

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experienced director keeps everyone informed about what is happening in the community and at the state level. • Variety of backgrounds and experiences current board members bring to the table are valuable. • Level of commitment of community partners and contractors to children and families is excellent. • MWECI board stands out compared to other ECI board that community partners also have contracts with. • Board seeks new partners and board members. • Younger board members help “think outside the box.” 	
WEAKENESS / CHALLENGES	THREATS
<p>Weaknesses - Weaknesses are the qualities that prevent the program from accomplishing and achieving its full potential. These weaknesses deteriorate influences on the program’s success and growth. Weaknesses are the factors which do not meet the standards we feel they should meet.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of enough Mahaska County representation on the board. • Seems to be more resources in Wapello County than Mahaska County. • Funding de-appropriations and reductions. • Commitment to the scope of work of the board seems limited to those who attend. 	<p>Threats - Threats arise when conditions in external environment jeopardize the reliability and profitability of the program’s goals and objectives. They compound the vulnerability when they relate to the weaknesses. Threats are uncontrollable. When a threat comes, the stability and survival can be at stake. Examples of threats are - unrest among employees; ever changing technology; increasing competition leading to excess capacity, competitive funding and duplication of services; etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding reductions and de-appropriations via state legislature & state budgets. • Viability of sub-contractors to continue quality services with less funding. • ECI funding formulas continue to effect MWECI funding each year (EC reductions). • Family needs continue to be: child care, mental health issues, living wages and unemployment. • Baby Boomer retirements leaving gaps in experienced service providers.

Other Data Sources

Other data sources also reviewed throughout the assessment of community needs included several community assessments collected from local sources in both Mahaska and Wapello counties. MWECI Board of Directors’ individual members choose to review specific assessments and shared an overview of indicator data, trends and possible recommendations for community plan updates and/or changes. The additional community assessments reviewed were:

1) State of the Local Economy: A Baseline Analysis of Mahaska County’s Economy in 2014;

- 2) *Mahaska Community Vision and Priorities: Establishing Direction for the Community in 2015;*
- 3) *Mahaska County Health & Wapello County Health 2015 Needs Assessments and Health Improvement Plans;*
- 4) *Prevention Research Center for Rural Health's Ottumwa Community Health Survey 2013;*
- 5) *Every Child Counts / Child and Family Policy Center Priorities;*
- 6) *SHE MATTERS: 2015 Issues and Actions and SHE MATTERS: We Listen and Iowa Wins;*
- 7) *Growing Wapello Together: Initiative to Improve Food Security;*
- 8) *A Rapid Ethnographic Assessment of Programs & Services (REAPS) for Fathers in Wapello County, Iowa;*
- 9) *Community Readiness Assessment, Child Abuse Prevention as a Response to Adverse Childhood Experiences;*
- 10) *Year in Review: Division of Child & Community Health / Child Health Specialty Clinics;*
- 11) *Governor's Report for Early ACCESS.*

Each of these community assessments provided additional insight into successful community plan priorities and strategies, the needs of our local communities and the impact of current efforts.

Review of Prevention Evidence-Based Practices

Another component of the community assessment was a thorough review of evidence-based programs and practices (EBPs) utilized throughout our community. Five clearinghouses of EBPs are used in the **FRIENDS National Center Matrix of Evidence-Based Practice**. The Matrix is designed to provide information to assist in identifying programs that communities may want to consider funding. It is meant to be used as a starting point and is not an exhaustive list of available programs. Programs listed in the Matrix were selected based on their relevancy to child abuse and neglect prevention and their presence on at least one of five nationally recognized registries for EI/EB programs and practices. At this time, the *Parents As Teachers Program* funded by MWECEI can be found listed as "Supported / Promising" program and the *Incredible Years* (curricula) is used by the Wapello County NEST Program and is listed as "Well-Supported / Effective Practice."

Child Abuse and Neglect / Prevention

Child abuse is more than bruises and broken bones. While physical abuse might be the most visible, other types of abuse, such as emotional abuse and neglect, also leave deep, lasting scars on children. The earlier abused children get help, the greater chance they have to heal and break the cycle – rather than perpetuate it. By learning about common signs of abuse and what we can do to intervene, we can make a huge difference in a child's life.

A copy of the current MWECEI Community Plan and any other documents referred to in this plan are available by contacting the MWECEI Area Director or the MWECEI Board Chair.

The incidence of child maltreatment in Iowa remains above the national rate, despite decreases in recent years. Iowa's Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) data indicates that 56 percent of adult Iowans report experiencing one of the eight ACEs measured in the study. The rate of neglect in the state is four times that of physical abuse and ranges widely from county to county. The *Iowa Child Maltreatment Prevention Needs Assessment 2017* found relationships between neglect and numerous risk factors, including teen births, poverty, low-birthweight births, domestic violence, high ACE scores and mental illness.

Allegations of abuse and neglect are evaluated by a central intake unit in Des Moines, Iowa. The intake is accepted if the allegation would be abuse if proven true. Accepted intakes are assessed in person by county-based DHS child protective workers. Most allegations are not founded, a trend aligned with other states. When abuse is founded, a separate group of DHS case managers supervise ongoing services for children and their families. Those services are performed by non-government social service agencies under performance contracts.

Research shows an increased risk for long-term physical, mental, and financial health outcomes for people exposed to household dysfunctions such as domestic violence, substance abuse, or mental illness or who have suffered child abuse or neglect without meaningful social supports. Risk factors for these social determinants of health are reduced when systems work together to implement trauma-informed practices that support the wellbeing of children and families. A coordinated approach is recommended to reduce the risk of children's exposure to toxic stress caused by abuse, whether physical or sexual, or neglect and improving protective factors through early access to concrete supports, evidence-based parenting education, and social supports for parents and children.

CHILD ABUSE STATISTICS 2018

County	DHS Service Area	Judicial District	Denial of Critical Care (Neglect)	Child Sex Trafficking - Prostitution of a Child - Bestiality in the Presence of a Minor	Mental Injury	Physical Abuse	Presence of Illegal Drugs in Child's System (PID)	Sexual Abuse	Allows Access to Obscene Materials	Allows Access by Registered Sex Offender	**Dangerous Substance	Total	Types of ABUSE	Provides a breakdown of confirmed/founded maltreatment by the abuse type. For each child on each report, up to 10 maltreatment types may be indicated. This spreadsheet summarizes the number of each type of allegation which was confirmed or founded for all child protective reports during the calendar year.
Mahaska	4-Cedar Rapids	8-Eigth JD	69	0	0	10	9	4	2	4	68	166	New Categories	
Wapello	4-Cedar Rapids	8-Eigth JD	106	0	0	21	22	13	0	6	122	290		

County	DHS Service Area	Judicial District	5 or Younger	6 to 10	Older than 11	Total	% 5 or Younger	By AGE	Provides a breakdown by age for all confirmed/founded maltreatment victims. If a child had multiple reports during the year, the age is counted for the most adverse outcome experienced by the child. For a smaller number of victims, the date of birth information may be unavailable--these victims are not classified.
Mahaska	4-Cedar Rapids	8-Eigth JD	47	25	24	96	49.0%		CAUTION: Increase in number from 2017 data
Wapello	4-Cedar Rapids	8-Eigth JD	99	42	44	185	53.5%		

County	DHS Service Area	Judicial District	Family Assessment	Unconfirmed	Confirmed	Founded	Total	REPORT	Provides information regarding the number and disposition of maltreatment reports investigated by DHS. A single report may include multiple children, and each child may have multiple types of alleged maltreatment. If any of these allegations for any child is confirmed, the entire report is counted as a confirmed report. If any of the confirmed allegations conclude that the perpetrator should be placed on the child abuse registry, the report is counted as founded.	Increase in number from 2017 data, resulting in increases in the number of both confirmed and founded reports. Not so good.
Mahaska	4-Cedar Rapids	8-Eigth JD	51	184	12	66	313			
Wapello	4-Cedar Rapids	8-Eigth JD	120	401	24	114	659			

County	DHS Service Area	Judicial District	Family Assessment	Unconfirmed	Confirmed	Founded	Total	UNIQUE CHILDREN	Provides a count of unique children by maltreatment level. Each child abuse report may have multiple children indicated, and a single child may have more than one abuse report in a given year. This section of the report indicates only the most adverse outcome for the child during the calendar year. If a child had multiple reports in multiple counties, that child would be counted in the county in which the most adverse outcome was recorded.
Mahaska	4-Cedar Rapids	8-Eigth JD	57	168	13	83	321		
Wapello	4-Cedar Rapids	8-Eigth JD	143	348	33	153	677		

County	DHS Service Area	Judicial District	Family Assessment	Unconfirmed	Confirmed	Founded	Total	DUPLICATE CHILDREN	Because a child may be the alleged victim on more than one abuse report during the year, this section summarizes the total number of children by maltreatment level by county. If a child was on multiple reports in multiple counties, that child will be counted for each county and maltreatment outcome level indicated during the calendar year.
Mahaska	4-Cedar Rapids	8-Eigth JD	88	289	16	116	509		
Wapello	4-Cedar Rapids	8-Eigth JD	218	663	33	185	1,099		

At the close of each calendar year, DHS generates a Child Maltreatment Statistical Report of child abuse/neglect statistics by county. The report includes some additional information which may be helpful in summarizing the information in the report, including the DHS Service Area and the Judicial District. These statistics are the most current available for the closing year 2018. **Dangerous Substances was added in 2017 as a specific type, between 2014-2016 the only type was Exposure to Manufacturing of Meth. Both of these types are now reported under Dangerous Substances.

Stakeholder Focus Groups and Surveys

To inform the discussion of the needs of Mahaska and Wapello families, a several community focus groups were conducted in the area. Participants were primarily representatives of grantee organizations and families receiving services that are funded through MWECI's programs. During the focus groups, participants reviewed and provided reactions to the identified risk factors and funding analyses. They shared their own experience as service providers, prevention providers, and program participants, including the challenges and strengths of programs in their area. Focus groups were completed at two MWECI Advisory Group meetings and a program participant (also open to the community at large) focus group was held at the end of the program year. In addition to the focus groups, online surveys were developed to gather feedback from both employers and employees (broader audience) with a focus on child care needs.

In 2018, Mahaska Wapello Early Childhood Iowa commissioned First Children's Finance to conduct a **Child Care Market Analysis** for Wapello County. The analysis provided relevant child care data, child care market analysis, First Children's Finance's key findings, explanations and recommendations for meeting the current and future child care needs of the residents of Wapello County.

First Children's Finance's **Key Findings** for Wapello County were:

- Most Parents are in the Labor Force and Need Child Care. According to the US Census Bureau the number of households that have all parents working varies considerably from community to community. The average for all of Wapello County is 73% of households that have children ages 0 to 5, and 71% with children ages 6 to 17, have all parents in the labor force.
- Median Family Income is Higher than Child Care Assistance Thresholds. In Wapello County, the median income for families with children under the age of 18 is \$48,750 and the average family size is 2.91. The maximum household income for a family of 3 to qualify for the Iowa Child Care Assistance program under 2018 guidelines is \$30,131. While many households with children in the county exceed this threshold, it is possible they still struggle to pay child care expenses out of pocket.
- Affordability and Accessibility are Barriers in Wapello County. Families whose children are not currently enrolled in their preferred child care setting indicated the number one reason is affordability (16%), followed by no openings/wait lists (12%). Parents repeatedly referenced issues related to affordability (both the cost of care and the necessity to work rather than stay home with their child) and the lack of child care openings in a 2018 child care needs survey of Wapello County conducted by First Children's Finance.
- Declining Child Care Supply. From July 2012 to July 2017, Wapello County lost 32 DHS regulated Licensed Child Care Centers, Registered Child Development Homes and Child Care Homes, which accounted for 302 child care spaces. Since July 2017, another 15 Registered Child Development Homes and 1 Child Care Home, which collectively accounted for 83 spaces have been lost.
- Shortage of Child Care Spaces. As of 2016, there were 5,666 children ages 0 to 12 living in Wapello County. Based on the percentage of households that have all parents in the labor force for each community, First Children's Finance estimates that approximately 4,007 children have all parents working. With only 1,402 regulated child care spaces available, that means the deficit of child care spaces could be as high as 2,605 and possibly even greater if part time or school-year only options are subtracted.

- Parents Prefer Licensed Centers with Later Pick Up. Twenty-nine percent (29%) of both current and future parents indicated they prefer a licensed center, the most popular choice for care outside the home in both groups. Today, 6% of families pick up their children after 5:30 p.m.; however, 20% indicate they would prefer to pick up after 5:30 p.m.
- Parents Satisfied with Child’s Current Provider. While many parents indicated they had problems finding care, once they do find care, they are satisfied. Eighty one percent (81%) of current parents participating in the survey said they are satisfied with their current arrangements; and 57% indicate that their children are enrolled in their preferred type of care.
- Worker Productivity Affected by Child Care. Forty nine percent (49%) of current parents indicated that child care challenges had caused them to miss a day of work, 43% had left work early or arrived late, 15% had troubles changing shifts or schedules, and 6% said their work quality was lower. Changes that parents said would allow them to be more productive were: expanding when care is available (daily hours and year-round care), being able to afford care, options for drop-in care, and more flexibility from employers around work-from-home options.
- Parents Concerned about Overall Quality of Care Available. Every parent wants their child in a setting that not only meets their basic needs for safety and security, but also provides nurturance and prepares that child for school success, which in turn is the best indicator for success in life. Wapello County parents stressed a concern not only about the availability of child care, but also about the level of quality in the existing options. Factors that parents indicated are important to them included positive interactions between staff and children (60%), dependable provider/staff (57%), and upkeep/appearance of the facility and playground (55%).

First Children’s Finance’s research provided valuable information that can help shape what the future of child care looks like in Wapello County. Based on this research, it was concluded that more child care spaces are needed, however attention will also be given to quality, not just quantity. First Children’s Finance made the following recommendations, which are described in detail in the “Meeting the Community’s Needs” section of the full report (page 43).

- Make Use of this *Child Care Market Analysis* for Decision Making
- Increase DHS Licensed Center Spaces
- Recruit Registered Child Development Home Providers
- Consider Space Options for Additional Year-Round Care
- Encourage Employers to Provide Child Care Information to Employees

Fiscal Assessment and Analysis

As required by Iowa law, the MWECE Board has identified the federal, state, local, and private funding sources available within the ECIA of Mahaska and Wapello Counties that provide services to children prenatal through five years of age. In completing this process state reports were used such as Iowa Dept. of Human Services (IDHS) funds, Iowa Dept. Public Health funds (IDPH), and Iowa Dept. of Education (IDOE). In addition to these reports the community partners were asked via inter-agency meetings,

written requests, via e-mails, and telephone calls for information regarding their funding sources and amount of funding. Follow up requests at meetings, e-mails, and telephone calls were made to those who did not reply.

Appendix B includes a matrix that identifies the agency, program, amount, ages served, counties served, type of funding, and source of information. Although the matrix offers a general overview of the services and funding flowing into the community to support children, all data should be reviewed with an understanding of challenges and margins for error. Program numbers and data cannot be compared with identical timeframes. Programs operate on a variety of calendars. Some may be reporting funds for a calendar year while others are reporting for the state fiscal year (July thru June.) Several services are operated by regional agencies with numerous counties. Information for these services offers a fiscal picture that is larger than the area covered by the community plan. A service area inclusive of rural, small towns and more populated cities may have a greater percentage of funding going to larger populated county and it cannot be assumed that rural families were served proportionately. Some programs serve children and families well beyond the age of 5 years. A program listed that serves people 0-18 does not confirm that a child 0-5 was actually served with the funding.

Taking into consideration the limitations of the fiscal information, the assessment provides broad information that may help regional early childhood efforts and guide the MWECI Board of Directors in their decision-making process. The fiscal assessment supports efforts to identify disparities, duplication, potential for efficiency, and trends of increasing and or decreasing funds.

The goals of the funding analysis were to determine the following:

- Total amount of funding focused on the highest needs with the community and identification of the services and programs that fill those needs.
- Amount of specific funding going to each county.
- Programs and services not available in our area are: Early Head Start and Shared Visions for Family Support.
- Ultimately, funding information was available for most of the identified services and programs.
- In instances in which county-level information was not available, county-level estimates were estimated on the number of counties served and averaged costs. Some private and/or faith based preschools and child care choose not to disclose annual tuition revenues.

Although the matrix is not a complete representation of all funds in the ECIA for children prenatal through age five, it the best representation of the current economic picture for young families in Mahaska and Wapello Counties that was able to be secured. As this Community Plan is a living, breathing document the MWECI Board welcomes any and all input regarding all aspects of the plan throughout the year.

Summary of Fiscal Assessment Findings

- State funds make up a greater portion of funding contributions for young children as opposed to the federal funds identified.
- All five community school districts have participated in the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program for many years. Four-year-old children receive considerable education funding through SVPP with a total of \$1,898,845 dollars invested in 2018.
- Three of the five (60%) community school districts partner with Sieda Head Start to provide a high-quality preschool experience for 3 and 4 year old's; follow National Head Start Performance Measures; and utilize Teaching Strategies / GOLD assessments. Total investment of these federal funds into the three districts equals \$1,533,174 dollars (2018).
- American Home Finding Association (Title V Agency) plays a key role in services for children and families with \$1,391,966 dollars invested, but determining the direct support for children 0-5 is difficult since many programs cover a wide range of ages.
- The Wapello County Children's Alliance applied for (RFP) and received additional prevention funds (ICAPP) on behalf of both Mahaska and Wapello counties, increasing prevention services and investing \$52,145 new dollars into the ECIA.
- The three state departments, IDPH, DHS and DE, are committed to investing in child and family services, and local input and choice do play a role in what services are available and utilized.

Summary & Collaborative Next Steps / MWECI Priorities

The finished product of this collaborative effort was a comprehensive two-county assessment covering needs with a focus specifically on the 0-5 years of age population. The community assessment results were shared with community partners at interagency meetings and input was solicited from them regarding the strengths and challenges of the communities in the ECIA. Input was also solicited from the current contracted providers of early childhood services funded by MWECI. Ultimately, concrete findings from this assessment have ensured that early childhood human service needs are being addressed in the two-county area. This has benefited hundreds of lives and has created a better place to live and work, not only for the 0-5 population, but also for those who are responsible for their care and well-being.

Based on the data reviewed and feedback gathered at various stages during the assessment process 5 priorities were identified and continue to move the MWECI community efforts forward in the area and improve the lives of children 0-5 and their families.

- Support services and training for the prevention of infectious disease, prevention of child injuries, development of health emergency protocols, administration of medications, care for children with special needs, and early childhood screenings (development, vision, hearing, nutrition and social-emotional). A growing conversation among early childhood partners about the need for better mental health services is a new emphasis.

- Support services and training to improve the quality of early learning environments (childcare centers, preschools, child development homes, and FFN (friends, family & neighbors). The emphasis on child care increases awareness of the child care shortage while promoting the use of quality standards and improving educational opportunities for children 0-5
- Support services to help families' access quality preschool experiences for all children 3-5 years. Young children exposed to high-quality settings exhibit better language and math skills, better cognitive and social skills, and better relationships with classmates than do children in lower-quality settings (Barnett & Lamy, 2013).
- Support services to provide family support through home visitation and group parent education. Home visiting has been demonstrated to be an effective method of supporting families, particularly as part of a comprehensive and coordinated system of services. These voluntary programs tailor services to meet the needs of individual families and offer information, guidance, and support directly in the home environment. While home visiting programs vary in goals and content of services, in general, they combine parenting and health care education, child abuse prevention, and early intervention and education services for young children and their families.
- Support services and community awareness for prevention of child abuse and neglect. (See above).

The MWECI Board of Directors and early childhood partners recognize that the job of education is never complete, and as an early childhood system representing a small part of southeast Iowa, a unified message is key to success for families and children.

Result Areas, Community Indicators & Core Services

Early Childhood Iowa (ECI) identifies 5 desired result areas and core services that every child needs to be healthy and successful. The result areas include; Healthy Children, Secure & Nurturing Families, Safe & Supportive Communities, Secure & Nurturing Early Learning Environments, Children Ready to Succeed in School. The core services include; Health Services, Family Services and Supports, Community Development Services, and Early Care and Education Services.

Each identified community plan priority provides opportunities and strategies to support the ECI result areas and core services. In the next section each community priority is identified and tied to ECI result area(s), community indicators, and core service(s) that it aligns with. Local community indicators used to monitor progress toward goals and changing trends are also identified. Specific trend data and tables for each indicator are located in Appendix C.

MWECI Quality Programming Strategies

The Mahaska Wapello Early Childhood Iowa Board promotes quality programming in the community by investing in programs/services/activities that move, improve or maintain high quality. The Board supports and promotes quality programs/services for the ECIA in meeting the community priorities as established in this community plan. Beginning in FYE 2014 and continuing to the present, the MWECI Advisory Group has made recommendations / guidance focused on program quality improvement and evidence based / informed best practice for both Early Learning Environments and Family Support. This guidance is intended to promote quality programming through quality recommendations, quality monitoring, and quality outcome-based incentives.

"Invest in 2000 Days"

There are approximately 2000 Days between birth and the first day of kindergarten. The first 2000 Days of a child's life can have a **profound and lifelong impact** on physical and emotional well-being, readiness to learn and succeed, and ability to become a productive citizen.



Relating to all
State Result
Areas

MWECI Community Priorities:

- ❖ Support high quality services including utilization of research-based and evidence-based curricula and program models and execute with fidelity.
- ❖ Support high quality training including utilization of high quality trainers and participant rewards for completion and implementation of training outcomes.
- ❖ Support all ECI funded programs and services to make referrals as appropriate to Early ACCESS and AEA.

Special Needs /
Early Intervention Oval

Relates to all
State Result Areas