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NEWS RELEASE

SOUTHWEST IOWA EARLY CHILDHOOD BOARDS OF DIRECTORS MERGE TO ONE REGIONAL BOARD

The merger among four boards streamlines administration of important Early Childhood Iowa initiatives across multiple southwest counties.

Council Bluffs, Iowa — Four southwest Early Childhood Iowa (ECI) county boards of directors have merged to one regional board as of July 1, 2024. Three of the boards merged under Thriving Families Alliance, which had previously been providing oversight and support to the other three.

The three boards now also represented as Thriving Families Alliance ECI Board are: HMS ECI Board, Boost 4 Families and Corner Counties ECI. The decision to operate as a regional board was strategically agreed upon by all boards as a way to eliminate duplicative administrative processes and vendor needs, resulting in more efficient use of board resources and funds.

“This was a mutually agreed-upon decision among all the boards, and we received support and encouragement for the merger from the [Early Childhood Iowa State Board](#),” said Patricia Russmann, Thriving Families Alliance executive director. Thriving Families Alliance is a 501 (c) 3 nonprofit and was already previously serving as the fiscal agent for the boards. The nonprofit status of Thriving Families Alliance also allows the board to develop additional private-public partnerships and funding for supporting community needs and plans. “The new regionally focused board remains committed to ensuring every county receives services and support resources based on community needs,” Russmann added.

Overseen by the ECI State Board, local ECI boards are responsible for collaborative efforts among public and state entities to improve education, health and human services for children 0-5 years old in each community.

Russmann emphasized that the Thriving Families Alliance board is responsible to provide equitable services to all nine counties in the region, and each county is represented by at least one board member on the regional board. Legislation also mandates that the board include members from specific sectors, including faith, business, health, human services, parents and education.

“As a regional board, we are here to support early childhood health and well-being in the entire southwest area. That said, we recognize that every county has slightly different needs and resources, so we are taking a tailored approach to each. Our goal is to make the southwest region’s families collectively stronger for our youngest and most vulnerable population — children ages 0-5 years,” Russman explained.

Thriving Families Alliance is distributing information to all partners, legislators and the public about the merger with a promise that though the board structure is different, the support and services to each community remains equitable. The organization published an [FAQ page](#) on its website at thrivingfamiliesalliance.org/boardmergerfaq to answer anticipated questions in more detail.

For more information about Thriving Families Alliance, visit thrivingfamiliesalliance.org.

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ABOUT THRIVING FAMILIES ALLIANCE

Thriving Families Alliance mission is to empower a caring community that promises the well-being of every child. As the umbrella organization that oversees state and local initiatives in Southwest Iowa, Thriving Families Alliance is a 501 (c) 3 nonprofit organization working together through interagency and cross-discipline collaboration to coordinate efforts for effectively addressing the needs of children and families in nine southwest counties.