



Dubuque County Early Childhood Community Plan

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SECTION 1: ORGANIZATIONAL INFORMATION

Executive Summary

Welcome to Our Community Plan - Letter from Board Chair

As members of the tri-state community, we all want a brighter future. Dubuque County Early Childhood (DCEC) believes that children’s development starts early, and the organization’s sole purpose is to mobilize the community around the well being of children age birth to five.

DCEC is a nonprofit organization and one of 38 Early Childhood Iowa (ECI) areas that cover the state. Led by a group of volunteer citizens serving on a board of directors, DCEC uses a planning process to identify this community’s status in supporting young children.

We began the Community Plan process with the Long Range Planning Committee by reviewing Dubuque County assessments and data to identify key community priorities for children age birth to five as well as community data indicators that track progress in achieving related goals. Then, after receiving grant funds from the National League of the Cities the Steering Committee sets forth a strategic plan with objectives, which include programs to fund and collaborative efforts. The DCEC Board shares this Community Plan throughout Dubuque County and uses the document to garner additional support and measure progress.

The DCEC board identified the following community priorities for children age birth to five:

- *Secure & Nurturing Families*
- *Secure & Nurturing Early Learning Environments*
- *Ready to Succeed in School*
- *Healthy Children*
- *Safe & Supportive Communities*
- *Infrastructure*

For young children to achieve success in life, every component of the community must work to achieve priority outcomes. DCEC community initiative exists to: link families to existing resources, building local capacity to achieve measurable results, leverage additional funding to enhance community resources, and to expand awareness of working with children under five and their families.

It is imperative that parents, businesses, healthy, education, labor, government, philanthropic organizations, and human services need to be at the table to work together to achieve community vision, establish priorities and collaborate to implement strategies to help young children achieve success.

I believe in the mission of this organization and look forward to seeing the continued impact it has on our children and families.

Sincerely,

Angela Petsche

*Angela Petsche, Chair
Dubuque County Early Childhood Board*

Introduction

Dubuque County Early Childhood (DCEC) was founded in 1999 as a community initiative to improve the lives of children age birth to five and their families. DCEC has sustained a strong history of collaborative community planning. This Community Plan was most recently revised by DCEC as a guide for both its board and the community. It is a dynamic document intended to provide information on the following:

The plan guides early childhood decision making and system building by DCEC, community partners, and citizens throughout Dubuque County.

Purpose of Community Plan

The purpose of the Dubuque County Early Childhood's Community Plan as a guide to plan, analyze, communicate, and monitor progress. Specific utilizations of the Community Plan are as follows:

1. Meet state, federal, or other requirements.
2. Track and identify changes to the status of Dubuque County as related to early childhood.
3. Seek and record assessment information, resources, public input, and other community feedback that is significant for advancing the early childhood system in this area.
4. Identify priorities and support coordination for early childhood resources and system building in Dubuque County.
5. Set measurable, strategic goals based on community needs, priorities, and resources.
6. Plan and evaluate programs/services and collaborative efforts to meet community needs and priorities.
7. Share information and conclusions with internal and external audiences with an emphasis on partners, parents, community leaders, and governing entities.
8. Build a sustainable system of early childhood supports and collaboration with community partners.
9. Improve the quality of life of Dubuque County families and support optimal and successful development of all young children.
10. Advance long-term impacts as young children turn five and move on to future life phases.

The documentation of how the DCEC Board, along with sponsored programs/services, community partners, and other local organizations, have used and will use this plan is found in the new strategic plan

History

In 1998, the Iowa General Assembly adopted legislation to create an Early Childhood Iowa Board (formerly called Iowa Empowerment Board) and local areas. The purpose of this initiative was to create a partnership between communities and state government to improve the well being of families with children age birth to five.

Citizens along with partners in health, human services, education, faith, government, business, and economic development were charged to work together to achieve these desired results:

- Secure & Nurturing Families
- Secure & Nurturing Early Learning Environments
- Ready to Succeed in School
- Healthy Children
- Safe & Supportive Communities

State funding for local areas is through School-Ready and Early Childhood grant programs.

OUR VISION FOR IOWA'S CHILDREN:



SECTION 2: DUBUQUE COUNTY EARLY CHILDHOOD (DCEC)

Vision

All children in Dubuque County are safe, healthy and successful.

Mission

DCEC builds connections across the community to facilitate access to support early childhood.

Contact Information

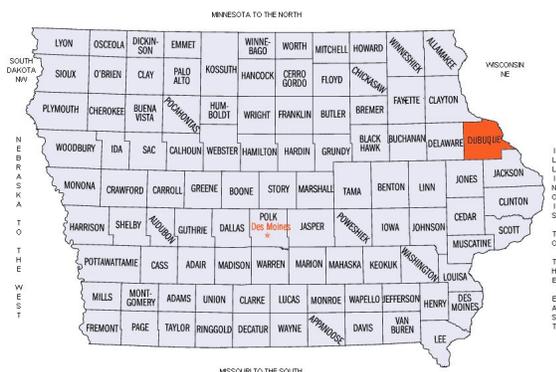
Dubuque County Early Childhood Office
2310 Chaney Road
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The Community Plan is shared with and available to the public. To request a paper or electronic copy, contact the office of Dubuque County Early Childhood or visit the organization’s web site.

Geographic Area

Founded in 1999, DCEC is a one-county Early Childhood Iowa (ECI) area located in northeast Iowa. It is situated on the eastern edge of Iowa bordering Illinois and Wisconsin. DCEC is one of approximately 38 ECI areas across Iowa representing all 99 counties.

Note at this time, DCEC focuses efforts on eligible children age birth through five who live in Dubuque County. Although some services may be structured to serve children in bordering Iowa counties, if deemed necessary.



Profile of Dubuque County

Profile of Dubuque County	
SIZE:	
Land mass	Dubuque County includes approximately 608 square miles with both urban and rural areas.
Incorporated communities	There are 21 incorporated communities, including Asbury, Balltown, Bankston, Bernard, Cascade, Centralia, Dubuque, Durango, Dyersville, Epworth, Farley, Graf, Holy Cross, Luxemburg, New Vienna, Peosta, Rickardsville, Sageville, Sherrill, Worthington, and Zwingle.
POPULATION GROWTH:	
County population comparison	In 2019, Dubuque County was the 8 th largest county in Iowa (99 total counties) with a population of 96,544. The 2014 population estimate is at 96,370 and 7 th largest in the state.
Population growth and forecast	From 2010-2019, Dubuque County's population grew 3.9% (compared to 2.0% for Iowa). The county ranks 10 th in Iowa in the fastest growing populations. Dubuque is the 10th largest city in Iowa. The U.S. Census Bureau forecasts the total population of Dubuque County to rise to 96,593 by 2020, 100,248 by 2030, and 103,994 by 2040. Based on current population estimates, the county is poised to exceed these projections.
Age & Sex	6.2% persons under 5 years. 22.7% under 18 years. 18.3% 65 years and over. 50.7% female
EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES:	
Schools in county	<p>Two public school districts – Western Dubuque Community and Dubuque Community – serve families plus several faith-based school systems. Both public school systems have a voluntary preschool program grant from the Dept. of Education. Dubuque School's grant began with the 2008-2009 school year. Western Dubuque's grant began with the 2009-2010 school year.</p> <p>Three small, private schools also serve area students, including Dubuque Lutheran School, Dubuque, (preschool through elementary grades); Tri-State Christian School, Galena, (elementary through high school grades); and Dubuque Montessori School (preschool-kindergarten grade).</p> <p>The county also is home to six higher education institutions, including Clarke University, Loras College, University of Dubuque, Northeast Iowa Community College, Emmaus Bible College, Divine Word College, and Wartburg Theological Seminary.</p>
INCOME/EMPLOYMENT/POVERTY	
Income	2014-2018 Narrative Profile stated the median household income for Dubuque County was \$61,321 (up from \$51,475 in 2013) compared to \$51,843 for Iowa (\$48,872 in 2010).
Employment	2,782 total employer establishments. 55,865 total employment. Unemployment rate (2018) 2.4%
Poverty	10.7% Persons in Poverty, 12.1% child poverty rate in 2018, ages 0-17 (kidscount.org)
DIVERSITY:	
Diversity	92.5% of Dubuque County Population is white alone. 90% white alone, not Hispanic or Latino. 3.6% Black or African American. 2.6% Hispanic or Latino. 1.7% two or more races. 1.3% Asian alone. 0.6% Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone. 0.3% American Indian and Alaska Native Alone.
CHILD CARE	
Child Care	84% of families have both parents working
HEALTH	
Health	<p>According to VNA 815 children were immunized in Dubuque County in 2019.</p> <p>Dental - of hte 3,130 children enrolled to Medicaid, 93.8% did not have a dental visit</p>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

Additional Community Demographic Data can be found in [Appendix A: Community Demographic Data](#)

Section 3: COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Community Needs Assessment Cycle

To facilitate the planning process, set priorities, and monitor results, DCEC identified and used the following cycle to meet required responsibilities and facilitate ongoing mission and goals.



Current Priorities

In the last Community Plan update in 2017, the DCEC Board was working on four priorities for children age birth to five. At that time, these priorities were based on review of data, community assessment tools, and community resources. Prior priorities included the following:

- Family success skills – Parents and caregivers have the information, support, and resources necessary to raise healthy and successful children.
- Learning Readiness - children have the early education services needed for ideal development and readiness to learn.
- Safe and secure relationships – Children live in safe and secure environments with at least one caring adult.
- Healthy development – Families access health-related financial resources and services to promote children’s optimal growth.

Process of Community Needs Assessment

The community needs assessment is designed to determine the needs of both children age birth to five years and their families in Dubuque County. DCEC Board’s focus was on conducting a process that would best facilitate identifying strengths, needs, and gaps in services and collaboration for this area. Consequently, the board through its Long-Range Planning Committee, Steering Committee and staff accomplished the following steps:

1. Collected and reviewed community assessments - list of reviewed documents can be found in [Appendix C: List of All Assessments Reviewed](#).
2. Identified demographics and community data
3. Facilitated parent survey and community partner survey
4. Held focus groups and data walk
5. Reviewed, discussed, analyzed and formulated strategic goals

To begin the process, similar to the last update of the Community Plan, DCEC through its Long-Range Planning Committee and staff collected community assessments, annual reports, strategic plans, and needs analyses published that were relevant to the current assessment and planning cycle. DCEC staff sent general requests by email and phone to obtain these publications on paper, via e-mails, and through website sources. A complete list of publications reviewed can be found in Appendix C.

DCEC believes a strong community effort is based on the following principles:

- Awareness: The Community understands the importance of children’s early experiences.
- Input: Local partners and citizens have a role in identifying needs and solutions to improve the lives of young children.
- Collaboration: Cooperation and shared resources are necessary for implementation of quality early childhood services.
- Leadership: Bringing community priorities to the forefront and being a catalyst for change increases community engagement/involvement in supporting early childhood.
- Outcomes: Tracking community data and monitoring progress focuses on improving key outcomes for young children and families.

DCEC’s Community Assessment Project

In addition to the existing assessment data/information gathered and analyzed as explained in this section, DCEC conducted its own assessment to capture community information and needs while staying within parameters available for this type of project. This included prioritizing collaborative efforts while respecting boundaries of resources, staff, and funding.

DCEC’s process of conducting a community assessment and analysis/results of that are as follows:

1. Parent/Caregiver Survey – To assess child and family needs as reported by parents and primary caregivers of young children living in this community.
2. Provider Survey – To assess community needs as reported by providers of early childhood services.
3. Data Walk/Focus Groups
4. Solutions Tour
5. Community Needs Survey
6. Child Care Provider/Preschool Data
7. National League of Cities - Steering Committee & Focus Groups

To review the above 7 assessments and results see [Appendix B: Community Assessment Project](#).

Assessment Results

After thoroughly reviewing and discussing assessments above the Long-Range Planning committee identified recurring themes/discussions. The themes identified are listed below and not in a specific order:

First 2,000 days	Dental Care	Transportation	Child Care	Family Activities/ Free/Accessible
Child Care Access - special needs	Communication/ Child Care/ Collaborations	Brain Health	Housing & impacts on children	Local Data - youth
Respite Care	Screening	Full day programing for children in Pre-K	How to include families in the work we do	Rural Communities
Wrap Around Care	Housing	Grief sessions	Immunization	

Community Wide Indicators

As part of assessment, the DCEC Board selected indicators as measurements of progress towards intentional results for child age birth to five. Selection took place with the Long Range Planning Committee. Through the review, the board considered past indicators plus community assessment data/information and analysis as reflected above in the assessment process.

New Indicators (New Community Plan): The indicators and rationales are listed along with the ECI state result area. All local indicators are chosen as priority and reflective of current needs. As with all planning efforts, review and modifications are ongoing.

Indicator	How	Rationale	ECI Result Area	DCEC Strategy
Immunized Children	# of children ages 0-5 vaccinated	By tracking immunization we will have a better idea of gaps and find ways to push immunization	Healthy Children	Strategy 2: Provider Education and Service
Dental Services	% of children ages 0-5 enrolled in Medicaid who receive dental services # of children who receive dental screenings	Dubuque County children are in need of access to dental care.	Healthy Children	Strategy 2: Provider Education and Service
Availability of Child Care	# Registered & Licensed Child Care Providers	By tracking child care providers we will have a better understanding of accessibility of child care in Dubuque County	Secure & Nurturing Early Learning Environments	Strategy 2: Provider Education and Service
Quality Learning Environments	# child care providers participating in QRS	By tracking QRIS are able to measure quality providers available	Secure & Nurturing Early Learning Environments	Strategy 2: Provider Education and Service
Safe & Nurturing Families	# of families served in family support groups #of home visits by family support	By tracking the number of families served we will be able to decrease the waiting list	Secure & Nurturing Families Secure & Nurturing Families	Strategy 2: Provider Education and Service
Healthy Children	Annually, 80% of eligible children in family support programs are screened with ASQSE	By tracking ASQSE we tracking social-emotional needs in community	Healthy Children	Strategy 2: Provide Education

Community Partners

Dubuque County Early Childhood’s community plan and strategic plan was a collaboration of community leaders and organizations serving children ages 0-5 in Dubuque County. The community partners can be found in [Appendix D: Community Partners](#).

Family/Community Resource Data

Annually, DCEC in conjunction with the Annual Kids Expo, updates the Family Resource Guide and distributes 2,000 hard copies. This guide provides resources available to families in Dubuque County. The list includes Child Care Providers, Preschool opportunities, Health Services, Human Services, Literacy Services and so much more. Fall 2020, due to the current health implications the nation faces with the pandemic and the need to resources, DCEC distributed 10,000 copies throughout Dubuque County. Copies were distributed to public schools, parochial schools and child care centers/homes that had children 5th grade and lower. To full guide can be found in [Appendix F: Family/Community Resource Guide](#)

Community Fiscal Assessment

To identify community resources, DCEC documented known federal, state, local, and private funding sources for children age birth-five that were made available. DCEC has compiled a chart of early-childhood entities with service information; each entity's funding total and sources; and collaboration. To be listed here with some exceptions, typically an organization needed to offer direct services to children age birth-five. No organization was intentionally left out, and DCEC welcomes any additions or corrections. As they become available, new programs will be documented to assist ongoing community need discussions on a regular basis. If NA (not available) is listed in the funding column, then DCEC requested this information from the associated agency and/or made a best attempt to locate it. NA indicates the agency did not disclose the funding amount. A best attempt was made to include most current funding for each entity listed; if that level was not available, DCEC used the most recent amount known. This assessment provides broad information that may help early childhood future planning efforts. The Community Fiscal Assessment can be found in [Appendix E: Community Fiscal Assessment](#)

With many steps on the path to collaboration, as stated DCEC seeks to track this on many levels. Although collaboration usually goes beyond the funding, here

- **Child Care Resource & Referral** – Funding includes DCEC, Exceptional Persons, Inc., DHS, and the local Prevent Child Abuse Council to support quality child care programs for parents and providers.
- **Clarke University Nursing Dept.** – Funding comes from DCEC, the college, and grants to offer support to pregnant mothers in need
- **Area Child Care Centers and Preschools** – Of the locations that offered a preschool curriculum program, the majority participated in a quality standard (such as NAEYC, QRS, or IQPPS), many received stipend or grant support, and those not participating in a voluntary preschool grant frequently accepted students on DCEC scholarships.
- **Four Oaks** – DCEC sponsors the Parents as Teachers program.
- **Visiting Nurse Association** – DCEC blends funds, with other federal and state sources, to support child care nurse consultants, an oral health screening program and immunizations.

The assessment provides broad information specific to children ages 0-5 and may help in future planning of childhood needs in Dubuque County.

Section 4: PRIORITIES & NEEDS

Determined Priorities

After identifying needs, the DCEC Board, through the strategic planning process, determined the priorities for children age birth to five in Dubuque County.

DCEC has 6 key priorities, 5 of which are aligned to the ECI priorities:

Priority	High level goal
Secure & Nurturing Families	Families have the information, support, and resources necessary to raise healthy and successful children
Secure & Nurturing Early Learning Environments	Families are able to access quality, affordable early learning experiences, including child care and preschool.
Ready to Succeed in School	Families have access to quality home, community, and preschool environments that encourage child development and learning
Healthy Children	Families have access to quality community resources to support their child's healthy development
Safe & Supportive Communities	Build the public appetite for investing in young children and their families
Infrastructure	Build capacity of the board and staff and raise the financial resources necessary to execute on the 5 programmatic priorities

The 6 priorities (which within include the state mandated funding priorities) are the basis of DCEC community planning for the next three years. They will be modified, as needed, if data and assessments reflect changes in community needs.

Determined Needs

To accomplish the first five goals, DCEC is proposing a set of strategies for DCEC and other key stakeholders in Dubuque.

Strategy 1: Provide Information: Ensure that all key stakeholder audiences have the information they need about the first 2000 days

Strategy 2: Provide Education and Services: Build capacity of key stakeholders to support the health and development of children ages 0-5

Strategy 3: Increase Access: Increase the number of providers and spaces as well as access to family support (child care, preschool/ pre-K, and healthcare)

***Further breakdown of these goals are found in [Appendix G: Strategic Plan](#).

Community Plan - Communication Plan

The Community Plan will notify and inform the community of upcoming events, services, and opportunities for families, caregivers, and child care providers specific to children ages 0 through 5 through various outlets. The information will be distributed to community partners, organizations, schools, child care providers, parents, and the public through regular media releases/public service announcements, social media, current contractors, and community partners. DCEC is committed to keeping the community and these families informed on early childhood services.

Section 5: Appendices

[Appendix A: Community Demographic Data](#)

[Appendix B: Assessments Project](#)

[Appendix C: List of all Assessments Reviewed](#)

[Appendix D: Community Partners](#)

[Appendix E: Community Fiscal Assessment](#)

[Appendix F: Family/Community Resource Guide](#)

[Appendix G: Strategic Plan](#)