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# Transition from Iowa Health Solutions: The Impact on Medicaid Enrollees. Results of a Survey with former Iowa Health Solutions Enrollees. Final report to the Iowa Department of Human Services

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# Transition from Iowa Health Solutions: The Impact on Medicaid Enrollees

Results of a Survey with former Iowa  
Health Solutions Enrollees

Final report to the Iowa Department of  
Human Services

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# Transition from Iowa Health Solutions: The Impact on Medicaid Enrollees

## Introduction

As of February 1, 2005, Iowa Health Solutions (IHS) was no longer a participating health plan for the Iowa Medicaid program. Thus, Medicaid coverage for all former Iowa Health Solutions enrollees had to be transferred to either a) Iowa Medicaid's Primary Care Case Management program (MediPASS), or b) the traditional Fee-for-Service (FFS) Medicaid program or "regular Medicaid." The primary difference between these two options would be that as a MediPASS enrollee they would choose or be assigned to a primary care physician, whereas in the Fee-For-Service program, they would have to find a physician who would accept them as a patient and accept Medicaid Fee-for-Service payment.

The impact of this change in health plans on children in Iowa Medicaid was evaluated as part of the program's ongoing quality assurance activities. This evaluation was carried out by researchers at the University of Iowa Public Policy Center for the Iowa Department of Human Services.

The primary research questions for this study were:

*What impact, if any, did the mandatory change in health plans have in the first six months on:*

1. children's access to health care, including the ability to stay with the same doctor, and
2. the perceived quality of the care children were currently receiving compared to when they were in IHS.

## Methods

A random sample of 800 households with Medicaid-enrolled children who had: a) been continuously enrolled in Iowa Health Solutions for at least the six months prior to its discontinuation on February 1, 2005, and b) were in another Iowa Medicaid program six months later (August 1, 2005), was drawn from enrollment data furnished by the Iowa Department of Human Services. This six-month period was designed to allow enrollees enough time to transition from Iowa Health Solutions to another Medicaid plan and potentially need to try and receive care. In households with more than one former IHS-enrolled child, only one child was selected at random as the study subject to reduce respondent burden and relatedness of responses.

In September 2005, six months following the end of Iowa Health Solutions' Medicaid participation, a relatively brief, 19-question survey was mailed to the parent or guardian of each of the 800 children in the sample. A cover letter included with each questionnaire explained the purpose of the study and that participation was voluntary. The first survey mailing was followed by a reminder post card after ten days. A second survey and cover letter was sent to non-respondents two weeks after the reminder post card.

In an effort to maximize response rates, both a premium and an incentive were used for the first mailing. Each survey envelope included a 20-minute long-distance phone card (a \$1.50 value), which recipients were free to use regardless of whether they chose to complete the survey. In addition, ID code numbers of respondents who completed and returned the survey within the first two weeks of the study were entered into a random drawing for one of three \$100 Wal-Mart gift cards. The three gift card winners were contacted by phone and the cards were mailed to them in December, 2005.

Usable surveys were obtained for 193 children, for an unadjusted response rate of 24%. Ninety-four children in the sample had bad addresses (no forwarding address) and 65 more were forwarded to a new address with no response. Adjusting for the 94 bad addresses, the final response rate was 28%. The survey response data were tabulated and significance tests conducted using Stata 9.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> StataCorp. 2005. *Stata statistical software: Release 9*. College Station, TX: StataCorp LP.

## Key findings from the post-IHS survey

After 6 months in a new health care plan following the end of Iowa Health Solutions as a Medicaid Health Plan, parents reported no significant disruption in care or reduction in perceived quality for children who had to change health plans.

- Almost all children had a personal doctor, with few having to change doctors
- For most of those who did have to change doctors, the transition was not a significant problem
  - Most parents or guardians thought their child's new doctor was as good as or better than the one he or she had when in IHS
- Access to care was good, with most believing it was as easy or easier to get the care their child needed as when they were in IHS
- Parents rated the quality of their child's new Medicaid health plan about the same as they rated IHS

## Results

- Survey data were obtained for 193 child enrollees (28% response rate)

### Demographics

Responses were almost evenly divided between those for boys and girls (Table 1). The children ranged in age from 1 year to 17 years, with an average age of 8 years. The children were in generally very good health, with 85% of parents rating their child’s health as excellent or very good.

**Table 1. Demographics of children about whom responses were received**

	IA Medicaid Post IHS
Female	49%
Age (ave. 8 yrs old)	
0-5	42%
6-12	36%
13-18	22%
Race	
Caucasian	84%
African American	12%
Latino or Hispanic	6%
Asian, Pacific Islander	2%
American Indian	2%
Other	4%
Health status	
Excellent	45%
Very good	40%
Good	14%
Fair	2%
Poor	0%

### Health plan of children

All but one of the respondents remembered that their child had been enrolled in Iowa Health Solutions up until 6 months before the first survey mailing. Twenty-seven percent, however, were not sure in which Medicaid health plan their child was currently enrolled (Table 2).

*Responses were about children with an average age of eight years.*

*99% of respondents remembered that their child had been in IHS 6 months prior to the study.*

Table 2. Current health plan of children

IA Medicaid Post IHS	
MediPASS	39%
Regular Medicaid	34%
Not sure	27%

95% of children had a personal doctor 6 months after leaving IHS.

### Access to care & use of services

#### DOCTORS AND VISITS

One of the most important research questions for this evaluation was the impact that having to change health plans might have on the relationship with a child’s personal doctor and the child’s access to comprehensive primary care.

At the time of the survey:

- 95% of children were reported to have a personal doctor, slightly higher than for all children in Medicaid managed care (92%)<sup>2</sup>

After switching from Iowa Health Solutions, 17% had to find a new personal doctor for their child (n=31).

For those who had to find a new doctor:

- 42% did not have a problem (7% of all children, n=13)
- 35% had a small problem (6% of all children, n=11)
- 23% had a big problem (4% of all children, n=7)

Over 80% of those who had to switch doctors felt their child’s current doctor was as good or better than the one they had in IHS.

The most commonly reported reasons for having problems finding a new personal doctor for their child were:

- didn’t know which doctors were part of the new Medicaid plan (n=8)
- the preferred doctors weren’t taking new Medicaid patients (n=4)
- doctors we tried in the new plan didn’t treat us well (n=3)
- another problem (n=7)

<sup>2</sup> Tyler MC, Damiano PC, Momany ET. 2006 February. *Evaluation of Iowa’s Medicaid Managed Care Plans: The Consumer’s Perspective: Final report to the Iowa Department of Human Services*. Iowa City: University of Iowa, Public Policy Center.

Of those who had to switch doctors, almost 85% thought their child’s current doctor was as good as, if not better than, the doctor they had while in IHS (Figure 1.)

*Over 8 out of 10 parents reported that it was usually or always easy to get the care their child needed through their current Medicaid plan.*

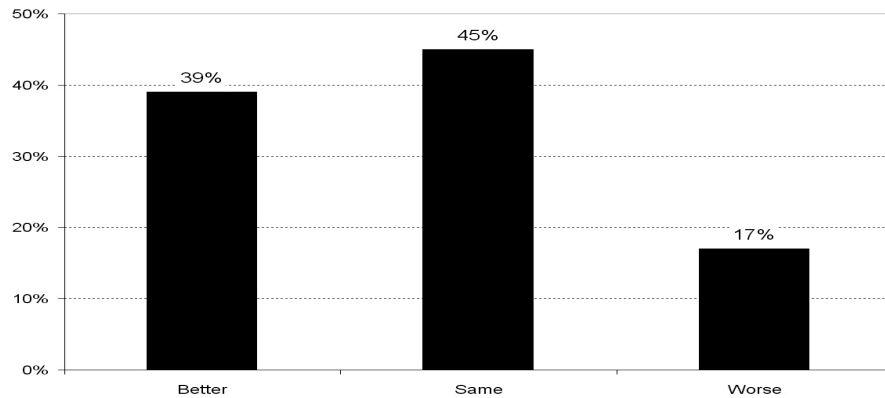


Figure 1. Perception of child's new personal doctor compared to the doctor they had while in IHS

**ACCESS TO CARE AND USE OF SERVICES**

In the six months following their child’s switch from Iowa Health Solutions to MediPASS or Fee-For-Service, 60% (n=112) of the survey respondents had tried to get health care for their child through their new plan. Of these, almost 90% found it was usually or always easy to get health care for their child (Figure 2.)

*87% thought it was as easy or easier to access care for their child now, compared to when in IHS.*

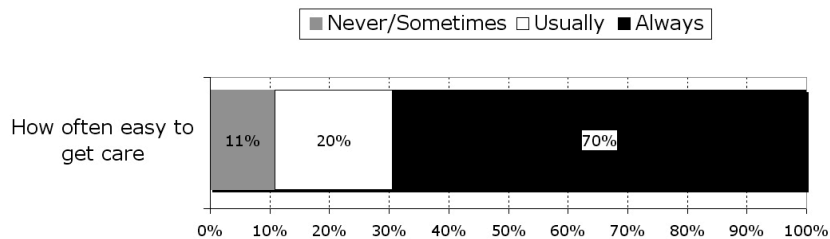


Figure 2. Ease of getting care in new health plan



When those who had tried to get care for their child were asked to compare their access to care now with when they were in IHS, most thought it was the same, 13% thought it was better now, and 7% thought it was worse now (Figure 3).

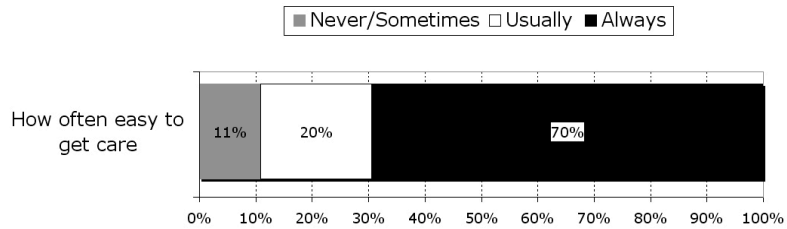


Figure 3. Ease of getting care now compared to when in IHS

### Quality of health plan

Parents rated both IHS and the child’s current Medicaid health plan using the CAHPS® global rating scale, where 0=worst possible and 10=best possible. Although the current plan received more “10” ratings than IHS (Figure 4), this difference was not statistically significant.

Parents rated their child’s current health plan similar to IHS, on a 0-10 scale.

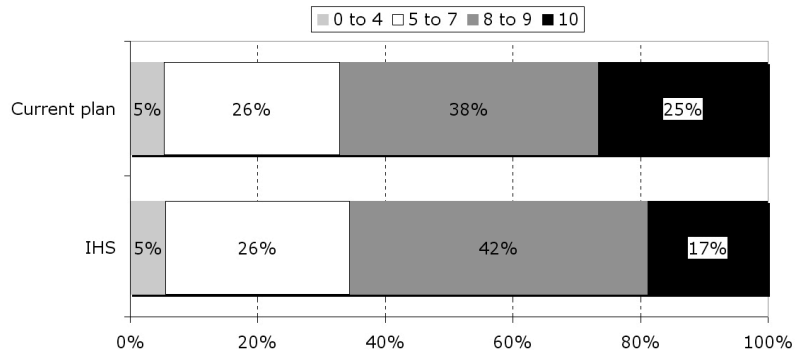
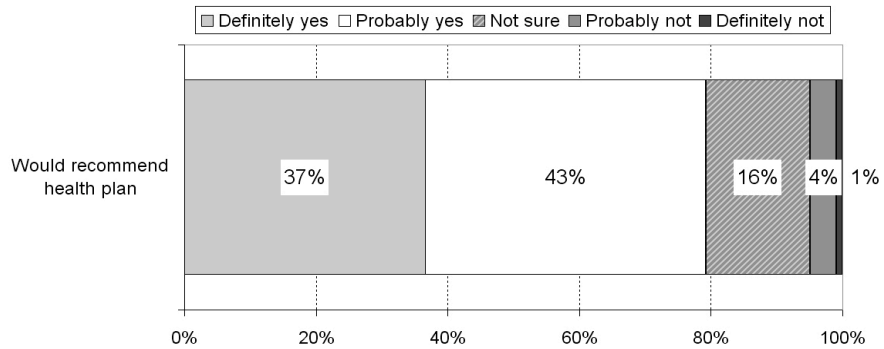


Figure 4. Ratings of IHS and current health plans

*The majority of parents said they would recommend their child's new Medicaid plan.*

Using a different way of evaluating health plan satisfaction, most parents were pleased enough with their child's current health plan that they would recommend the plan to friends or family members with children. Eight out of ten respondents indicated they would definitely (37%) or probably (43%) recommend their child's current health plan to others (Figure 5).



**Figure 5. Recommendation of current health plan to family or friends**

PLAN CUSTOMER SERVICE & INFORMATION

- 22% had looked for information about how their child's Medicaid plan worked

Of those who looked for this information:

- 73% usually or always it
- 28% sometimes found it
- 0% never found it

## Appendix A

Transition from Iowa Health Solutions  
Survey Item Responses

1. Our records indicate that your child was enrolled for at least 6 months in the Iowa Health Solutions Medicaid health plan before February 1, 2005. Is this correct? *(If no, please mail survey back in enclosed envelope—THANK YOU!)*

Response	n	Percent
Yes	190	99%
No	1	1%
<i>Total</i>	191	100%

2. In what Medicaid health plan is your child currently enrolled?

Response	n	Percent
MediPASS	69	39%
Regular Medicaid	59	34%
Coventry	0	0%
I'm not sure	48	27%
<i>Total</i>	176	100%

3. Does your child now have a personal doctor who can be seen for check-ups, or when they are sick or hurt?

Response	n	Percent
Yes	178	95%
No	10	5%
<i>Total</i>	188	100%

4. Did you have to find a new personal doctor for your child after he/she switched from Iowa Health Solutions to the new Medicaid health plan? *(If no, go to Question 8.)*

Response	n	Percent
Yes	31	17%
No	155	83%
<i>Total</i>	186	100%

## Iowa Medicaid Post IHS

5. How much of a problem was it to find a new personal doctor you liked for your child? (If “not a problem,” go to Question 7.)

Response	n	Percent
Big Problem	7	23%
Small Problem	11	35%
Not a Problem	13	42%
<i>Total</i>	31	100%

6. What kinds of problems, if any, did you have finding a personal doctor for your child? (Check all that apply.)

Response	n	Percent*
I didn't know which doctors were part of the new Medicaid health plan	8	44%
The doctors I liked best in the new Medicaid health plan were not taking new Medicaid patients	4	22%
The doctors/offices I tried in the new Medicaid health plan did not treat us very well	3	17%
Other	7	39%
<i>Total</i>	18	—

\* Percentages do not sum to 100 because respondents could choose more than one category.

7. Overall, how would you compare your child's current personal doctor with the doctor he/she had when in Iowa Health Solutions?

Response	n	Percent
Current doctor is much better	10	34%
Current doctor is a little better	1	3%
The doctors are about the same	13	45%
Current doctor is a little worse	2	7%
Current doctor is much worse	0	0%
My child doesn't have a personal doctor at this time	3	10%
<i>Total</i>	29	100%

8. Since enrolling your child in his/her current Medicaid health plan have you tried to get any kind of care, tests, or treatment for your child? (If no, go to Question 12.)

Response	n	Percent
Yes	113	60%
No	74	40%
<i>Total</i>	187	100%

## Iowa Medicaid Post IHS

9. Since enrolling your child in his/her current Medicaid health plan, how often was it easy to get the care, tests or treatment you wanted for your child?

Response	n	Percent
Never	2	2%
Sometimes	10	9%
Usually	22	20%
Always	78	70%
<i>Total</i>	112	100%

10. Overall, how would you rate your ability to get the care your child needs now compared to when he/she was in Iowa Health Solutions?

Response	n	Percent
It is much easier to get care now	11	10%
It is a little easier to get care now	3	3%
It is about the same	90	80%
It is a little harder to get care now	6	5%
It is much harder to get care now	2	2%
<i>Total</i>	129	100%

11. Using any number from 0 to 10, where 0 is the worst health plan possible and 10 is the best health plan possible, how would you rate Iowa Health Solutions?

Response	n	Percent
0	1	1%
1	0	0%
2	0	0%
3	3	2%
4	2	2%
5	13	10%
6	10	8%
7	24	19%
8	36	28%
9	18	14%
10	22	17%
<i>Total</i>	129	100%

## Iowa Medicaid Post IHS

12. Since enrolling your child in his/her current Medicaid health plan, did you try to find any information about how this health plan works, including in written materials, through phone calls or on the Internet? (If no, go to Question 14.)

Response	n	Percent
Yes	41	22%
No	144	78%
<i>Total</i>	185	100%

13. Since joining the new Medicaid health plan, how often were you able to find the information you wanted about how the health plan works from these written materials, phone calls or the Internet?

Response	n	Percent
Never	0	0%
Sometimes	11	28%
Usually	16	40%
Always	13	33%
<i>Total</i>	40	100%

14. Using any number from 0 to 10, where 0 is the worst health plan possible and 10 is the best health plan possible, how would you rate your child's current health plan?

Response	n	Percent
0	2	1%
1	1	1%
2	0	0%
3	1	1%
4	5	3%
5	22	12%
6	12	7%
7	23	13%
8	41	23%
9	27	15%
10	45	25%
<i>Total</i>	179	100%

## Iowa Medicaid Post IHS

15. If asked, would you recommend your child's current Medicaid health plan to your family members and friends who have children?

Response	n	Percent
Definitely Yes	67	37%
Probably Yes	78	43%
Not sure	29	16%
Probably No	7	4%
Definitely No	2	1%
<i>Total</i>	183	100%

16. In general, how would you rate your child's overall health?

Response	n	Percent
Excellent	83	45%
Very good	74	40%
Good	26	14%
Fair	3	2%
Poor	0	0%
<i>Total</i>	186	100%

17. What is your child's race or ethnicity? *(Please mark all that apply.)*

Response	n	Percent*
White	157	84%
Black or African-American	22	12%
Latino or Hispanic	12	6%
Asian	3	2%
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	2	1%
American Indian or Alaska Native	4	2%
Other	7	4%
<i>Total</i>	187	---

\* Percentages do not sum to 100 because respondents could choose more than one category.

## Appendix B

### Survey Comments

#### Comments from Former Iowa Health Solutions Enrollees

Respondents were invited to write in any additional comments they had about their child's transition from Iowa Health Solutions to their current Medicaid plan.

*Question 18: Please tell us if there is anything else you believe is important about your child's switch from Iowa Health Solutions to his or her current Medicaid health plan.*

- Overall we noticed no change since the clinic and physicians we saw with Iowa Health Solutions remained the same with the new Medicaid program.
- It needs to be easier to switch the doctor's name on their ID cards. Customer service is rude and not inclined to help. Otherwise I enjoy the new plan.
- We have no problems but it worries me if something serious should arise will we be able to get the best care best doctors for the condition or will we only have certain doctors and facilities available to us.
- It's the same nothing has changed. Thank you.
- I don't have to pay for her bills.
- It's easier than Iowa Health Solutions in dealing with payments.
- It's easier to receive emergency services.
- There was really no change in service with the change because her doctor accepts both.
- When the switch occurred my child was given a provider that was closer to our home that was great.
- I have had no problems with either plan except that I was able to get help closer to home with current plan. Thanks.
- Her Medicaid help is awesome and very appreciated.
- I feel very uninformed. I have never even received any info on my new insurance and I don't even know which one I have. I've never once received any info of any sort having anything to do with my insurance coverage now.
- With the new Medicaid I could not get some of the proper medicine for my child to get better. The one time we had to call the doctor back 3 times. That never happened with Iowa Health Solutions.
- Have no questions at this time.
- I am very happy that me and my six children have the Medicaid health plan and I am able to take them to the doctors I choose.



## Iowa Medicaid Post IHS

- Medicaid would not accept my child even though I do not have any coverage and she needed services. Medicaid refused my application.
- Don't know if I understand why all the switches. It's our 3rd switch. Our doctor has been great even though probably not her favorite way of getting money.
- Should have been notified sooner.
- I like medical health plan. It is best for my family. Thank you.
- Any of the plans are confusing when the information packages are sent. Just as long as I can continue him with the same doctor and take him to the ER if necessary and dentist I don't care.
- He is currently on the *hawk-i* health plan John Deere.
- The doctors didn't change. She sees the same ones.
- Not being able to just take your child to the emergency room if you cannot get a hold of your doctor etc.
- Overall pretty much the same don't mind either.
- Nothing about this child. My daughter though goes to lots of therapy and psych appointments.
- I don't even know who to call to get bills paid or anything. I got no new info and even my income maintenance worker doesn't know the bills are unpaid and he has Title 19. I don't even know who to call to get help and I owe \$3000.
- Iowa Health had problems of paying the bills--always sending me bills when coverage was in effect.
- That there are more dentists that would take the health plan that's been hard to find a good child dentist.
- N [?] speak English I can't write in English.
- Would like to have plastic ID card other than piece of flimsy paper card.
- It would be nice if they can get a packet.
- It is fine but we signed up for the hawk-i program and got switched to Medicaid because of our income. We are farmers and don't have a regular monthly income. I am embarrassed to be on Medicaid just because I can't afford health insurance.
- With Medicaid health plan Title 19 they changed to primary health care on 29 st. We had a bad experience. The doctor is OK but the administration very bad. The doctor sent my child for a brain test 5 months ago and they didn't give the results. When I asked at the office they said, "I don't know," so I don't like it.
- My daughter has severe asthma. Our family doctor knows every aspect of this and has been treating it and my daughter since birth. It is not fair to my daughter or self to have to switch doctors. I will not so I have to [?] all our medical bills.
- I really have not noticed a significant difference because my child has the same doctor she had before and same availability.
- Would like to receive more detailed info when having to may [?] switch plans.

## Iowa Medicaid Post IHS

- The only complaint is not a small one. When my son's health plan was changed the info I received was very little and very confusing. If more detailed info was provided it would of been a lot easier in more than one way to understand and to deal with.
- Just having to get things preapproved is a pain in the butt.
- If she became horribly sick I don't know if there would be any way possible for to get the best of care I would hope so though she god sent all 3 of my children are [?].
- I should read the plans information earnestly.
- I really like the doctor my children have right now. She is really good with the children if I had to pick again I would not pick another one.
- Only used card twice for dental easy and for eye doctor not easy. I need to get a referral for a doctor my child has had for 5 plus years. Never happened with Iowa Health Solutions.
- I have to try different meds than what the doctor has given me because Medicaid won't give the one doctor wants without having to try something cheaper.
- Haven't noticed any difference from one to any another so far; I'm happy with everything.
- We have run into medications that where not covered. Also the dental plan is absolutely horrible.
- Better dental ortho plan.
- I really had no choice in the matter.
- They are both good programs.
- I did not care for them to switch us to another doctor.
- Better doctors in general.
- I know we were fortunate to be able to keep our doctor. After his nurse called someone we went right back to them. I know a lot of other people who were not as lucky.
- It would be nice to have orthodontist to be covered if it is medically necessary.
- Sorry to say but I haven't noticed a difference with my son's health care change at this point.

Appendix C

Survey Instrument

1. **Our records indicate that your child was enrolled for at least 6 months in the Iowa Health Solutions Medicaid health plan before February 1, 2005. Is this correct?**
  - <sup>1</sup>  Yes
  - <sup>2</sup>  No → If No, please mail survey back in enclosed envelope—**THANK YOU!**
  
2. **In what Medicaid health plan is your child currently enrolled?**
  - <sup>1</sup>  MediPASS
  - <sup>2</sup>  Regular Medicaid
  - <sup>3</sup>  Coventry
  - <sup>4</sup>  I am not sure
  
3. **Does your child now have a personal doctor who can be seen for check-ups, or when they are sick or hurt?**
  - <sup>1</sup>  Yes
  - <sup>2</sup>  No
  
4. **Did you have to find a new personal doctor for your child after he/she switched from Iowa Health Solutions to the new Medicaid health plan?**
  - <sup>1</sup>  Yes
  - <sup>2</sup>  No → If No, Go to Question 8
  
5. **How much of a problem was it to find a new personal doctor you liked for your child?**
  - <sup>1</sup>  Big problem
  - <sup>2</sup>  Small problem
  - <sup>3</sup>  Not a problem → **Go to Question 7**
  
6. **What kinds of problems, if any, did you have finding a personal doctor for your child?(Check all that apply.)**
  - <sup>1</sup>  I didn't know which doctors were part of the new Medicaid health plan
  - <sup>2</sup>  The doctors I liked best in the new Medicaid health plan were not taking new Medicaid patients
  - <sup>3</sup>  The doctors/offices I tried in the new Medicaid health plan did not treat us very well
  - <sup>4</sup>  Other (write in)\_\_\_\_\_
  
7. **Overall, how would you compare your child's current personal doctor with the doctor he/she had when in Iowa Health Solutions?**
  - <sup>1</sup>  Current doctor is much better
  - <sup>2</sup>  Current doctor is a little better
  - <sup>3</sup>  The doctors are about the same
  - <sup>4</sup>  Current doctor is a little worse
  - <sup>5</sup>  Current doctor is much worse
  - <sup>6</sup>  My child doesn't have a personal doctor at this time.
  
8. **Since enrolling your child in his/her current Medicaid health plan have you tried to get any kind of care, tests, or treatment for your child?**
  - <sup>1</sup>  Yes
  - <sup>2</sup>  No → **If No, Go to Question 12**

9. Since enrolling your child in his/her current Medicaid health plan, how often was it easy to get the care, tests or treatment you wanted for your child?

- <sup>1</sup> Never
- <sup>2</sup> Sometimes
- <sup>3</sup> Usually
- <sup>4</sup> Always

10. Overall, how would you rate your ability to get the care your child needs now compared to when he/she was in Iowa Health Solutions?

- <sup>1</sup> It is much easier to get care now
- <sup>2</sup> It is a little easier to get care now
- <sup>3</sup> It is about the same
- <sup>4</sup> It is a little harder to get care now
- <sup>5</sup> It is much harder to get care now

11. Using any number from 0 to 10, where 0 is the worst health plan possible and 10 is the best health plan possible, how would you rate Iowa Health Solutions?

- <sup>00</sup> 0 Worst health plan possible
- <sup>01</sup> 1
- <sup>02</sup> 2
- <sup>03</sup> 3
- <sup>04</sup> 4
- <sup>05</sup> 5
- <sup>06</sup> 6
- <sup>07</sup> 7
- <sup>08</sup> 8
- <sup>09</sup> 9
- <sup>10</sup> 10 Best health plan possible

12. Since enrolling your child in his/her current Medicaid health plan, did you try to find any information about how this health plan works, including in written materials, through phone calls or on the Internet?

- <sup>1</sup> Yes
- <sup>2</sup> No → If No, Go to Question 14

13. Since joining the new Medicaid health plan, how often were you able to find the information you wanted about how the health plan works from these written materials, phone calls or the Internet?

- <sup>1</sup> Never
- <sup>2</sup> Sometimes
- <sup>3</sup> Usually
- <sup>4</sup> Always

14. Using any number from 0 to 10, where 0 is the worst health plan possible and 10 is the best health plan possible, how would you rate your child's current health plan?

- <sup>00</sup> 0 Worst health plan possible
- <sup>01</sup> 1
- <sup>02</sup> 2
- <sup>03</sup> 3
- <sup>04</sup> 4
- <sup>05</sup> 5
- <sup>06</sup> 6
- <sup>07</sup> 7
- <sup>08</sup> 8
- <sup>09</sup> 9
- <sup>10</sup> 10 Best health plan possible

**15. If asked, would you recommend your child's current Medicaid health plan to your family members and friends who have children?**

- <sup>1</sup> Definitely yes
- <sup>2</sup> Probably yes
- <sup>3</sup> Not sure
- <sup>4</sup> Probably not
- <sup>5</sup> Definitely not

**16. In general, how would you rate your child's overall health?**

- <sup>1</sup> Excellent
- <sup>2</sup> Very good
- <sup>3</sup> Good
- <sup>4</sup> Fair
- <sup>5</sup> Poor

**17. What is your child's race or ethnicity? Please mark all that apply.**

- <sup>1</sup> White
- <sup>2</sup> Black or African-American
- <sup>3</sup> Latino or Hispanic
- <sup>4</sup> Asian
- <sup>5</sup> Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
- <sup>6</sup> American Indian or Alaska Native
- <sup>7</sup> Other \_\_\_\_\_

**18. Please tell us if there is anything else you believe is important about your child's switch from Iowa Health Solutions to his or her current Medicaid health plan.**

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