

What is child welfare?

Even the term child welfare is not simple or unambiguous.

The child welfare system is a group of public and private services that are focused on ensuring that all children live in safe, permanent and stable environments that support their well-being. Most child welfare activities are largely directed toward those children who have been abused and/or neglected or at risk of being abused and/or neglected.

Child welfare services may interact with entire families, or they may be focused on direct intervention with children. The public child welfare system operates at the federal, state, and local levels. Additionally, many private and community-based organizations are involved in providing for children's well-being. Thus, the child welfare system varies dramatically from state to state.

When the Coalition for Family & Children's Services refers to "child welfare", we are referring to any of the elements of this system. Thus, a family who is child welfare involved may be receiving services but still be intact (family preservation), or the child or children may be removed from the home, either temporarily or permanently.

For more information about child welfare programs and services, visit the Child Welfare Information Gateway at: <https://www.childwelfare.gov/>

For more information on the services provided in Iowa, visit the Iowa Department of Human Services website at: <http://dhs.iowa.gov/node/1001>

What are the goals of child welfare?

The child welfare system has three primary goals for children. These are:

1. **Safety:** No child should suffer maltreatment, both in their own home and when they are in out-of-home placement.
2. **Permanency:** All children should have stable and continuous family relationships and connections. Stable, caring relationships in a family are essential for healthy child development.
3. **Well-being:** Any effects of child maltreatment on the child's physical, mental, or emotional health must be identified, and preventative or treatment interventions should be provided if they are needed.