

2017 ISAC Top Priorities

Iowa State Association of Counties



Mental Health and Disability Services



Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund



Food Safety



Water Quality Management



Distracted Driving

Mental Health and Disability Services

PROBLEM: Counties are facing continuing funding challenges regarding the regional mental health and disability services (MH/DS) system. With the lack of equalization funding again in 2016 along with dwindling cash reserves, MH/DS regions are going to find it difficult to maintain current services, let alone provide the expanded core plus services and expanded populations envisioned by redesign. This current method of funding MH/DS is forcing unfunded mandates on counties and regions and forcing them to pay for on-going expenses with one-time resources.

SOLUTION: ISAC recommends that the Legislature:

1. Provide adequate and sustainable funding to allow the regions to have the resources necessary to support and manage core services. Further, a long term funding solution should be found that gives MH/DS regions through counties the ability to levy the necessary amount to fund these services to complete the final piece of mental health redesign. This stable funding in the system will give providers the ability to develop long term business plans that will ensure a consistent level of coverage of MH/DS statewide.
2. Remove the 1996 MH Levy Cap that is limiting specific counties from generating adequate property tax revenue to cover the costs of providing core services to Iowa citizens. This artificial cap is also causing an inequity between counties when it comes to equitable funding sources within each MH/DS region.
3. The 2017 Iowa Legislature should provide for adequate levels of MH/DS outside of the correctional system. These services would include the necessary number of “psychiatric beds” in our mental health facilities and hospitals to address acute care needs.
4. The 2017 Iowa Legislature should provide sufficient funding for the effective implementation of a Children’s Mental Health/Disability Services program.

Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund

PROBLEM: Iowa’s natural resources need a consistent and protected funding source. Lack of funding translates into fewer investments that are important to the quality of life and economic activity in Iowa communities.

SOLUTION: ISAC recommends the following:

1. Passing a statewide sales tax increase of at least 3/8 of a penny in support of the Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund, or I-WILL, as it’s commonly known.
2. Maintaining the formula distribution provided by the Iowa Legislature in Iowa Code Chapter 461 in preparation for the successful passage by Iowa voters of the Water and Land Legacy Constitutional Amendment of 2010.
 - Natural Resources Account created in the “trust fund” to be used by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources - 23%
 - Soil Conservation and Protection Account created in the Trust Fund to be used by the Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship - 20%
 - Watershed protection - 14%
 - Iowa Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) Fund - 13%
 - Local conservation partnerships - 13%
 - Land based trails - 10%
 - Lake restoration - 7%

Food Safety

PROBLEM: In the past 37 years, the Legislature has only increased food licensing fees twice. Both times, the increase was not enough to cover the cost of operating the inspection program. Because of the low fees, many counties have returned the food program to the Department of Inspection and Appeals (DIA) which has forced DIA to take back other contracts to obtain additional license fees to afford inspecting the returned jurisdictions. In 2009 DIA inspected 23 counties, and now, DIA inspects 52 counties. Because of the low fees, DIA has lowered its inspection frequency two times in the past three years. Inadequate and irregular license fee increases are degrading Iowa's food safety system and have the potential to put the health and lives of the consuming public at risk.

SOLUTION: Increase food licensing fees to fully fund food safety program activities in compliance with Iowa Code. DIA should be authorized to administer the food licensing fees through the Iowa Administrative Code.

Water Quality Management

PROBLEM: It has been well documented by numerous sources that there is a need to provide adequate, sustainable, dedicated state financial resources to address the state-wide concerns related to Iowa's water quality management issues. Specific concerns are the high level of nitrates and phosphorus that are entering our water system. In addition, there are on-going issues that must be addressed in our efforts to minimize future financial losses caused by flooding through effective flood mitigation programs.

SOLUTION: ISAC recommends the following:

1. The identification of additional financial resources to be used to address the Water Quality Management issues. Specifically, ISAC would:
 - Encourage significant funding for, and the aggressive implementation of, a "revolving loan" program so that critical funds could be used for multiple projects throughout the years ahead.
 - Encourage a significant amount of funding be utilized to assist cities and towns in their efforts to upgrade their water treatment facilities.
2. The implementation of, and funding for, a network of statewide Watershed Management Authorities established by 28E agreements. These Watershed Management Authorities could coordinate efforts to upgrade their water treatment facilities.
3. Legislation to support water mitigation projects in both the public and private sectors.

Distracted Driving

PROBLEM: Distracted, inexperienced and impaired driving, as well as other factors result in hundreds of deaths on Iowa's roadways each year. While there is no simple solution to reduce the number of highway fatalities, there needs to be an enhanced effort on the awareness of the dangers of distracted and impaired driving.

SOLUTION: ISAC supports legislation to prohibit the use of a hand-held electronic communication devices while operating a motor vehicle and to make the use a primary offense.

ISAC members are elected and appointed county officials from all 99 counties.

We represent 16 affiliated associations. Representatives of these affiliates make up our Legislative Policy Committee and our Board of Directors.

Mission promote effective and responsible county government for the people of Iowa.

Vision principal, authoritative source of representation, information and services for and about county government in Iowa.



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