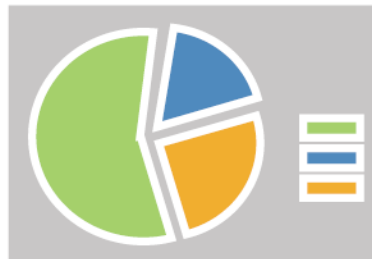




State Fiscal Year 2021 Annual Outcomes Report

prepared by Youth Policy Institute of Iowa



September 2021

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Introduction

The Iowa Aftercare Services Network (IASN) provides services and support to help youth and young adults who exit foster care near or after the age of 18 make a successful transition to adulthood. The IASN (“Aftercare”, “the Network”) focuses on helping youth reach their personal goals in the areas of education, employment, housing, health, and relationships. Aftercare services are provided by trained Self-Sufficiency Advocates (SSAs, “Advocates”), who partner with young adults to create and execute Self-Sufficiency Plans based on assessed strengths and needs of the participants.

The Iowa Department of Human Services (DHS) contracts with YSS (Ames), a nonprofit organization that has served as the lead agency and fiscal agent for the Network since its inception in 2002. In addition to providing direct services through five of its central Iowa locations (Ames, Des Moines, Marshalltown, Mason City, Webster City), YSS subcontracts with seven other youth-serving agencies to provide Aftercare to eligible youth throughout the state. These partner agencies and the location of the primary Aftercare offices are:

- American Home Finding Association (Ottumwa)
- Children’s Square USA (Council Bluffs)
- Family Resources, Inc. (Davenport)
- Foundation 2 (Cedar Rapids)
- Four Oaks (Waterloo)
- Youth Homes of Mid-America (Des Moines)
- Young House Family Services (Burlington)

Further information about these agencies, including the counties they serve as part of the Network, is available at www.iowaaftercare.org. YSS also subcontracts with the Youth Policy Institute of Iowa (YPII) to provide statewide coordination, policy development, quality assurance, and evaluation services for the Network. One of YPII’s responsibilities is data analysis and the submission of this annual report on outcomes of Aftercare participants.

The DHS contract combines funding from federal and state sources. Over the years, legislative changes and increased funding have allowed Aftercare to expand eligibility criteria so that more young Iowans can benefit from the program:

- Beginning in 2002, DHS designated a portion of its funding from the federal Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood¹ to provide services to 18 to 21-year-olds who are discharged from foster care near their eighteenth birthday.
- Since SFY 2006, the Iowa Legislature has appropriated state funding for the Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) program, which provides monthly financial support to youth who a) exit a state-paid foster care placement at age 18 and b) are employed and/or enrolled in postsecondary education or training.
- Since SFY 2015, the Iowa Legislature has provided additional funding so that youth aging out of the State Training School (STS) and Iowa detention facilities are eligible for Aftercare services as they transition to adulthood.

¹Formerly known as the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program, the *Chafee program* was authorized by Congress in 1999 and has been amended several times. Funds are distributed to States based on their relative share of children in foster care.

- Beginning in January 2020, “Extended Services” became available to 21 and 22-year-olds who had previously received “Core” Aftercare services between the ages of 18 and 21. Extended services are less structured than Core services and are designed to be responsive to those young adults who want additional support as they continue on a path towards self-sufficiency.
- A policy change effective in SFY 2021 revised the eligibility criteria for PAL, allowing young people who aged out of “non-licensed relative care or suitable other placements” to receive PAL if other eligibility criteria are met. This was an important policy change that eliminates a disincentive to placing older youth with relatives or suitable other adults when an out-of-home placement is needed.

Reporting Responsibilities

The IASN contract requires an annual report on the services provided to participating youth and participants’ outcomes at the point they discontinue services. This information is used to assess the impact of the services being delivered, to inform quality improvement efforts, and to fulfill state and federal reporting requirements. Data presented in this annual report are primarily drawn from an online data collection system that was designed specifically for the Network and is maintained by YPII.

For purposes of Aftercare, foster care is defined in Iowa Administrative Code 441.187 as follows: “Foster care may include, but is not limited to, placement in a foster family home, a foster care group home, an emergency shelter, a pre-adoptive home, the home of a relative or suitable person, or a Psychiatric Medical Institution for Children (PMIC).” Throughout this report, the term “foster care” refers to all these placement types. Youth aging out of the State Training School and Iowa detention facilities are also eligible for Aftercare services.

Organization of the Report

This report is organized into three parts and is similar to prior annual reports:

- **Part I** of the report provides highlights from intake interviews with 177 youth who initiated services in SFY 2021 (July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021). This information is provided to help readers understand the characteristics of youth as they leave the formal child welfare or juvenile justice systems and begin working with Aftercare agencies. For certain measures, year-to-year trends are included to show changes over time.
- **Part II** of the report provides an overview of the services provided to 602 participants who received Core Aftercare services in SFY 2021, including a summary of “services provided” which IASN collects in accordance with the state’s obligation to report data for the federal National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD). Additionally, this part summarizes the reasons youth exited the program during the year, the duration of their involvement, and their participation in the exit interview process.

This part also includes information on the first full year of Extended Services provided to 210 young people ages 21 and 22 during the year.

- **Part III** of the report examines outcomes of 164 participants who exited Core services during the year, did not return to Core services prior to June 30, 2021, and for whom the Network has complete exit data as reported by the participant in an exit interview.

Two appendices contain additional information as required by the DHS contract. The information in the appendices has also been provided to DHS previously.

- Appendix I presents the results of the annual Participant Survey. The survey was completed by 384 active participants in March 2021, including 56 young people receiving Extended Services (ages 21 and 22). The purpose of the survey is to collect a point-in-time snapshot of participants' satisfaction with IASN agency services and to assess their progress on key performance measures related to economic security, stable housing, and relationships. Results are used to inform policy development and quality improvement efforts, and to gather data on performance measures that are included in the IASN contract.
- Appendix II is a summary of the Network's performance on the specific measures for which the Contractor is held accountable and receives an incentive payment if met. Data from the annual Participant Survey and exit interviews are used for this purpose.

Methodology

Aftercare is a voluntary program. Because eligible young adults may initiate and discontinue services as they choose, they may have multiple entries and exits from IASN services. Data is collected through individual interviews with participants each time they enter or exit services. To assess outcomes, data from participants' initial interviews are compared to their last exit interview *during the fiscal year for which this report is generated (i.e., "reporting period")*. Outcomes are reported for youth who participated for at least three months before exiting and did not return to services *prior to the end of the reporting period*. All exiting youth meeting these criteria are included in the SFY 2021 outcomes (n=164).

The data collection instruments used by the Network were revised substantially in FY 2020 to streamline interviews with participants and solicit more meaningful information on certain issues. Responses to the new (or revised) questions are available for all participants who had their initial interview during the reporting period. Those who first entered Aftercare prior to July 1, 2019 responded to the older version of the intake interview. Young people exiting services during the year, regardless of when they first accessed services, responded to the new interview. These differences are noted in the report when the discrepancies are relevant to the data being presented. Questions related to changes in the data collection instruments may be directed to the Youth Policy Institute of Iowa.

Efforts are made to ensure the accuracy of the data, but there remain limitations to the quality of the data. The information is based largely on self-reports by youth and many of the topics covered in the participant interviews are sensitive (*e.g.*, high-risk behaviors). Although aggregate data is quite consistent year-to-year, some participants may not provide consistent or truthful answers. Participants may also decline to answer certain questions. Additionally, data is collected and entered by multiple interviewers. These limitations to the quality of data create a margin of error in the results presented in this report.

Given the frequent references to the reporting period throughout this report, State Fiscal Years (SFY) will only be noted when necessary (*e.g.*, when comparing SFY 2021 data to SFY 2020 data for the same interview question). Readers can assume that data presented without reference to a specific SFY is relevant to the current annual reporting period (SFY 2021).

COVID-19 Response

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic affected the delivery of Aftercare services throughout the year. The Network continued to comply with mitigation recommendations and implement safety precautions,

including relying on virtual meetings, asking screening questions before meeting in person, and practicing social distancing as appropriate. Moreover, COVID-related disruptions in employment, education, and other activities were experienced by many Aftercare participants. In response, the Network worked to adapt its services and leverage resources to address the needs of participants and other foster care alumni at both the individual and systems levels.

The Aftercare Network, with leadership from YSS and YPII, helped develop and implement Iowa's plan for using supplemental federal funds from the Consolidated Appropriations Act (CAA) to help older youth (through age 26) with foster care experience recover from the COVID pandemic. In collaboration with DHS, this work has included:

- Setting aside a portion of the annual Aftercare budget to help meet COVID-related financial needs of participants;
- Gathering information from young people through the IASN annual participant survey to inform Iowa's CAA plan for older foster youth;
- Participating in numerous meetings with DHS and others to develop elements of the plan;
- Staying abreast of national guidance and information from other state examples;
- Designing and maintaining an on-line portal for applications for pandemic relief direct payments to youth and processing those payments for youth verified as eligible by DHS;
- Doing outreach and providing additional assistance to young adults who requested it;
- Developing and implementing a marketing and awareness strategy that includes a webpage with information on Iowa's full plan; earned media (local news stories on several TV stations around the state); direct mail; and other outreach efforts.

A central feature of Iowa's pandemic relief plan for foster youth and alumni is direct payments to young adults ages 18 – 26 who had aged out of foster care. As of the end of SFY 2021, under an amendment to the Aftercare contract, YSS had distributed more than \$600,000 in pandemic relief payments to individual youth. Work on the CAA pandemic relief effort will continue through the next fiscal year. Separate financial and narrative reports will provide more detail on these efforts.

State Fiscal Year 2021 Highlights

New Participants

The number of young people aging out of foster care and other court-ordered placements in Iowa has declined over recent years, which has translated to a decreasing number of new entries into Aftercare services. Of young adults, ages 18-21, who received Aftercare Core services this reporting period, 177 accessed the services for the first time.

Demographic and initial interview data illustrate the characteristics and circumstances of these youth as they transition to early adulthood. The impact of child welfare and juvenile justice policy direction and priorities, such as the recent emphasis on family-like placements and maintaining family connections, can be detected in the data collected from those aging out of these systems and entering Aftercare (*See trend data presented on pages 13 and 17*).

- Four in five new intakes (80.1%) were under 18½ when accessing Aftercare; and three-quarters accessed services within three months of being discharged from care. The median lapse between a young person's discharge from the system and Aftercare intake was 21 days.
- Among all new intakes, 52.5% identified as male, 47.5% as female. The racial/ethnic distribution of new Aftercare participants has not changed significantly in recent years and is consistent with the population of older youth in placement. Participants can identify with multiple races and separately report whether or not they identify as Hispanic or Latino. Among SFY 2021 intakes, 58.5% selected White as their only race and identified as non-Hispanic, an increase from last year when 49.5% of youth identified as non-Hispanic, White only.
- In SFY 2021, the last placement of just over half (52%) of new participants was a family like setting (Licensed Family Foster Home, Relative, Adoption or Subsidized Guardianship, or Suitable Other placement); an increase from 34% of new intakes last year. Last placement of nineteen of the new participants was the State Training School (STS) or detention.
- For the first time in several years, more than half (50.5%) of first-time participants entered Aftercare without a high school diploma or equivalent. After peaking in SFY 2018 when 71% of youth had already completed high school at intake, this is the third year of a decline in the proportion of youth entering Aftercare with a high school credential. At the same time, more youth report being enrolled in an education program at intake, including 44% who were enrolled in high school or a H.S. equivalency program.
- In an increase from last year, just over half of new participants reported being employed full- or part-time at intake (51.4%), rising from 39.5% last year.
- Just over half (52.5%) of young people entering Aftercare are living with biological or adoptive family members or a former foster family. Another 26.6% are living with friends, roommates, or a significant other, while 11.9% are living alone with no other adults. A small number (4%) are couch surfing (no fixed address) or are living on the street.
- A small percentage of new participants (6.8%) started services as parents, which includes 10.7% of females and 3.2% of males.

Core Services Participants

A total of 602 young people received “Core” services during the year, with an average of 403 served per month.

Of the Core service participants, 542 were Aftercare PLUS, meaning that they could receive a PAL stipend if education, employment and/or income conditions were met. From the 542 potentially eligible, 380 participants (70.1%) met these conditions and received a PAL stipend at least once during the year. Both overall and PAL participation in Core services declined from the previous year.

A total of 249 young people exited Core services during the reporting period and did not return prior to the end of the period. The most prevalent reason for young people exiting Core services was turning 21 and therefore becoming ineligible (46.6%).

Youth leaving services (with or without an exit interview), had an average duration in the program of 1.76 years. Because duration is measured as the time between a participant’s initial entrance and their most recent exit, total duration does not necessarily equate to continuous participation in services.

Extended Services Participants

SFY 2021 was the first full fiscal year that IASN provided “Extended” Aftercare services for young adults ages 21 and 22 who had previously received “Core” services (ages 18-21). A total of 210 young people received Extended Services. Seventy-eight (78) young people participated in both “Core” and “Extended” services during the year leaving an unduplicated total number of youth served by the Network of 733.

Extended services are less structured than Core services and are designed to be responsive to those young adults who want or need additional support as they continue on a path towards self-sufficiency. The following data reflect the circumstances reported by Extended services participants at their last month of contact with an Advocate during SFY 2021.

- 74% were working full- or part-time.
- 24% were enrolled in an education program..
- 93% reported that they had safe and stable housing.
- 98% reported that they had a supportive relationship with a positive adult.
- 63% indicated that they had enough money to cover their expenses the prior month.

Outcomes for Participants Exiting Core Services

Aftercare outcomes analysis compares initial intake data with the last exit interview data for those who were active Core services recipients (ages 18-21) for at least three months, exited services during the reporting period, and did not return before the end of the reporting period (June 30, 2021). Outcome data is presented for the full group of 164 young adults and two sub-groups based on PAL participation (132 PAL recipients and 32 “non-PAL” participants).

- More than half (52.8%) of this group participated over a period of at least 2.5 years and two-thirds (65.2%) were involved over a period of at least two years. Because duration is measured as the time between a participant’s initial entrance and their most recent exit, the total duration can include lapses in participation.
- The length of time young people voluntarily engage in Aftercare services is a positive indication that they find value in the support they receive from IASN. Moreover, the policy of automatically

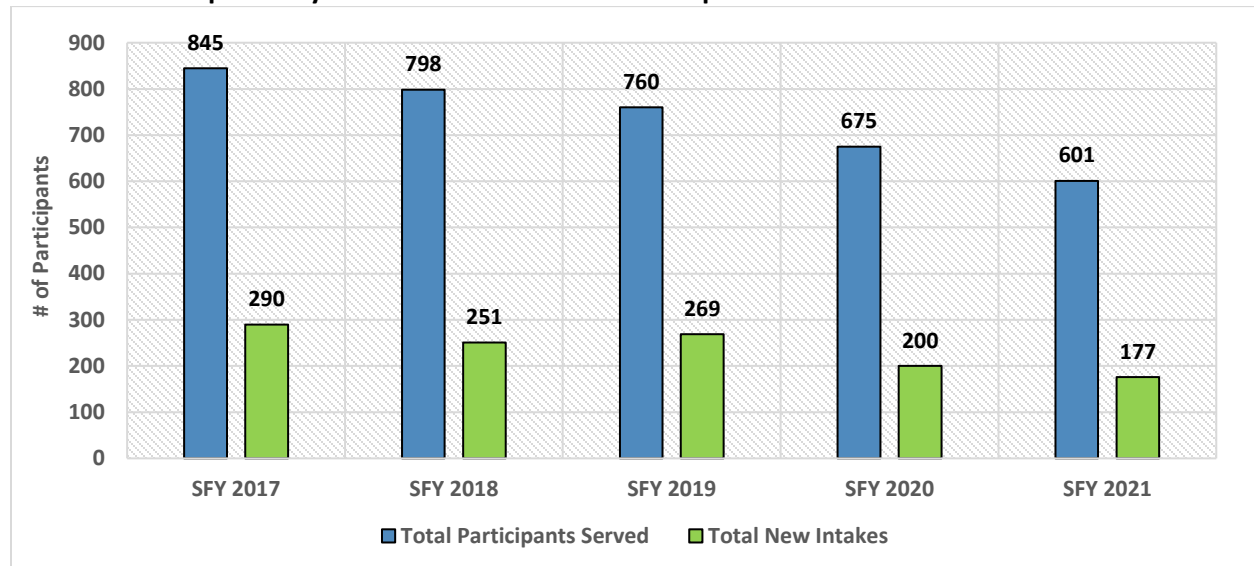
decreasing the monthly PAL stipend as participants get older, which was first implemented in January 2020, does not appear to be impacting the length of time participants remain engaged in Aftercare services.

- Employment (full- or part-time) increased from 44.5% to 62.8% between intake and exit in SFY 2021. About half (49.4%) of the participants reported working at least 25 hours or more per week at exit, more than double this level of employment at intake (21.9%). *(Five year trends in full or part-time employment at intake and exit are presented on page 27.)*
- More than half of this year's outcomes group reported zero earned income when they first accessed services. The proportion of participants with zero income drops significantly (57.9% to 32.9%), while those earning \$800 or more per month more than triples (10.4% to 35.3%) from intake to exit. While their earnings increase while in Aftercare, it is still difficult for many participants to meet their expenses (especially with earned income alone) as they take on adult responsibilities. One in four young people reported not having enough resources to cover their expenses the prior month at both intake and exit.
- At intake, 83.5% of the Outcomes Group were living with family members, friends, or other unrelated adults. At exit, this number was less, but two-thirds (66.5%) of these young people continued to live with other adults. Conversely, the number living alone more than doubled from intake (12.8%) to exit (25.6%).
- Whether by choice or necessity, episodes of homelessness, including "couch surfing" remain relatively common among this population. While only 1.2% of exiting participants indicated they did not have a fixed address or were homeless at time of exit, 27.4% said they had been homeless at some point since aging out of foster care or last court-ordered placement.
- Among this year's outcomes group (most of whom accessed Aftercare two to three years ago), 72.6% had earned a high school credential prior to accessing Aftercare. This increased to 82.9% at exit, including 2.4% who had completed an Associate degree. One in four exiting participants were enrolled in a post-secondary education or training program at exit. *(Five year trends in high school completion at intake and exit are presented on page 30.)*
- Aftercare participants' secondary completion (82.9%) compares favorably to both state and national NYTD survey results. At age 21, 75% of NYTD respondents in Iowa (and 70% nationally) had earned a High School Diploma or equivalent. Of concern, however, is the disparity in education attainment between non-Hispanic White youth and Youth of Color, with 90.5% of White, non-Hispanic youth having earned a high school credential or higher at exit, compared to 72.5% of Youth of Color.
- When first accessing services, 8.5% of this year's outcomes group were parents. This increased to 27.4% at exit. Of all parents, 91.1% reported either having custody of or being regularly involved in the lives of their child(ren).
- Nearly all participants have health insurance when they enter and exit services. At exit, most participants (97.6%) rely on Medicaid. About half (52.4%) had prescribed medications at intake and about one-third (35.4%) at exit.

Part I: Characteristics of New Participants

A total of 602 young adults, ages 18-21, received Core Aftercare services between July 1, 2020 and June 30, 2021. Of these participants, **177 accessed services for the first time**. Over the last five years, the Network has served an average of 736 young people per year, and an average of 237 participants each year have been new intakes.

Participation by State Fiscal Year – Total Participants Served and Total New Intakes



Year-to-year variation in the number of “new intakes” is influenced by the number of older youth “aging out” of Iowa’s child welfare and juvenile justice systems who are referred to and choose to participate in Aftercare. Iowa DHS estimates that about 400 youth ages 17.5 and older are discharged from a foster care or juvenile justice placement each year, making them potentially eligible for Aftercare services. Because Aftercare eligibility is based on several factors related to the age and placement experience of each young person, a precise number of youth becoming eligible for services is difficult to pinpoint. At best, however, only about half of young people who could receive Aftercare are referred and/or choose to participate.

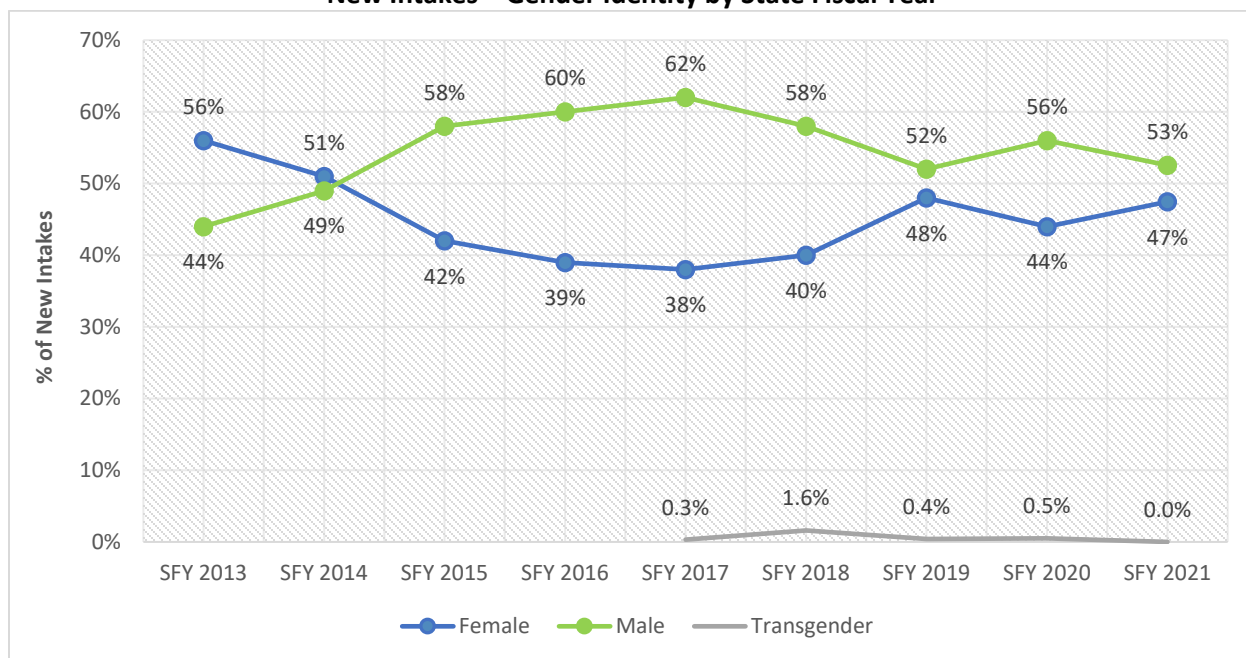
Part I of the report summarizes characteristics of young people at the time they first accessed IASN services, including year-to-year trends which help illustrate changes over time. Although not all eligible youth access IASN services, these data help demonstrate the circumstances of Iowa youth as they transition from foster care or other court-ordered placement to early adulthood.

Demographics

Four in five new intakes (80.1%) were under 18½ when accessing Aftercare. The 177 new intakes had a mean age of 18.4 and a median age of 18.1. Just 10% of participants were 19 or older at intake.

The gender balance among new intakes has shifted over the years as eligibility criteria has changed, most notably with the addition of boys from the State Training School in SFY 2015 to the eligible population. Of all new intakes in SFY 2021, 52.5% identified as male and 47.5% as female (none identified as transgender or other). Not including those who aged out of STS (19 total), the remaining 158 new intakes were 53.2% female and 46.8% male.

New Intakes – Gender Identity by State Fiscal Year



The racial/ethnic distribution of new Aftercare participants has not changed significantly in recent years and generally reflects the population of older youth in placement. About three-fourths of new intakes identify as “White or Caucasian” each year (74.0% in SFY 2021) and roughly one-fourth identify as “Black or African American” (24.9% in SFY 2021). A small proportion of youth identified as “American Indian or Alaska Native” (5.1%) and about 2.8% as “Asian” in SFY 2021. Participants can identify with multiple races and separately report whether or not they identify as Hispanic or Latino. Among all new intakes, 58.5% selected White as their only race and identified as non-Hispanic, an increase from last year when 49.5% of youth identified as non-Hispanic, White only.

New Intakes – Racial/Ethnic Identity by State Fiscal Year

	SFY 2017	SFY 2018	SFY 2019	SFY 2020	SFY 2021
American Indian or Alaska Native	5.5%	3.2%	8.6%	5.5%	5.1%
Asian	0.7%	1.2%	0.4%	2.0%	2.8%
Black or African American	21.0%	20.8%	31.6%	25.0%	24.9%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	1.0%	1.6%	0.4%	0.0%	0.6%
White	79.3%	74.4%	69.1%	77.5%	74.0%
Multiracial	12.8%	12.0%	14.5%	14.5%	12.4%
Hispanic or Latino (of any Race)	16.2%	16.0%	9.7%	13.5%	11.9%

Note: because participants can identify with more than one race/ethnicity, total percentages exceed 100%

Aftercare services are available to youth statewide; young people entered Aftercare in 56 of Iowa’s 99 counties during the reporting period, an increase from the 45 counties in which youth accessed services last year. One-third of all new intakes were in Polk (32) and Linn (26) Counties. Seven counties had five to seven new intakes, and sixteen counties had two to four. At the other end of the scale, 31 counties had just one new participant access services.

New Intakes – County of Residence

	#	%		#	%
<i>Polk</i>	32	18.2%	<i>Buena Vista</i>	1	0.6%
<i>Linn</i>	26	14.8%	<i>Clarke</i>	1	0.6%
<i>Black Hawk</i>	7	4.0%	<i>Crawford</i>	1	0.6%
<i>Cerro Gordo</i>	7	4.0%	<i>Dallas</i>	1	0.6%
<i>Dubuque</i>	7	4.0%	<i>Decatur</i>	1	0.6%
<i>Woodbury</i>	6	3.4%	<i>Dickinson</i>	1	0.6%
<i>Johnson</i>	5	2.8%	<i>Emmet</i>	1	0.6%
<i>Marshall</i>	5	2.8%	<i>Grundy</i>	1	0.6%
<i>Pottawattamie</i>	5	2.8%	<i>Guthrie</i>	1	0.6%
<i>Clinton</i>	4	2.3%	<i>Hardin</i>	1	0.6%
<i>Muscatine</i>	4	2.3%	<i>Harrison</i>	1	0.6%
<i>Story</i>	4	2.3%	<i>Humboldt</i>	1	0.6%
<i>Webster</i>	4	2.3%	<i>Ida</i>	1	0.6%
<i>Floyd</i>	3	1.7%	<i>Iowa</i>	1	0.6%
<i>Kossuth</i>	3	1.7%	<i>Jackson</i>	1	0.6%
<i>Lee</i>	3	1.7%	<i>Jasper</i>	1	0.6%
<i>Plymouth</i>	3	1.7%	<i>Jefferson</i>	1	0.6%
<i>Scott</i>	3	1.7%	<i>Jones</i>	1	0.6%
<i>Bremer</i>	2	1.1%	<i>Madison</i>	1	0.6%
<i>Calhoun</i>	2	1.1%	<i>Mahaska</i>	1	0.6%
<i>Monroe</i>	2	1.1%	<i>Marion</i>	1	0.6%
<i>O'Brien</i>	2	1.1%	<i>Palo Alto</i>	1	0.6%
<i>Shelby</i>	2	1.1%	<i>Pocahontas</i>	1	0.6%
<i>Tama</i>	2	1.1%	<i>Ringgold</i>	1	0.6%
<i>Warren</i>	2	1.1%	<i>Union</i>	1	0.6%
<i>Adair</i>	1	0.6%	<i>Van Buren</i>	1	0.6%
<i>Adams</i>	1	0.6%	<i>Wapello</i>	1	0.6%
<i>Buchanan</i>	1	0.6%	<i>Winneshiek</i>	1	0.6%

Placement Characteristics

To facilitate the transition from the formal child welfare or juvenile justice system to voluntary services available after age 18, youth may be referred to Aftercare once they turn 17. These “Pre-Aftercare” services provide an opportunity for Advocates to establish a relationship with young people and help with their transition from placement to adulthood.

A total of 51 youth who completed an intake for Core Aftercare services in SFY 2021, had received “Pre-services” from IASN before being discharged from care. Most commonly, an Aftercare Advocate participated in Transition staffings and/or Youth Transition Decision Making (YTDM) meetings as part of Pre-services. Advocates also assisted youth in areas of education, employment, housing and connecting youth to community resources as they prepared to transition out of care.

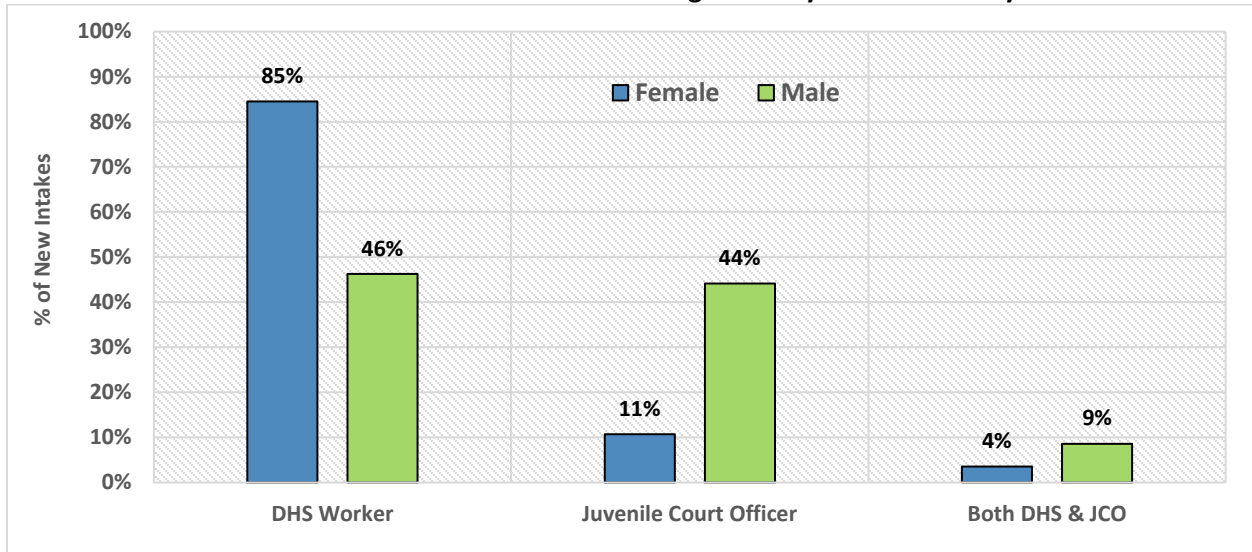
Aftercare participants tend to initiate services very soon after their exit from the system. Of new intakes, 75% accessed services within three months of being discharged from care, while 15% began participating in Aftercare more than six months after leaving foster care. Those with a longer lapse before initiating Aftercare services include those who exit care to adoption or subsidized guardianship after the age of 16 but do not become eligible for Aftercare services until age 18. It also includes those who leave care between age 17.5 and 18 and also are not eligible for Core services until age 18.

The median lapse between their discharge from the system and Aftercare intake was 21 days. Even though Aftercare is a voluntary program, efforts by DHS caseworkers, Juvenile Court Officers (JCOs) and others is critical to ensuring that young people are aware of and connected to Aftercare services.

DHS workers provide case management for youth who have been placed in foster care for any circumstance that designates them as a Child in Need of Assistance (CINA). If delinquency was the reason for placement, a JCO generally handles the case. Two-thirds (64.4%) of new intakes had a DHS social worker during their placement (an increase from 56.5% in SFY 2020); 28.8% had a JCO, and 6.2% had both.

Females accessing Aftercare are much more likely to have a DHS worker than a JCO (84.5% vs. 10.7%), while males who accessed Aftercare are about evenly split in terms of JCS versus DHS involvement while in out-of-home placement.

New Intakes – DHS v. JCS Case Management by Gender Identity



Many young people accessing Aftercare services have experienced lengthy stays in foster care and many have multiple placements. Three out of five youth (61.6%) reported spending two or more years in foster care and 61% reported three or more placements.

Aftercare participants leave the system from a variety of foster care placement types. In SFY 2021, the last placement of just over half (52%) of new participants was a family like setting (Family foster home [non-relative], Relative, Adoption or Subsidized Guardianship, or Suitable other placement); this is an increase from 34% of new intakes last year. Another quarter (23.7%) of new participants aged out of a QRTP or shelter, which is similar to last year; and one out of ten (11.9%) came into Aftercare from a Supervised Apartment Living setting (down from 19.5% last year). Of new participants in SFY 2021, 22 youth (12.4% of intakes), were discharged from the State Training School or a detention facility prior to accessing Aftercare.

The Department of Human Services has emphasized the use of family-like placements, including relatives and suitable others, for all children and youth in foster care over the last few years. Also beginning in SFY 2021, the Department revised Aftercare rules to allow youth aging out of non-licensed relative or suitable other placements to be eligible for PAL if other criteria were met. These policies resulted in more youth from these placement types accessing Aftercare services (from an average of 7.5% of all new intakes in recent years, to 24.3% of new intakes in SFY 2021).

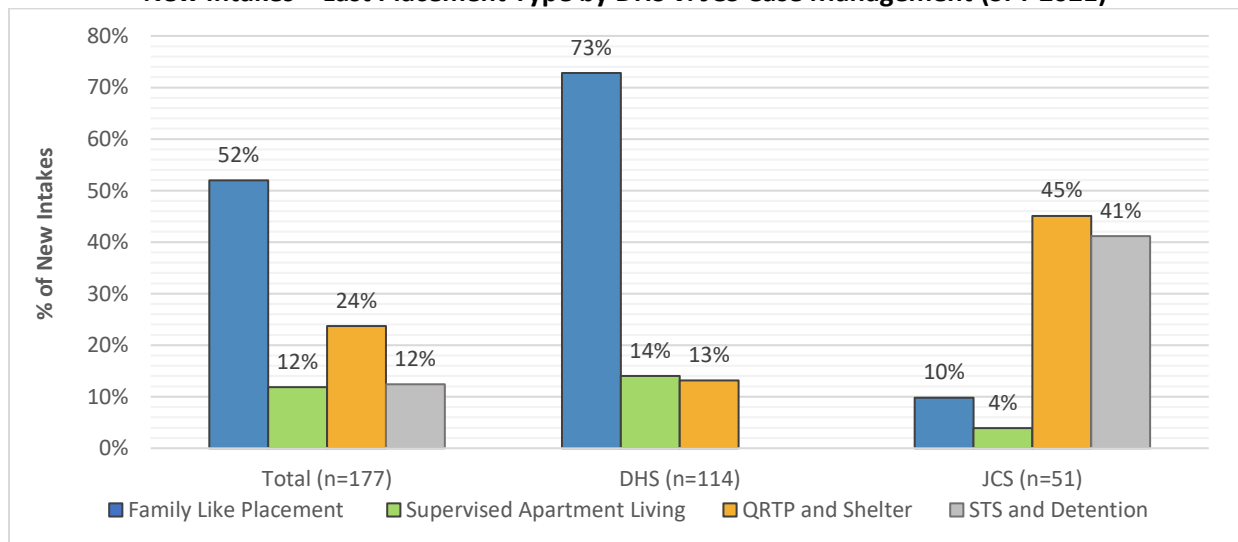
There has also been a decrease in the number of youth exiting the State Training School and detention facilities over the last few years as the population in those placements has also declined. And those who exited a SAL placement declined proportionately. The table below shows five-year trends in the last placement type of new Aftercare participants.

New Intakes – Last Placement Type by State Fiscal Year

	SFY 2017	SFY 2018	SFY 2019	SFY 2020	SFY 2021
Family-Like					
<i>Adoption/Sub. Guardianship</i>	0.3%	0.8%	1.1%	0.0%	1.7%
<i>Family Foster Home (non-relative)</i>	24.5%	28.3%	30.5%	26.5%	26.0%
<i>Relative</i>	5.2%	4.0%	5.2%	4.5%	14.1%
<i>Suitable other</i>	3.5%	3.2%	2.2%	3.0%	10.2%
Congregate					
<i>Group Home/PMIC/Q RTP</i>	22.8%	15.1%	17.5%	23.0%	15.3%
<i>Shelter</i>	7.6%	11.6%	7.1%	6.5%	8.5%
STS/Detention					
<i>STS</i>	16.2%	16.3%	15.6%	14.0%	10.7%
<i>Detention</i>	1.4%	1.2%	2.6%	1.5%	1.7%
Supervised Apartment Living (SAL)	18.6%	19.5%	18.2%	19.5%	11.9%

As shown in the table below, there are substantial differences in the last placement type between youth whose cases were managed by DHS contrasted with JCS. DHS is more likely to use family-like placements, while JCS is more likely to utilize residential facilities for placements of older youth.

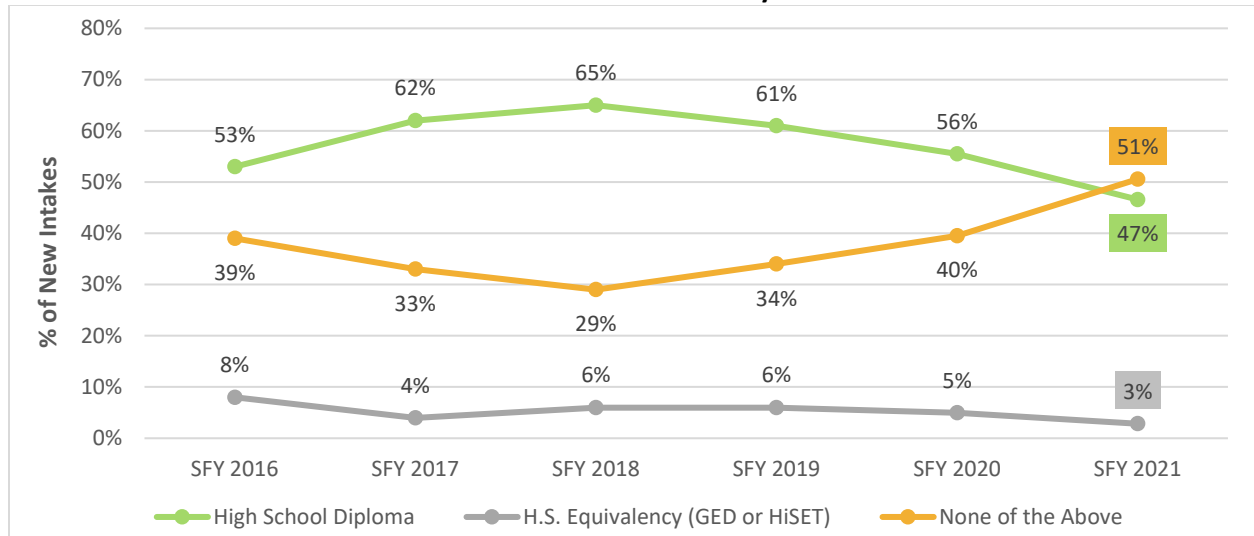
New Intakes – Last Placement Type by DHS v. JCS Case Management (SFY 2021)



Education

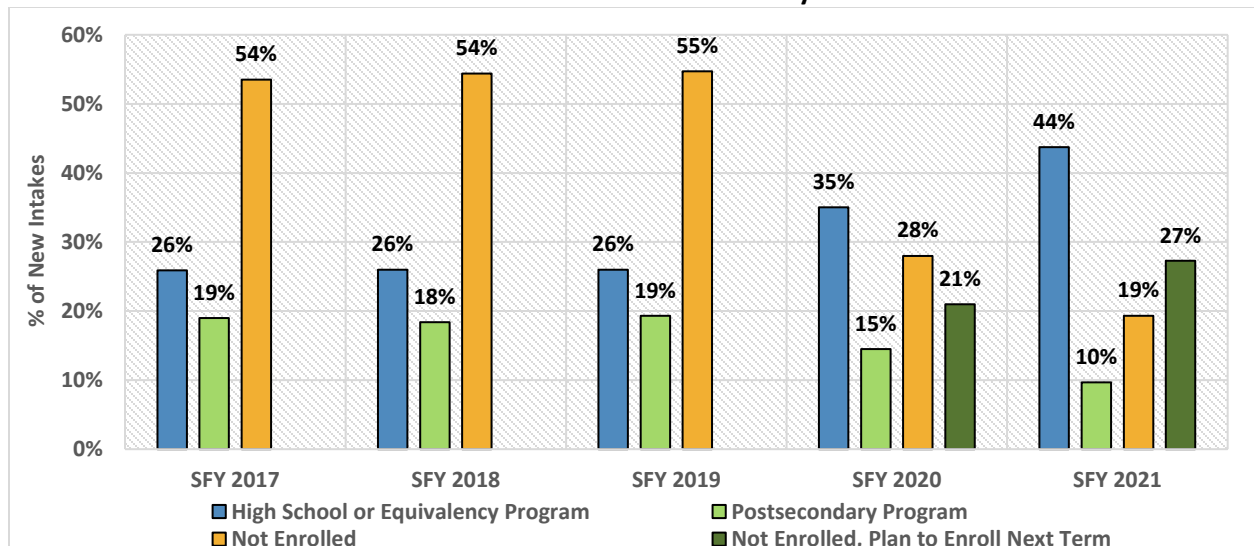
For the first time in several years, more than half (50.5%) of first-time participants entered Aftercare without a high school diploma or equivalent. After peaking in SFY 2018 when 71% of youth had already completed high school at intake, this is the third year of a decline in the proportion of youth entering Aftercare with a high school credential. It is likely that disruptions in education and placements resulting from the pandemic have impacted these numbers, but it is unclear how much of this trend is pandemic-related.

New Intakes – Education Attainment by State Fiscal Year



At the same time, more youth report being enrolled in an education program at intake. Of new intakes in SFY 2021, 53% were enrolled and another 19.3% had plans to enroll in an education program for the upcoming term. This includes 43.8% who were enrolled in high school or a H.S. equivalency program and 10% who were enrolled in a postsecondary program at the time they accessed services.

New Intakes – Education Enrollment Status by State Fiscal Year



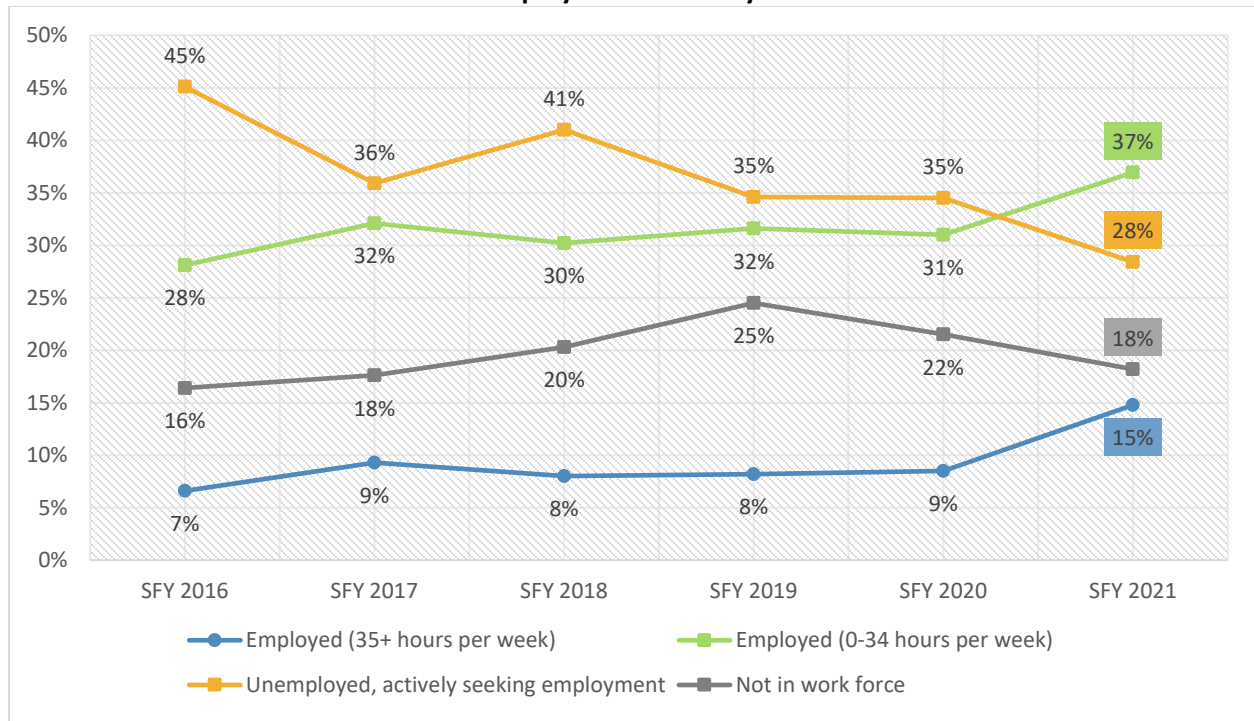
* “Not currently enrolled, but plan to enroll in the upcoming term” was a new answer option for the education enrollment status interview question beginning in SFY 2020.

Because Iowa policy allows youth to continue in voluntary foster care until their 20th birthday if they are still in high school, many of these youth could remain in care with the supports and stability that provides while completing their secondary education, but they choose not to stay or are not made aware of that opportunity. It is also important to note that 40% of youth accessing Aftercare report having received special education services, such as an Individual Education Plan or 504 accommodation, before exiting foster care.

Employment and Finances

In an increase from last year, just over half of new participants reported being employed at some level at intake (51.4%), rising from 39.5% last year. Another 28.3% reported being unemployed but “actively seeking employment.” Those who reported they were “not in the work force” has decreased the last two years from 25% in SFY 2019 to 17.5% in SFY 2021. This may reflect the availability of jobs and overall increase in labor force participation as the economy recovered from the pandemic.

New Intakes – Employment Status by State Fiscal Year



As employment increased among new participants, earned income also rose in SFY 2021. Those reporting monthly earned, “take-home” income of \$1 - \$799 increased from 29.5% last year to 36.7% this year at intake. Similarly, the proportion reporting net earned income of more than \$800 monthly at intake increased from 10.5% last year to 14.1% this year. And, although improving, almost half of young people who age out enter Aftercare services with zero monthly income (49% in SFY 2021 compared to 60% in SFY 2020).

Most youth enter Aftercare in possession of their essential personal documents. In SFY 2021 a large majority reported possessing a birth certificate (87%), Social Security card (82%), and government-issued identification, such as a State ID, Driver’s License, or Permanent Resident Card (78%). However, only 42.3% reported having a Driver’s License (an increase from 37.5% last year) and nearly half (48.6%) reported they “have never been able to get a Driver’s License but want one.”

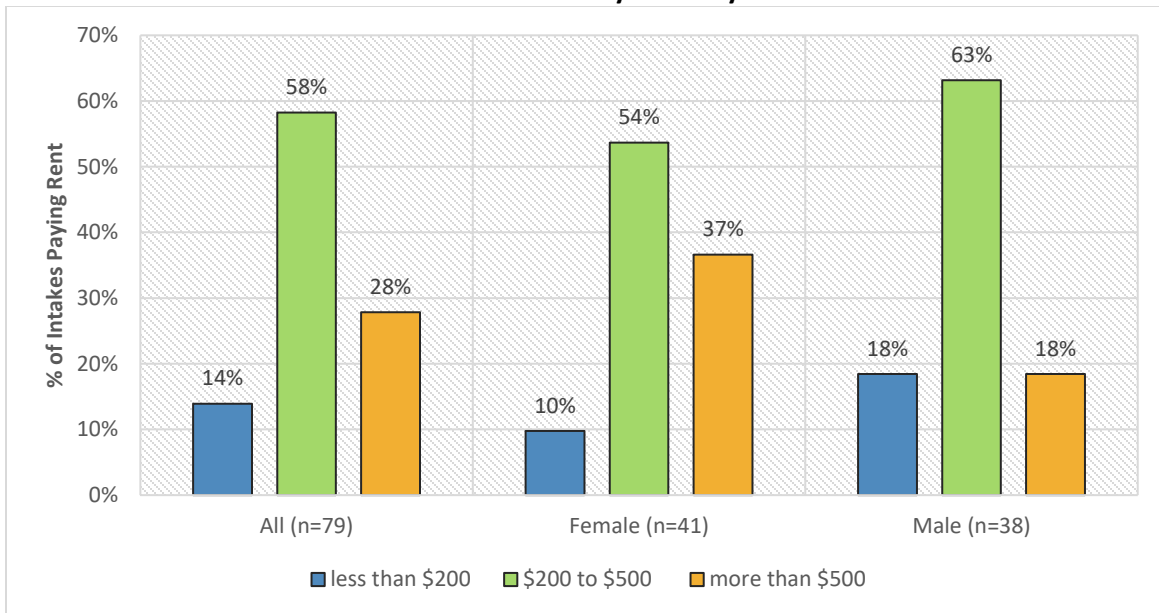
Living Situation

Just over half (52.5%) of young people entering Aftercare are living with biological or adoptive family members or a former foster family. Another 26.6% are living with friends, roommates, or a significant other, while 11.9% are living alone with no other adults. A small number (4%) are couch surfing (no fixed address) or are living on the street.

Despite what is usually a brief lapse between aging out of foster care and joining Aftercare, 15.3% of new intakes said they had been homeless since aging out of their last placement and 34.5% reported experiencing homelessness at any point in their life.

Finding and maintaining safe and affordable housing can be a challenge for transition-age youth, and the cost of housing is often mentioned as a significant barrier to self-sufficiency for these young people. About 45% of youth are paying rent at the time of intake, and of those, nearly half report that more than half their monthly income (earned and unearned) goes toward rent and utilities.

New Intakes – Rent Payments by Gender



Supportive Relationships

Having positive connections to supportive adults is critical to a successful transition to adulthood. Although youth aging out of the system are not being discharged to permanency, they still feel connected to their families and other important adults in their lives. More than nine-out-of-ten (92.7%) said they had at least one family member they “will always be able to turn to for support, advice, [to] share or celebrate personal achievements, [or to] help solve problems.” This reflects a five-year high in the percentage of youth who reported having a positive connection with family. Family members frequently cited by youth as being available to support them included: Extended family members (57.0%), birth parents (45.2%), “fictive kin” (46.3%), adult siblings (37.9%), and adoptive parents (15.3%).

In addition, 89.8% of youth report having other adults who support them. Frequently reported non-family supports included “adult friends” (64.4%), caseworkers (38.4%), significant others (31.6%), foster parents (26%), and teachers or coaches (23.2%). Five-year trends in supportive relationships are shown below. One-third of new participants indicated that they were in a committed relationship with a significant other at the time of intake.

New Intakes, Supportive Adults by State Fiscal Year

	SFY 2017	SFY 2018	SFY 2019	SFY 2020	SFY 2021
Adult family member I will always be able to turn to for support...	86.2%	86.5%	86.6%	87.0%	92.7%
Adult, non-family member, I will always be able to turn to for support...	91.4%	92.0%	90.7%	92.5%	89.8%

Health

Iowa youth exiting foster care are largely enrolled in Medicaid; 91.5% of new intakes reported Medicaid coverage; however, young men were less likely to report Medicaid coverage (86%) than young women (97.5%). Only 2.3% indicated that they did not have any medical insurance. Of all new participants, 62% reported having a primary care physician or health care group where they regularly receive health care.

The decreasing trend in tobacco use among new intakes continued in SFY 2021, with only one in five youth reporting current tobacco use (half of the percentage reported four years ago). At the same time, vape (*e.g.*, E-cigarettes and other vaping devices) may be replacing tobacco use. A new data element on vaping was added during SFY 2020 shows that “vaping” has more than doubled from 12% of new participants in SFY 2020 to 26.6% in SFY 2021.

New Intakes – Recent Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Use by State Fiscal Year

	SFY 2017	SFY 2018	SFY 2019	SFY 2020	SFY 2021
Alcohol to intoxication	10.7%	8.8%	14.5%	13.5%	12.4%
Tobacco	40.3%	37.5%	35.7%	34.0%	20.3%
Vaping	N/A	N/A	N/A	12.0%	26.6%
Marijuana	14.8%	13.6%	15.2%	19.0%	15.8%

Sexual and Reproductive Health and Parenting

A small percentage of new participants (6.8%) started services as parents, which includes 10.7% of females and 3.2% of males. As in prior years, females reported they had “been pressured into a sexual situation” at significantly higher rates than males (40.5% vs. 9.7%). Self-reported regular use of birth control also differs between males and females, with more than half (57%) of females reporting that they “always” use birth control compared to 26% of males.

New Intakes – Reproductive Health Factors by Gender Identity

	Female (n=84)	Male (n=93)
Are a parent (regardless of custody)	10.7%	3.2%
Ever pregnant/got someone pregnant	23.8%	7.5%
Always use birth control	57.1%	25.8%
Ever pressured into a sexual situation	40.5%	9.7%

Adverse Experiences

Young people exiting foster care or other placements frequently report mental health struggles, “high-risk” behaviors, and other challenges that can complicate the transition to adulthood. When participants access services, Advocates conduct initial interviews in person and ask the participant to self-report their wellbeing through a variety of specific questions. Because these questions cover personal and often sensitive topics, this self-reported information should be interpreted with caution. These

questions were recently revised, so comparable data is not available for some data elements for prior years.

New Intakes – Adverse Experiences by State Fiscal Year

	SFY 2017	SFY 2018	SFY 2019	SFY 2020	SFY 2021
Ever inflicted self-harm	32.8%	30.3%	32.3%	33.0%	29.4%
Ever attempted suicide	29.0%	27.5%	27.5%	34.5%	25.4%
Incarcerated/detained, past two years	48.9%	46.6%	45.7%	43.0%	36.7%
Mental health diagnosis, past three years	N/A			48.5%	50.3%
Current counseling/therapy				25.5%	28.3%
Substance abuse diagnosis, past 3 years				27.0%	15.3%
Current substance abuse treatment				3.0%	3.4%
Ever victim of domestic violence				40.5%	33.9%
Ever victim of sexual abuse/exploitation				28.5%	29.9%

Numerous studies have shown that youth aging out of foster care and other placements exhibit greater prevalence of adverse experiences and risky behaviors than their same age peers. There are also gender differences among those entering Aftercare. As shown in the table below, gender differences are seen in both adverse experiences and in the frequency of receiving services related to those experiences.

New Intakes – Adverse Experiences by Gender Identity

	Female (n=84)	Male (n=93)
Ever inflicted self-harm	36.9%	22.6%
Ever attempted suicide	33.3%	18.3%
Incarcerated/detained, past two years	22.6%	49.5%
Mental health diagnosis, past three years	57.1%	44.1%
Current counseling/therapy	41.7%	16.1%
Substance abuse diagnosis, past 3 years	13.1%	17.2%
Current substance abuse treatment	4.8%	2.2%
Ever victim of domestic violence	45.2%	23.7%
Ever victim of sexual abuse/exploitation	51.2%	10.8%

Part II: Overview of Services Provided

Part II of this report provides a brief overview of overall participation trends (yearly and monthly) and services provided by the Aftercare Network in SFY 2021. A total of 602 young people received “Core” services during the year, with an average of 403 served per month. STS/detention was the last placement of 82 participants (13.7%) of all those served in SFY 2021. On average, 56 of these individuals participated each month. In addition, 210 young people (ages 21 and 21) received “Extended Services.” Seventy-eight (78) young people participated in both “Core” and “Extended” services during the year leaving an unduplicated total number of youth served of 733.

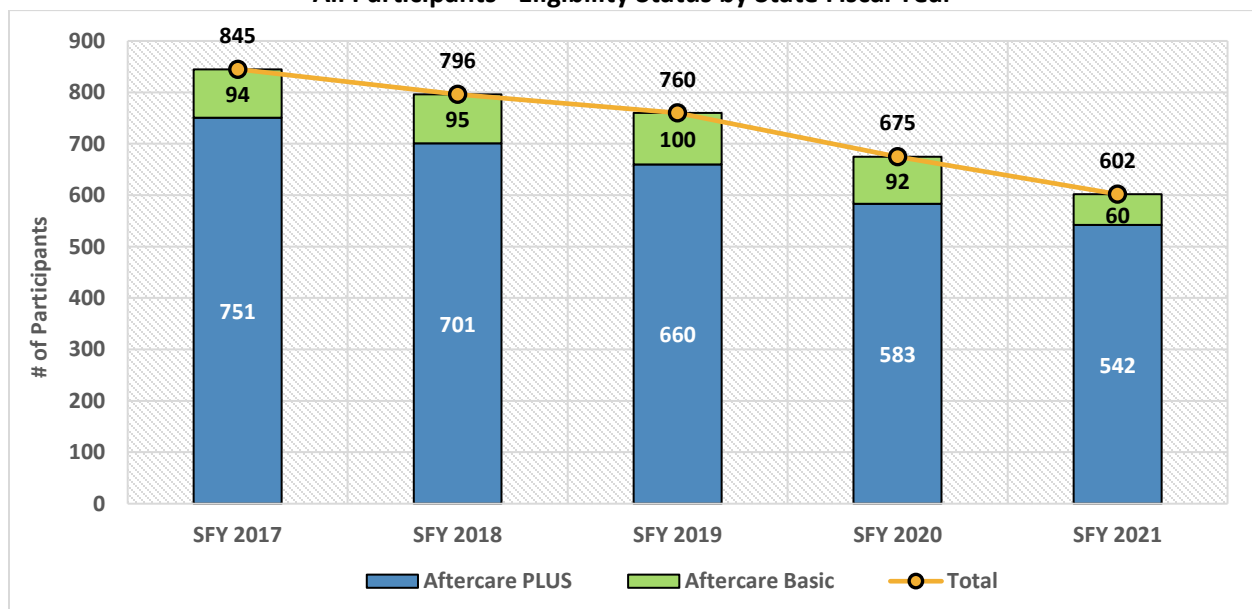
Eligibility Status

IASN categorizes participants as having either “Aftercare Basic” or “Aftercare PLUS” status as determined by program eligibility criteria. Because PAL eligibility requirements are more stringent than Aftercare requirements, some participants are eligible for Aftercare but ineligible for the PAL stipend. These participants have Aftercare Basic status. Those with Basic status will never qualify for PAL benefits (*i.e.*, monthly stipend), but receive Aftercare case management services and support, as well as limited, short-term financial assistance in the form of vendor payments. Participants that could receive a PAL stipend depending on their education and work status are designated as Aftercare PLUS.

Eligibility criteria for PAL was revised by the Department of Human Services in SFY 2021 to allow young people who aged out of “non-licensed relative care or suitable other” placements to receive PAL if other eligibility criteria were met. The status of 20 active youth who had previously been ineligible for PAL for this reason was updated to “Aftercare PLUS” to reflect the revised eligibility rules beginning in SFY 2021, along with any new participants who met the revised criteria.

Of the 602 participants in SFY 2021, 60 (9.96%) were eligible for Aftercare Basic only. Of these, 53 (8.8% of all participants) left their last placement before their 18th birthday or had not been in placement for six of the twelve months prior to aging out; and seven (1.2%) were adopted or placed in subsidized guardianship after the age of 16.

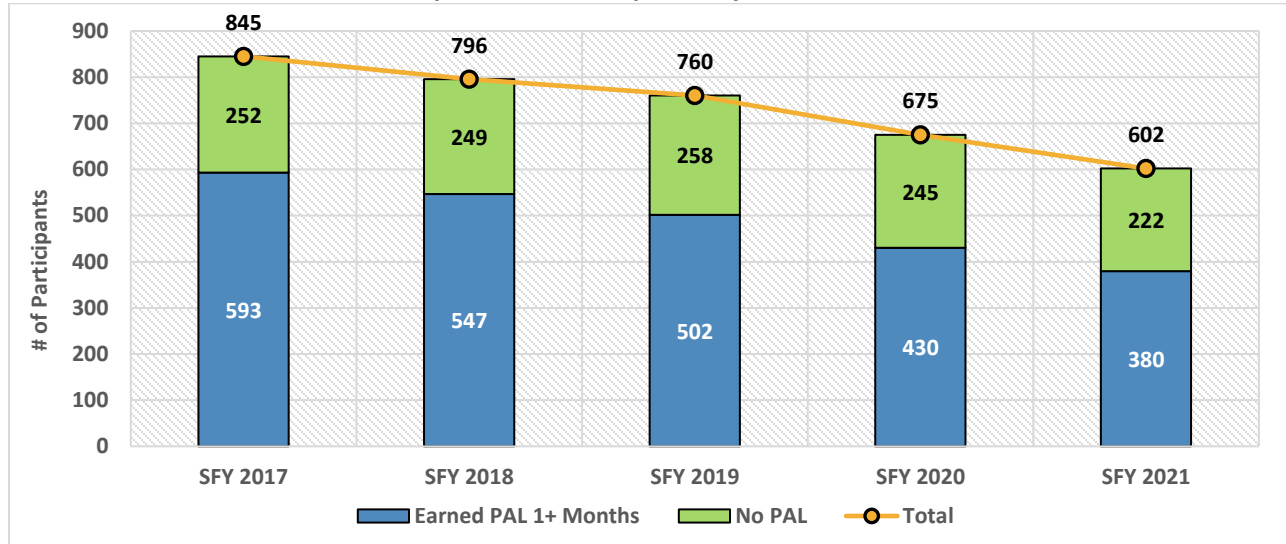
All Participants – Eligibility Status by State Fiscal Year



PAL Participation

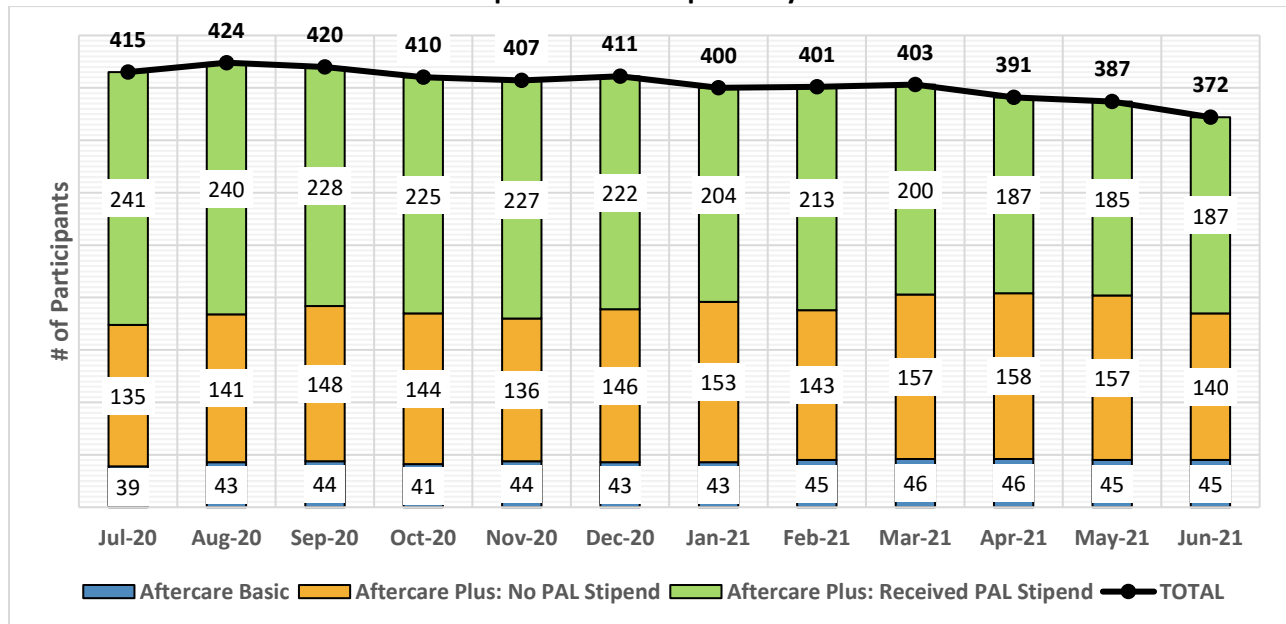
In total, 380 out of 542 Aftercare PLUS participants (70.1%) met all conditions and received a stipend at least once during the year and 162 (29.9%) did not. Reasons Aftercare PLUS participants may not receive a stipend include: a) they were still eligible for voluntary foster care (under age 20 and have not yet completed high school), b) they were not meeting PAL education or employment requirements, or c) their income (earned and unearned) was too high to qualify for the needs-based stipend. Many of these youth may qualify for PAL at some point as their circumstances change. Five-year and SFY 2021 monthly trends in PAL participation are shown in the charts below.

All Participants – PAL Recipients by State Fiscal Year



Among the 602 youth served in SFY 2021, 380 participants (63.1%) received a PAL stipend for at least one month of the reporting period and 222 participants (36.9%) did not. The 222 includes the 60 Aftercare Basic participants and the 162 Aftercare PLUS participants who did not receive a stipend during the year.

All Participants - PAL Recipients by Month



Services Provided

Each participant works individually with a Self-Sufficiency Advocate (SSA) that is assigned to them by their IASN agency. These SSAs meet in person with participants (ideally at least twice per month) to assess their needs, help them set and/or revise goals, identify action steps, and persist until they achieve those goals. SSAs offer support, guidance, and provide a range of information and life skill training according to participants' unique needs and interests.

In compliance with reporting requirements for the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD), the Network tracks the provision of specific services to participants and submits monthly reports to Iowa DHS. The table below shows the unduplicated number of youth who received each of the NYTD-defined services at least once during the reporting period. Because NYTD service definitions are very specific, this data is not an exhaustive list of the services provided by Aftercare Advocates.

Nearly all Aftercare participants received “mentoring” services (96.7%) and assistance with “budget and financial management” (93.9%). This reflects the mentoring relationship SSAs establish with their clients, as well as the program’s emphasis on financial capability (particularly monthly budgeting). Advocates also supported participants in a variety of other areas including career preparation, housing, and health education.

<i>All Participants – NYTD-Defined Services Provided</i>	#	%
Mentoring	582	96.7%
Budget and financial management	565	93.9%
Career preparation	479	79.6%
Housing education & home management training	467	77.6%
Health Education and risk prevention	460	76.4%
Other financial assistance	443	73.6%
Independent living needs assessment	424	70.4%
Family Support and Healthy Marriage Education	400	66.4%
Post-secondary educational support	269	44.7%
Employment programs or vocational training	164	27.2%
Academic support	161	26.7%
Room and Board financial assistance	155	25.7%
Education financial assistance	81	13.5%

Any participant receiving a PAL stipend or Aftercare vendor payment is recorded as receiving “other financial assistance.” The NYTD “Room and board financial assistance” category includes vendor payments used specifically for housing and the Chafee-funded Rent Subsidy program.

Rent Subsidy

Through a collaboration of the IASN, Iowa DHS, and Iowa Finance Authority (IFA), participants can access financial assistance for housing through a Rent Subsidy program. The program is designed to help Aftercare participants who are not receiving a PAL stipend meet the cost of housing (see Iowa Administrative Code 265, Chapter 22 for details). In May, 2021, DHS directed additional funds to IFA for the Rent Subsidy program from the Consolidated Appropriations Act. This allowed a temporary increase in the amount of the subsidy available to each recipient, up to the full cost of their rent. As a result, there was an overall increase in overall rent subsidy expenditures at the end of FY 2021.

Annual data from the Iowa Finance Authority shows that an average of 44 Aftercare participants utilized the Rent Subsidy program each month in SFY 2021. A total of \$212,151 (\$17,679 per month on average) was distributed during the year. Young people in 21 counties participated in the Rent Subsidy program during the 12-month period, with the greatest number of those residing in Polk, Linn, and Johnson Counties.

Participant Exits

Aftercare and PAL are voluntary programs, so eligible young adults are able to initiate and discontinue services as they choose if they meet eligibility requirements. As they move around the state, they may transfer from one IASN agency to another. In some cases, services may be discontinued when young people fail to meet the participant responsibilities established by the program. These young people may re-enter services when they are ready.

For these reasons, young people may have periodic lapses in their participation, and many participants enter and exit services multiple times. Advocates work to keep participants engaged as long as services are needed, but not all young people accept the services or fulfill the requirements of the program.

A total of 249 young people exited Aftercare during the reporting period and did not return prior to the end of the period. Youth leaving services (with or without an exit interview), had an average duration in the program of 1.76 years. Because duration is measured as the length between a participant's initial entrance and their most recent exit, the total duration does not necessarily equate to continuous participation in services.

Among all exiting participants, 167 (67.1%) completed an exit interview with an Advocate and 82 (32.9%) did not ("No Interview Exit" or NIX). In the case of NIXs, each participant's reason for exit is reported based on their Advocate's understanding of their circumstances, if known.

The most prevalent reason for young people being discharged from Core services was turning 21 and therefore becoming ineligible for that phase of services (46.6%). Additionally, 15.3% moved out of their agency's service area, including (3.2%) who were expected to transfer to a different Aftercare agency but had not yet done so at the end of the reporting period. Another 14.1% had their services discontinued for failing to meet "self-responsibility" requirements (not meeting regularly with an Advocate, not actively working toward self-sufficiency, etc.), 7.2% voluntarily chose to end services, and 8.0% were incarcerated, institutionalized, or hospitalized as the reason for exit.

<i>All Participants – Exits by Reason</i>	#	%
Turned 21 (end of eligibility for Core services); or achieved self-sufficiency	116	46.6%
Moving/has moved out of area (includes 8 pending transfer)	38	15.3%
Exited for not meeting self-responsibility requirements	35	14.1%
Voluntarily ended services	18	7.2%
Incarcerated, institutionalized, or hospitalized	20	8.0%
Other or unknown	22	8.8%

Although many participants have multiple entries and exits from services, a few never seem to fully engage with the program. Sixteen (16) individuals exited after less than three months of participation and did not return before the end of the fiscal year. Many of these young people remain eligible and may re-enter services in the future. With such a short duration of involvement with an Aftercare agency, this group of 19 is excluded from the outcomes analysis presented in Part III of this report.

Extended Aftercare Services

SFY 2021 was the first full fiscal year that IASN provided “Extended” Aftercare services for young adults ages 21 and 22 who had previously received “Core” services (ages 18-21). Extended services, which were first available in January 2020, are less structured than Core services and are designed to be responsive to those young adults who want or need additional support as they continue on a path towards self-sufficiency.

Extended services are different from Core services in two primary ways. First, expectations for meeting regularly with an Aftercare Advocate are relaxed. There is no pre-determined minimum contact for participants who qualify for Extended services to remain eligible. Participants in Extended services are able to determine the frequency of meetings based on their needs and interest. The second difference is participants in Extended services are not eligible for a monthly PAL stipend. Rather, they may receive limited financial support for approved uses in the form of “Extended Aftercare Supportive Payments” on a case-by-case basis.

In total, the Network served 210 youth across 12 agency locations with youth residing in 45 counties. The distribution of participants across agencies was similar to those receiving Core services. An average of 74 young adults participated in Extended services each month.

<i>Extended Services – Participants by Agency</i>	#	%
American Home Finding Association	7	3.3%
Children's Square USA	17	8.1%
Family Resources, Inc.	5	2.4%
Foundation 2	39	18.6%
Four Oaks	41	19.5%
Young House Family Services	6	2.9%
Youth Homes of Mid America	4	1.9%
YSS - Ames	6	2.9%
YSS - Francis Lauer Youth Services	9	4.3%
YSS - Hamilton County	20	9.5%
YSS - Iowa Homeless Youth Centers	43	20.5%
YSS - Marshall County	13	6.2%

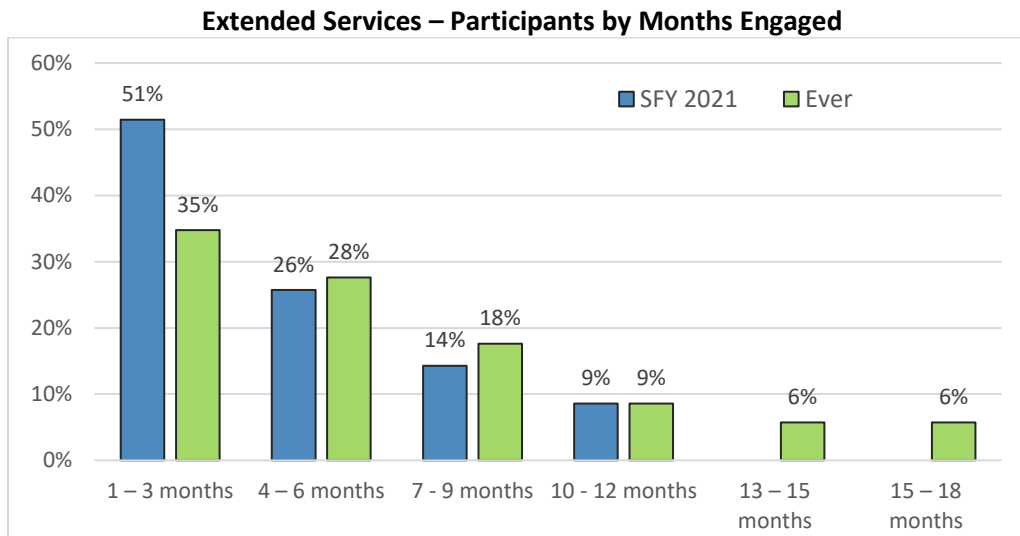
Most young people who elected Extended services had Aftercare PLUS status (86.2%). Compared to those exiting Core services², Extended participants were somewhat more likely to identify as female (58.6% vs. 53.8%) and to be parents (35.2% vs. 27.4%). Fifteen of those who received Extended services had aged out of the STS or detention.

Participants taking advantage of the Extended services met with an Advocate an average of four months in SFY 2021, but that number ranged from one to twelve months. Advocates reported a total of 1,013 points of contact (either in-person or virtually) with the 210 Extended services participants, meaning the average recipient of Extended services engaged with their Advocate about five times during the year, not including other contacts with the youth or made on their behalf.

Because Extended services were first offered in January 2020, an individual could have received these as-needed services for a maximum of 18 months if they became eligible in January 2020.

² For the purposes of comparison with Core Services participants, demographic data are for the SFY 2021 “outcomes group” (see Part III, who are predominantly age 21 at exit from Core services).

<i>Extended Services – Participants by Months Engaged</i>	SFY 2021		Ever	
	#	%	#	%
1 – 3 months	108	51.4%	73	34.8%
4 – 6 months	54	25.7%	58	27.6%
7 - 9 months	30	14.3%	37	17.6%
10 - 12 months	18	8.6%	18	8.6%
13 – 15 months	--	--	12	5.7%
15 – 18 months	--	--	12	5.7%



As previously mentioned, recipients of Extended services do not receive a regular PAL stipend. They may instead qualify for “Extended Aftercare Supportive Payments” which have a maximum amount of \$300 per quarter (\$1,200 per year) and are distributed on a case-by-case basis. For SFY 2021, the Network distributed Supportive Payments totaling \$91,718 or an average of \$436.75 per participant.

When young people’s eligibility for Core Aftercare services ends, they are encouraged to reach out for assistance if and when they need extra help or support up to age 23. For this reason, it is common for the youth accessing Extended services to be struggling financially or with other issues. Based on reports of Advocates, on average about 42% of young people sought Extended services for the primary purpose of accessing financial assistance; 45% met for guidance and/or support from the Advocate; and 12% met for help on accessing other resources.

The following data reflect the circumstances reported by Extended services participants at their last month of contact with an Advocate during SFY 2021.

- 74% were working full- or part-time.
- 24% were enrolled in an education program, including 13% in a 2 or 4-year college; 9% in high school or HS completion program; and 2% in a career, trade, or certificate program.
- 93% reported that they had safe and stable housing.
- 98% reported that they had a supportive relationship with a positive adult.
- 63% indicated that they had enough money to cover their expenses the prior month.

Part III: Outcomes for Participants Exiting Core Services

Iowa's Aftercare and PAL programs were established to assist young people who age out of child welfare or juvenile justice placements make a successful transition to adulthood. The services and supports offered by the IASN are designed to help these young adults move toward stability and self-sufficiency in five key areas: education, employment, housing, health, and relationships.

A variety of interview questions are used to assess participants' progress in these outcome areas at both intake to and exit from services. Specifically, the Network is contractually required to report outcome data for the following areas:

- Employment
- Resources to Meet Living Expenses
- Safe and Stable Housing
- Education
- Positive Relationships
- High-risk Behaviors
- Physical and Mental Health
- Essential Documents
- Engagement until Planned Exits (*See Part II, page 22, Participant Exits*)
- Annual Participant Survey (*See Appendix I*)
- Performance Measures (*See Appendix II*)

This part of the report compares initial intake data with the last exit interview data for those who were active Core services recipients (ages 18-21) for at least three months, exited services during the reporting period, and did not return before the end of the reporting period (July 1, 2021). In total, this unduplicated "outcomes group" includes 164 participants. For the duration of this part of the report, any descriptions of outcomes for "participants", "exiting youth", etc. are in reference to this outcomes group unless otherwise specified.

Outcome data is presented for the full group of 164 young adults and two sub-groups based on PAL participation (132 PAL recipients and 32 "non-PAL" participants). In this part of the report, participants listed under "PAL" are those who met PAL eligibility requirements and received a PAL stipend *at any point* during their participation (whether they received it during the reporting period or prior). Eighty percent (80%) of the full group received a PAL stipend for at least one month of their time in Aftercare.

Because the Non-PAL sample is relatively small, results for this sub-group are less conclusive and should be interpreted accordingly. It is also worth noting that some of the youth included in this analysis may return – or may have already returned between July 1, 2021 and the submission of this report – if they remain eligible. Finally, as discussed in the previous section, a number of these Core services participants who turned 21 this past year have accessed Extended Services.

Demographics

As is typical, the outcomes group was generally under the age of 19 at intake (median = 18.2, mean = 18.4) and largely at or near 21 at exit (median = 21.0, mean = 20.5). Two-thirds (67.7%) had reached age 21 at the time they exited Core services and were no longer eligible; 75% were at least 20½ at exit.

Slightly more than half (53.8%) identified as female, 43.9% male, and the remaining 2.3% identified as transgender. Three-fourths (76.8%) identified as White, 25.8% identified as African American or Black,

and 5.1% as American Indian or Alaska Native. In total, regardless of their racial identity, 12.4% identified with Hispanic or Latino ethnicity. Youth may select more than one racial or ethnic group with which they identify so percentages do not add up to 100. Of the outcomes group, 58% identified as non-Hispanic White only, while the remaining 42% identified with one or more other races or ethnicities.

Duration of Participation

Participants in the outcomes group were typically involved with Aftercare for more than two years (median = 2.6, mean = 2.2). More than half (52.8%) of this group participated over a period of at least 2.5 years and two-thirds (65.2%) were involved over a period of at least two years. Because duration is measured as the time between a participant's initial entrance and their most recent exit, the total duration can include lapses in participation. Still, the length of time young people voluntarily engage in Aftercare services is a positive indication that they find value in the support they receive from IASN. Moreover, the policy of automatically decreasing the monthly PAL stipend as participants get older, which was first implemented in January 2020, does not appear to be impacting the length of time participants remain engaged in Aftercare services.

Employment

The purpose of IASN services is to help participants move toward stability and self-sufficiency as they transition to adulthood. Securing and maintaining employment is important to this goal, and youth in Aftercare demonstrate significant gains in employment by the time they exit.

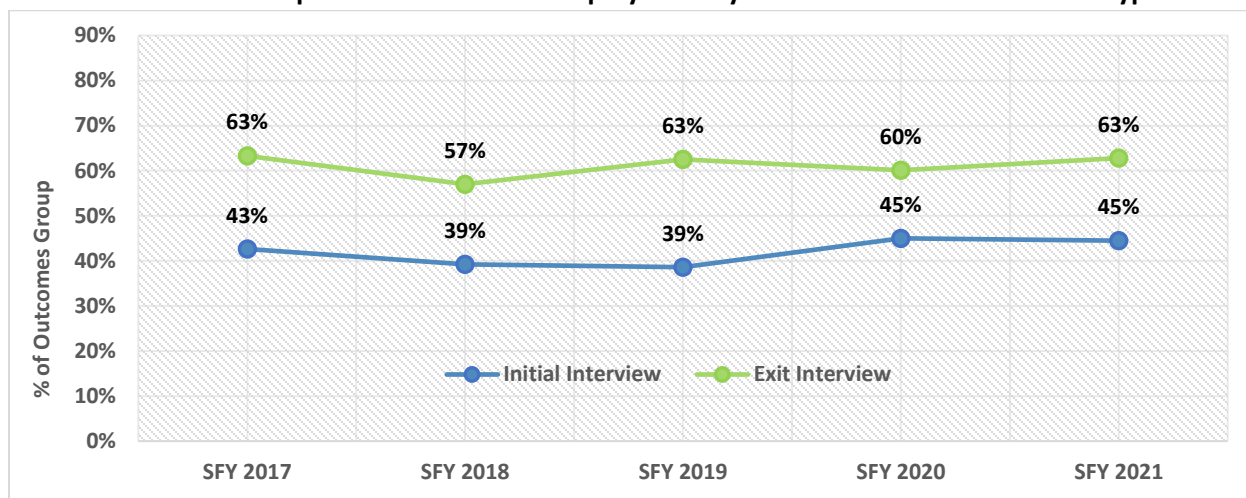
Employment at any level increased from 44.5% to 62.8% between intake and exit in SFY 2021. About half (49.4%) of the participants reported working at least 25 hours or more per week at exit, more than double this level of employment at intake (21.9%). Both PAL recipients and non-PAL participants had gains in employment. Although the number of non-PAL participants is small, as a group they are more likely to be working less than 25 hours per week or not at all compared to those receiving PAL at both intake and exit from Aftercare services.

Outcomes Group – Employment Status by Interview Type

	All (n=164)		PAL (n=132)		Non-PAL (n=32)	
	Initial	Exit	Initial	Exit	Initial	Exit
Employed full-time (35+ hours)	8.5%	28.7%	9.9%	30.3%	3.1%	21.9%
Employed part-time (25-34 hours)	13.4%	20.7%	15.9%	21.2%	3.1%	18.8%
Employed part-time (<25 hours)	22.6%	13.4%	25.8%	13.6%	9.4%	12.5%
Unemployed, seeking work	28.5%	12.8%	25.8%	13.6%	37.5%	9.4%
Unemployed, long-term disability	0.6%	2.4%	0.0%	.8%	3.1%	9.4%
Not in workforce	25.6%	18.9%	21.2%	18.2%	43.8%	25.0%
Other/Not reported	1.2%	2.4%	1.5%	2.3%	0.0%	3.1%

Over the last five years, an average of 42% of young people have entered Aftercare working full or part-time, and that proportion increases to an average of 61% at exit. Five year trends in employment at intake and exit are shown below.

Outcomes Group – Full or Part-Time Employment by State Fiscal Year & Interview Type



Relative to state and national data from the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD), Aftercare employment outcomes (60.1% at exit) compare favorably to the larger population of former foster youth. According to NYTD data, 40% of youth nationally at age 19 are employed (either full- or part-time) and 57% are employed at age 21.³ Of former foster youth in Iowa who completed the NYTD surveys, 51% were employed at 19 and 57% at 21.

There are, however, differences between non-Hispanic White youth and Youth of Color in employment outcomes among participants exiting Aftercare services. In SFY 2021, White youth in the outcomes group were more likely to be working and working more hours than the Youth of Color, suggesting that the latter may face additional barriers to employment.

Outcomes Group - Employment Status at Exit by Race/Ethnicity

	White, NH (n=95)	Youth of Color (n=69)
Employed full-time (35+ hours)	34.8%	18.8%
Employed part-time (25-34 hours)	21.0%	20.3%
Employed part-time (<25 hours)	15.8%	23.2%
Unemployed, seeking work	10.3%	15.9%
Unemployed, long-term disability	2.1%	2.9%
Not in workforce	16.9%	23.2%

Resources to Meet Living Expenses

More than half of this year’s outcomes group reported zero earned income when they first accessed services. The proportion of participants with zero income drops significantly (57.9% to 32.9%), while those earning \$800 or more per month more than triples (10.4% to 35.3%) from intake to exit.

³ National Youth in Transition Database, Outcomes for FFY 2016 (age 19) and FFY 2018 (age 21), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children’s Bureau; [acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/nytd-services-and-outcomes-reports](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/nytd-services-and-outcomes-reports)

Outcomes Group – Monthly Earned Income by Interview Type

	All (n=164)		PAL (n=132)		Non-PAL (n=32)	
	Initial	Exit	Initial	Exit	Initial	Exit
\$0	57.9%	32.9%	50.8%	31.8%	87.5%	37.5%
\$1-399	13.4%	9.8%	15.2%	9.1%	6.3%	12.5%
\$400-799	18.3%	22.0%	21.2%	21.2%	6.3%	25.0%
\$800-1,199	6.7%	14.6%	8.3%	15.9%	0.0%	9.4%
\$1,200+	3.7%	20.7%	4.6%	22.0%	0.0%	15.6%

*Note: Prior to SFY 2020, participants reported their **gross** monthly earned income (i.e., before taxes). Beginning in SFY 2020 they are asked to report their monthly **net** or “take-home” income (i.e., after taxes). Therefore, income at initial intake is pre-tax for 76% of respondents and after-tax for the remaining 24%. Income at exit is after-tax for all respondents.*

While their earnings increase while in Aftercare, it is still difficult for many participants to meet their expenses (especially with earned income alone) as they take on adult responsibilities. One in four young people reported not having enough resources to cover their expenses the prior month at both intake and exit.

Outcomes Group – Resources for Monthly Expenses by Interview Type

	All (n=164)		PAL (n=132)		Non-PAL (n=32)	
	Initial	Exit	Initial	Exit	Initial	Exit
Yes, with earned income alone	17.1%	31.1%	18.2%	30.3%	12.5%	34.7%
Yes, with earned income and other assistance	56.7%	42.7%	62.9%	43.2%	31.3%	43.2%
No, not enough to cover expenses last month	26.2%	26.2%	18.9%	26.3%	56.2%	22.1%

Other indications of financial capability show improvement. These are encouraging signs that youth are making progress toward longer-term economic stability.

Outcomes Group – Financial Capability Indicators by Interview Type (All)

	Initial	Exit
Six months or more of continuous employment	48.2%	64.0%
Have a checking account	56.7%	78.1%
Have money saved for emergencies	31.1%	37.2%
Have received their credit report	8.5%	47.6%
Have their Social Security card	88.4%	93.9%

Safe and Stable Housing

Like many emerging adults in their late teens and early twenties, most youth who age out of foster care live with friends or family at this stage of their lives. At intake, 83.5% of the outcomes group were living with family members, friends, or other unrelated adults. At exit, this number was less, but two-thirds (66.5%) of these young people continued to live with other adults. Conversely, the number living alone more than doubled from intake (12.8%) to exit (25.6%).

The vast majority of youth report feeling safe in their current living arrangement at both intake (97%) and exit (94.5%), although there are a few at each interview who are homeless or couch-surfing (4.3% at the initial interview and 1.2% at exit). Also of concern is that 27.4% of those exiting indicated that they had experienced homelessness since aging out of foster care or other placement.

From intake to exit, participants increased the rates at which they were paying for housing, whether they were living alone (10.4% to 25.6%) or with others (37.8% to 45.7%). Smaller numbers were living with others not contributing toward costs (39% at intake and 13.4% at exit); or were in supportive housing, such as rehabilitation facilities, waiver homes, transitional facilities, or shelters at intake (5.5%) and exit (6.1%). A few were in campus housing; and some were couch-surfing or homeless.

Outcomes Group – Housing Status by Interview Type

	All (n=164)		PAL (n=132)		Non-PAL (n=32)	
	Initial	Exit	Initial	Exit	Initial	Exit
Living alone, sole responsibility	10.4%	25.6%	11.4%	25.0%	6.3%	28.1%
With others, paying	37.8%	45.7%	40.2%	49.2%	28.1%	31.3%
With others, not paying	39.0%	13.4%	36.4%	11.4%	50.0%	21.9%
University housing	3.1%	3.7%	3.8%	4.6%	0.0%	0.0%
Supportive housing (shelter, rehabilitation, etc.)	5.5%	6.1%	3.8%	4.6%	12.5%	12.5%
Couch surfing or homeless	4.3%	1.2%	4.6%	1.5%	3.1%	0.0%
Other	0.0%	4.3%	1.5%	3.8%	0.0%	6.3%

About two-thirds of the outcomes group (63.4%) report being on a lease at exit, but the affordability of housing remains tenuous for many of these exiting participants. Nearly half (44.5%) indicate that more than half of their monthly income (earned and unearned) goes toward rent and utilities, and 15.9% are currently behind or late on rent and/or utility bills as they exit Aftercare services. Housing assistance specifically for former foster youth, such as Iowa's Aftercare Rent Subsidy program (see page 21 above) and the federal [Foster Youth to Independence](#) (FYI) program administered by some local housing authorities in cooperation with DHS are available to help, but housing costs remain a challenge for these young adults.

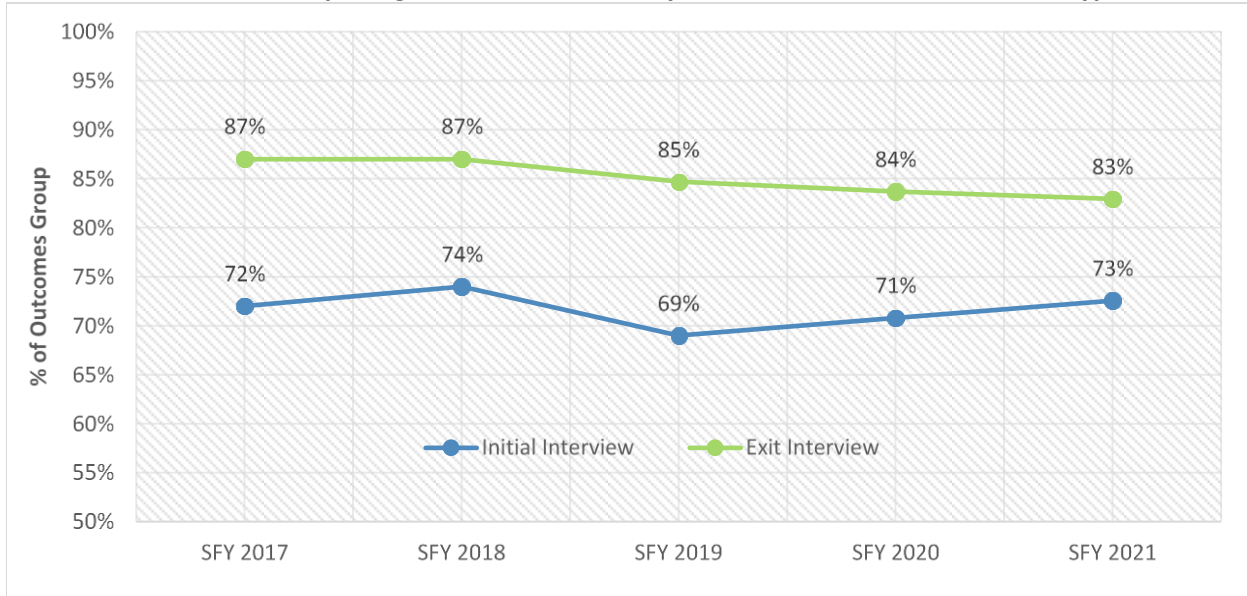
Education

Over the last several years, the majority of youth entering Aftercare had already earned a High School Diploma or Equivalent and about 15% achieved that milestone during their participation. Among this year's outcomes group, 72.6% had earned a high school credential prior to accessing Aftercare. This increased to 82.9% at exit, including 2.4% who had completed an Associate degree. Six percent of the outcomes group had earned a vocational, trade or technical certificate or license.

Outcomes Group – Education Attainment by Interview Type

	All (n=164)		PAL (n=132)		Non-PAL (n=32)	
	Initial	Exit	Initial	Exit	Initial	Exit
High School Diploma	68.3%	77.4%	79.6%	87.9%	21.9%	34.4%
High School Equivalency Degree	4.3%	3.1%	5.3%	3.0%	0.0%	3.1%
Associate degree	0.0%	2.4%	0.0%	3.0%	0.0%	0.0%
None	27.4%	17.1%	15.2%	6.1%	78.1%	62.5%

Outcomes Group – High School Credential by State Fiscal Year and Interview Type



The disparity between PAL and Non-PAL participants in education attainment may be explained, in part, by the eligibility conditions to receive a PAL stipend. Young people who are still working toward a high school credential may voluntarily stay in foster care up to age 20. As long as that is the case, those youth are not eligible to receive a PAL stipend, even if they exited care at age 18 or older and meet other eligibility qualifications.

Of more concern is the disparity in education attainment between non-Hispanic White youth and Youth of Color, with 90.5% of White, NH youth having earned a high school credential or higher at exit, compared to 72.5% of Youth of Color. This disparity needs further investigation.

Outcomes Group – Education Attainment at Exit by Race/Ethnicity

	White, NH (n=95)		Youth of Color (n=69)	
	Initial	Exit	Initial	Exit
Associate Degree	0.0%	2.1%	0.0%	2.9%
High School Diploma	73.7%	84.2%	60.9%	68.1%
High School Equivalency	5.3%	4.2%	2.9%	1.5%
None of the Above	21.1%	9.5%	36.2%	27.5%

Overall, Aftercare participants’ secondary completion (82.9% at exit in SFY 2021) compares favorably to both state and national NYTD survey results. At age 21, 75% of NYTD respondents in Iowa (and 70% nationally) had earned a High School Diploma or equivalent.

About half of Aftercare participants enter services enrolled in an education program, typically high school/HiSET (25.6%) or community college (17.7%). The number of participants enrolled in any type of education program decreased to 35.4% at exit, including 11% continuing to work toward a high school credential and 24.4% in a post-secondary education or training program.

Positive Relationships

Most participants have adults they “will always be able to turn to for support, advice, [to] share or celebrate personal achievements, [and to] help solve problems.” At intake and exit, whether they are family members or not, 85-97% of youth have supportive adults in their lives. When asked which one adult (family or otherwise) they turn to most often for support, exiting youth named a variety of people with whom they have positive relationships, including birth parents (17.1%), extended family members (15.2%), significant others (15.2%), adult friends (12.2%).

Outcomes Group – Supportive Adults by Interview Type

	All (n=164)		PAL (n=132)		Non-PAL (n=32)	
	Initial	Exit	Initial	Exit	Initial	Exit
Adult, family member	90.2%	93.3%	90.9%	93.9%	87.5%	90.6%
Adult, non-family member	92.7%	96.3%	93.9%	97.0%	87.5%	93.8%

Parenting

Of this year’s outcomes group, 8.5% were parents when first accessing services. This increased to 27.4% at exit. At both intake and exit, more exiting participants were parenting in SFY 2021 than those exiting in SFY 2020. Additional questions related to parenting experiences were included in interviews with participants beginning last year. Both SFY 2020 and SFY 2021 data on these factors is shown below.

Outcomes Group – Parenting Factors Among Exiting Parents

	SFY 2020 (n=37)	SFY 2021 (n=45)
Custody of child(ren)	78.4%	73.3%
Paternity established	64.9%	62.2%
Not custody, but regularly involved	13.5%	17.8%
Pay or receive child support	10.8%	6.7%
Participated in parenting program	40.5%	55.6%
Enough parenting support from others	62.2%	68.9%

High-Risk Behaviors

The prevalence of risky behaviors among Aftercare participants provides insight into their transition to adulthood. Some of these behaviors may not be accurately reported by participants, and youth may choose not to answer certain questions. While these self-reports by young people are fairly consistent from year-to-year, it is important to use caution when interpreting this data given the sensitive nature of the questions.

Tobacco use is persistently high among participants, with about one-third of youth indicating past-month use at intake (31.1%) and exit (31.7%). Recent binge drinking (12.2% to 28.1%) and marijuana use (12.2 to 25.0%) increased significantly from intake to exit. Given the cultural norms around the use of these substances in young adulthood, these percentages are similar to state and national rates among other young adults. For example, for lowans ages 18 – 25, the NSDUH estimates past month tobacco use at 27%; past month binge alcohol use at 40%; and past month marijuana use at 16%.⁴

⁴National Survey on Drug Use and Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration; <https://www.drugabuse.gov/drug-topics/trends-statistics/national-drug-early-warning-system-ndews/national-survey-drug-use-health>

Outcomes Group – Recent (Past 30 Days) Drug Use by Interview Type

	All (n=164)		PAL (n=132)		Non-PAL (n=32)	
	Initial	Exit	Initial	Exit	Initial	Exit
Alcohol to intoxication	12.2%	28.1%	9.9%	28.0%	21.9%	28.1%
Tobacco	31.1%	31.7%	28.8%	31.8%	40.6%	31.3%
Marijuana	12.2%	25.0%	10.6%	23.5%	18.8%	31.3%
Meth and/or opioids	0.6%	1.8%	0.8%	1.5%	0.0%	3.1%
Prescription misuse	0.6%	3.1%	0.0%	0.8%	3.1%	12.5%

In the two years prior to their initial Aftercare intake, 39.6% of youth reported having been “incarcerated or detained in a jail, prison, or juvenile justice or community detention facility.” This overall rate includes participants whose last placement was STS/detention. In addition to recidivism, youth may have exited Aftercare within two years of the event that led to their initial juvenile justice placement. Criminal justice involvement among youth was somewhat less common (28.7%) during the period after they aged out of their final placement.

It is important to note that the Aftercare interview asks whether participants were “incarcerated or detained”, not whether they were charged or convicted of any crimes. Nonetheless, involvement in the criminal justice system remains high and further monitoring and analysis is warranted.

Relatively small groups of participants self-report specific criminal activities. Among the categories covered in the interview, stealing is the most common at intake (20.1%) but declines sharply by the time they exit Aftercare (11.0%). A small, but persistent proportion of participants (5-10%) are involved with gang activity and illicit drug trading, both reported more often at intake (past two years), than exit (since leaving formal placement).

Outcomes Group – Incarceration and Criminal Activity by Interview Type

	All (n=164)		PAL (n=132)		Non-PAL (n=32)	
	Initial	Exit	Initial	Exit	Initial	Exit
Incarcerated or detained	39.6%	28.7%	38.6%	25.0%	43.8%	43.8%
Stealing	20.1%	11.0%	18.2%	11.4%	28.1%	9.4%
Selling or distributing drugs	9.2%	5.5%	9.9%	4.6%	6.3%	9.4%
Gang activity	6.7%	4.9%	6.8%	5.3%	6.3%	3.1%

Note: Initial interviews ask participants about their criminal justice involvement and criminal activity in the “last two years”. Exit interviews ask about the period after their last discharge from DHS or JCS placement. .

Of concern is the proportion of participants who consistently report high frequency of past self-harm and suicidality. Many exiting participants have inflicted harm in the form of “cutting, burning, etc.” (36.0%), planning suicide (37.8%), and attempting suicide (32.9%) sometime in their lives, although most of these behaviors occurred more than a year prior to their exit from Aftercare. Even so, these risk factors are reminders of past trauma and the seriousness of the difficulties many youth face as they transition from foster care to adulthood.

While Aftercare is not designed or intended to provide mental health assessments or treatment, Advocates are trained to observe and report signs of mental health concerns and to help youth connect to appropriate community resources when needed.

Outcomes Group – Self-Harm Behaviors by Interview Type

	All (n=164)		PAL (n=132)		Non-PAL (n=32)	
	Initial	Exit	Initial	Exit	Initial	Exit
Ever inflicted self-harm	30.5%	36.0%	27.3%	32.6%	43.8%	50.0%
<i>Self-harm last 12 months</i>		8.5%		7.6%		12.5%
Ever planned suicide	36.0%	37.8%	34.9%	37.1%	40.6%	40.6%
<i>Planned suicide last 12 months</i>		6.7%		6.8%		6.3%
Ever attempted suicide	30.5%	32.9%	31.1%	31.8%	28.1%	37.5%
<i>Attempted suicide last 12 months</i>		5.5%		6.1%		3.1%

Physical and Mental Health Services

Nearly all participants have health insurance when they enter and exit services. At exit, most participants (97.6%) rely on Medicaid, which is available to many former foster youth up to age 26. These young people may also be eligible under other Medicaid coverage groups or government health insurance programs.

Outcomes Group – Health Insurance Coverage by Interview Type

	All (n=164)		PAL (n=132)		Non-PAL (n=32)	
	Initial	Exit	Initial	Exit	Initial	Exit
Medicaid	93.3%	97.6%	93.2%	98.5%	93.8%	93.8%
Someone else's plan	1.2%	2.4%	0.8%	2.3%	3.1%	3.1%
Employer	0.6%	1.8%	0.8%	1.5%	0.0%	3.1%
Self (private pay)	1.8%	0.6%	2.3%	0.8%	0.0%	0.0%

Maintaining health insurance is critical for youth, particularly those with serious physical and mental health problems which require ongoing treatment or medications. For example, more than half (52.4%) of the outcomes group were taking prescribed medications at intake and about one-third (35.4%) were doing so at exit. Of concern is that 25% of exiting participants indicated that they are not taking medications that have been prescribed to them.

Outcomes Group – Health Conditions and Treatments by Interview Type

	All (n=164)		PAL (n=132)		Non-PAL (n=32)	
	Initial	Exit	Initial	Exit	Initial	Exit
Current prescribed medication(s)	52.4%	35.4%	51.5%	34.1%	56.3%	40.6%
Mental health diagnosis, past 3 years		49.6%		43.9%		62.5%
Current counseling/therapy		22.0%		22.0%		21.9%
Substance abuse diagnosis, past 3 years	N/A	9.2%	N/A	7.6%	N/A	15.6%
Current substance abuse treatment		3.1%		3.8%		0.0%

Essential Documents

Due to their transitions between placements and, ultimately, out of foster care, it can be difficult for youth to acquire and retain essential documents. While percentages fluctuate somewhat year-to-year, many young people who lacked these documents at intake had gained access to them while participating in Aftercare.

Progress has also been made on a more recent requirement that the foster care system provide youth who exit foster care at age 18 or older with “written verification of having been in foster care.” This requirement is primarily for the purpose of verifying eligibility for student financial aid and other public benefits. Although this question was not asked on the initial interview of a majority of this year’s outcomes group, three-fourths indicated that they had this verification at exit from Aftercare.

Outcomes Group – Essential Document Possession by Interview Type

	All (n=164)		PAL (n=132)		Non-PAL (n=32)	
	Initial	Exit	Initial	Exit	Initial	Exit
Birth Certificate	85.4%	87.8%	87.9%	90.2%	75.0%	78.1%
Social Security Card	88.4%	93.9%	90.9%	94.7%	78.1%	90.6%
Government Issued ID	N/A	90.9%	N/A	93.2%	N/A	81.3%
Verification of Foster Care	N/A	73.8%	N/A	78.0%	N/A	56.3%

Notes: The question related to government issued ID was changed in SFY 2020 and initial interview data is not available for the majority of this year’s outcomes group. The federal mandate for states to provide documentation of foster care status was enacted in 2018 as part of the Family First Prevention Services Act. A question on this issue was also added to the Aftercare interviews in SFY 2020.

Although it is not an essential document *per se*, possession of a valid Driver’s License is often crucial as participants pursue education and employment, particularly in more rural areas of the state. As of their exit from Aftercare, 20.7% of youth expressed that they “have never been able to get a Driver’s License but want one”; 6.1% had a license but it was suspended or revoked; and 8.5% indicated that they didn’t “want or need a driver’s license at this time.”

Conclusion

The transition to adulthood can be a particularly steep path for young people who have experienced foster care or other out-of-home placements. Making this transition during the COVID pandemic has added further stress and uncertainty about the future. Aftercare is designed to help equip these young people with the skills, resources, and connections that all young people need to navigate the path to adulthood successfully.

As reflected in the outcome measures in this report, young people who participate in Aftercare services show signs of progress and improvement in several areas. Almost all of the exiting participants have maintained positive relationships with supportive family and other adults who will be available to them as they continue their journeys. Most have earned a high school credential, are gaining traction in employment, and have increased their earnings by the time they exit Aftercare services.

At the same time, there are areas of concern. By age 21, few have completed a post-secondary degree. Many struggle to find affordable housing, and consistently making ends meet remains elusive for too many. Ongoing mental health concerns and other risky behaviors present ongoing challenges to long-term stability. Further, not all Aftercare participants are achieving milestones at the same rate, and attention to disparities needs to be part of the ongoing work with and on behalf of these young people.

Appendix I

IASN Annual Participant Survey Report – March 2021

The [Iowa Aftercare Services Network](#) provides services and support to help youth and young adults who exit foster care near the age of 18 make a successful transition to adulthood in the areas of education, employment, housing, health, life skills, and relationships. The Network supports young people up to the age of 23 as they pursue self-sufficiency. Aftercare Self-Sufficiency Advocates (“Advocates”) meet with young people regularly to set goals, develop individual action plans, build skills, and connect to resources.

The Network administers an annual survey to solicit feedback from Aftercare participants and assess their satisfaction with the services they are receiving. Survey results are used to inform policy and program decisions as part of the Network’s ongoing quality assurance efforts. The annual survey is also used to provide a snapshot of the status of participants in terms of three primary outcomes: sufficient resources, stable housing, and supportive relationships.

In March 2021, 384 currently active Aftercare participants completed the confidential survey. This includes young people receiving services from all eight agencies in the Network. Response rates were proportionate to agencies’ caseloads. The agencies serving the Des Moines and Cedar Rapids areas accounted for more than 40% of all survey responses.

Of all respondents, 320 young people (ages 18 to 21) were receiving Core services at the time of the survey, and 56 participants (those age 21 and 22), were receiving Extended Services. Eight (8) respondents did not provide their age or other demographic information. Of all continuing Core participants who met with an Advocate at least once during the month of March, 91.7% completed a survey (n=349).⁵ The vast majority of respondents completed the survey electronically, but other options were made available for participants without online access.

This report shows survey results for both Core and Extended recipients separately and combined. Respondents who did not provide their age are included in the total data, but not in the disaggregated Core or Extended Services responses.

Participant Demographics

Similar to the SFY 2020 survey, just over half (55%) of 2021 respondents identified as female.

Gender Identity			
	Core (n=320)	Extended (n=56)	Total (n=376)
Female	54.4%	57.1%	54.8%
Male	44.7%	42.9%	44.4%
Other	0.6%	0.0%	0.8%
Prefer Not to Answer	0.3%	0.0%	0.3%

⁵ Because the survey results are used to assess the quality of services participants receive over time, young people completing intakes during the month the survey is administered are not asked to complete a survey.

Survey respondents trended older in 2021 than previous years, in part because fewer young people are aging out of foster care and becoming eligible for Aftercare services, while those that do participate in the program are staying involved longer. SFY 2021 is also the first full year of providing Extended Services for 21 and 22 year olds and the first time these older participants were included in the annual survey. Extended Services are more flexible and do not require monthly participation to remain eligible. Rather these services are available when young people need assistance.

Age Distribution by Survey Year			
	2019 (n=371)	2020 (n=354)	2021 (n=370)
18	31.0%	28.8%	21.6%
19	29.4%	38.1%	27.8%
20	39.6%	33.0%	35.4%
21	--	--	7.6%
22	--	--	7.6%

Aftercare participants are racially and ethnically diverse. When asked which race/ethnicity they “most closely identify with,” about one-third of the respondents overall identified as people of color. This is consistent with the racial and ethnic makeup of Aftercare participants in prior years and with the overall population of those who have recently aged out of court-ordered, out-of-home placements in Iowa ([Youth Policy Institute of Iowa](#)). Extended participants are more likely to be Black or multi-racial than Core participants.

Race/Ethnicity “Most Closely Identified With”			
	Core (n=320)	Extended (n=56)	Total (n=376)
African American or Black	15.0%	23.2%	16.2%
Asian American	0.6%	0.0%	0.3%
Hispanic or Latino	4.1%	3.6%	4.0%
Native American or American Indian	2.2%	0.0%	1.2%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0.3%	0.0%	0.3%
White	66.9%	58.9%	65.7%
Multiracial	9.7%	14.3%	10.4%
Prefer Not to Answer	1.3%	0.0%	1.0%

Participant Outcomes & Satisfaction

The Aftercare contract includes performance measures in three key areas which are monitored, in part, using questions in the annual satisfaction survey:

1. **Sufficient Resources:** “Last month, did you have enough money or other resources to cover your expenses? (Include your income, money from PAL/vendor payments, and any other assistance)?”
2. **”Stable Housing:** “Do you currently have a safe and stable place to live?”
3. **”Supportive Relationships:** “Do you have a positive relationship with at least one adult in your community?”

Nearly all (94% or more) of both Core and Extended Services respondents reported that they had stable housing and supportive relationships. Core Services recipients, many of whom receive monthly financial assistance from the Preparation for Adult Living program, were more likely to report that they had sufficient resources to meet their expenses than the older young people participating in Extended Services. Limited emergency financial assistance from the program is available to young adults accessing services at age 21 and 22. Many Extended Services recipients may therefore be accessing services precisely because they have experienced financial setbacks and are not able to meet their living expenses.

Self-Sufficiency Performance Measures			
% Responding “Yes”	Core (n=320)	Extended (n=56)	Total (n=384)
Sufficient Resources	81.3%	62.5%	78.7%
Stable Housing	95.9%	98.2%	96.1%
Supportive Relationships	98.1%	94.6%	97.7%

Recognizing that the COVID-19 pandemic has affected everyone this past year and especially former foster youth who are particularly vulnerable to economic downturns, this year’s survey asked how the pandemic had impacted them. Results are show in the table below.

Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic		
Areas	Examples of Impact	Total (n=380)
Employment	Lost job, reduced hours, unable to work	52.1%
Education	Education interrupted or had to dropout	24.7%
Housing	Lost housing, got behind on rent or utilities, forced to move	21.6%
Relationships	Unable to stay in touch with family or friends	26.6%
Mental Health	Increased stress, depression, other MH concerns	62.9%
Transportation	Could not afford transportation costs	19.7%

Advocates strive to establish positive relationships with young people participating in the program and to help them become more confident and hopeful about their futures – an important indicator of long-term success. Of all survey respondents, 94.6% reported that meeting with an Aftercare Advocate “always” or “almost always” helped them feel more hopeful, an indication that Aftercare is helping young adults develop resilience.

"Does your current Advocate help you feel more hopeful about your future?" (n=384)			
	Core (n=320)	Extended (n=56)	Total (n=384)
Always	76.3%	83.9%	77.1%
Almost Always	18.4%	12.5%	17.5%
Sometimes	4.4%	3.6%	4.7%
Not Really	0.3%	0.0%	0.3%
Too Soon to Tell	0.6%	0.0%	0.5%

Participants were asked to assess how helpful the program has been in terms of six skills that are important to a successful transition to adulthood. For all six areas, the vast majority of respondents described the program as “somewhat” or “very helpful” to them as they work with Advocates in the areas of education, employment, health, and relationships.

"Please share how helpful Aftercare/PAL has been to you in the following areas" (n=384)				
	Very helpful	Somewhat helpful	Not at all helpful	Too soon to tell
Setting & pursuing personal goals	84.9%	13.5%	0.5%	1.0%
Improving my ability to solve problems	77.1%	20.6%	0.5%	1.8%
Building positive relationships with others	71.1%	25.5%	1.3%	2.1%
Accessing community resources	83.6%	14.8%	0.3%	1.3%
Holding me accountable	84.1%	14.3%	0.0%	1.6%
Managing my money	76.8%	19.3%	1.8%	2.1%

As a culminating question related to participants satisfaction with the Aftercare services they have received, the survey invites respondents to rate Aftercare’s overall helpfulness on a five-point scale. The average rating by all respondents was 4.7, with a significant majority (76.8%) offering a five-star rating. Fewer than 5% gave Aftercare less than a four-star rating.

"How helpful is Aftercare/PAL to you overall?"			
Five-star rating where “1” is not at all helpful and “5” is very helpful (n=384)			
	Core (n=320)	Extended (n=56)	Total (n=384)
1	0.6%	0.0%	0.5%
2	0.9%	0.0%	0.8%
3	3.8%	1.8%	3.4%
4	18.4%	16.1%	18.5%
5	76.3%	82.1%	76.8%

Young adults participating in Aftercare do so on a voluntary basis. While the annual participant survey historically has shown very high levels of satisfaction with the services provided, it could be that those who are dissatisfied simply do not stay involved in the program long enough to be surveyed for their feedback. However, average duration of participation in Aftercare remains high (averaging 2+ years, including temporary interruptions in services). Very few leave the program within 3 months of accessing services, suggesting that there are relatively few who are dissatisfied or not finding value in the services by “voting with their feet” and choosing to discontinue their participation before having the opportunity to complete a survey.

Comments from Young People

In each year’s survey, participants are invited to share additional comments about their experience in Aftercare in response to an open-ended question. Typically, the majority of comments convey a positive view of Aftercare services generally, and many participants take the opportunity to praise their Advocate specifically. Participants also offer valuable constructive criticism. Examples of comments from this year’s respondents are shown below.

“Is there anything else you would like to share with us about your experience in Aftercare?” (n=124)	
The program was genuinely there during covid, don't know where I would be [without it], very very helpful	[My Advocate] has saved my life and doesn't even know it.
I love aftercare and my worker. It really has helped me stay on my feet and my worker has provided amazing support. She always is professional but very caring!	People coming out of foster care, take advantage of this program. It is very beneficial.
[My Advocate] is a very sweet and caring person. always helping me with my problem and helping me find a solution to them.	I’m glad I’m in aftercare because without the help I’m getting, I would be lost and wouldn’t know anything, but I’m just thankful.
If it wasn't for [my Advocate's] persistence with me I doubt I wouldn't have been nearly as successful as an adult. She has made sure to hold me accountable every step of the way and has helped me build the necessary skills to be a responsible person.	Aftercare has helped provide the resources for me to thrive and is helping me create a stable financial foundation. While I have not yet achieved a fully stable financially, with aftercare helping me I believe I’ll be able to do it.
My advocate is very straight forward. If I ask a question she gets back to me in a timely manner... and she is very active in trying to help me reach my goals. Good program, good advocate!	[My Advocate] is truly a wonderful person. She has helped me see the many paths I am completely capable of pursuing. I’m lucky to have such a helpful, caring, and kind advocate.

<p style="text-align: center;">“Is there anything else you would like to share with us about your experience in Aftercare?” (n=124)</p>	
<p>[My Advocate] . . . has been a consistently positive influence/role model. Throughout our times [he] has been the realest/most genuine support service I've experienced and by far the most helpful!!</p>	<p>My advocate has been a support system to me whenever I felt like I had absolutely no one.</p>
<p>[My Advocate] has helped me immensely in my journey to become a responsible adult. In my time with her I've developed the ability to budget and save, as well as reach out when I need to.</p>	<p>[My Advocate] is always there for me when I have questions about anything, she helps me when I'm struggling, and is always there to listen to my problems and help me figure them out.</p>
<p>My workers have always been there for me through my very rough times and I don't think I would be where I am without them.</p>	<p>Aftercare is an extremely helpful resource choosing what to pursue is just difficult.</p>

Appendix II

SFY 2021 Required Performance Measures

Section 1.3.4.2 of the Department of Human Services contract for the Iowa Aftercare Services Network establishes an incentive plan based on outcomes achieved. This section reads, in part, as follows:

The Contractor's achievement of performance measures will be a factor of compensation, via potential annual performance payments. An amount equal to 3% of the annual direct services budget (Aftercare Program budget excluding direct payments to Participants and administrative costs), is payable at Agency discretion annually after the Agency confirms the Contractor's successful completion and reporting of performance measures in Section 1.3.2.1 Performance Measures.

a. Outcomes Achieved:

- i. At least 65 percent of participants will have resources to meet their living expenses.*
- ii. At least 80 percent of participants will have a safe and stable place to live.*
- iii. At least 90 percent of participants will, by self-report, have positive personal relationships with at least one adult in the community.*

The primary source of data to determine if these performance measures are met is the annual participant satisfaction survey that was completed by active participants in March. The survey, which includes questions specific to the performance measures, was completed by 320 Core youth in March 2021 representing 91.7% of Core active participants that month. The results of the FY 2021 survey are presented below.

Outcomes Achieved:	FY 2021
<i>Last month, did you have enough money or other resources to cover your expenses? (Incentive Target – 65% Yes)</i>	
Yes	81.3%
No	21.8%
<i>Do you currently have a safe and stable place to live? (Incentive Target – 80% Yes)</i>	
Yes	95.9%
No	2.0%
<i>Do you have a positive relationship with at least one adult in your community? (Incentive Target – 90%)</i>	
Yes	98.1%
No	3.1%

Based on the satisfaction surveys completed during the fiscal year, the Network achieved the desired performance based on this data source, which represents the conditions while youth are receiving services from the Network.

In addition, the outcomes achieved for the incentive performance measures are confirmed by examining data from interviews with participants who exited the program during the fiscal year and completed an exit interview after at least three months of service and did not return to services prior to the end of the

fiscal year. In SFY 2021, there were 163 youth that met these criteria⁶. The following three questions are used to assess the achievement of the exit outcomes:

1. Do you have enough money to cover your needed expenses with your income and other assistance? (Response Options - Yes or No)
2. Where are you living? (Multiple response options, with university housing or any option where youth is paying rent or living with someone else included as meeting the safely housed performance measure—details below.) (Response Options - Yes or No)
3. Do you have adults other than a family member that you are able to turn to for support, advice, share or celebrate personal achievements, help solve problems? (This can include SSAs or previous case workers) (Response Options - Yes or No)

Responses to these questions on 163 exit interviews between July 1, 2020 and June 30, 2021 are shown in the table below:

Question	Number	Percent
Do you have enough money to cover your needed expenses with your income and other assistance? (Target Yes with earned income alone or with earned income and other assistance - 65%) ACHIEVED – 73.62%		
Yes, with my earned income alone	51	31.29%
Yes, with my earned income and other assistance	69	42.33%
No	43	26.38%
Where are you living? (Target safely housed – 80%) ACHIEVED 90.18%		
University (campus based) housing	5	3.07%
Apartment or house – sole responsibility for rent	42	25.77%
Apartment or house – shared responsibility for rent	50	30.67%
Living in someone else’s home (may or may not be contributing to rent or expenses)	46	28.22%
Living in an adult residential or rehabilitation facility or waiver home	4	2.45%
SUBTOTAL – SAFELY HOUSED	147	90.18%
Couch surfing or moving from house to house – no fixed address	1	.61%
Transitional facility, shelter, or other supported housing	3	1.84%
Other	12	7.36%
Do you have adults other than a family member that you are able to turn to for support, advice, share or celebrate personal achievements, help solve problems (This can include SSAs or previous case workers.)? (Target – Yes 90%) ACHIEVED - 96.32%		
YES	157	96.32%
No	6	3.68%

Based on this data, the exit interviews show that minimum thresholds on all three outcome performance measures were exceeded by the Network in SFY 2021.

⁶ SFY 2021 outcome data is preliminary.

About the Youth Policy Institute of Iowa

The Youth Policy Institute of Iowa is a non-profit intermediary that specializes in policies and programs affecting youth transitioning to adulthood, particularly those who have been involved in the child welfare or juvenile justice systems. Founded in 2000, YPII embraces the principles of youth engagement, research and data-informed decision-making, and equity and inclusion. Since 2002, YPII has supported the Iowa Aftercare Services Network through policy development, coordination, quality assurance, and evaluation.

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