

# Iowa's 2023-2027 State Health Improvement Plan



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## Acknowledgements

Healthy Iowans would not be possible without the participation and support of organizations and community members across Iowa, as well as the Healthy Iowans Partnership. Thank you for your dedication to Healthy Iowans' assessments and plans. Your work is important to health improvement among all who live, learn, work and play in Iowa.

Healthy Iowans is coordinated by:

**Public Health**  
**IOWA HHS**

**This is a living document.  
Changes will occur as  
needed.**

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## What Is the Healthy Iowans Partnership?

The Healthy Iowans Partnership is a collaborative group consisting of a steering committee, local organizations and individuals throughout Iowa. This group is coordinated by Iowa Health and Human Services' (HHS) Division of Public Health. Together, the Partnership works to address the priorities outlined in the state health assessment (SHA) and state health improvement plan (SHIP). As time passes, the Partnership plans to include more direct service providers and community decision makers such as: private businesses, infrastructure-based organizations, healthcare providers, elected officials, faith-based organizations and other community leaders. To join the Healthy Iowans Partnership, please email Iowa HHS' Healthy Iowans team at [healthyiowans@idph.iowa.gov](mailto:healthyiowans@idph.iowa.gov).



## Healthy Iowans Partnership Steering Committee

The Healthy Iowans Partnership Steering Committee is a group dedicated to providing leadership throughout the Healthy Iowans process. The Steering Committee consists of representatives from 22 different organizations. Members were selected for their state or regional focus, their commitment to improving health and their experience with health equity initiatives. We are grateful to have the following organizations represented:

- Delta Dental of Iowa Foundation
- Iowa Department of Education
- Iowa Department of Human Rights
- Iowa Department on Aging
- Food Bank of Iowa
- Great Plains Action Society
- Healthiest State Initiative
- Iowa ACEs 360
- Iowa Behavioral Health Association
- Iowa Economic Development Authority
- Iowa International Center
- Iowa Medicaid Enterprise
- Iowa Primary Care Association
- Iowa Public Health Association
- Iowa Rural Health Association
- ISU Extension and Outreach
- NAACP - Iowa Nebraska Chapter
- NAMI Iowa
- One Iowa
- The Wellmark Foundation
- United Way of Central Iowa
- University of Iowa Center for Disabilities and Development

By guiding a strong coalition of partners, the Steering Committee works to inspire structured, collective action aimed at improving the health of all who live, learn, work and play in Iowa. Yet, this list does not represent all parties needed to improve health. For example, more than 100 organizations contributed to the [Healthy Iowans 2017-2021 plan](#). Similarly, the 2023-2027 SHIP will be an interactive process that engages much of the state. To stay informed on health improvement initiatives, [subscribe](#) to our monthly newsletter and monitor our [website](#).



## Public Health Accreditation

The Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB), a non-profit accrediting body, oversees public health agencies throughout the United States. Through the accreditation process, PHAB helps verify that public health agencies are providing essential services (Figure 1) and strengthening public health infrastructure. Since the SHA and SHIP are instrumental tools that all states use to guide public health work, PHAB has included these items as required elements of accreditation. As public-facing, statewide documents, the SHA and SHIP must meet the [highest standards](#) possible.

Prior to aligning with the Iowa Department of Human Services in July 2022, the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) received national accreditation from PHAB in November 2018. Operating under PHAB standards, IDPH has made significant strides towards improving the quality, accountability and performance of services - including the SHA and SHIP processes. Reaccreditation occurs every five years to ensure continuous improvement.

**Figure 1: The Ten Essential Public Health Services**





## How Are People in Iowa Doing?

The health of people in Iowa continues to be impacted by a variety of factors, including the COVID-19 pandemic, social determinants of health, systemic inequities, and more.<sup>1</sup> According to data from the [Iowa Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Survey](#) (BRFSS),<sup>2</sup> more than one in eight adults in Iowa (12.6%) considered their general health to be fair or poor in 2020. This grew to 13.2% of adults reporting fair or poor health in 2021.<sup>3</sup> Fair or poor health was more prevalent in people of racial/ethnic minorities, those with less than a high school education, households with an income of less than \$15,000 per year and adults with disabilities.<sup>2-3</sup>

In 2021,

**13.9%**

**of adults in Iowa reported experiencing frequent mental distress<sup>3</sup>**

Health-related quality of life (HRQOL) of people in Iowa has also changed (both positively and negatively) since the last Healthy Iowans cycle.<sup>3</sup> As defined by the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#),<sup>4</sup> HRQOL refers to “an individual’s or group’s perceived *physical* and *mental* health over time.” In 2021, 9.2% of adults in Iowa reported experiencing frequent *physical* distress.<sup>3</sup> This is the lowest percentage reported since 2011.<sup>3</sup> The prevalence of frequent *physical* distress was higher among older adults, those with a lower household income, people with a lower level of education and those living with disabilities.<sup>3</sup>

In terms of mental health, many people in Iowa are struggling. In 2021, 13.9% reported experiencing frequent *mental* distress.<sup>3</sup> This percentage has been increasing since 2013, but at a higher rate since 2018.<sup>3</sup> The rate reported in 2021 is the highest percentage to date.<sup>3</sup> Frequent *mental* distress was significantly more prevalent among the LGBGT+ population, those with a lower household income and people living with disabilities.<sup>3</sup>

Other statewide surveys such as the [Iowa Youth Risk Behavior Survey](#) (YRBS) and the [Iowa Youth Survey](#) (IYS) have found that Iowa should also focus on improving the health of youth. In the 2021 [IYS State Report](#),<sup>5</sup>

between 25% and 29% of youth in grades 6, 8, and 11 reported being physically active for at least 60 minutes on all seven days in the past week. The Healthy Iowans Partnership would like to see this percentage increase, as physical activity has been shown to reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression, as well as lower the risk of developing chronic diseases in adulthood.<sup>6</sup> Another worrisome trend in Iowa is the decline of youth mental health. In 2021, YRBS results indicated that nearly two out of five 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> graders reported feeling sad or hopeless almost every day for at least two weeks in a row during the past year.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, 22.6% of Iowa high school students have seriously considered attempting suicide during the last 12 months.<sup>7</sup> Based on these statistics, it is clear Iowa must take action. Through the 2023-2027 SHIP, the Healthy Iowans Partnership hopes to build upon the positive changes while also addressing the factors that may have led to negative changes in the health of people in Iowa.

In 2021,

**39.1%**

**of 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> graders reported feelings of prolonged sadness or hopelessness during the past year<sup>7</sup>**



## State Health Assessment (SHA) Overview

The first step in the Healthy Iowans process was to conduct a SHA. To capture a complete picture of health in Iowa, Iowa HHS' Division of Public Health reviewed Iowa's [2016 SHA](#), the national [Healthy People 2030 objectives](#) and state health data. Through this review, over 40 issues were identified as having an impact on health. Yet, the Healthy Iowans Partnership wanted to focus on issues that are most important to people in Iowa. In June 2021, Iowa HHS solicited feedback from people in Iowa and community organizations using the Iowa State Health Assessment Survey. In total, more than 2,700 people in Iowa responded to the survey. Based on their responses, the final list of priorities identifies seven different issues.

The [2021-2022 SHA](#) highlights the seven priority areas that shape health for all who live, learn, work and play in Iowa. Iowa's current health priorities include:



For further descriptions of these priority areas, please reference the [2021-2022 SHA](#).



## State Health Improvement Plan (SHIP) Overview

The Healthy Iowans Partnership Steering Committee used the seven priorities identified in the [2021-2022 SHA](#) to begin development of the SHIP. This required extensive group reflection to determine resources and capabilities. Based on feasibility and potential impact on health in Iowa, the Steering Committee chose to begin with Access to Care: Behavioral Health and Healthy Eating & Active Living as their two main priorities for the 2023-2027 SHIP. Then, the Steering Committee set goals for each priority area. The resulting goals were chosen after careful consideration and serve as the broad, overarching targets for the 2023-2027 SHIP. Objective and strategy development will continue into 2023 and will be added to this document once complete.

While the SHIP only outlines two of the seven priority areas, work will not end in the other five categories. There are numerous organizations throughout the state that will continue to address these important issues.



## Health Equity: The Anchor of the SHIP

**Health Equity** means that “everyone has a fair and just opportunity to be as healthy as possible. This requires removing obstacles to health such as poverty, discrimination, and their consequences, including powerlessness and lack of access to good jobs with fair pay, quality education and housing, safe environments, and healthcare.”<sup>8</sup>



Many groups of people in Iowa experience health disparities; in particular, people of color (such as African American and Indigenous people), people with disabilities, people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender, and people who live in rural areas. These disparities often stem from broad, systemic inequities that have created deep-rooted barriers to good health.<sup>9</sup>

As an integral part of improving statewide outcomes, health equity serves as the anchor of the 2023-2027 SHIP. The Healthy Iowans Partnership is dedicated to using data, community voices, and evidence-based strategies to create meaningful solutions for health inequities. As a result, the 2023-2027 SHIP uses a health equity lens that focuses on ending long-standing disparities.



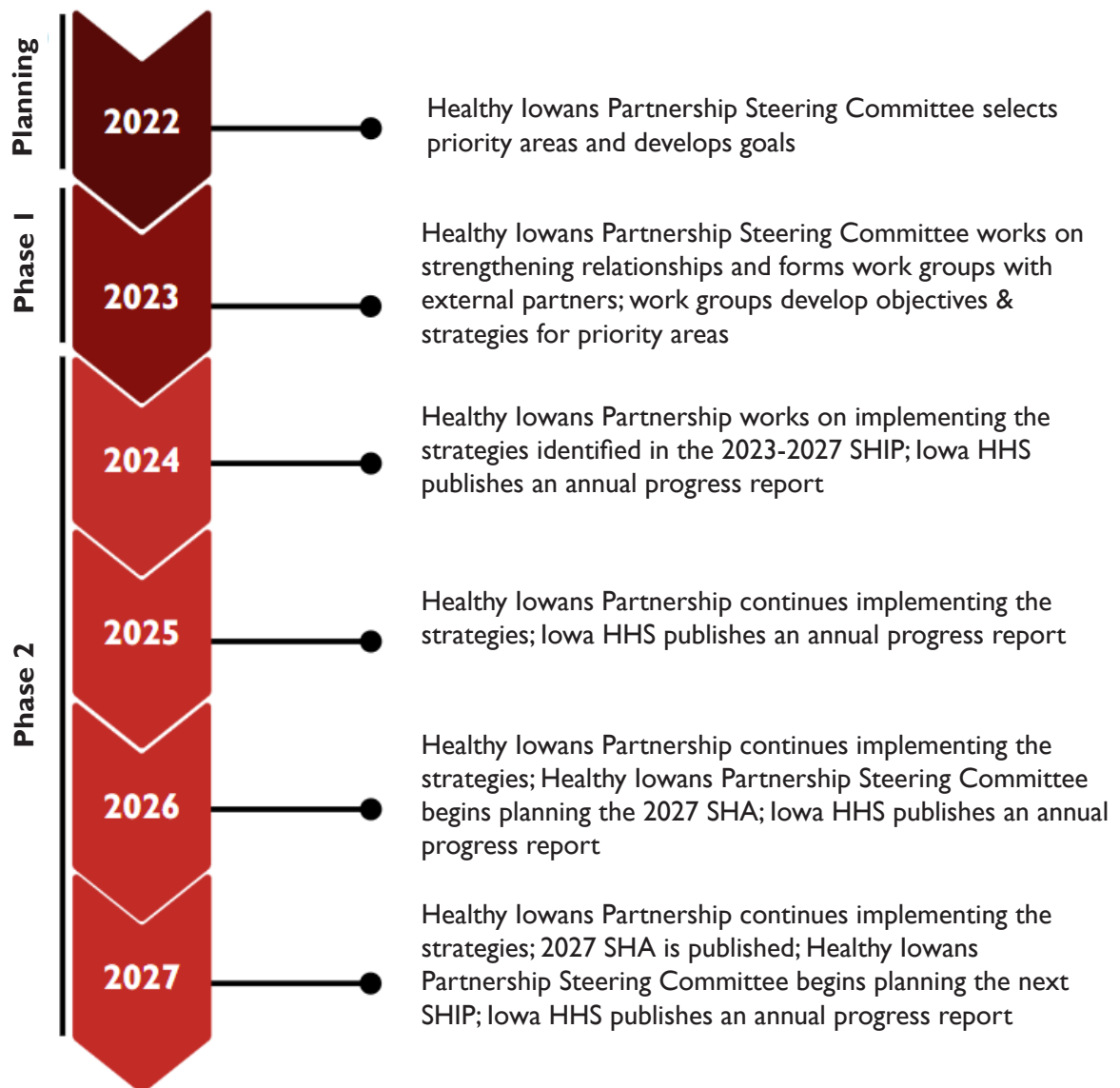


## Timeline

Implementation of the 2023-2027 SHIP will occur in two phases. In phase one, the Healthy Iowans Partnership will focus on strengthening relationships. As part of this phase, workgroups will be developed for the two priority areas. Together, the workgroups will create objectives and strategies, build action plans, and prepare for implementation of phase two. Strengthening relationships within the partnership is important, as it will create a solid foundation for phase two. This foundation will allow for increased collaboration as organizations work to address Access to Care: Behavioral Health and Healthy Eating & Active Living. Phase one implementation will occur during 2023.

From 2024-2027, the Healthy Iowans Partnership will begin phase two of this plan. Phase two will require the Partnership to actively address Access to Care: Behavioral Health and Healthy Eating & Active Living. The success of the SHIP will be dependent on contributions from the Healthy Iowans Partnership and community members across the state. Iowa HHS will monitor the implementation of the SHIP to ensure accountability from all contributing initiatives.

**Figure 2: Healthy Iowans Timeline**





# Phase One 2023





## Strengthening Relationships

To make maximum impact in the 2023-2027 SHIP priority areas, organizations throughout the state must work together. As stated by the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#),<sup>10</sup> “partnerships can avoid duplication of effort, ensure synergy of resources, and enhance the overall leadership within the state.” To help foster the success of these relationships, it is important to have a shared directional framework. The goal, objectives, and strategies listed below will help facilitate these joint efforts within the Healthy Iowans Partnership.

### GOAL 1

To build a strong  
Healthy Iowans  
Partnership

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### Objectives

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I.1: By the end of 2023, the Healthy Iowans Partnership will have an operating framework.

I.2: By the end of 2023, the Healthy Iowans Partnership will be prepared to address each priority area of the 2023-2027 SHIP.





## Strengthening Relationships

### Plan of Action

Strategy	Responsible Party	Target Date	Source
Finalize and publish the Partnership's mission statement	Healthy lowans Partnership Steering Committee	December 2023	N/A:This is a new strategy
Finalize and publish the Partnership's vision statement	Healthy lowans Partnership Steering Committee	December 2023	N/A:This is a new strategy
Develop a charter for the Partnership	Iowa HHS	December 2023	N/A:This is a new strategy
Create core values for the Partnership	Healthy lowans Partnership Steering Committee	December 2023	N/A:This is a new strategy
Create SMARTIE objectives for each priority area	Healthy lowans Partnership	December 2023	N/A:This is a new strategy
Develop strategies for addressing each priority area	Healthy lowans Partnership	December 2023	N/A:This is a new strategy
Host a Partnership-wide summit	Iowa HHS	December 2023	N/A:This is a new strategy
Incorporate core values in action plans	Healthy lowans Partnership	December 2023	N/A:This is a new strategy





# Phase Two 2024-2027





## Access to Care: Behavioral Health

**Behavioral Health** is “the promotion of mental health, resilience and wellbeing; the treatment of mental and substance use disorders; and the support of those who experience and/or are in recovery from these conditions, along with their families and communities.”<sup>11</sup>

The healthcare system is complex and hard to navigate for many people in Iowa. This is especially true when people in Iowa are in need of behavioral health services. The Healthy Iowans Partnership is committed to strengthening the behavioral health workforce and removing barriers to care. In no particular order, the goals for this priority area include:

### GOAL 1

To improve access to inclusive behavioral health services in Iowa

### GOAL 2

To strengthen the behavioral health system in Iowa by increasing available resources and capacity

### GOAL 3

To reduce behavioral health stigma in Iowa

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\* Objectives, strategies and a plan of action will be published by the end of 2023.



## Healthy Eating & Active Living

Proper nutrition and regular physical activity are key to one's overall health. Benefits include - but are not limited to - boosted immunity, stronger bones, improved mental health and more.<sup>12-13</sup> Yet, many people in Iowa lack access to healthy foods, beverages and safe recreational areas. The Healthy Iowans Partnership hopes to make Healthy Eating & Active Living more attainable for all people in Iowa. In no particular order, the goals for this priority area include:

### GOAL 1

To reduce barriers to affordable, nutritious foods for all people in Iowa

### GOAL 2

To increase engagement in active living among all people in Iowa

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\* Objectives, strategies and a plan of action will be published by the end of 2023.



## Stay Connected

The 2023-2027 SHIP is a living document. This means that changes may occur throughout the course of the next five years. To stay up to date with these changes, and the Healthy Iowans process, please use the following resources:

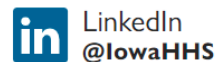
- *Healthy Iowans Newsletter*
  - A monthly publication, the Healthy Iowans Newsletter provides updates on the Healthy Iowans process, and also includes links to pertinent public health trainings, events, news and resources.

- To [subscribe](#), scan this QR code with your phone's camera:



- *Healthy Iowans website*
  - <https://idph.iowa.gov/healthy-iowans>

- *Iowa Department of Health and Human Services' social media:*



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