



# Caring for Our Caregivers, Caring for Our State

## Iowa ACEs Policy Coalition 2023 Priorities

We all want Iowa to be a safe, prosperous place to live. Promoting caregiver health and well-being is an effective common-sense strategy to build and sustain a thriving Iowa. When caregivers are healthy and well, children can learn and grow, families can fully contribute, and Iowa's economy and communities can flourish.

The relationship between caregiver and child builds the foundation for a thriving state. A caregiver is a child's first and most important teacher, nurse, safety officer, and guide to the world. But caregivers alone do not create the conditions kids need to thrive. The policies we design and the environments we create can either

empower caregivers or make it harder for them to succeed and care for their families. Policies should give caregivers the freedom to make choices that support an entire family's well-being.

Access to health care, home visiting, and paid time off create opportunities for caregivers to have the support and skills they need, build financial stability, and focus on nurturing relationships with their kids—all of which help prevent adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and promote children's lifelong healthy development. An investment in caregivers today is an investment in our state.



### Policies

- Extend Medicaid coverage
- Increase access to home visiting
- Expand access to paid leave benefits

### Thriving Conditions

- Quality health and mental health care
- Supportive networks
- Equitable and family-friendly workplaces

### Thriving Families

- Nurturing caregiver-child relationships
- Strong mental, physical, and emotional health
- Safety
- Belonging
- Economic stability
- Capacity to learn and contribute

### Thriving Iowa

- A growing population
- Strong economy with expanding businesses
- Vibrant cultural and recreational experiences
- Strong social networks
- Safe, stable, and connected neighborhoods

# Policy Opportunities

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## KEEP NEW MOMS COVERED

When caregivers have their physical and mental health needs met, not only do their health outcomes improve, they are also better able to care for their families

**Extend Medicaid coverage from 60 days to 12 months postpartum:** Currently in Iowa, Medicaid enrollees who qualify for coverage due to their pregnancy, lose coverage 60 days after giving birth, but many health complications arise at 6-12 months postpartum. Extending coverage can increase access to care, improve health outcomes for mom and baby, and reduce costs. It is the simplest and most targeted way to ensure that new mothers can get the care they need, when they need it to help keep them and their baby healthy.

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## OFFER SUPPORT EARLY

When caregivers have access to a trusted resource for parenting information, tools, and support, they are more equipped to lay a strong foundation for their children's health and development. Home visiting can offer this critical support.

**Increase access to evidence-based home visiting programs including prenatal support:** Home visiting programs help parents build safe, nurturing environments for young children, providing critical early support that sets them up for later success in school and in life. In Iowa, only about one-third of families participating in home visiting engage prenatally. Engaging more families earlier can help get families off to a good start, from the very beginning.

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## PRIORITIZE FAMILY, MAINTAIN STABILITY

When caregivers are empowered to take time to attend to family health and safety needs, families can participate in life's most important and pivotal moments, maintain financial stability, and continue to contribute to a strong Iowa workforce.

**Expand access to paid leave benefits.** Today's workforce encompasses a greater share of caregivers who are raising children and supporting elderly family members, and yet 4 out of 5 Iowans do not have access to paid leave through their jobs. Paid leave is effective in allowing employees to improve their families' health and well-being, while remaining committed to their jobs.

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**Iowa ACEs 360 advocates for policy decisions that foster a society based on these values:**

- All people have inherent worth.
- The future can be different.
- Healing and belonging occur through connection and trusting relationships.
- Our identity is shaped by our history, culture, and unique experiences.
- The freedom to create change contributes to individual and collective well-being.



Iowa ACEs 360's supports communities, organizations, and people in taking informed actions to prevent and mitigate the lifelong effects of childhood adversity. Through advocacy, advancing knowledge, and catalyzing innovative practices, we foster broad changes that lead to healing and well-being for all Iowans. Learn more at [www.iowaaces360.org](http://www.iowaaces360.org).