UDMO

Helping People. Changing Lives.



GET TO KNOW
UDMO
BY CHECKING OUT THE
WEBSITE AT
UDMO.COM

November 2026 Edition
In This Issue

Executive Director

Human Resources

1st Five

Early Childhood Services

FaDSS

Outreach

LIHEAP

Housing

Compliance
&
Reporting

Head Start

Weatherization

UDMO WILL BE CLOSED
NOVEMBER 26TH & 27TH
FOR THANKSGIVING.



UDMO has kicked off it's annual
Giving Tuesday Campaign.
This year Giving Tuesday is December 1, 2026.
Giving Tuesday is a global generosity movement unleashing the power of people and organizations to transform their communities and the world. You can help spread awareness by liking and sharing our Facebook posts.

GIVING TUESDAY







Dee Reed is Retiring!
Her last day will be November 13th.
She has been with UDMO for 28 years!
Thank you for your dedication, and
we wish you all the best!





Thank you to Hamilton County RSVP for Sponsoring a Food Drive for the Outreach there!!



FROM THE DESK OF JULIE EDWARDS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As we move into the holiday season, there is plenty happening throughout UDMO! November and December are busy months as our teams prepare for legislative advocacy, work toward program enrollment goals, and complete several important monitoring and audit activities.
Here are a few updates and ways you can stay connected with UDMO.

🏛️ ADVOCACY: PREPARING FOR 2027

Planning is underway for UDMO's 2027 legislative visits at both the state and federal levels. While dates are being finalized, our program teams are working behind the scenes to gather important data and real-life stories that help legislators understand the impact of our programs.
Numbers tell part of the story, but hearing how services make a difference in the lives of individuals and families brings that information to life. These conversations are an important part of protecting and strengthening the services our communities depend on.

❤️ HELP US CONNECT FAMILIES WITH SERVICES!

Did you know that MIECHV, FaDSS, and Head Start are all working toward full enrollment?
Each program is developing and following enrollment plans to meet program expectations and ensure available services reach families who need them.
Here's where you can help! Please spread the word that these programs have openings and can begin accepting children and families immediately.
A conversation, referral, or shared announcement could help connect a family with valuable services. Thank you for helping us get the word out!

📋 A BUSY SEASON: MONITORING & AUDITS

November and December are especially busy months for UDMO as several monitoring and audit activities get underway. Our teams are preparing, gathering documentation, and working together to successfully complete these important reviews.
A special shout-out goes to our Fiscal Department! Their work for the agency-wide audit began in early November, as the department continues to carrying a significant workload to support every program in our agency.
Their work often happens behind the scenes, but their contributions are essential to UDMO's success. They continue to approach these demands with a positive attitude and a commitment to helping our programs succeed.
Please take a moment to recognize and thank our Fiscal team for all they do!
Upcoming Monitoring & Audit Dates
November 16: Head Start CLASS
November 17: IIJA Inspections
November 30: Wipfli Agency Audit (Head Start is the focus program this year)
December 15: Head Start Focus Area 2
December 21: DHHS Audit – CSBG, LIHEAP & Weatherization
Thank you to everyone working hard to prepare for these reviews!

📅 MARK YOUR CALENDAR | UDMO BOARD

Board members, please keep these upcoming meeting dates on your calendar:
Finance Committee: Tuesday, November 17, at 1:00 p.m.
Board of Directors: Tuesday, November 24, at 5:00 p.m.

💙 THANK YOU FOR BEING PART OF UDMO!

Whether you are an employee, Board member, or community partner, your involvement helps UDMO make a difference across the 12 counties we serve.
UDMO will be hosting our annual **Giving Tuesday fundraiser on December 2.**
Donations support our local Outreach Offices and help ensure they have the resources needed to continue providing services to individuals and families in our communities.

HR MONTHLY NEWS
TIFFANY HARRIS HR DIRECTOR

· **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 to make this a fun and engaging day for everyone.**

· **Open Enrollment: Open Enrollment ran November 1–15. All benefit-eligible employees were reminded to complete their assigned enrollment task in UKG. Updates included the new Wellmark Coalition PPO medical plan, continued dental and vision coverage, and the transition to Reliance Standard for Life, AD&D, and LTD benefits.**
· **Wellness Challenge: Registration opened for our next wellness challenge, Walk It Out, which begins November 16. We currently have 76 employees enrolled and are working toward our goal of 100+ participants. We encourage everyone to get involved!**
· **Recruitment & Staffing: We currently have 10 open positions, the highest number of vacancies we have experienced in several months. Recruitment efforts are ongoing; however, hiring continues to be challenging, with several applicants not responding to interview scheduling attempts. We will continue working to fill these important positions.**

· **Winter Weather Reminders: As we head into the changing seasons, please remember to stay weather aware. Watch for changing road conditions, allow extra travel time, and prioritize your safety when traveling for work. Communication with your supervisor regarding weather-related concerns is important.**



Early Childhood Services

Jessie Hansen

October 2026

KIDS-MIECHV



October marked continued growth in referrals as we expanded our capacity to serve families.

We hosted our monthly Parent Group featuring a guest speaker from a local bank who shared practical budgeting strategies. Families received budget planners and children took home piggy banks.

We also assisted a family with the delivery and placement of furniture in their new home.



ECI-HOME VISITATION



We continue to meet monthly to stay connected as a team, discuss any changes or updates that may be needed, and share important information to help keep everyone informed and up to date. These meetings allow us to work together, address questions, and ensure we are providing the best possible support to our families.

We will also be delivering the last of the developmental kits to a home visitor. These kits will be used during home visits to provide families with fun, educational activities that support their children's learning, growth, and development.

CARES

It was a great month! We received a lot of referrals and we're able to help many families connect with resources to meet their needs. We helped families obtain new car seats for their children, find beds to ensure their children have a comfortable place to sleep, and locate furniture for their homes.

We also helped guide a family in the right direction to get their children enrolled in school. It has been a rewarding month, and we will continue working hard to support families, connect them with resources, and provide assistance to help them build a better future.

UDMO Program INFO

ASHLEY COOKLIN
FADSS COORDINATOR

FaDSS is still working on building up capacity and still in need of new referrals. We will begin planning this month for FaDSS Day on the Hill in February.

HEATHER LUNDBERG
OUTREACH COORDINATOR

We welcomed Jessica Paine to Emmet County, she started 11/10/26
Elaine George will be departing our O'Brien office Dec. 3rd, we wish Elaine the best
Webster and O'Brien are currently interviewing and will hopefully have positions filled
Christmas apps are available until Nov. 24th and Christmas activities will begin the first of the month.

SHELLY CHARAPATA
LIHEAP DIRECTOR

· 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.
· LIHEAP APPLICATIONS: For October, Outreach took and processed 2,032 Liheap applications.
· ECIP/CRISIS: For October, 118 households received ECIP/Crisis funds in the amount of $34,994.78

LINDSEY SIMENTAL
HOUSING COORDINATOR

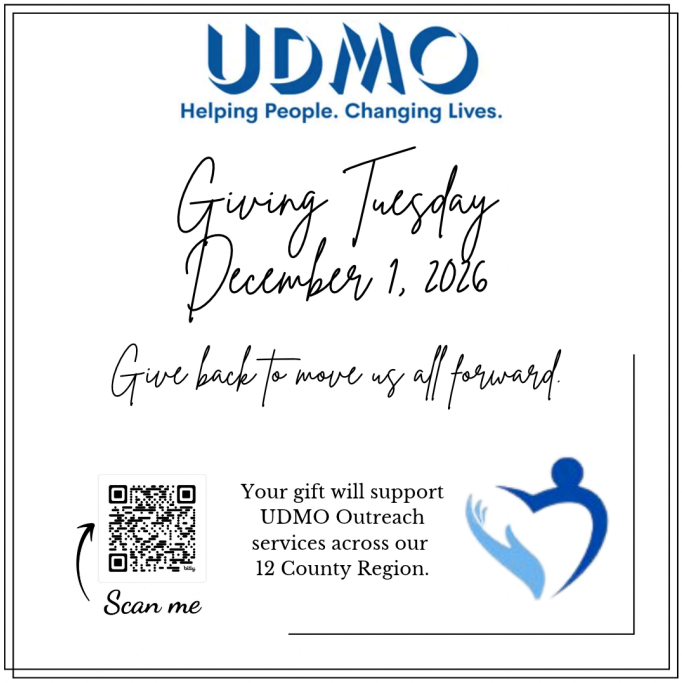
The housing team attended the Building Futures Conference hosted by IA Bos CoC. The conference focused on centering youth voices, strengthening systems, and creating opportunities for youth in our communities facing housing instability. We were able to hear from youth with lived experience and bring back fresh ideas to better serve our Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program.

Shakira Meyer – Director of Program Development, Compliance & Reporting

Annual Giving Campaign

UDMO first launched a ***Giving Tuesday Campaign*** in 2024. We will have social media posts and fliers going out through Giving Tuesday on December 1, 2026.
Giving Tuesday contributions will support the work of UDMO Outreach across our 12 County Region. This looks different from county to county.
Additionally, UDMO will be submitting a number of local community foundation and Trust Fund grants over the next 60-90 days.
Lastly, the CSBG Report for FY26 is in process. This report encompasses data from all UDMO programs and demonstrates to the State the work our agency is doing:

Helping People. Changing Lives.



Recent Foundation/Organizational/Trust Grants Submitted & Status: November 2026	County	Program	Submitted/ Pending	Amount Awarded	Not Funded
Hoeppner Trust	CL	Client Services - Youth		$4,000	
Barkema Trust	WR	Client Services			
NW ECI	CH, CL, DI, LY, OB, OS, PL, SX	Oral Health Supports for CAH I Smile		$20,000	
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: November 2026	County	Program	Submitted/ Pending	Amount Awarded	Not Funded
Head Start Continuation Grant	BV CL DI EM PA OB OS	Head Start Preschool / Early Head Start Continuation Funding	X		
Community Services Block Grant (CSBG)	All	Outreach & Program Support		$352,648	
IFA Emergency Solutions Grant	All	Rental Assistance		$135,235	
IFA Iowa Homelessness Prevention Program	All	Homeless Prevention Services	X		

UDMO HEAD START
By: Julie Edwards



GOOD THINGS ARE HAPPENING!
📈 Moving Closer to our Enrollment Goal!
Head Start Preschool continues to make progress toward full enrollment!
Last month: 35 open slots
This month: 22 open slots
That's 13 fewer openings in just one month!

Early Head Start continues to maintain full enrollment, serving all 183 funded slots.

Our staff continue recruiting every day. Enrollment is also a regular topic at leadership team meetings and monthly ERSEA Committee meetings. Our third program update has been completed and submitted to the Regional Office.

💙 Supporting Every Child
Head Start is committed to meeting children where they are and helping them reach their full potential.
Currently, 28 children receive services through an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) or Individualized Education Program (IEP).
Early Head Start: 10 children with IFSPs (an increase of two from last month).
Head Start Preschool: 18 children with IEPs.
Annual Target: 47 children.

👏 Celebrating Leadership Changes in Storm Lake
After 28 years of dedicated service to Head Start families, Dee Reed, Program Coordinator, is retiring!
We are grateful for Dee's many years of commitment to children, families, and the community.
We are also pleased to share these leadership transitions:
Heather Stout, previously Education Coach, will become the Storm Lake Program Coordinator.
Melea Nielsen, previously Head Start Preschool Lead Teacher, will transition into the Education Coach position.

🎥 Federal CLASS Monitoring
The Office of Head Start has notified UDMO of an upcoming virtual CLASS monitoring experience. CLASS (Classroom Assessment Scoring System) focuses on the quality of teacher-child interactions in Head Start preschool classrooms. Selected classrooms will record and upload classroom videos during the assigned monitoring period. This is an opportunity to demonstrate the meaningful interactions, teaching practices, and relationships that support children's learning every day.

📋 More Federal Monitoring: Focus Area 2 (FA2): December 15–18, 2026
The Office of Head Start will review how UDMO puts program services into practice, uses data to make decisions, and meets the Head Start Program Performance Standards.
The review includes:
Classroom observations
Documentation reviews
Staff and parent interviews
File audits
Data walk-throughs
Preparation involves teamwork across the program. Thank you to everyone contributing to this important process!

HEAD START-CONTINUED:

🤝 UDMO Head Start Featured in the Shared Visions Annual Report to the Governor!
When teaching staff noticed a developmental concern, they partnered with the Area Education Agency (AEA) to develop strategies to support the child in the classroom.
Through monthly check-ins, the team reviewed progress, discussed concerns, and identified next steps. The result? The child's developmental concerns decreased, meaningful progress was made, and a formal special education referral was not needed. This is what early intervention and strong partnerships look like!

Want to See Head Start in Action?
Visit udmo.com to see what's happening in our Head Start classrooms and during home visits.
.

"Weatherization Report for October 2026" Kyle Dietrich, Weatherization Director
Number of Families Served in October 2026: 5
Number of Families Served in FY 2026: 91
Goal for 2026: 110 Homes

Weatherization Update:
We recently had a IWAC meeting on October 28th with the state on our program and I thought I would share some changes and information that I thought would be nice to share with others.
DOE-26: Contract Updates
The state is still reviewing the DOE-26 contract terms and conditions. Contract amendments will be issued as soon as they are ready. It is not yet clear whether they will be available in time for November reporting on homes served in October.
IIJA Funding and Production Planning
IIJA funds are available through June 30, 2029.
At the quarterly meeting, each agency was asked to prepare a production plan covering January 2027 through January 2029. The plan was due November 6.
Lewis Update: Work Orders
Recent changes to the Lewis work order have made reporting easier. The start date for agencies to begin using the software has not yet been confirmed.
Reminder: Keep Written Records Professional
Emails, documents, and notes may be requested under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) or by clients requesting copies of their files. Keep written communication factual, professional, and objective.
WAweb Interface Update
The WAweb interface update was scheduled for yesterday but has been delayed.
· After the update, contact the help desk with questions about the interface.
· For help entering data, refer to the recorded training.

Priority List Refresher

The state has received questions about using the new priority list when an application has expired or a household is facing an urgent heating system problem. Guidance on these situations has been added to Program Notice 26-05.

Balancing services across counties: Each county should receive a share of weatherization services that roughly matches its share of approved applications in the service area. For example, if 20% of approvals are in County A, about 20% of homes weatherized should be there. The state reviews these percentages for the program year, July 1 through June 30.

Before closing a home as incomplete: Agencies have been asked to send the state homes they plan to close without completing. In many reviewed cases, the home did not actually lack the required Savings-to-Investment Ratio (SIR). Small changes to the energy audit sometimes made it possible to proceed with weatherization.

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 area we proudly serve.