

Eliminating Program and Oversight Duplication in Community Empowerment: The Unachieved Goal

Introduction

As we approach the start of the 2009-2010 school year, the first Iowa children to be part of Community Empowerment Areas are preparing to start their senior year in high school. This innovative approach has been very successful in helping families prepare their children to begin their education, But the other goal - reducing duplication in programs and governance of early childhood programs - has yet to be achieved.

Empowerment – A Brief History

In 1997, the Iowa Legislature created an interim committee to examine options for reorganizing the Department of Human Services. At the time, there was bipartisan concern over the size of the Department and its ability to provide necessary services to Iowans. Rather than allow the Department or the executive branch to develop ideas for changes, legislators took it upon themselves to be agents of change.

The Human Services Restructuring Task Force was created by the Legislative Council and comprised of 15 members – 5 state representatives, 5 senators, and 5 members of the public. The Committee was chaired by Representative Hubert Houser and Senator Maggie Tinsman. Its charge was:

Build upon the efforts of the 1996 Department of Human Services (DHS) Restructuring Task Force by developing a comprehensive proposal for transferring control of human services delivery to the local level, eliminating program duplication within DHS and between DHS and other state agencies, and reducing the amount of paperwork, red-tape, and bureaucracy to improve quality of services delivery and consumer satisfaction. ...

The Task Force was authorized to create subcommittees for its work, and two were created. One subcommittee, led by Representative Houser, examined the role played by the eight state institutions under the control of the Department of Human Services. The other subcommittee, chaired by Senator Tinsman, focused on program duplication and resource utilization.

Through the work of the Task Force and its subgroups, a vision was put together of giving Iowans control over human service-related programs at the local level. To begin this process, the Task Force determined that focus should be placed on those services to children age 0-5 and their families, with the goal of these efforts being to have every Iowa child ready to learn when they begin kindergarten.

During the 1998 legislative session, a bipartisan group of legislators crafted Senate File 2406. This bill created the Iowa Empowerment Board, Community Empowerment Areas, and established the Early Childhood and the School Ready grant programs.

Senate File 2406 was adopted by both chambers with virtual unanimous support, and Governor Branstad signed the bill into law on May 20, 1998.

Program Duplication – The Silos Still Stand

From the first meeting of the Program Duplication Subcommittee in the fall of 1997, many associated with Empowerment have sought to break down the funding “silos” of the many early childhood programs offered by the state of Iowa. The need for this was clear from the start when the Fiscal Services Division of the Legislative Services Agency presented the subcommittee with a chart known as “Iowa Programs for Children”.

In examining the chart, the Subcommittee determined that there were a number of programs that provided similar services or served the same clientele. During these meetings a number of reasons were given for several departments offering the same programs, including federal funding requirements, different focuses of programs, and a lack of direction for policy-makers. Members of the Subcommittee were focused on addressing these challenges.

The biggest goal was to collapse funding “silos”, allowing local programs to blend funding streams in order to provide comprehensive services. While the blending of federal funding sources may not be possible, it was believed that combining state funds being sent through state agencies could be achieved. That was not an opinion shared by those agencies. Rather than force the issue, the Subcommittee decided to have the state board work on the issue and bring recommendations to the Legislature for moving forward with breaking down the walls of the silos.

To this day, identifying program duplication is still the one of the missions of the Iowa Empowerment Board. Iowa Code section 28.4(11a) states:

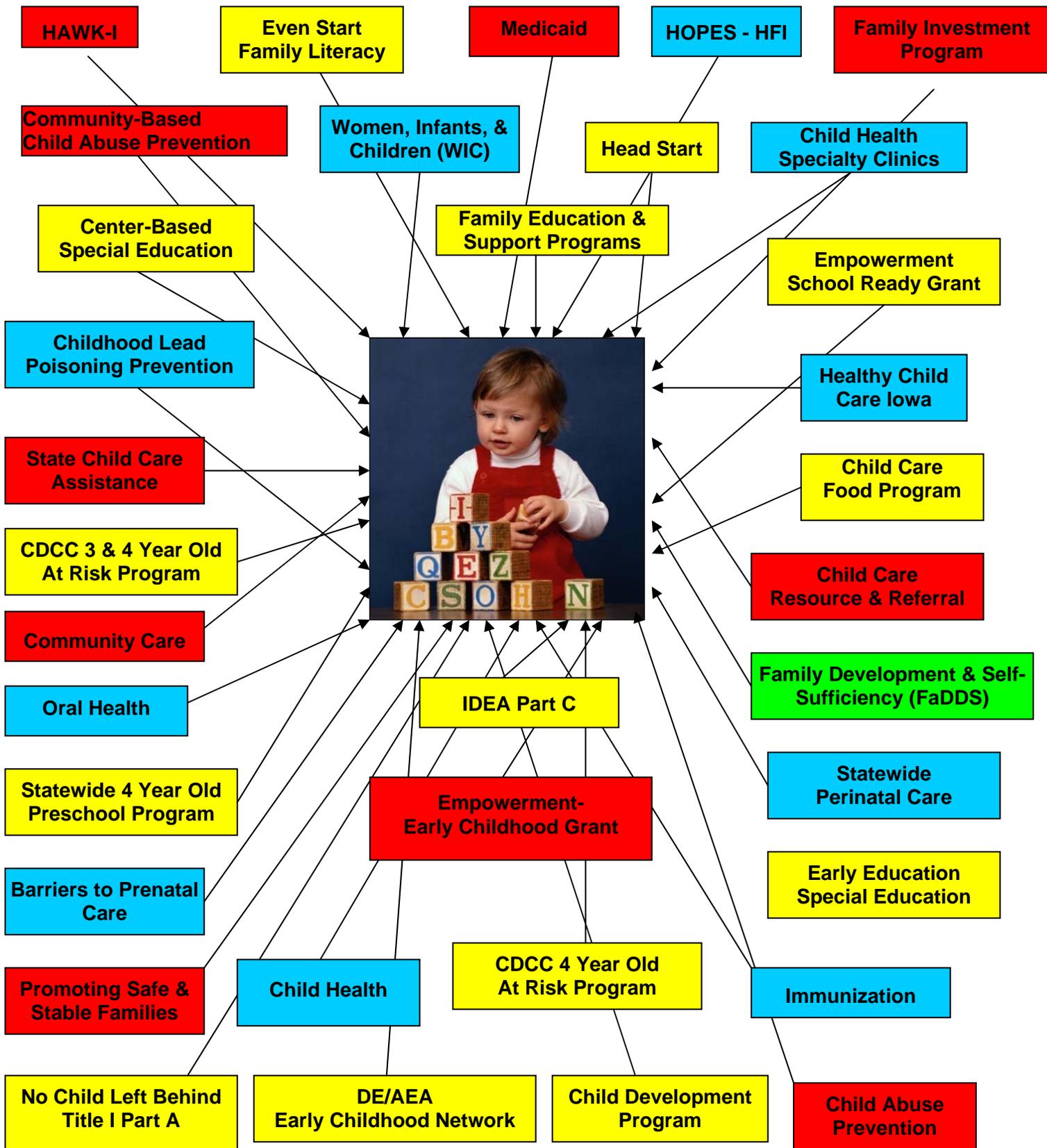
***The board shall perform the following duties:
With extensive community involvement, develop and annually update a five-year plan for consolidating, blending, and redistributing state-administered funding streams for children from birth through age five made available to community empowerment area boards.***

In 2007, the Iowa Empowerment Board submitted to lawmakers their first report under this provision. Entitled “Early Childhood Coordinated Leadership – 2006 Report to Policy Makers”, the document identifies a number of issues brought about by the overlap of state programs. But it does not propose any concrete steps for streamlining the system. Instead, the proposal calls for further study of the issue and the creation of a new group to improve coordination of early childhood programs.

SOURCE: 2006 State Empowerment Annual Report

Twelve years after the Legislature started the Empowerment process, it is hard to identify any program that has been eliminated or combined. The silos remain, unaltered. House Republican Caucus staff have identified 35 programs in four state agencies that provide significant services to children from age 0-5. That number is a significant increase over the 27 early childhood programs that were identified in 2005, when the Legislature last examined this issue. Here are the current programs:

Iowa Programs for Children 0-5



An examination of the official descriptions for these programs – provided in June, 2009 to the Legislative Services Agency by the four departments – shows that there is significant duplication of services going on.

One area where the state has numerous programs addressing the same issue is in the area of parental education and the prevention of child abuse. There are at least nine different programs in the Departments of Education, Human Rights, Human Services, and Public Health that are involved in working with families to reduce the risk of child abuse. Below is a listing of these programs with their description:

Child Abuse Prevention Program

Provides funding to Prevent Child Abuse Iowa to support local programs reduce family stress, improve family functioning and increase knowledge about parenting and self-protection in order to reduce the risk of child abuse

Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP)

CBCAP funds are used for community based activities with families to prevent child abuse and neglect, and for respite care for children with disabilities.

Community Care

Child and family focused services and supports provided to families referred from DHS after a child abuse report, geared to keeping the children in the family safe from abuse and neglect and keeping the family intact, preventing the need for further and future intervention by DHS, including removal of the child from the home, and to building on-going linkages to community-based resources that improve the safety, health, stability and well being of those served.

Promoting Safe and Stable Families

Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF) provides federal funding under Title IV-B for four programmatic areas – family support, family preservation, time-limited family reunification, and adoption promotion and support – as well as planning. With the exception of the family support portion of the funding, PSSF funds for family preservation, time-limited family reunification and adoption are used to serve children that have been abused or neglected and are involved in the child welfare system. Iowa uses the funding for family support for the state's child abuse prevention program.

Healthy Families Iowa (HOPES)

A Family Support program that uses the Healthy Families America model to provide home visits to families prenatal - children age 4. Families determined through a screening process to be at high risk for child abuse.

Even Start Family Literacy Program

Comprehensive family literacy program that helps parents of children ages 0-8 achieve GED or high school diploma. Assists with literacy, parenting skills, and child development services. High collaboration with community colleges. Required local match that increases yearly from 10.0% to 65.0% over four years. All sites at full match limit.

Family Education and Support Programs

Family support programs ensure the delivery of quality, family-centered comprehensive early childhood services for children and families at-risk. Family support and prevention programs focus on: parenting skills, child growth and development, building of self-concept, nutrition, positive guidance techniques, family resource management, parent literacy, and how to access the array of supportive services from a network of agencies that are available to families with young children who are at risk. Each agency must create a delivery system addressing the goals and objectives.

Iowa Empowerment Fund – School Ready Children Grant

The School Ready Grants support local programs for children age 0-5, including preschool and child care; parent support and education; family home visitation; and professional development.

Family Development and Support Services (FaDSS)

FaDSS is a supportive service to assist Family Investment Program (FIP) families with significant or multiple barriers reach self-sufficiency. The foundation of FaDSS is regular home visits with families, using a strength-based approach.

It is important to note that these programs do not provide the exact same services or serve the same families. The connecting factor is the focus on the prevention of child abuse and establishing solid parenting skills. In several cases, the overlap is between programs within the same department. At a time when state budgets are tight, it would seem logical for policymakers to focus on duplication as a way to preserve as much funding as possible for direct services to Iowa children and their families.

The appearance of overlapping programs is even more pronounced when looking at Iowa’s child care and child development programs. Below is a list of eleven programs which provide either child care or pre-school services to children under the age of 5:

Iowa Empowerment Fund – Early Childhood Program Grant

Used for local community grants to enhance child care through regular child care and provider recruitment, child care for mildly ill children, 2nd and 3rd shift child care, provider training, and support for registration and licensure.

State Child Care Assistance

Child Care Assistance (CCA) is a program that assists families with the cost of child care.

Child Care Resource & Referral

Child Care Resource and Referral agencies provide referrals to parents seeking child care providers and consumer education on quality child care; consultation and training for child care providers, and data/assessment services for community planning.

Healthy Child Care Iowa

Develop an infrastructure and standardization of health and safety for Iowa children enrolled in child care and early education settings through a contract with DHS.

Child Development Coordinating Council – 3 and 4 year old Children at Risk

High quality child development programs for children ages three to five years of age who are at high risk for later school failure.

Child Development Coordinating Council – 4 year old Children at Risk

High quality child development programs for children who are at high risk for later failure in school and life.

Child Development Programs

High quality child development programs for children ages three to five years of age who are at high risk for later school failure.

Head Start

Includes Head Start (3-5 year-olds) and Early Head Start (prenatal to 3 years of age). Targets children and families at or below federal poverty level with comprehensive services covering health, education and family support.

Statewide Preschool Program

The Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program for Four-Year-Old Children is to provide an opportunity for all young children in the state to enter school ready to learn by expanding voluntary access to quality preschool curricula for all children who are four-years-old.

No Child Left Behind Title I Part A

Help neediest schools and students reach high standards in reading and math, requires parental involvement in planning and implementation, training, and evaluation. Coordinates with Head Start, State-run preschools, and other programs.

Iowa Empowerment Fund – School Ready Children Grant

The School Ready Grants support local programs for children age 0-5, including preschool and child care; parent support and education; family home visitation; and professional development.

Once again there is a significant amount of overlap and duplication, even within the same department. Three programs within the Department of Education have the same description. While they may not serve the same communities, one has to wonder how efficient it is to maintain separate programs with the same purpose?

Who is Steering the Early Childhood Ship?

Another issue identified early on by the Program Duplication Subcommittee was the lack of coordination amongst the various boards and commissions throughout state government that oversaw the programs serving Iowa children. One of the major factors in the creation of duplicative programs is the fact that Iowa has numerous state boards and commissions dealing with early childhood and the absence of a coordination strategy.

Before 2008 there were three state committees that have a role in the provision of services to children age 0-5. They were:

Child Development Coordinating Council (Department of Education)

The Child Development Coordinating Council advocates for comprehensive child development and family support programs for at-risk children and families. CDCC ensures the development, delivery, and promotion of quality, family-centered comprehensive early childhood services through:

- *all preschool programs meeting National Association for the Education of Young Children Accreditation requirements;*
- *the establishment of parent support programs to enhance the skills of parents in providing for the learning and development of their children;*
- *cost-effective child development services for at-risk 3- and 4-year-old children;*
- *comprehensive services such as child care, transportation, family support and education, developmental screen, and referral to health professionals; and*
- *equity of access to these services for all Iowa's children and their families.*

SOURCE: Child Development Coordinating Council FY 2008 Shared Visions Report

Child Care Advisory Council (Department of Human Services)

The State Child Care Advisory Council (SCCAC) is established in Iowa Code (237A.22) to consult with and make recommendations to the Department of Human Services concerning policy issues related to child care. Advise to the Department concerning services related to child care include, but is not limited to:

- *Resource and Referral Services*
- *Provider training*
- *Quality Improvement*
- *Public-private partnerships*
- *Standards review and development*

SOURCE: Department of Human Services website

Iowa Empowerment Board (Department of Management)

An Iowa empowerment board is created to facilitate state and community efforts involving community empowerment areas, including strategic planning, funding identification, and guidance, and to promote collaboration among state and local early care, education, health, and human services programs.

SOURCE: 2009 Code of Iowa, section 28.3

It is clear from the official descriptions that these three state boards were working on the same issue. And while there may have been a number of people serving on the same boards, there was very little coordination between the three groups.

When the Legislature examined the issue of program duplication in 2005, they also looked at the duplication of oversight authority amongst the various boards. Despite the opposition of some state agencies, legislators were able to amend the Empowerment laws to instruct the Iowa Empowerment Board to examine the issue of duplicative boards. The duties of the Board were amended to include the following:

Identify boards, commissions, committees, and other bodies in state government with overlapping and similar purposes which contribute to redundancy and fragmentation in early care, education, health, and human services programs provided to the public. The board shall also make recommendations and provide an annually updated strategic plan to the governor and general assembly as appropriate for increasing coordination between these bodies, for eliminating bureaucratic duplication, for consolidation where appropriate, for improving the efficiency of working with federally mandated bodies, for integration of services and service quality functions to achieve improved results, and for integration of state-administered funding streams directed to community empowerment areas and other community-based efforts for providing early care, education, health, and human services.

SOURCE: Iowa Code section 28.4 (4)

Whether this added emphasis has had an impact is questionable, as the Legislature in 2008 created another state board to focus on early childhood issues.

The state received a National Governors Association Early Childhood Advisory Council project grant in 2005, and this grant was used to develop a new oversight group for early childhood programs – Early Childhood Iowa. This structure is an alliance of early care, health and education “stakeholders” who are committed to the integration of a comprehensive early care, health, and education system for Iowa.

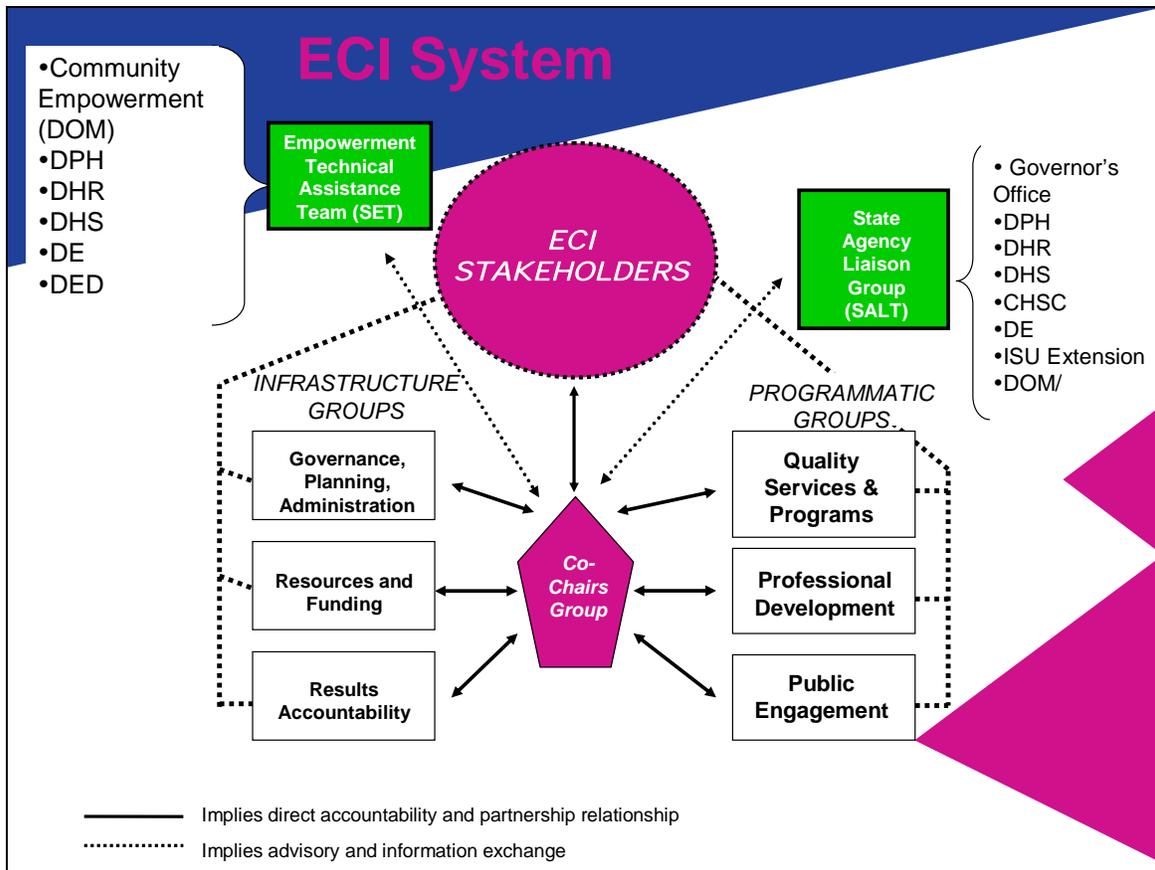
As part of the work on the grant, Early Childhood Iowa created a proposal for the creation of another state board to play a role in 0-5 programs. In the FY 2009 Health and Human Services Appropriations Bill (Senate File In 2425), language was slipped into the bill that created a new governmental body – Early Childhood Iowa Council.

Early Childhood Iowa Council (Department of Public Health)

The purpose of the early childhood Iowa council is to oversee the development of an Iowa early childhood system by integrating the early care, health, and education systems addressing the needs of children ages zero through five and their families. The council shall advise the governor, general assembly, and public and private policy bodies and service providers in coordinating activities throughout the state to fulfill its purpose.

SOURCE: 2009 Code of Iowa, section 135.173

Not only was the Early Childhood Iowa Council created in 2008 by the Legislature, but it also created a massive sub-structure of subcommittees and advisory groups beneath the board. The bill also set up a Early Childhood Iowa Steering Committee, State Agency Liaison Group, and six “component workgroups”.



SOURCE: Iowa Empowerment Board 2008 Report

The Early Childhood Iowa Council was even given the duty of reporting to the Legislature on the status of Community Empowerment and how it was meeting the results that the Legislature set for the program. Why the Iowa Empowerment Board is not trusted to report on this was not made clear.

As with the growing duplication of early childhood programs, the legislative intent to reduce the overlap and duplication of state boards and commissions has not happened. Instead, the Legislature has gone along with the adoption of new state boards that will perform the exact same function of the Iowa Empowerment Board.

OPTIONS FOR POLICY MAKERS

A. Reorganization

Iowa's early childhood programs are mainly housed in three state agencies – the Departments of Education, Human Services, and Public Health. While each of them would seem to have one core service, they also have programs that overlap into the core function of the other agencies.

One idea that has yet to be considered is a realignment of programs within the three Departments. Instead of allowing each department to have their own programs for child care and parental education, the Legislature would move these programs into their natural

location. The Department of Education would house all child care and child development programs, the Department of Human Services would have authority for parental education and family support programs, and the Department of Public Health would have responsibility for child health and wellness.

The new alignment would be as follows:

Child Care & Child Development (Education)	Parental Education and Family Support (Human Services)	Child Health and Wellness (Public Health)
Empowerment Early Childhood Grants	Community Based Child Abuse Prevention	Barriers to Prenatal Care
State Child Care Assistance	Promoting Safe & Stable Families	Child Health
Child Care Resource & Referral	Community Care	Immunizations
CDCC 3-4 Year Old Children at Risk Program	Healthy Families Iowa (HOPES)	Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention
CDCC 4 Year Old Children at Risk Program	Empowerment – School Ready Grants	Statewide Perinatal Care
Center-based Special Education	Even Start Family Literacy Program	WIC
Child Development Program	Family Education & Support Program	Oral Health
DE/AES Early Childhood Network	FaDSS	Child Health Specialty Clinics
Head Start	Child Abuse Prevention Program	
IDEA – Part C		
Statewide Preschool Program		
Healthy Child Care Iowa		
NCLB Title I, Part A		

As can be seen from the chart above, there would be significant movement of programs between DE and DHS. But by making this change, there would be a streamlining of focus which would allow each department to re-design the programs to be more effective and more efficient.

Undoubtedly, some would raise issues concerning how federal funding comes to the state for the various programs. That has not prevented other programs from transferring authority to a different agency. One prime examples would be the state’s welfare assistance program – the Family Investment Program(FIP). This is funded by the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families federal funding stream, which goes to the Department of Human Services. The job training part of FIP is provided by Iowa

Workforce Development through a 28E agreement with DHS. If federal funding issues were to arise with the realignment of programs, those questions could be solved in a similar manner.

B. Fusion

One idea that has been discussed in the past is co-locating programs that deal with the same subjects, even if they are in different departments. By co-locating early childhood programs of the Departments of Education, Human Services, and Public Health, the state would be encouraging collaboration amongst the three agencies at a much higher level.

Unfortunately when this was proposed in 2005, this idea was vehemently opposed by some in the state bureaucracy. Some within the Capitol Complex felt co-location would expose their agencies' programs to potential scrutiny by the Legislature and the public. If we have three child care programs addressing the same population and they are all located in the same room, someone may ask why we need all three. Unfortunately, this concern overrode strong public policy and co-location did not occur.

But since that time, law enforcement agencies have come together in a single location to work together on homeland security and intelligence issues. The Iowa Intelligence Fusion Center is a facility where local, county, state, and federal law enforcement agencies work together for a common purpose. The state has also created six regional fusion centers to extend this cooperative effort further into communities.

While child care and development programs are significantly different from law enforcement, the example provided by the Intelligence Fusion Center shows that state agencies can be in the same room and work together effectively. Policy-makers should seriously consider creating a child development fusion center to bring the various programs of the three departments together.

C. Speaking With One Voice

Duplication and fragmentation is not limited to just early childhood programs. It also occurs with the state boards and commissions that are charged with overseeing these efforts. This duplication has led to confusion amongst providers and families and the creation of what could be called the "meeting class" – those who spend their time going from meeting to meeting, instead of working with Iowa's kids. Instead of continuing to create new boards to look at the same issue, maybe its time to have just one board with responsibility for early childhood policy?

In order to streamline the decision-making process for early childhood programs, one concept would be to transfer oversight authority for all age 0-5 programs to the Iowa Empowerment Board. This is important, as several state boards have authority for the creation of standards to be applied for child care facilities and pre-schools. Having one board establish a uniform set of standards would be a major step forward in early childhood policy for a state that has at least 4 different agencies inspecting these providers.

The Empowerment Board would also serve as the public board responsible for submitting early childhood budget proposals to the Governor and the Legislature. The Board would also serve as the committee responsible for the adoption of administrative rules of these programs.

This change would allow the state to eliminate boards like the Child Care Advisory Council, the Child Development Coordinating Council, and the Early Childhood Iowa Council.

Agencies would maintain autonomy over their own programs. All agencies involved in early childhood are members of the Board, so no one could claim that their interests are not being represented. And since this board works closely with those providing services at the local level, they would be more responsive to the concerns and ideas of Iowans on the front line of early childhood programming.

CONCLUSION

A great deal of progress has been made over the past 12 years in improving early childhood services and programs in Iowa. Communities have come together to pool their efforts for Iowa's preschool children with positive results. But the other goal of Empowerment – identifying program duplication and blending programs and funding streams – has yet to be a focus of the Iowa Empowerment Board or the Legislature.

There is hope that duplication may finally be addressed. In June, the Iowa Empowerment Board held a LEAN event to look at its programs and procedures. One item that the group identified was the duplication of programs and services. Whether they will take any further action is still to be seen.

With the growing fiscal crisis facing the state of Iowa, additional reductions in funding for early childhood services is likely to be cut again. At some point, policy makers will have to decide on which programs survive and which ones can no longer be funded. If the Community Empowerment Areas are to continue their work getting Iowa's children ready to learn, then it is time to fulfill the other goal.