



January 2010

Dear IFAPA Members,

This year Iowa faces a record budget shortfall. Iowa legislators will face a daunting task to try and provide services to so many in need with such limited funding. Children must remain a priority of our state. Children in the child welfare system are some of the most vulnerable children in Iowa. IFAPA will continue to work to be a voice for children and families, but we need your help.

In these tough financial times it is imperative that IFAPA members keep their legislators informed on the issues facing children in their care. Sharing specific information such as: how adoption subsidy has made a difference for your child; how a child has blossomed with the structure and consistency of foster care; how your family has been able to work with birth parents to return a child home; how a training taught you how to parent a difficult teen—all tell the story of the importance of funding for foster care and adoption programs.

Legislators want to hear from YOU, their constituents. Please make a point to get to know the legislators representing you. They are there to address the needs of all Iowans, including the children in foster care and adoptive homes and the parents who care for them.

The across the board cuts will impact IFAPA. Staff is working to minimize the effect of these shortfalls. As the Executive Director of IFAPA, I can promise what IFAPA will continue to do for you.

- IFAPA will work diligently to inform legislators of the important role foster, adoptive, and kinship families play to improve the lives of children in Iowa.
- IFAPA will work diligently to inform legislators of the impact and true cost of cuts to the foster care and adoption programs.
- IFAPA will continue to advocate for innovative and established best practices to improve the Iowa Child Welfare system.
- IFAPA will work collaboratively with DHS and other child welfare agencies to address the needs of children in foster care and Iowa's foster, adoptive and kinship families.
- IFAPA will keep you informed of changes in DHS policy, rules, and regulations. Prior to rule changes, DHS allows for public input. IFAPA will continue to inform members of their right to review proposed changes and submit suggestions and changes.
- IFAPA will continue to provide quality training that addresses the needs of children in care.
- IFAPA will continue to provide quality support and resources through the IFAPA Peer Liaison and Resource Information Specialist programs.
- IFAPA will continue to keep you informed through the IFAPA website, listserv and newsletter.

The IFAPA website (Legislative Resources & Legislative News sections) includes information about the IFAPA public policy priorities. Maintaining funding and reducing additional cuts to the foster care and adoption programs is IFAPA's first priority. Our website also includes a sample letter to send to your legislator and information on how to effectively contact and communicate with your legislators. **IFAPA's Legislative Breakfast will take place on Tuesday, February 16 from 7am to 9am at the State Capitol Building in Des Moines.** If you are not able to attend the Legislative Breakfast, please consider sending your legislators a letter or attend a legislative forum or town hall meeting in your area.

I thank you for your hard work and dedication to children and families. Your commitment to Iowa's children is unparalleled. IFAPA looks forward to working with you, our members, to continue to educate the policymakers about foster care and adoption. If you have questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact me.

In service to children and families,

Lynnon Stout
IFAPA Executive Director