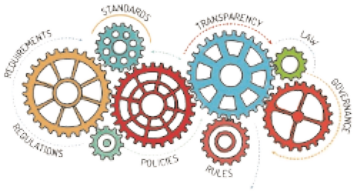
Head Start Continuation Grant: Prior to December 1, 2026 program leaders will be submitting Head Start's renewal grant so work on this project has been initiated.





**Shakira Meyer –**

**Director of Program Development, Compliance & Reporting**




# How Does UDMO Make the Most of Grant Opportunities?

UDMO's larger programs, like Head Start, LIHEAP, Weatherization, Housing, Family Services, and Health, receive state and federal funding. Grants from local businesses, foundations, and community groups provide extra support to help fill funding gaps and meet other needs in our communities.

These grants may help pay for classroom and playground equipment, building updates, and other program needs.

When a grant is available, UDMO looks at:

- **Who can apply:** Does UDMO meet the grant requirements?
- **What it covers:** Can the grant pay for the needs we have?
- **Where it is needed most:** Which projects would benefit the most people?

Some funders allow only one request per organization. In these cases, UDMO leaders review needs across **all programs** to decide which projects to submit.

Grant opportunities vary from year to year, with many local opportunities becoming available between October and April.

### How can staff help?

Check out the chart below for easy to follow steps!




### UDMO Funding Requests Update:

| Recent Foundation/Organizational/Trust Grants Submitted & Status: October 2026 | County | Program | Submitted/ Pending | Amount Awarded | Not Funded |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Hoeppner Trust | CL | Client Services - Youth | X | | |
| Belmond Area Community Trust | WR | Client Services - Belmond | X | | |
| Emmetsburg Unifund | PA | Client Services | X | | |
| **Pending from Summer 2026 to be Awarded Spring 2027** | | | | | |
| Sheldon United - 2026 - TBD Spring 2027 | OB | Client Services - Sheldon | X | | |
| Dickinson County Good Neighbor Fund | DI | Client Services | X | | |

| Program Grants Submitted & Status: August 2026 | County | Program | Submitted/ Pending | Amount Awarded | Not Funded |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Head Start 1303 - Resubmitted as One Time Supplemental Funding | EM | Roosevelt HVAC | | $1,488,830.00 | |
| Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) | All | Outreach & Program Support | | TBD | |

**“WEATHERIZATION REPORT FOR SEPTEMBER 2026”**

**NUMBER OF FAMILIES SERVED IN SEPTEMBER 2026: 13**

**NUMBER OF FAMILIES SERVED IN FY 2026: 86**

**GOAL FOR 2026: 110 HOMES**

**WEATHERIZATION UPDATE:**

**IN SEPTEMBER, WE COMPLETED 13 HOMES, HELPING MAKE UP FOR THE SEVEN-HOME SHORTFALL FROM THE PREVIOUS MONTH. THE TEAM PUT IN TREMENDOUS EFFORT AND DID AN EXCELLENT JOB KEEPING US ON TRACK TOWARD OUR ANNUAL GOAL OF 110 HOMES. WITH THREE MONTHS REMAINING IN THE YEAR, WE ARE WELL POSITIONED TO MEET THAT GOAL.**

**AT A RECENT QUARTERLY MEETING WITH THE STATE OF IOWA’S WEATHERIZATION PROGRAM, WE LEARNED THAT A FUNDING CONTRACT AMENDMENT IS EXPECTED ON OCTOBER 30. THIS ADDITIONAL FUNDING WILL SUPPORT THE PROGRAM’S CONTINUED WORK.**

**THE STATE WILL ALSO INSPECT HOMES FUNDED THROUGH THE INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT AND JOBS ACT (IIJA) FROM NOVEMBER 17–19. ONCE THE INSPECTIONS ARE COMPLETE, WE WILL SHARE THE REVIEW AND FINDINGS WITH THE BOARD.**

**IN ADDITION, THE SUPPORT AMOUNT FOR DEFERRED HOMES WILL INCREASE FROM $500 TO $750. THIS CHANGE WILL HELP OFFSET COSTS INCURRED DURING EVALUATIONS WHEN WE ARE UNABLE TO PROCEED WITH WORK AT A CLIENT’S HOME.**

**AS WE MOVE FORWARD, WE REMAIN COMMITTED TO MEETING OUR PRODUCTION GOALS, DELIVERING MEASURABLE RESULTS, AND HELPING CLIENTS ADDRESS THEIR ENERGY NEEDS THROUGHOUT THE 17 COUNTIES WE PROUDLY SERVE.**