

Initiative Overview

At a young age, children begin to develop essential skills for engaging in our society, like managing emotions, problem solving, getting along with others, and coping with adversity. Fostering these skills is a critical prevention and early intervention strategy to help young children recover from the effects of the pandemic and build the foundation for good mental health. Social and emotional development maximizes children's lifelong ability to learn, develop into healthy adults, and contribute to a thriving Iowa.

The Iowa Alliance for Healthy Kids formed in summer 2020 as a collaboration with Sesame Street in Communities (SSIC) to support young kids' social-emotional development. The unique partnership has offered Iowa caregivers, providers, and leaders messages and tools to help children ages 0-8 build skills and to promote early relational health within families. Iowa is one of a handful of communities partnering with Sesame Street in Communities across the nation.

Key activities of the project:

- **TRAINING:** Abby's Ambassadors deliver presentations to providers on how to use SSIC resources in their work with families and children.
- **PROGRAMMATIC IMPLEMENTATION:** Materials created with SSIC and distributed through programs offer families easy-to-use tips and activities.
- **AWARENESS:** Presentations to decisionmakers elevate the importance of social-emotional development as a part of children's mental health; marketing efforts make Iowans aware of resources.
- **EVALUATION:** Analyzing efforts identifies what families and providers need and elevates the importance of investing in these efforts beyond central Iowa.

The Alliance has engaged organizations primarily in central Iowa and in five sectors: early care and education, health care, mental health, child welfare, and family support.

Year 1 Summary

A grant from the Kellogg Foundation enabled the Iowa Alliance for Healthy Kids to work with SSIC most intensely from August 2020-July 2021 to train trainers, host events with Sesame Street characters, develop materials, and analyze effective strategies, primarily in central Iowa.

Highlights include:

- 324 organizations were engaged in activities.
- 1,391 providers received training from Abby's Ambassadors on SSIC topics and resources.
- 20,342 materials and 35,956 Comfy-Cozy Nest books were distributed to children and families through provider networks.
- 487 individuals registered for a virtual Town Hall.
- 1.6 million impressions of social media messages were delivered to Iowa audiences.

An evaluation showed that these efforts aligned stakeholders around a shared focus on social-emotional well-being of young kids at a time when families were more open to talking about mental health.

Year 2 Summary

August 2021-July 2022 sustained the efforts launched in year one at a smaller scale, with support from local funders. Based on the year one evaluation, year two focused on meeting providers' needs for print materials to integrate into programming, as well as families' desire for easy-to-use activities and tips for addressing behaviors. Leaders also were engaged through presentations.

Highlights include:

- 114 organizations were involved in activities, with 72 new organizations engaged.
- 392 providers received training from Abby's Ambassadors.
- 53,610 materials were distributed to children and families through provider networks. Items included lesson plan kits, activity bags, books, handouts, and posters.
- 8,124 Iowa users accessed the SSIC.org website in the first half of 2022.

INSIGHTS FROM YEAR 2 SURVEY

Feedback from Alliance partners and a survey of stakeholders involved in Year 2 activities showed:

- 1 Providers working with young kids and their families continue to **prioritize social-emotional development**. More than 90 percent of survey respondents agree that:
 - Social-emotional development of children is a high priority for their organization.
 - They feel comfortable discussing the importance of social-emotional development.
 - They know where to find strategies, tips, and information to help promote it.
- 2 Sesame Street in Communities **offers effective tools** for teaching kids and families social-emotional skill.
 - 97% of survey respondents said they would recommend SSIC.org and materials to others.
 - Most have used materials to share with families, share with other providers, and/or integrate into existing programs or classroom activities.
- 3 This initiative **offers a tangible strategy** for promoting mental well-being and intervening early with concerns.
 - State leaders acknowledged they could see what prevention looks like after learning about the initiative.
- 4 **Ongoing investment is needed**, so resources are continually available to help reinforce skills with kids.
 - Survey respondents expressed strong interest in having continued access to books, handouts, and coloring books.

Initiative Reach

Over two years, the initiative has had a broad reach with many organizations across sectors and geographical regions.

TOTAL IOWA ORGANIZATIONS ENGAGED IN ACTIVITIES

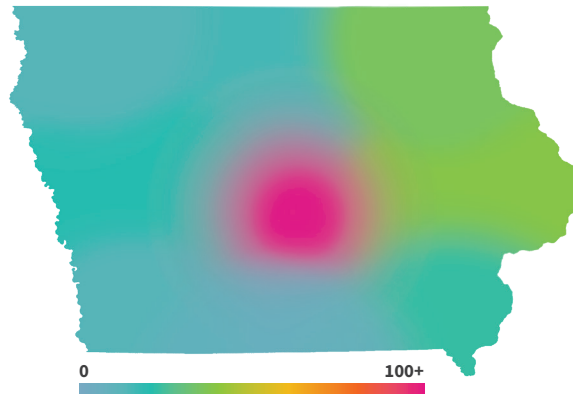
396

TOTAL NUMBER OF TOUCHPOINTS ORGANIZATIONS HAD WITH IOWA ALLIANCE ACTIVITIES

651

ORGANIZATIONS ENGAGED BY REGION

This map represents the level of organizational engagement in Iowa Alliance activities by regions of the state. Because some organizations overlap several regions, exact numbers are not provided. This map shows the most intense engagement in the central Iowa region, which aligns with the initiative's focus. Interest statewide has led to an expansion of activities outside the central Iowa region, especially in Year 2.



ORGANIZATIONS WITH THE MOST TOUCHPOINTS

- Better Tomorrows ECI
- Cedar/Jones Early Childhood
- Child Care Resource & Referral
- Des Moines Public Schools
- Drake University Head Start
- EveryStep
- Iowa State University Extension and Outreach
- Lutheran Services in Iowa
- Orchard Place Child Guidance Center
- Polk County Family Enrichment Center
- Prevent Child Abuse Iowa
- Southwestern Community College
- Early Childhood Education

IOWA ALLIANCE FOR HEALTHY KIDS PARTNERS

A special thank you to the many partners across the state who helped lead and implement these efforts and are committed to ensuring Iowa's kids have a healthy start.

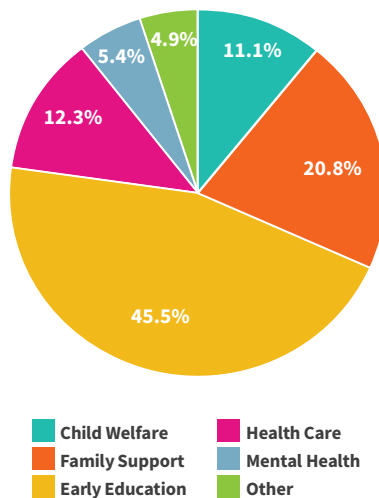
The following organizations provided funding to support year two activities: Mid-Iowa Health Foundation, Polk County Behavioral Health and Disability Services, and Polk County Decategorization.

Iowa ACEs 360 has coordinated the initiative with support from Sesame Street in Communities and representatives from the following organizations:

- Common Good Iowa
- Early Childhood Iowa
- Iowa ACEs 360
- Iowa Campaign for Grade-Level Reading
- Mid-Iowa Health Foundation
- Orchard Place
- Prevent Child Abuse Iowa
- Project LAUNCH
- United Way of Central Iowa
- UnityPoint Health - Blank Children's Hospital

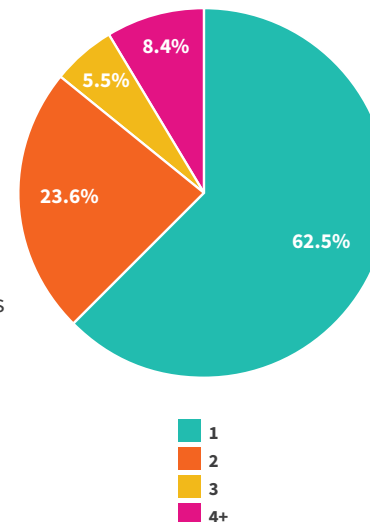
SECTORS ENGAGED

This chart represents the percentage of organizations engaged in Iowa Alliance activities by sector. Programs in early care and education and family support have been most engaged in activities. Involvement from several sectors has helped connect families to information and resources in places throughout communities.



ORGANIZATION ENGAGEMENT

This chart represents the percentage of organizations by number of touchpoints with Iowa Alliance activities (not including the Town Hall). Among all organizations engaged, 37.5% have been involved in more than one activity, with a handful of larger family-serving organizations involved in multiple ways. Reaching organizations more than once is a critical way to connect with new children and families entering their programs and to reinforce skill-building with those already receiving services.



Learn more at www.iowaallianceforhealthykids.org