



# Better Tomorrows Early Childhood Iowa Area

## Vision

All children (age 0-5) living in Benton and Tama County will be healthy; have a safe, secure, nurturing home and childcare environment; and be ready to succeed in school.

## Mission

To enhance the quality of life in Benton and Tama County by promoting strong, healthy families. Barriers will be overcome and programs and services coordinated through community collaboration.

## Community Plan Priorities

- ♦ Healthy children
- ♦ Secure and nurturing families
- ♦ Secure and nurturing early learning environments
- ♦ Children ready to succeed in school
- ♦ Safe and supportive communities

**Counties in Area:** Benton and Tama County

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## Better Tomorrows Success Story

Tama Healthy Families is providing two home visits a month to a family and has coordinated home visits with MICA's contracted mental health consultant in order to develop and implement strategies to support the child. The parent was encouraged to advocate for a referral for the child to be tested for behavioral concerns. After being referred and subsequently assessed, the child was diagnosed with autism. The worker provided information about having a consistent environment and avoiding sudden changes since those can be challenging for the child. A picture schedule was created to hang on the refrigerator. The parent uses this schedule with the child throughout the day by showing him the pictures each morning when he wakes up. This picture schedule, along with the other information and support provided to the family, have greatly improved the parents' parenting skills and the child is now able to transition more smoothly throughout the day.

## Did You Know?

74% of families enrolled in the Horizons Family Support Program have at least one parent is now employed.

## What services/programs/activities do we support?

**Early Childhood Funds** - Child Care Provider Classes, Quality Early Childhood Environments (QECE), Coordination Services

**School Ready Funds** - MICA Parents as Teachers Family Support Program, Tama County Health and Home Care Parent Visitation Program, Nest of Tama County, Horizons Family Support Program, Quality Early Childhood Environments (QECE), Preschool Scholarships, Coordination Services

## Why are the programs we support important to reaching our vision and mission?

- √ Home visitation programs offer families ways to improve their life skills. Of the families participating in the Better Tomorrows Home Visitation Programs:
  - ⇒71% improved or maintained healthy family functioning.
  - ⇒67% increased or maintained social supports.
  - ⇒41% are connected to additional concrete supports.
  - ⇒60% increased knowledge about child development and parenting.
  - ⇒60% improved nurturing and attachment between parent(s) and child(ren).
- √ 7 of 158 families have higher education degrees which indicates that families of all types have needs for home visitation services. The economy is a huge factor contributing to this statistic.
- √ An important part of home visitation is having qualified staff going into the homes. 100% of our workers have either a Bachelor's degree or are employed as a Registered Nurse.
- √ 2/3's of our program have either a state or national credential or are in the process of becoming a credentialed program.
- √ 92% of families meet FS eligibility criteria.

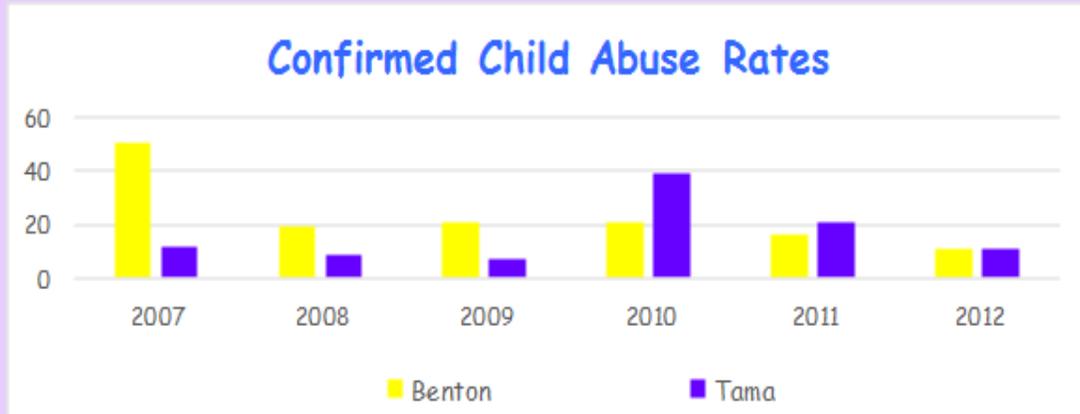


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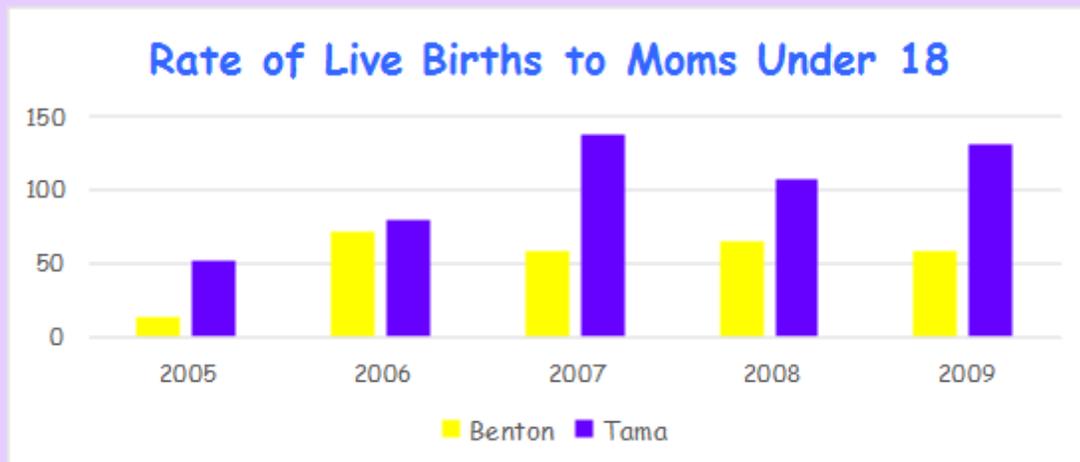
Others within our community working on similar issues:

- ◇ Area Education Agencies
- ◇ Child Care Providers
- ◇ Child Care Resource & Referral
- ◇ Churches
- ◇ County Officials
- ◇ CPPC
- ◇ Decat
- ◇ DHS
- ◇ Family Nurturing Council
- ◇ Four Oaks
- ◇ Horizon's
- ◇ ISU Extension
- ◇ Local Citizens
- ◇ Lutheran Services of Iowa
- ◇ Meskwaki Settlement School
- ◇ MICA
- ◇ Ministerial Association
- ◇ Parents As Teachers
- ◇ Preschools
- ◇ Public Health
- ◇ School Districts
- ◇ SKIP
- ◇ Substance Abuse Councils
- ◇ WIC

How do we measure our progress?



**How are we doing?** The data indicates that child abuse rates are decreasing. There were peaks in Benton (2007) and Tama (2010) but otherwise rates are holding steady.



**How are we doing?** The data indicates that teen pregnancy rates are higher in Tama than Benton. But overall they are either slowly decreasing or holding steady.

**What can you do to help?**

- ◇ *State Systems Produce Positive Outcomes for Children and Families* - In evaluating a "systems level approach" to coordinating health care services, researchers in North Carolina concluded that "system-level interactions hold promise to improve the effectiveness and outcomes of care for children." Their findings, published in the *Journal of Pediatrics*, demonstrated outcomes that included policy-level changes, the alignment of multiple organizations toward a common goal, reduced duplication of services, and better health outcomes for mothers and children compared to the outcomes of previous randomized trials.
- ◇ *Community Outreach Activities* - participation on boards and committees involving child welfare.
- ◇ *Financial Support* - donations, both financial and in-kind to assist programs that focus on child welfare.