

POLK COUNTY COMMUNITY IDENTIFICATION CARD PROGRAM

A REPORT FOR STAKEHOLDERS AND DECISION
MAKERS ON THE IDEA, THE NEED AND THE SUPPORT
FOR A COMMUNITY ID PROGRAM IN POLK COUNTY.



INTRODUCTION

Early in 2019, community leaders began discussing ways to strengthen relationships between municipal and community agencies and the immigrant community. To ascertain the need for a community identification program in Polk County, Iowa MMJ (then AFSC Iowa) met with community partners to survey residents of Polk County. Focus groups and surveys conducted in March and April 2019 yielded around 70 responses. In addition, Iowa MMJ staff and leaders met with county staff, researchers and community leaders from Johnson County who had implemented a similar program in 2015. These individuals provided information and extensive research on similar programs around the country, as well as logistics and use of the program in Johnson County.



THE IDEA: WHAT IS A COMMUNITY ID CARD?

Individuals are asked to present a valid form of identification for many daily activities in our community. However, many people don't have access to traditional forms of ID like a U.S. passport, driver's license or non-operator's card. As a result of life circumstances, such as lack of a social security number or unauthorized immigration presence, lack of housing, age of the person or having escaped a violent living situation, accessing important community services can be difficult.

A municipality can offer a community ID as a way to help facilitate access to certain services for residents that lack traditional forms of ID.



*Johnson County Community ID Card

THE NEED: HOW WOULD A COMMUNITY ID CARD BE HELPFUL?

The positive response in other communities that have implemented a community ID card program indicates that the need for and interest in such a program in Polk County would be significant. Given the rapidly growing immigrant and refugee community of Des Moines and estimates of the 2020 census, we believe that the program would be embraced by residents of Polk County.

A SAMPLING OF INDIVIDUAL RESPONSES AND IDEAS OF HOW A CARD COULD BE USED FROM THE FOCUS GROUPS AND SURVEYS THAT WERE CONDUCTED IN EARLY 2019:

- Accessing library services
- Accessing youth sports leagues
- Interacting with local law enforcement
- Accessing services from food pantries and clothing closets
- Cashing checks
- Opening bank accounts
- Wiring money
- Opening a gym membership
- Setting up phones
- Self identification
- Picking students up or entering schools
- Accessing medical services
- Access to pharmacy services
- Access to insurance
- Access to casinos
- Access to government agencies
- An ID for refugees who have lost their state ID or who are experiencing delays renewing their IDs
- Survivors of domestic violence/sexual assault

Depending on the logistics, services and benefits provided, a Polk County community ID card has the potential to be broadly popular. For example, other communities with a similar program provide a wide range of benefits, including discounts at local businesses, that are attractive to every member of the community.

A community/municipal ID program is limited, though, and cannot offer the same access that a state or federal identification document can. A community or municipal ID does not allow a person to vote, drive, enter a federal building or board an airplane.

“

People don't feel like they belong.

We should have this already.

”

THE SUPPORT: WHO IS SUPPORTIVE OF A COMMUNITY ID CARD?

In addition to grassroots and community leaders, various immigrant and refugee organizations, community groups and agencies are supportive of the idea of a community ID program for Polk County residents.

1. AL EXITO

"Polk County, Iowa is an ever growing and diversifying community. The community prides itself on cultivating an inclusive equitable environment for all people. To be inclusive of all residents, those without a home address or no driver's license, it is vital to help them feel a part of the community in which they live and participate. Please support this initiative so ALL community members are included."

2. AL RAZI ACADEMY

"I believe it is very helpful to many people and families in our community in Polk County and surrounding communities."

3. DES MOINES AREA RELIGIOUS COUNCIL

The Des Moines Area Religious Council (DMARC) is proud to support the Polk County Community ID initiative. Having a Community ID available would help all residents of Polk County, including many who visit our food pantry network, feel welcome and included and reduce barriers to accessing services."

4. DES MOINES PUBLIC LIBRARY

"A Polk County issued Community ID would help metro residents utilize the resources of the library to their maximum potential and remove a barrier of access to these vital services."

5. DES MOINES PUBLIC SCHOOLS

6. DREAM IOWA

7. DSM SHOWING UP FOR RACIAL JUSTICE

"DSM SURJ wholeheartedly supports Polk County Community ID cards as we believe all members of our community deserve access to the same services, and no one should experience hurdles because they don't have an ID card. We know many people in our community will be positively impacted by having a community ID card."

8. EAT GREATER DES MOINES

“Requiring a State of Iowa driver’s license to be served has disenfranchised many. A Polk County community ID card would help people access much needed services.”

9. IOWA CITIZENS FOR COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT (IOWA CCI)

“Community IDs for Polk County residents would benefit people that have difficulty presenting what is deemed as proper identification and overall is a way to be inclusive and welcoming of everyone with diverse backgrounds.”

10. IOWA COALITION AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

11. IOWA COALTION FOR COLLECTIVE CHANGE

12. IOWA DREAM COALITION

13. IOWA INTERNATIONAL CENTER

“As an organization whose mission is to create a welcoming community, we support the Polk County Community ID program because it unlocks greater access to programs and services that promote prosperity in all its forms for a greater number of individuals.”

14. IOWA MIGRANT MOVEMENT FOR JUSTICE (IOWA MMJ)

“A community ID card for residents of Polk Co. would help us be a more united, healthier and safer community. It would send a welcoming and inclusive message to all residents.”

15. LATINX IMMIGRANTS OF IOWA

“The community ID card will help our community to have a type of identification as proof in order to be recognized by the corresponding agencies and businesses.”

16. LEAGUE OF UNITED LATIN AMERICAN CITIZENS (LULAC)

17. REFUGEE ALLIANCE OF CENTRAL IOWA (RACI)

18. TRINITY LAS AMERICAS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

19. UNITED WAY OF CENTRAL IOWA

THE SUPPORT: WHO IS SUPPORTIVE OF A COMMUNITY ID CARD? (CONT'D)

Institutions, departments and businesses in Polk County are also interested in and excited about the idea of a community ID card. The following businesses, agencies and departments are offering their support:

RESTAURANTS

- Ritual Cafe: Offering a free 12oz coffee with the order of a breakfast item Tuesdays through Friday.

BANKS

- Green State Credit Union: Accept as ID for opening accounts
- Des Moines Metro Credit: Accept as ID for opening accounts.

HEALTHCARE & PHARMACIES

To date, outreach to three health departments and pharmacies has been conducted. These facilities have indicated interest in the community ID program.

LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT

To date, outreach to two law enforcement departments has been conducted. Officials with both departments indicated that the program could be beneficial in Polk Co.



THE RECOMMENDATION: WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

We recommend that the Polk County Board of Supervisors pass a resolution directing the appropriate county office to move ahead with a plan to implement a Polk County Community ID Card program following the Johnson County model.

The county office should work with Iowa MMJ and other community organizations that work directly with the communities that would most benefit from the community ID card to ensure that the program is accessible, confidential and beneficial to a broad section of residents of Polk County.

Once the resolution is passed, outreach to community members, additional stakeholder organizations, institutions, businesses and departments should continue.

WE ARE UNITED.

WE ARE SAFE.

WE ARE HEALTHY.

WE ARE INCLUSIVE.

WE ARE POLK COUNTY.



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