FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Department of Human Services Extends Pandemic Relief for Iowa Foster Youth and Alumni

(DES MOINES, Iowa) – More than 1,300 current and former foster youth in Iowa have benefited from special pandemic assistance since April, and more help is on the way. The Iowa Department of Human Services (DHS) announced today that key provisions of its initiative to offer pandemic assistance to foster youth and alumni who have been adversely impacted due to COVID-19 will be extended.

In March, as part of the federal Consolidated Appropriations Act (referred to as “the Act” below), DHS was awarded $4.7 million in supplemental funds for the Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood (Chafee), which provides funding to states to assist older youth in foster care and those who age out. More than $2 million of the CAA supplemental award has been utilized so far to provide direct financial assistance and other supports to this population.

Janee Harvey, Division Administrator of Adult, Children, and Family Services, sees youth continue to struggle. “Youth who were in foster care continue to need our help. The Consolidated Appropriations Act and Iowa efforts lead to more stable housing, food on the table, and better college outcomes. We want foster care youth to know we are on their side, and we’re going to maximize these federal funds to continue to support them through this pandemic.”

DHS will continue to deliver Pandemic Relief for Iowa Foster Youth and Alumni primarily through contracted service providers, including YSS, which oversees the statewide Iowa Aftercare Services Network and Achieving Maximum Potential (AMP), the Iowa foster care youth council. As of August 30, 2021, more than 1,200 young adults who have aged out of foster care applied for and received financial support, including but not limited to a $750 pandemic relief payment.

The Act includes time and age limits on the use of funds, specifically an upper age limit of 22 after September 30, 2021. Also, the moratorium on aging out at age 18 and opportunity to re-enter foster care expires on September 30, 2021. To ensure seamless support when allowable, eligible youth will be referred to the Iowa Aftercare Services Network for continued support and services. Other Pandemic Relief for Iowa Foster Youth and Alumni will be extended or continued with modifications, including:

- Direct Payment to Foster Care Alumni: For young adults ages 18 through 22 who have aged out of foster care, DHS will extend the deadline to apply for a direct pandemic relief payment of $750 through June 2022. The Iowa Aftercare Services Network will continue to administer the
application process and make payments to eligible youth on behalf of DHS. (Authority to provide this aid to youth over the age of 23 expires on September 30, 2021.)

Young people under age 27 who have already received a pandemic relief payment earlier this year will also receive an additional payment of $500 later this month. Youth do not need to re-apply to receive the second payment but will be asked to confirm or update their address. Finally, to the extent funds remain available, DHS may make subsequent, smaller payments to eligible youth periodically through September 30, 2022.

- Extra Support for Teens in Foster Care: DHS will provide additional funds to support social, extracurricular, and cultural activities. Fo$ter Fund$ grants (temporarily up to $600 per child) are available to youth ages 14 and older who are currently in a foster care placement, including family foster care, group care, and supervised apartment living. Up to $300 per year is also available to relative caregivers through a similar program called Kinship Funds.

- Increased Education and Training Voucher Program (ETV) Funding: ETV contractor Iowa College Aid and DHS will offer a maximum $12,000 for the 2021-2022 school year. Part-time students will receive a pro-rated amount based on enrollment.

Additional information regarding these and other features of Pandemic Relief for Iowa Foster Youth and Alumni, including application information, is available on the Iowa Aftercare pandemic relief webpage here: https://iowaaftercare.org/pandemic-relief/

For DHS’s full list of COVID-19 resources, visit https://dhs.iowa.gov/COVID19.

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Program contact:
Doug Wolfe
dwolfe@dhs.state.ia.us
515-242-5452

Media contact:
Alex Carfrae
acarfra@dhs.state.ia.us
515-281-4848