

Iowa Health Care

Flu Shot Season

Getting a yearly flu vaccination is the best way to prevent flu and its potentially serious complications. Protect yourself and others by isolating when you are feeling under the weather, washing your hands often, and getting vaccinated! If you are concerned that you are experiencing cold or flu symptoms reach out to your healthcare provider for symptom management & self-monitor at home. Ensuring that you increase your hydration when temperatures drop is important and you can do so by consuming warm beverages and eating hydrating foods like soups, stews, fruits, and vegetables. If you have questions about the flu, covid, or any other vaccinations this season don't hesitate to reach out!

SNAP Changes and LIHEAP

Effective January 1, 2026, Iowa's **SNAP** (food stamps) program will be limiting the types of food that can be purchased with food assistance. Several types of food will no longer be covered by SNAP benefits, including soda, candy, chewing gum, and vitamins. Please check <https://hhs.iowa.gov/assistance-programs/food-assistance/snap> for more information and updates.

Applications for the 2025-2026 Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (**LIHEAP**) in Iowa are available from November 1, 2025, to April 30, 2026, though households with a member who is elderly or disabled can apply starting October 1, 2025. To apply, you'll need proof of income, Social Security numbers for all household members, and copies of your most recent heating and electric bills. Contact your local Community Action Agency or dial 211 to find out where and how to apply. <https://www.hacap.org/energy>

****Fall is a reminder to
Reset—your wellness journey starts with
small daily choices.
Let's make this season about *connection,
compassion, and care.***



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***There are no
premium free
Medicare Part D
drug plans in Iowa in
2026.***

Benefits & Open Enrollment 2026

As we enter the closing months of 2025, it's time to start thinking about medical coverage for 2026. If you have employer sponsored medical insurance, check in with your Human Resources department to stay updated with important information about updates and deadlines for 2026. If you have Medicaid coverage, be sure to check and open your mail regularly to be kept aware of the status of your coverage – this is best practice for insurance and other benefits in general as most information and requests come via mail. If you anticipate any changes or have questions, please reach out to your Case Manager or to the Field Benefits Specialist.

Open Enrollment for BDAP-sponsored insurance through the Federal Marketplace is from **November 1, 2025 through December 15, 2025** for plans effective January 1, 2026. If you are on one of these plans currently, you should be auto-enrolled for 2026 and just need to share your premium statement for January with your Case Manager as soon as you receive it. If your mailing address or ability to receive mail has changed, please update your case manager right away so you can still receive the statement we need! If you are not enrolled in BDAP-sponsored insurance through the Federal Marketplace currently but are interested for 2026, please contact your Case Manager.

If you missed the December 15, 2025 deadline for Open Enrollment, you can still enroll for a plan effective February 1, 2026 between December 16, 2025 and January 15, 2026.

Medicare Open Enrollment for Medicare Part D drug plans and Medicare Advantage plans effective January 1, 2026 is from **October 15, 2025 through December 7, 2025**. During this time you can compare plans to be sure you have the right coverage for your medical care and medications in 2026. You can complete plan comparisons on [medicare.gov](https://www.medicare.gov) if you are comfortable doing so yourself, or you can reach out to the SHIIP-SMP certified Field Benefit Specialist for assistance. You can also find a list of local SHIIP counselors in your county by visiting shiip.iowa/find-resources/find-counselor.

Please remember that we are always here to help, so do not hesitate to reach out to your Case Manager or Field Benefits Specialist with any questions or concerns!

**Please send new Social Security benefit letters, premium statements,
and insurance cards to your Case Manager as soon as you receive them.**

Mike Lawler Field Benefits Specialist 319-335-7449



Monica joins UI Support Team

Monica Rodriguez, LMSW (she/her)

Hello! I am so excited to be a part of this! I recently graduated from St. Ambrose University with my Master's in Social Work, and I will be serving as a Case Manager. I was born and raised in this area, and after completing my undergraduate degree, I had the opportunity to live in several different places. I am now excited to return and re-root myself in the community! Throughout my travels, I have had the opportunity to work with many different populations and in a variety of settings, and I am passionate about helping and advocating for people to feel seen, heard, and empowered. Outside of work, I enjoy practicing yoga, spending time on our hobby farm (I love animals), and traveling with my partner!

Holiday Food Basket Sign Ups

Sign-ups for Thanksgiving food baskets in Johnson County, IA are not yet available, as most food assistance programs open their applications closer to the holiday season. You can check back in the fall with local organizations like CommUnity Crisis Services & Food Bank, Coralville Community Food Pantry, and the [Salvation Army](#) for specific 2025 application dates and details.

Welcome Hailey J. to River Hills in Ottumwa

Hailey Jensen (she/her)

I'm thrilled to be joining the team as a Social Worker and Case Manager at River Hills Community Health Center in Ottumwa. My career has been rooted in serving diverse communities. Most recently I worked on tribal lands, where I led nonprofit programs that helped families access vital resources and support systems. That experience strengthened my passion for advocacy, collaboration and meeting people where they are.

I'm excited to bring that same energy to River Hills and I look forward to getting to know each of you.

Outside of work I spend most of my time with my husband and our energetic one year old daughter. We love being outdoors camping, boating or just enjoying the fresh air. When I get a quiet moment I am usually reading a good book.





AIDS WATCH 2026

Part of our Ryan White grant for 2025-2026 is to offer an active PITCH member a chance to attend AIDS Watch in Washington D.C.
March 16-18 2026.

This is an opportunity for one person living with HIV to accompany PITCH to tell his or her story to elected officials at the United States Capitol in Washington D.C. to be a voice for Iowans.

Scholarship will include roundtrip airfare to Washington DC, lodging, meals and ground transportation.

Requirements:

- Must be an Iowa resident
- Must be living with HIV
- Must be an active PITCH member
- Must have a current passport or state ID or Driver's License with a gold star to enter federal buildings and to access boarding at airports.

Information and application will be shared on the November 20th PITCH Virtual Meet and Greet at 6:30 pm. Please join us to learn more about this opportunity. Register here for the PITCH Meet and Greet.



<https://bit.ly/PITCHMG>

Disclaimer: Iowa Ryan White is a federally funded grant administered by Iowa Health and Human Services. There is always a possibility funds could be cut if this happens any applicant will be notified.

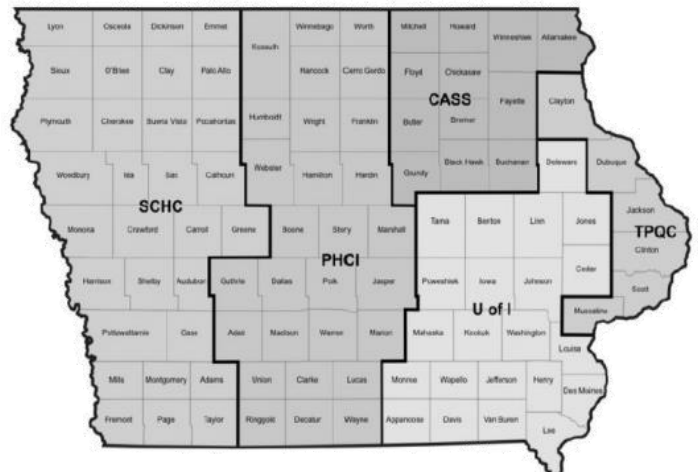
Support Group for People Living with HIV

Are you a person living with HIV? Consider joining UIHC's monthly Support Group Zoom meetings! In this online meeting we focus on connecting with others who may share similar experiences, discovering helpful resources, developing coping strategies and more! Join host Kari Vrbn on the first Wednesday of the month from 4 to 5:30 pm on Zoom. For more information and to sign up, please scan the QR Code below with your phone, or visit: <https://forms.office.com/r/f8eYjN4L6A> This will take you to an online form, after you fill this out, Kari will email you a Zoom link the day before each meeting. If you need assistance, please contact Kari at 319-467-5655 or at kari-vrbn@uiowa.edu.



Housing Opportunities for People With HIV (HOPWA)

Are you in need of financial assistance to get or maintain housing? You may be eligible for services provided by HOPWA such as Long-Term Rental Assistance, Short-Term Rent, Mortgage and Utility Assistance, or Permanent Housing Placement. Eligibility is based on your income (limits vary by county) and emergency status. Clients who are case managed by a Ryan White agency may talk to their case manager to complete a referral form that will be forwarded to the HOPWA coordinator Viri Estudillo Areguin. Clients who are not case managed may contact HOPWA coordinator directly to be assessed.



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