

Why IWF Does What It Does!

Women and girls in Iowa still face many challenges, including economic insecurity.

- 70% of our female headed households are struggling economically
 - 40% are living below the federal poverty level
 - 30% are low-income working families - living above the federal poverty level but below the self-sufficiency level.

To understand why women and girls are struggling and what barriers impact their success, IWF launched our state tour SHE MATTERS: We Listen and Iowa Wins in 2015. We held focus groups in 18 communities across Iowa, where we learned there are six barriers: employment, child care, housing, education/training, transportation and mentors.

IWF returned to those 18 communities in 2016, we shared the results, interacted with the findings and identified a course of action to address one of the barriers the communities felt was the most significant—child care. The solid data reinforces this need within the state of Iowa:

- 75% of Iowa households with children under the age of 6 have all parents working outside the home
- 527,194 children ages 0-12 in the state of Iowa
- 167,817 child care spaces available
- Shortfall of 359,377 spaces
- On average 1 in 2 children go without access to affordable quality child care
- Iowa has lost 40% of its child care businesses over the past five years.

Child Care data in Johnson County:

- 76% of Johnson Co. households with children under the age of 6 have both parents working outside the home
- 22,168 children ages 0-12 in Johnson Co
- 9,267 child care spaces available
- Shortfall of 12,901 spaces
- 50-70 children are on waiting lists at Neighborhood Centers of Johnson County at any given time
- Johnson Co has lost 26% of its child care programs over the past five years

Child care is not just a family issue, it encompasses business success and community viability as well.

- The Midwest is the only US region where job openings outnumber job seekers
- Today on Indeed, there are 39,591 open jobs in Iowa and 4,792 in Johnson County

Iowa has an affordable quality child care crisis and IWF is partnering with communities to address the challenge. We will focus our energy and resources to impact the child care barrier, decrease the workforce gap and ultimately achieve IWF's mission: to improve the lives of Iowa's women and girls through economic self-sufficiency.

First, IWF has established the Child Care Solutions Fund (CCSF). The CCSF is a "field of interest" fund designated to specifically by improving the availability of, and access to, quality affordable child care in Iowa. These CCSF funds are invested in organizations and institutions focused on innovative and sustainable strategies/solutions ensuring access to affordable quality child care and demonstrate the ability to increase women's economic security across Iowa.

Second, the Building Community Child Care Solutions network, will work with individual communities and the state to engage individuals and diverse institutions in local child care solutions. Through the BCCS, we will recognize, convene and assist leaders and practitioners dedicated to solving Iowa's child care crisis. This exchange of ideas among business and community leaders, employees and organizations will raise the awareness and promote feasible community specific solutions for the children, businesses and communities of the state of IOWA.