



ON YOUR OWN BUT NOT ALONE

The transition from adolescence to adulthood is often a challenging time for young people, but it can be especially daunting for youth who age out of foster care with limited or no family support.

### A precarious launch

An average of 450 Iowa youth age out of Foster Care at age 18 every year and are highly vulnerable to poor outcomes. Research has shown that when compared with their peers, young people aging out of care are less likely to have a high school diploma or to pursue higher education, and more likely to be dependent on public assistance, experience homelessness, and be involved with the criminal justice system.

#### Data collected in SFY 2011 from 284 Iowa youth shows that as they transition from foster care to adulthood:

- > A majority report having mental health needs; a significant number have attempted suicide or inflicted self-harm
- > 22% report having had an unintended pregnancy; 11% are parenting
- > 34% had been incarcerated or detained in the previous two years
- > Only 65.5% had their high school diploma or GED
- > 40% were unemployed; less than 20% were working at least 25 hours a week

### On their own, but not alone

In the spring of 2002 **Youth & Shelter Services** united 11 human service agencies across the state to form the **Iowa Aftercare Services Network (IASN)**. Services and support offered through IASN are designed to help foster care alumni move toward stability and self-sufficiency in five key areas: **education, employment, housing, health and relationships.**

In 2006, the Iowa Legislature authorized the **Preparation for Adult Living (PAL)** program for foster care alumni who are enrolled in post-secondary education, a work training program or employed. PAL, which includes needs-based financial assistance for eligible youth, is administered by IASN as a component of Aftercare services.

Aftercare participants meet at least twice monthly with an IASN Self-Sufficiency Advocate. Advocates partner with youth to help them address barriers and develop skills to achieve their individual goals and dreams. Participating youth rate IASN services highly, with 98% indicating they would recommend Aftercare to other young people who age out of care.

*"Aftercare has helped me cope with being on my own and to realize what I need to do to be successful." - Aftercare Participant 2011*



## Young adults we serve

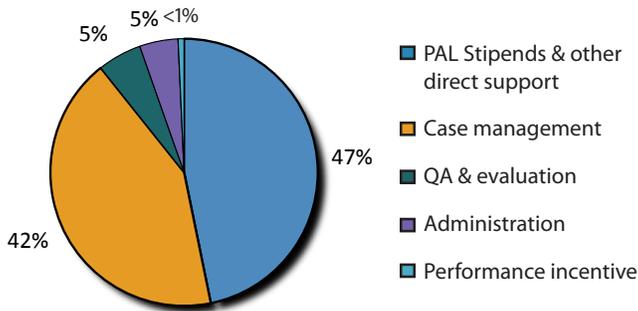
In state fiscal year 2011, IASN served an average of 465 young people each month. In total, 788 youth from 85 Iowa counties participated on a voluntary basis during the year. Of youth served, 71% had been in foster care for more than two years, and about two-thirds reported having been in three or more placements during their time in foster care. Most youth access Aftercare at age 18; the average age of new participants in SFY 2011 was 18.5 years.

More women (60%) than men utilized Aftercare services in 2011. The vast majority are White (83%), but a sizeable percentage identify themselves as African American (16%), Hispanic (10%), Multi-racial (7%), and/or American Indian (6%).

## Investing in their future

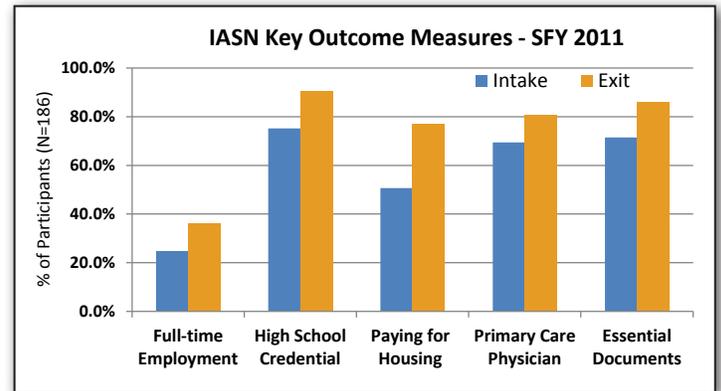
For SFY 2011 the Iowa Legislature appropriated \$2.875 million for the PAL program. This state appropriation and a portion of the state's federal Chafee allotment are contracted by the **Iowa Department of Human Services** for the IASN to operate the PAL and Aftercare programs for a total of just over \$4.2 million.

### IASN Expenditures SFY 2011



## Achieving positive results

The Iowa Aftercare Services Network has served more than 2,200 young people who age out of foster care and voluntarily access Aftercare services since the program began in 2002.



**Positive outcomes** achieved by the Aftercare Network in SFY 2011, as measured by progress made by 186 exiting participants, include:

- > 46% increase in full-time employment
- > 90% had earned either a high school diploma or GED, compared to 75% at intake
- > 34.4% had completed at least one year of college
- > 77% had assumed sole or shared responsibility for their housing costs, compared to 51% at intake
- > Across-the-board increases in young people who have essential documents (i.e., birth certificate and Social Security card), driver's licenses and bank accounts – important steps toward achieving self-sufficiency.

## Making a difference ...

When [John] first accessed Aftercare services, he had been living in his own apartment with limited success and was making poor choices in friends and activities. He was working a few hours a week, but had fines to pay and owed his college money after dropping out. He was showing signs of depression and ended up in the hospital after a suicide attempt. Aftercare has been able to assist him in setting up a payment plan to the college, allowing him to return to classes, and he has secured a better job. John has now reduced his debt by 15% and returned to his grandmother's house where he receives the additional support he needs.

In the words of another Aftercare participant, *"I have benefitted from the Aftercare program in so many ways. I am so thankful for the staff and their support and encouragement. Its been a good year!"*

This fact sheet was prepared by the **Youth Policy Institute of Iowa (YPII)** based on data analyzed for the IASN SFY 2011 Outcomes Report. The full report is available at [www.ypii.org](http://www.ypii.org). In addition to evaluating outcomes, YPII provides policy development, technical assistance, and quality assurance services for the IASN.