

2019 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Prevent Child Abuse Iowa strengthens families for Iowa's future. We believe that healthy, vibrant communities provide nurturing environments for kids. Our statewide network provides expertise in child abuse prevention to create a stronger, healthier Iowa.

Prevent Child Abuse Iowa requests consideration of the following legislative actions in support of Iowa's children and families.



- 1) **Enact legislation requiring homeschool parents to submit an annual notification of intent to the superintendent of the school district of residence.** An annual notification of intent to home school improves child protection and creates opportunity for collaboration between home school families and their district of residence. The 2012-2013 school year was the last time the Iowa Department of Education collected information about homeschool student populations. At that time, 2.3% of Iowa school-aged children, or 10,732 students, were homeschooled.

PCA Iowa asks the legislature to accept this change to Iowa Code Chapter 299A.



- 2) **Adopt recommendations identified by the work group to examine current mandatory reporter training and certification requirements.** A revision of Iowa's Mandatory Reporting guidelines will create a streamlined, comprehensive framework that effectively executes this important child and elder protection legislation for better response protecting our most vulnerable populations. There are nearly 400,000 mandatory reporters in Iowa, and child protection requires the coordination of many professional groups, a common framework of recognizing the signs of abuse, appropriate intervention and timely response. Iowa's child abuse reporting, assessment, and rehabilitation law, Iowa Code (IC) sections 232.67-232.75, was enacted in 1978 and has been amended many times.

PCA Iowa asks the Iowa legislature to adopt policy recommendations provided by the Mandatory Reporter legislative work group.



- 3) **Enact legislation for awareness and prevention of child sexual abuse and sexual assault.** Safety from sexual abuse and exploitation begins by creating awareness of boundary violating behaviors, appropriate interventions to prevent abuse, and developing systems of reporting. Sexual abuse prevention in Iowa schools builds protective factors for Iowa children, creating safer learning environments for all children. Iowa is one of 17 states that has not yet enacted a sexual abuse prevention law requiring all public schools to implement prevention-oriented child sexual abuse programs.

PCA Iowa requests the Iowa legislature to enact a sexual abuse prevention policy for Iowa's children.



- 4) **Promote child and family resilience.** Resilience means the ability to thrive despite adversity. The goal of the Iowa legislature should be to promote wellness in the state starting with its youngest citizens. Promoting child health starting in infancy helps Iowa grow a strong and prosperous workforce. Adversity in childhood has a direct impact on an individual's health outcomes and social functioning. Approximately one in five Iowa children has experienced three or more Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), the most common being divorced or separated parents and having lived with someone with a substance use disorder or mental health condition. Children with three or more ACEs have higher odds of failing to engage and flourish in school. The impact of ACEs in Iowa is evident through the rise in caseloads in the DHS, the acceleration of the opioid epidemic, which is both driving and affected by family dysfunction, and rising health care costs associated with adult chronic illness.

PCA Iowa requests the Iowa legislature promote child and family resilience through trauma-informed policies that prioritize prevention and increase protective factors for Iowa children.