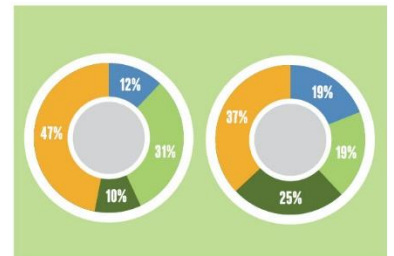
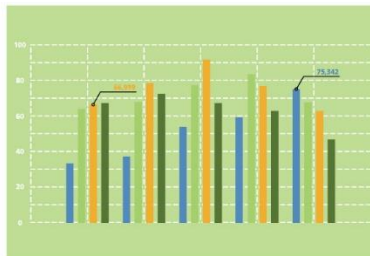




State Fiscal Year 2022 Annual Outcomes Report

Prepared by Youth Policy Institute of Iowa



*Celebrating Twenty Years of
Iowa Aftercare Services*

Acknowledgements

This report would not be possible without the efforts of the IASN agencies and staff who work diligently throughout the year to collect and enter data about the lives and experiences of Aftercare participants. Moreover, our gratitude is extended to the young people who share their journeys with us.

Special thanks to the following for their contributions to this report: Steve Elfvin, our database developer and manager, for his technical expertise in designing, maintaining, and accessing data from the Aftercare database; and Joan Havel, State Aftercare Coordinator, for her assistance in data cleaning and analysis. Finally, much appreciation is extended to Dr. Janet Melby, Director of the Child Welfare Research and Training Project (CW RTP) at Iowa State University for her final review and edits to the report.

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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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 (“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 develop Self-Sufficiency Plans and identify action steps to achieve the participant’s individual goals.

SFY 2022 marked twenty years of Aftercare services in Iowa. The Iowa Department of Human Services (DHS) has contracted with YSS (Ames), which serves as the lead agency and fiscal agent for the Network, since the initiation of Aftercare services 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)
- Ellipsis (Des Moines) (formerly Youth Homes of Mid-America)
- 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 has also subcontracted 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.

Reporting Responsibilities

Under the DHS contract for Aftercare, an annual report is required summarizing the services provided by the Network and on the outcomes of those services at the point participants exit or 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 via the subcontract to 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 212 youth who initiated services in SFY 2022 (July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022). This section describes 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 trends over time.
- **Part II** of the report provides an overview of the services provided to 587 participants who received Core Aftercare services in SFY 2022, 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.

Information on Aftercare’s Extended Services provided to 235 young people ages 21 and 22 during the year is also included in this part.

- **Part III** of the report examines outcomes of 151 participants who exited Core services during the year, did not return to Core services prior to June 30, 2022, 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 320 active participants in March 2022, including 62 young people (ages 21 and 22) receiving Extended Services. 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 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 for key performance measures included in the DHS 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 are 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 2022 outcomes ($n=151$).

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 accuracy 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 are collected and entered by multiple interviewers. These limitations 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 2022 data to SFY 2021 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 2022).

COVID-19 Response

Throughout SFY 2022, the Iowa Aftercare Services Network continued to work with the Department of Human Services to ensure that young people in transition from foster care to adulthood had the supports needed as a result of setbacks stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-related disruptions in employment, education, and other activities were experienced by many Aftercare participants in 2020 and 2021 with lingering negative consequences. A core feature of DHS’s response to address these challenges was direct financial payments to young adults who had aged out of foster care. Beginning in May 2020 and continuing to September 2022, the Aftercare Network has distributed approximately \$2 million federal funds from Division X of the Consolidated Appropriations Act (CAA) to more than 2,000 young people, providing much needed assistance to this population.

State Fiscal Year 2022 Highlights

New Participants

in SFY 2022, **212 young people accessed Aftercare services for the first time**, reversing a three year trend of a declining number of new Aftercare intakes. New participants represented 36% of the 587 young adults who received Core Aftercare services during the year. Over the last five years, the Network has served an average of 684 young people per year, and an average of 222 participants each year have been new intakes.

- Similar to prior years, the majority of young people access Aftercare within a few months of their 18th birthday and within a few weeks of exiting the system. Three in four of this year's new intakes (75.6%) were under 18½ when first accessing Aftercare, and 90.1% were under the age of 19.

Of new intakes in SFY 2022, 54.3% identify as males and 44.3% as females, while 1.4% identified as transgender or other.

Among all new intakes, 123 (58%) identified as non-Hispanic and selected White as their only race, while the remaining 42% identified with one or more other races, as multiracial, and/or as Hispanic or Latino.

- Again this year, the last placement of just over half (51.6%) of new participants was a family like setting (Family foster home [non-relative], Relative, Adoption, Subsidized Guardianship, or Suitable other placement). About one-fifth (19.25%) of new participants aged out of a QRTP or shelter, continuing a recent decline that reflects fewer placements in congregate care settings.

In an increase from last year, 17.8% came into Aftercare from a Supervised Apartment Living setting (compared to 11.9% last year). Of new participants in SFY 2022, 24 youth (11.3% of intakes) were discharged from the State Training School or a detention facility prior to accessing Aftercare.

- Reversing a three-year trend in a declining proportion of youth entering Aftercare with a high school diploma or credential, more than half of new participants (56%) had completed high school by the time they accessed services, an increase from last year's four-year low of 50%.

Almost half of new participants (49%) are enrolled in an education program at intake, including 38% who were enrolled in high school or H.S. equivalency program, and 11% who were enrolled in a postsecondary program at the time they accessed services. Another 24% indicated that they intended to enroll in the upcoming term.

- Employment among young people entering Aftercare continues to show improvement. Slightly over half of new participants reported being employed at some level at intake (53.8%), rising from 51.4% in SFY 2021 and 39.5% in SFY 2020 when the COVID pandemic was first impacting the economy and unemployment was exceptionally high among young adults.
- Young people in foster care and other out-of-home placement are frequently diagnosed with serious emotional disorders (SED). While still prevalent, over the last several years the proportion of youth entering aftercare with a SED has declined from nearly two-thirds of all youth in Aftercare to just over one-half.

Core and Extended Services

A total of 587 young people ages 18, 19, and 20 received “Core Services” during the year, with an average of 353 served per month. STS/detention was the last placement of 66 participants (11.2%) of all those receiving Core Services in SFY 2022.

While participation in Core services declined again this year as fewer youth have aged out in recent years, the decrease was offset by the provision of “Extended Services” to those young people ages 21 and 22. A total of 235 distinct young people received “Extended Services” during the year, with an average of 79 participating each month.

Eighty-four (84) young people participated in both “Core” and “Extended” services during the year leaving an unduplicated total number of youth served of 738. An average of 432 young people were served each month.

A total of 231 young people exited Core 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 two years; median duration was 2.36 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.

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 toward self-sufficiency. Based on reports of Advocates, on average about half (51.1%) of the time, young people sought Extended services for the primary purpose of accessing financial assistance; 35.7% met for guidance and/or support from the Advocate; and 13.2% met for help on accessing resources or other reasons.

Outcomes for Participants Exiting Core Services

Part III of this 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, 2022). In total, the SFY 2022 unduplicated “outcomes group” includes 151 participants. Outcome data in Part III is presented for the full group of 151 young adults, as well as disaggregated by gender.

- Three-quarters (76.2%) had reached age 21 at the time they exited Core services and were no longer eligible; nine out of ten (88.7%) were at least 20½ at exit.
- Participants in the outcomes group were typically involved with Aftercare for more than two years (median = 2.8 years, mean = 2.4 years). Two-thirds (65.6%) of this group participated over a period of 2.5 years or more, and three-quarters (76.8%) were involved over a period of at least two years.
- SFY 2022 outcomes group data show strong earnings growth as the economy and individuals continued to rebound from setbacks during the pandemic. Almost four times as many exiting participants were earning \$800 or more per month at exit (42.4%) than at intake (11.3%). (*Five year trends in full or part-time employment at intake and exit are presented on page 25.*)
- While earnings increase during their time in Aftercare, it is still difficult for many participants to meet their expenses (especially with earned income alone) as they take on adult responsibilities. Eighteen percent (18%) of young people at exit reported not having enough resources to cover their expenses the prior month.

- 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, 80.1% of the outcomes group were living with family members, friends, or other unrelated adults. At exit, this number declined by about twenty percent, but 61.6% continued to live with other adults. Conversely, the number of youth living alone increased from intake (12.6%) to exit (21.9%).

The vast majority of youth report feeling safe in their current living arrangement at both intake (98%) and exit (95.4%), 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 in SFY 2022). At the same time, data persistently shows that one-fourth to one-third of Aftercare participants experience some level of homelessness after aging out of foster care or other placement.

- Among this year's outcomes group, 71.5% had earned a high school credential prior to accessing Aftercare. By the time they exited services, 88.1% of these young people had achieved this milestone, setting a five-year high and reversing a three-year trend of a slight decline in the proportion of youth exiting Aftercare with a high school credential. (*Five year trends in high school completion at intake and exit are presented on page 27.*)

Encouragingly, disparity in education attainment between White non-Hispanic youth and Youth of Color evident in last year's data was not present among this year's Outcomes Group. In fact, the rate of high school completion/credential among Youth of Color well exceeded that of White non-Hispanic youth at exit this year. Among Youth of Color, 93.5% had earned a high school credential by the time they exited Aftercare, compared to 83.2% of White, NH youth.

- Of this year's outcomes group, eleven (7.3%) were parents when first accessing services. This increased to forty-two (27.8%) at exit. About 20% of males and 35% of females were parents at exit.

In its 2022 session, the Iowa Legislature passed a DHS sponsored bill to allow young people to voluntarily stay in a foster family or Supervised Apartment Living placement up to the age of 21, even if they have earned a high school credential (the previous exception to aging out at age 18). With this new law, young people will have new options to ease the transition to adulthood. It remains to be seen how this change in Iowa law will impact Aftercare services, which will remain available to those youth who choose to leave the system before age 21.

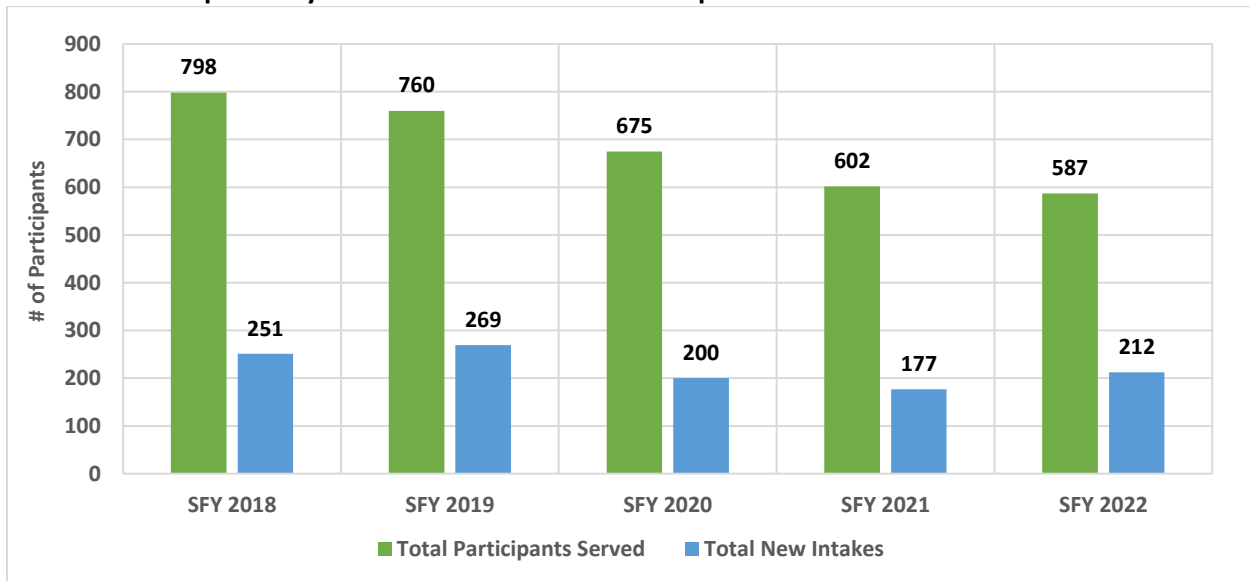
Part I: Characteristics of New Participants

Part I of the report summarizes characteristics of young people at the time they first accessed IASN services, including year-to-year trends which show 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.

Year-to-year variation in the number of “new intakes” is influenced by the number of older youth exiting Iowa’s child welfare and juvenile justice systems and of those, the number who 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. Roughly half of young people who could receive Aftercare are referred and choose to participate.

in SFY 2022, **212 young people accessed Aftercare services for the first time**, reversing a three-year trend of a declining number of new Aftercare intakes. New participants represented 36% of the 587 young adults who received Core Aftercare services during the year. Over the last five years, the Network has served an average of 684 young people per year, and an average of 222 participants each year have been new intakes.

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



Communication and outreach efforts by the Network include maintaining the IASN website, social media, and developing and distributing various print materials. Most youth, however, learn about the services through their primary DHS or JCS caseworker, a DHS Transition Planning Specialist, or another service provider. IASN agencies work collaboratively with these individuals to ensure that young people receive accurate and timely information about Aftercare services. Yet, the most common reason given by youth who don’t receive services is that they are not aware of Aftercare.²

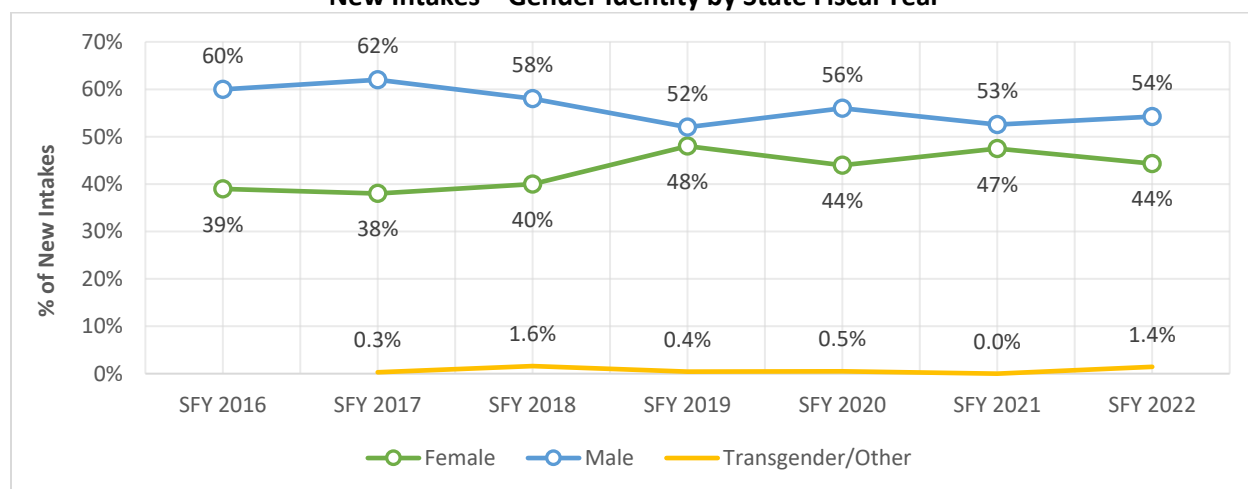
² Department of Human Rights, Division of Criminal and Juvenile Justice Planning. *NYTD Annual Report, Cohort 3, 21 Year Olds, FFY 2021 Survey Results*.

In SFY 2022, IASN convened a work group to strengthen the Aftercare referral process, particularly for Pre-Aftercare services, which can begin when youth (age 17 or older) are still in care and are likely to become eligible for Aftercare services. Many of the work group recommendations will be implemented in SFY 2023, with a goal of increasing the proportion of eligible youth who take advantage of Aftercare services.

Demographics

The majority of young people access Aftercare within a few months of their 18th birthday. Three in four of this year's new intakes (75.6%) were under 18½ when first accessing Aftercare; and 90.1% were under the age of 19. The 212 new intakes had mean age of 18.3 and a median age of 18.1. As shown in the chart below, of new intakes in SFY 2022, 54.3% identify as males and 44.3% as females, while 1.4% identified as transgender or other.

New Intakes – Gender Identity by State Fiscal Year



The Aftercare population is quite diverse with the racial/ethnic distribution of new Aftercare participants generally reflecting the population of older youth in placement. As shown in the chart below, about three-fourths of new intakes identify as “White or Caucasian” each year (75.9% in SFY 2022) and roughly one-fourth identify as “Black or African American” (23.6% in SFY 2022). A small proportion of youth identified as “American Indian or Alaska Native” (3.8%) and about 1.9% as “Asian.” Participants can identify with multiple races and separately report their ethnicity; 13.7% identified as Hispanic or Latino. Among all new intakes, 123 (58%) identified as non-Hispanic and selected White as their only race, while the remaining 42% identified with one or more other races, as multiracial, and/or as Hispanic or Latino.

New Intakes – Racial/Ethnic Identity by State Fiscal Year

	SFY 2018	SFY 2019	SFY 2020	SFY 2021	SFY 2022
American Indian or Alaska Native	3.2%	8.6%	5.5%	5.1%	3.8%
Asian	1.2%	0.4%	2.0%	2.8%	1.9%
Black or African American	20.8%	31.6%	25.0%	24.9%	23.6%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	1.6%	0.4%	0.0%	0.6%	0.5%
White	74.4%	69.1%	77.5%	74.0%	75.9%
Multiracial	12.0%	14.5%	14.5%	12.4%	11.8%
Hispanic or Latino (of any Race)	16.0%	9.7%	13.5%	11.9%	13.7%

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

Young people entered Aftercare in 55 of Iowa’s 99 counties during the reporting period. Approximately 30% of all new intakes were in Polk and Linn counties, which each had 32 intakes during the year. Marshall (12), Black Hawk (11), and Woodbury (11) Counties, rounded out the top five geographic areas where young people accessed services. An additional six counties had five to nine new intakes, and eighteen counties had two to four. At the other end of the scale, twenty-six counties had one new participant access services. The rural nature of Iowa and concentration of participants in a small number of counties creates challenges to providing statewide services, but all youth in Iowa are served regardless of where they live.

New Intakes – County of Residence

	#	%		#	%
Linn	32	15.1%	Lee	2	0.9%
Polk	32	15.1%	Chickasaw	1	0.5%
Marshall	12	5.7%	Dallas	1	0.5%
Black Hawk	11	5.2%	Buchanan	1	0.5%
Woodbury	11	5.2%	Bremer	1	0.5%
Story	9	4.2%	Muscatine	1	0.5%
Scott	8	3.8%	Jasper	1	0.5%
Pottawattamie	6	2.8%	Hancock	1	0.5%
Cerro Gordo	6	2.8%	Cherokee	1	0.5%
Des Moines	6	2.8%	Osceola	1	0.5%
Johnson	5	2.4%	Hamilton	1	0.5%
Webster	4	1.9%	Calhoun	1	0.5%
Mahaska	4	1.9%	Clayton	1	0.5%
Union	4	1.9%	Winnebago	1	0.5%
Marion	4	1.9%	Iowa	1	0.5%
Kossuth	3	1.4%	Clarke	1	0.5%
Henry	3	1.4%	Greene	1	0.5%
Crawford	3	1.4%	Delaware	1	0.5%
Worth	3	1.4%	Harrison	1	0.5%
Clay	3	1.4%	Dickinson	1	0.5%
Benton	2	0.9%	Wapello	1	0.5%
Dubuque	2	0.9%	Carroll	1	0.5%
Clinton	2	0.9%	Warren	1	0.5%
Tama	2	0.9%	Shelby	1	0.5%
Cedar	2	0.9%	Franklin	1	0.5%
Wright	2	0.9%	Cass	1	0.5%
Plymouth	2	0.9%	Wayne	1	0.5%
Boone	2	0.9%			

Placement Characteristics

Aftercare participants tend to initiate services very soon after their exit from the system. Of new intakes, 86% accessed services within three months of being discharged from care, while only 10% 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 many of 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 just 15 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 Juvenile Court Officer (JCO) generally handles the case. Similar to last year, two-thirds (66.2%) of new intakes had a DHS social worker during their placement, 24.4% had a JCO, and 8.9% were involved in both systems.

Many young people accessing Aftercare services have experienced lengthy stays in foster care and many have multiple placements. Sixty percent of youth reported spending two or more years in foster care and 56% reported three or more placements.

Aftercare participants leave the system from a variety of foster care placement types. Again this year, the last placement of just over half (51.6%) 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 in SFY 2020. About one-fifth (19.25%) of new participants aged out of a QRTP or shelter, continuing a recent decline that reflects fewer placements in congregate care settings. In an increase from last year, 17.8% came into Aftercare from a Supervised Apartment Living setting (compared to 11.9% last year). Of new participants in SFY 2022, 24 youth (11.3% of intakes), were discharged from the State Training School or a detention facility prior to accessing Aftercare.

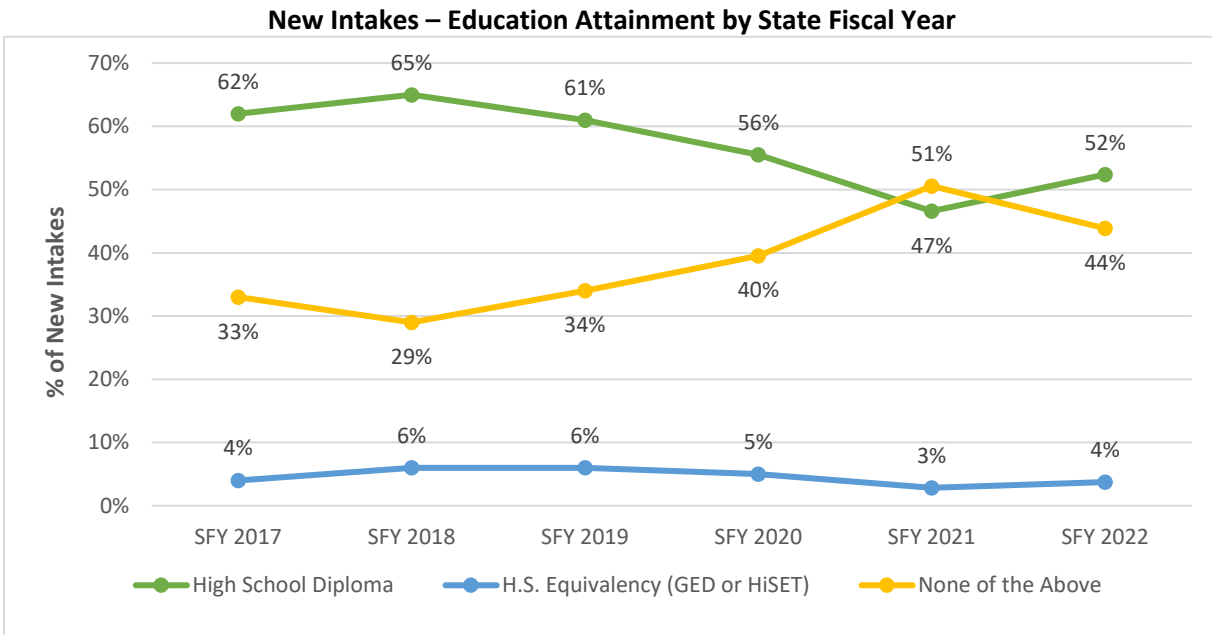
Data from SFY 2022 on last placements of incoming Aftercare participants continues to reflect the increasing use of family-like settings for youth requiring out-of-home placements and declining use of congregate care, including the State Training School, by the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. 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 2018	SFY 2019	SFY 2020	SFY 2021	SFY 2022
Family-Like					
<i>Adoption/Sub. Guardianship</i>	0.8%	1.1%	0.0%	1.7%	3.3%
<i>Family Foster Home (non-relative)</i>	28.3%	30.5%	26.5%	26.0%	26.3%
<i>Relative</i>	4.0%	5.2%	4.5%	14.1%	9.9%
<i>Suitable other</i>	3.2%	2.2%	3.0%	10.2%	12.2%
Congregate					
<i>Group Home/PMIC/QRTP</i>	15.1%	17.5%	23.0%	15.3%	13.6%
<i>Shelter</i>	11.6%	7.1%	6.5%	8.5%	5.6%
STS/Detention					
<i>STS</i>	16.3%	15.6%	14.0%	10.7%	10.3%
<i>Detention</i>	1.2%	2.6%	1.5%	1.7%	0.9%
Supervised Apartment Living (SAL)	19.5%	18.2%	19.5%	11.9%	17.8%

Education

Reversing a three-year trend in declining proportion of youth entering Aftercare with a high school diploma or credential, more than half of new participants had completed high school by the time they accessed services. High school attainment prior to entering Aftercare peaked in SFY 2018 when 71% of youth had a high school credential at intake. In SFY 2022, that percentage rebounded slightly to 56% from last year's, four-year low of 50%. Females were somewhat more likely to have completed high school at time of intake – 60.6% of females versus 52.2% of males had their high school diploma or HiSED when they accessed Aftercare.

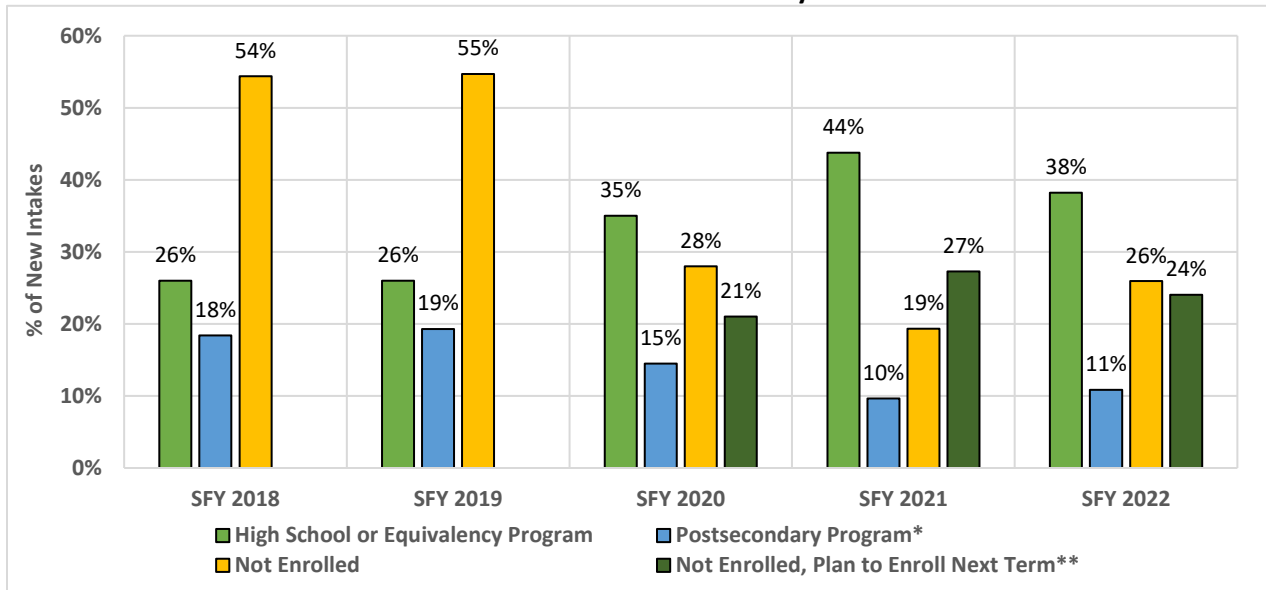


Young people in foster care often face numerous obstacles to education achievement, including school disruptions, poor attendance, disabilities, and academic challenges. Of youth accessing Aftercare in SFY 2022, 43% reported ever having received special education services (either an Individual Education Plan or 504 accommodation). More than half of males (52.2%) received special education services prior to entering Aftercare; compared to 30.9% of females. The most prevalent reasons for special education services were Behavior issues (44%), or a learning disability (41%) of those receiving special education based on self-reports of the youth.

Almost half of new intakes (49%) are enrolled in an education program at intake, including 38% who were enrolled in high school or a H.S. equivalency program, and 11% who were enrolled in a postsecondary program at the time they accessed services. Another 24% indicated that they intended to enroll in the upcoming term. A small number of youth (2.4% of new intakes) had already earned some type of vocational, trade or technical certificate or license.

Because many young people enter Aftercare the Spring or Summer after graduating from high school, the “plan to enroll” option was added in SFY 2020 to better reflect the post-secondary intentions of these youth. See the table below on enrollment trends among Aftercare intakes over recent years.

New Intakes – Education Enrollment Status by State Fiscal Year



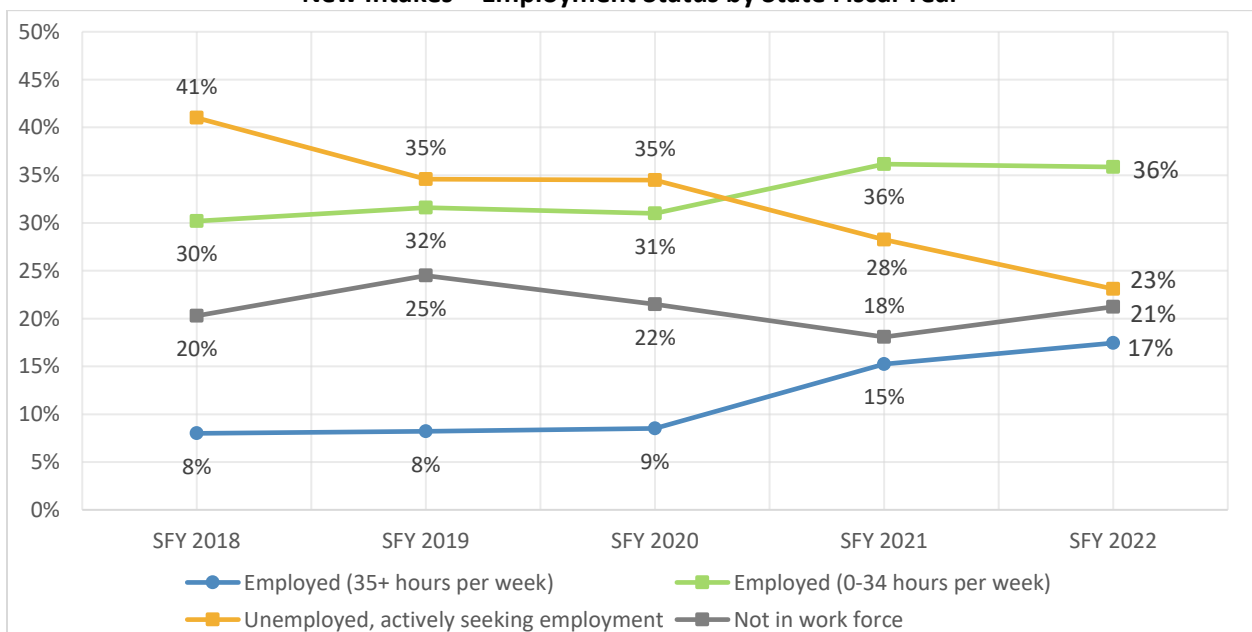
* Postsecondary Program includes two and four-year colleges and universities, community colleges, as well as trade, career, technical schools and training programs.

** “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.

Employment and Finances

Employment among young people entering Aftercare continues to show improvement. Slightly over half of new participants reported being employed at some level at intake (53.3%), rising from 51.4% last year. This includes 17.5% who reported full-time employment of 35 or more hours per week, a five-year high. Another 24% reported being unemployed but “actively seeking employment.” About one in five (21.2%) reported they were “not in the work force” which may include full-time students.

New Intakes – Employment Status by State Fiscal Year



Only 14.6% of new intakes have never held a job, while 26.4% report having been continuously employed for three months or less. One-fifth of new participants reported having been continuously employed for one year or longer.

Most youth enter Aftercare in possession of their essential personal documents. A majority of new participants reported possessing a birth certificate (78%), Social Security card (85%), and government-issued identification, such as a State ID, Driver’s License, or Permanent Resident Card (79%) in SFY 2022. In addition, 74% indicated that they had written verification of having been in foster care or out-of-home placement, a relatively new federal requirement that States are mandated to provide to older youth exiting foster care to facilitate access to other resources for which prior foster care involvement is a criterion (*e.g.*, college financial aid).

Only 38.7% of new participants reported having a Driver’s License (a decrease from 42.3% last year), and half (50.5%) reported they “have never been able to get a Driver’s License but want one.” In the Spring of 2022, DHS set-aside Division X pandemic funds in a special initiative to assist youth in care with the costs of meeting transportation needs, including paying for the costs of driver’s education and getting a license, among other options. The impact of this short-term initiative may be seen in this data point next year.

Many youth in foster care also face barriers to accessing mainstream financial institutions and gaining direct experience with managing a bank account. Overall, about one-third of new participants (34%) report not having any kind of bank account at intake. Males are more likely to be unbanked (43.5%) compared to 23.4% of females who report not having any bank accounts.

Living Situation

As is common among young adults, most new participants in Aftercare are living with family members, friends, or other adults with whom they have a relationship. A smaller number are living alone or in a residential program. Males are more likely to be living with family members, while females are more likely to be living with roommates, including significant others.

New Intakes, Living Arrangements by Gender Identity

	All (n=210)	Male (n=115)	Female (n=94)
Living with Family Members (<i>biological or adoptive parent or other family member</i>)	37.3%	47.0%	25.5%
Living with Former Placement (<i>unrelated foster family, suitable other</i>)	14.6%	7.8%	22.3%
Living with Others (<i>roommates, non-related Adults, significant other</i>)	28.8%	25.2%	34.0%
Living Alone (<i>no other adults</i>)	12.7%	11.3%	13.8%
Living in a residential program (<i>shelter, transitional facility</i>)	5.7%	7.8%	3.2%

Despite what is usually a brief lapse between aging out of foster care and joining Aftercare, 14.2% of new intakes said they had been homeless since aging out of their last placement, and 37.7% 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 half of youth (48%) are paying rent or otherwise contributing to the cost of their housing at the time of intake. Of those, half report that more than half their monthly income (earned and unearned)

goes toward rent and utilities. Given the range of housing assistance programs available, especially in more urban areas, opportunities to provide greater housing support to youth aging out of foster care are worth further exploration.

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 adults in their lives. More than nine-out-of-ten (91%) 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.” Family members frequently cited by youth as being available to support them included: Extended family members (56.8%), “fictive kin” (55.1%), birth parents (49.1%), adult siblings (33.9%), and adoptive parents (16%).

In addition, 90.6% of youth report having other adults who support them. Frequently reported non-family supports included “adult friends” (67%), caseworkers (39.2%), significant others (25.2%), foster parents (27.8%), and teachers or coaches (28%).

New Intakes, Supportive Adults by State Fiscal Year

	SFY 2018	SFY 2019	SFY 2020	SFY 2021	SFY 2022
Adult family member I will always be able to turn to for support...	86.5%	86.6%	87.0%	92.7%	91.0%
Adult, non-family member, I will always be able to turn to for support...	92.0%	90.7%	92.5%	89.8%	90.6%

Still, helping participants establish and maintain connections and relationships is an important aspect of Aftercare’s work. Two-thirds of young people indicated that they have “enough people to count on” for support, 31.6% reported that they have “some, but not enough people to count on,” and 1.9% say they have no one.

Health

Iowa youth exiting foster care are largely enrolled in Medicaid -- 94.3% of new intakes reported Medicaid coverage. Only 2.4% indicated that they did not have any medical insurance. Of all new participants, two-thirds 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 leveled off in SFY 2022, at about 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) continued to increase, with more than one-third of the most recent year’s incoming participants reporting vaping in the last thirty days.

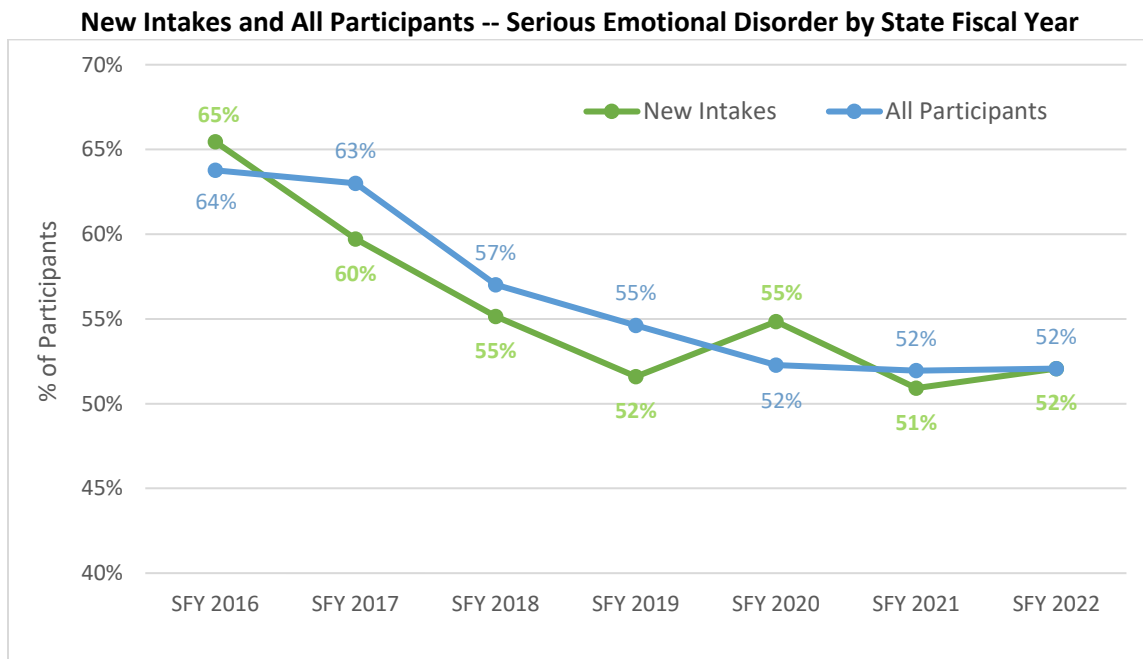
New Intakes – Recent Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Use by State Fiscal Year

	SFY 2018	SFY 2019	SFY 2020	SFY 2021	SFY 2022
Alcohol to intoxication	8.8%	14.5%	13.5%	12.4%	11.3%
Tobacco	37.5%	35.7%	34.0%	20.3%	20.8%
Vaping	N/A	N/A	12.0%	26.6%	34.4%
Marijuana	13.6%	15.2%	19.0%	15.8%	14.2%

Mental Health

Youth in foster care and other out-of-home placement are frequently diagnosed with serious emotional disorders (SED). Young people are not required to have their mental health or substance abuse histories disclosed to Aftercare, but most allow for that information to be shared. Over the last several years the proportion of youth entering aftercare with a SED has declined from nearly two-thirds of all youth in Aftercare to just over one-half. Mental health challenges and associated risky behaviors are still more prevalent among young people in Aftercare than those in the general population.

The following chart reflects the percentage of those youth who authorized release of this information as part of their entry into Aftercare. Each year, five to ten percent of young people elect not to have this information disclosed.



Sexual and Reproductive Health and Parenting

A small percentage of new participants (5.7%) started services as parents, which includes 9.6% of females and 2.6% of males. As in prior years, females reported they had “been pressured into a sexual situation” at significantly higher rates than males (44.7% vs. 13.9%). Self-reported regular use of birth control also differs between males and females, with more than half (54.3%) of females reporting that they “always” use birth control compared to 29.6% of males.

New Intakes – Reproductive Health Factors by Gender Identity

	Female (n=84)	Male (n=93)
Are a parent (regardless of custody)	9.6%	2.6%
Ever pregnant/got someone pregnant	17.0%	7.8%
Always use birth control	54.3%	29.6%
Ever pressured into a sexual situation	44.7%	13.9%

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. The tables below show five-year trends, but because these questions cover sensitive topics, this self-reported information should be interpreted with caution.

New Intakes – Adverse Experiences by State Fiscal Year

	SFY 2018	SFY 2019	SFY 2020	SFY 2021	SFY 2022
Ever inflicted self-harm	30.3%	32.3%	33.0%	29.4%	41.0%
Ever attempted suicide	27.5%	27.5%	34.5%	25.4%	31.1%
Incarcerated/detained, past two years	46.6%	45.7%	43.0%	36.7%	29.7%
Mental health diagnosis, past three years	N/A		48.5%	50.3%	46.7%
Current counseling/therapy			25.5%	28.3%	30.7%
Substance abuse diagnosis, past 3 years			27.0%	15.3%	17.0%
Current substance abuse treatment			3.0%	3.4%	4.3%
Ever victim of domestic violence			40.5%	33.9%	40.1%
Ever victim of sexual abuse/exploitation			28.5%	29.9%	34.4%

Questions related to certain risky behaviors and related services were revised substantially in SFY 2020, so comparable data is not available for some data elements.

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

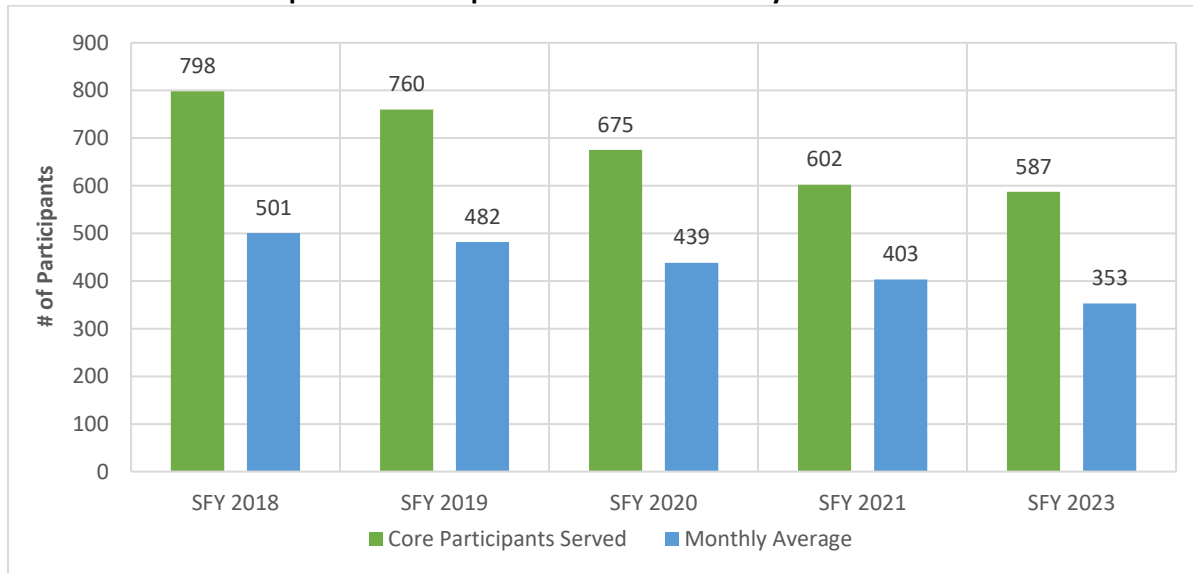
	Female (n=94)	Male (n=115)
Ever inflicted self-harm	48.9%	33.9%
Ever attempted suicide	36.2%	27.0%
Incarcerated/detained, past two years	14.9%	47.0%
Mental health diagnosis, past three years	51.1%	42.6%
Current counseling/therapy	37.2%	24.4%
Substance abuse diagnosis, past 3 years	7.5%	24.4%
Current substance abuse treatment	3.2%	5.2%
Ever victim of domestic violence	43.6%	36.5%
Ever victim of sexual abuse/exploitation	53.2%	19.1%

Part II: Overview of Services Provided

Part II of this report provides a brief overview of participation trends (yearly and monthly) and services provided by the Aftercare Network in SFY 2022. Additional information on these services is provided in the semi-annual progress report to DHS.

A total of 587 young people ages 18, 19, and 20 received “Core Services” during the year, with an average of 353 served per month. STS/detention was the last placement of 66 participants (11.2%) of all those receiving Core Services in SFY 2022.

Unduplicated Participation in Core Services by State Fiscal Year



While participation in Core services declined again this year as fewer youth have aged out in recent years than in the past, the decrease was offset by the provision of “Extended Services” to those young people ages 21 and 22. A total of 235 distinct young people received “Extended Services” during the year, with an average of 79 participating each month.

Eighty-four (84) young people participated in both “Core” and “Extended” services during the year leaving an unduplicated total number of youth served of 738. An average of 432 young people were served each month. (*More information on Extended Services is presented starting on page 21.*)

Eligibility Status

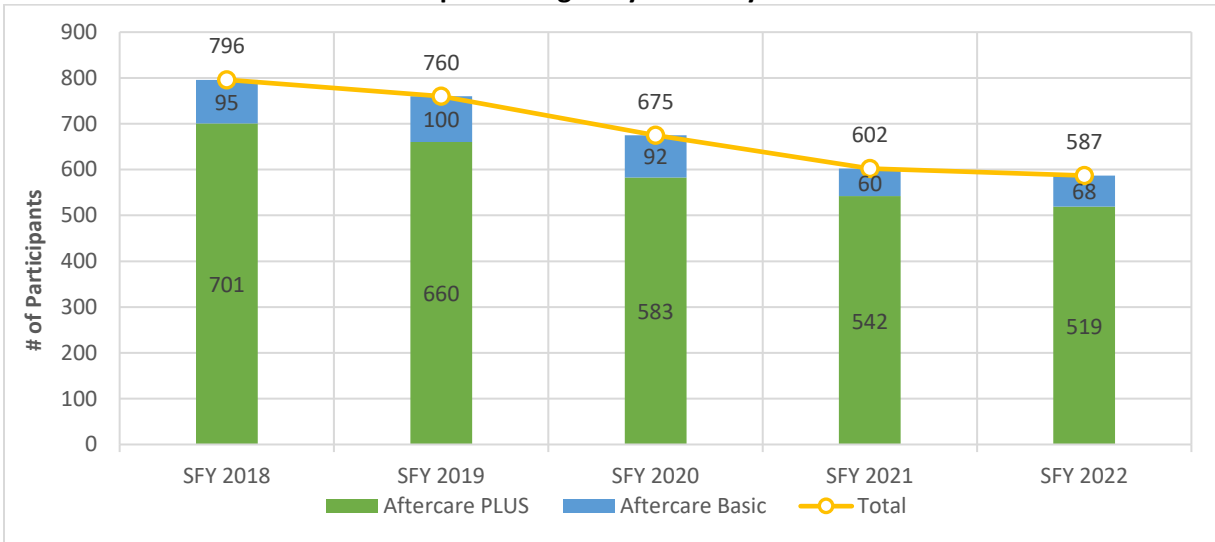
IASN categorizes participants as having either “Aftercare Basic” or “Aftercare PLUS” status as determined by program eligibility criteria. Because Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) eligibility criteria are narrower than Aftercare requirements, some participants are eligible for Aftercare but ineligible 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, and have access to 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 were 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. This change reduced the number of Aftercare Basic participants from an average of 96 in the prior three years (SFYs 2018 – 2020) to an average of 64 the last two years.

Of the 587 participants in SFY 2022, 68 (11.6%) met criteria for Aftercare Basic only. Of these, 52 (8.9% 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 16 (2.7%) were adopted or placed in subsidized guardianship after the age of 16.

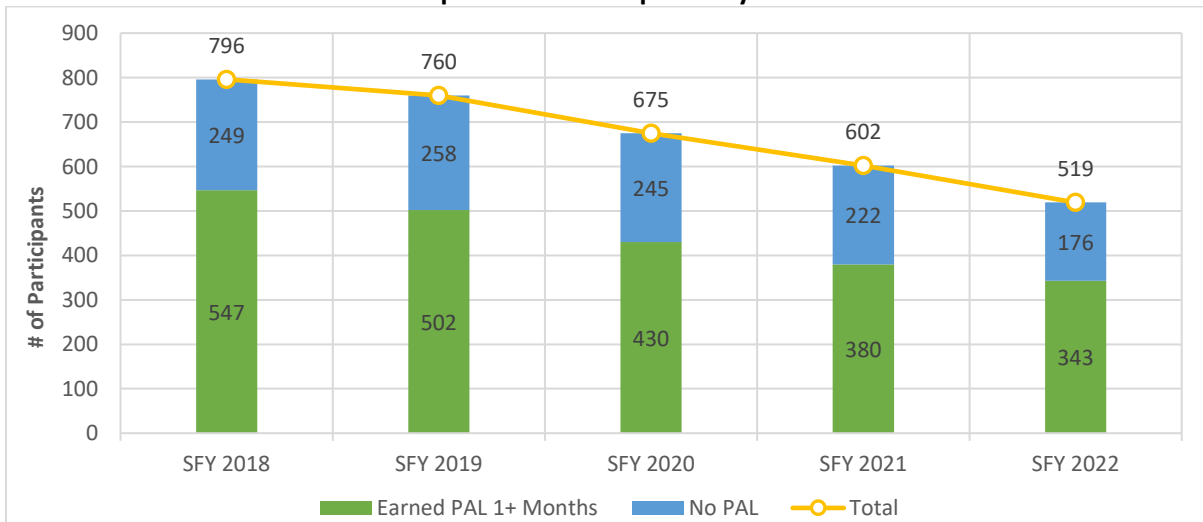
All Core Participants –Eligibility Status by State Fiscal Year



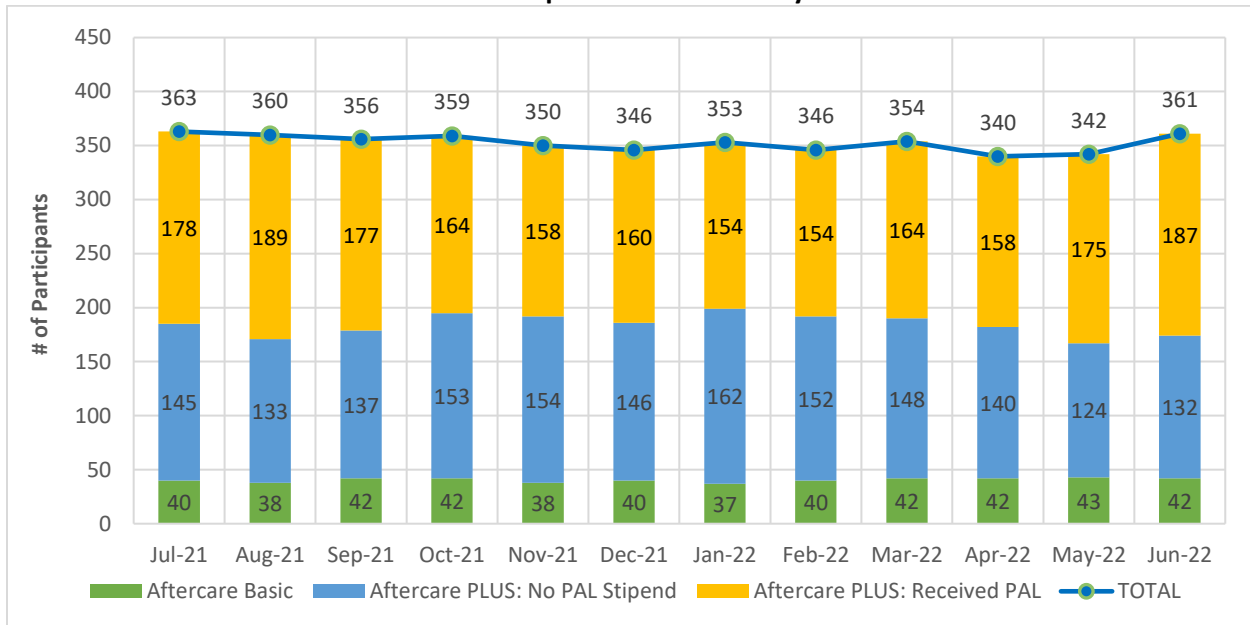
PAL Participation

In total, 343 out of 519 Aftercare PLUS participants (66.1%) met all conditions and received a stipend at least once during the year, and 176 (33.9%) 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 2022 monthly trends in PAL participation are shown in the charts below.

All Core Participants – PAL Recipients by State Fiscal Year



All Core Participants – PAL Status 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 (typically 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 based on 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.

All Participants – NYTD-Defined Services Provided	#	%
Mentoring	571	97.3%
Budget and financial management	547	93.2%
Housing education & home management training	481	81.9%
Independent living needs assessment	468	79.7%
Career preparation	466	79.4%
Health Education and risk prevention	449	76.5%
Other financial assistance	431	73.4%
Family Support and Healthy Marriage Education	388	66.1%
Post-secondary educational support	249	42.4%
Employment programs or vocational training	155	26.4%
Academic support	151	25.7%
Room and Board financial assistance	143	24.4%
Education financial assistance	67	11.4%

Among Core participants in SFY 2022, nearly all received “mentoring” services (97.3%) and assistance with “budget and financial management” (93.2%) from their IASN Advocate. 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 housing, assessing needs, career preparation, and health education.

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), Aftercare 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, Division X funds for foster care youth. This allowed a temporary increase in the amount of the subsidy available to each recipient, up to the full cost of their rent through September 2021. Eligibility was also extended to participants up to the age of 23. As a result, there was an overall increase in overall rent subsidy expenditures toward the end of FY 2021 and into SFY 2022. Eligibility will revert back to those ages 18 to 21 on October 1, 2022.

According to the Iowa Finance Authority, \$388,119 in rent subsidies were distributed during SFY 2022, an increase from the \$212,151 expended in the prior year. An average of 59 young people received a subsidy each month, an increase from a monthly average of 44 rent subsidy recipients in the previous year.

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 231 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 two years; median duration was 2.36 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, 158 (68.4%) completed an exit interview with an Advocate and 73 (31.6%) 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. On average, there was a full year age difference between those completing an exit interview (average age of 20.6) compared to the average age of those discontinuing services without an interview of 19.6.

The most prevalent reason for young people being discharged from Core services was turning 21 and therefore becoming ineligible for that phase of services (52.8%). Additionally, 9.5% moved out of their agency’s service area, including 3.5% who were expected to transfer to a different Aftercare agency but had not yet done so at the end of the reporting period. Another 13% had their services discontinued for failing to meet “self-responsibility” requirements (e.g., not meeting regularly with an Advocate, not actively working toward self-sufficiency, etc.), 10.4% voluntarily chose to end services, joined the military, or had achieved self-sufficiency, and 3.5% were incarcerated as the reason for exit. One youth died while an active Aftercare participant.

All Participants – Exits by Reason	#	%
Turned 21 (end of eligibility for Core services)	122	52.8%
Moving/has moved out of area (includes 8 pending transfer)	22	9.5%
Exited for not meeting self-responsibility requirements	30	13.0%
Voluntarily ended services, joined the military, or achieved self-sufficiency	24	10.4%
Incarcerated, institutionalized, or hospitalized	8	3.5%
Other or unknown	24	10.4%

Thirteen (13) of these individuals exited after less than three months of participation and did not return before the end of the fiscal year. Two of these youth initially accessed service just prior to turning 21 and have continued with Extended Services. The others remain eligible for core services and may re-enter services in the future. With such a short duration of involvement with an Aftercare agency, this group of 13 is excluded from the outcomes analysis presented in Part III of this report.

Extended Aftercare Services

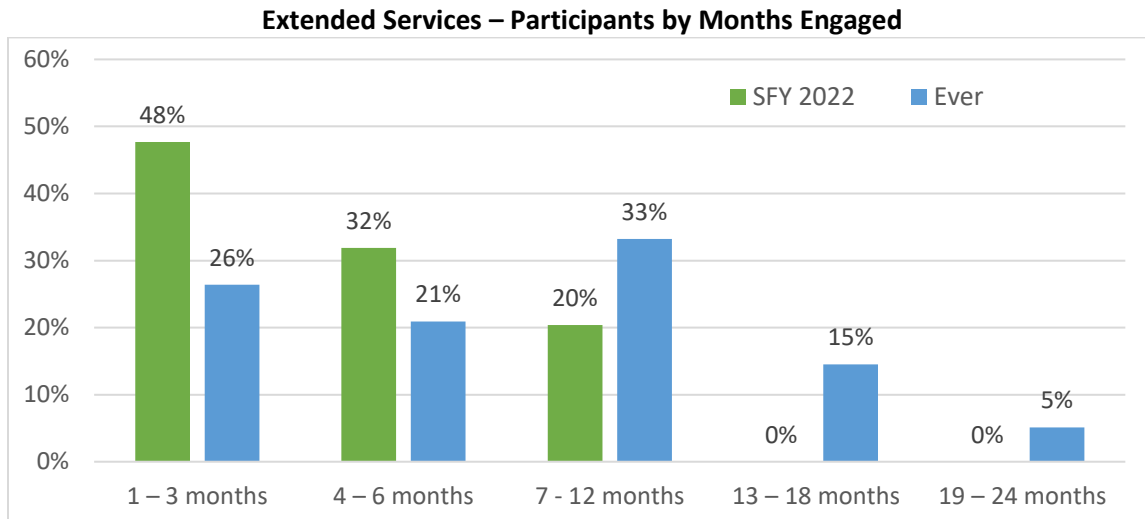
Extended Aftercare services for young adults ages 21 and 22 who had previously received Core services (ages 18-21) were provided to 235 young adults in SFY 2022 (an increase from 210 in SFY 2021). An average of 79 young adults participated (i.e., met in person with an SSA at least once) in Extended services each month. Young people accessed Extended services in 41 counties, with 44% of those residing in either Linn County (54 participants) or Polk County (50 participants).

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. There are two primary differences between Core and Extended services:

- 1) expectations for meeting regularly with an Aftercare Advocate are relaxed. There is no pre-determined minimum contact for young people to remain eligible. Participants in Extended services are able to determine the frequency of meetings based on their needs and interest; and
- 2) 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. Supportive payments may not exceed \$300 per quarter.

Most young people who elected Extended services had Aftercare PLUS status as Core participants (83.4%). Compared to youth exiting Core services, Extended participants were somewhat more likely to be female (59.1% versus 48.4% of Core exits) and to be parenting (39.2% versus 27.2% of Core exits). Twenty-three (23) 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 2022, but that number ranged from one to twelve months.



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 2022, the Network distributed Supportive Payments totaling \$103,289 or an average of \$440 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 half (51.1%) of young people sought Extended services for the primary purpose of accessing financial assistance; 35.7% met for guidance and/or support from the Advocate; and 13.2% met for help on accessing resources or other reasons.

The following data reflect the circumstances reported by Extended services participants at their last month of contact with an Advocate during SFY 2022. These results are similar to the previous year.

- 71.5% were working full- or part-time.
- 23.8% were enrolled in an education program, including 9.8% in a 2 or 4-year college; 12.8% in high school or HS completion program; and 1.3% in a career, trade, or certificate program.
- 86.4% reported that they had safe and stable housing.
- 93.2% reported that they had a supportive relationship with a positive adult.
- 61.7% 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 are designed 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 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

This part of the report compares initial intake data with the last exit interview data for those Core services recipients (ages 18-21) who were active for at least three months, exited services during the reporting period, and did not return before the end of the reporting period (July 1, 2022). 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. The SFY 2022 unduplicated "outcomes group" includes 151 participants. Outcomes data are presented for the full group of 151 young adults, as well as disaggregated by gender.

Note that some of the youth included in this analysis may return – or may have already returned between July 1, 2022, and the submission of this report – if they remain eligible. Finally, as discussed in the previous section, a number of the Core services participants who turned 21 this past year have accessed Extended Services or may in the future.

Demographics

Young adults are generally under the age of 19 when they first access Aftercare services (median = 18.1, mean = 18.3) and largely at or near age 21 at exit (median = 21.0, mean = 20.7). Three-quarters (76.2%) had reached age 21 at the time they exited Core services and were no longer eligible; nine out of ten (88.7%) were at least 20½ at exit.

Slightly more than half (52.3%) identified as female, and 47.7% male. Three-fourths (76.2%) identified as White, 17.2% identified as African American or Black, and 8.6% as American Indian or Alaska Native. In total, regardless of their racial identity, 11.9% 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, 58.9% identified as non-Hispanic White only, while the remaining 41.1% 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 = 2.8 years, mean = 2.4 years). Two-thirds (65.6%) of this group participated over a period of 2.5 years or more, and three-quarters (76.8%) 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. Further, the policy of stepping-down the maximum monthly PAL stipend as participants get older, which was first implemented in January 2020, has not impacted the length of time participants remain engaged in Aftercare services. In fact, duration increased in SFY 2022 from the prior year.

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. Once again this year, youth in Aftercare demonstrated significant gains in employment while in Aftercare. In the outcomes group, employment at any level increased from 49% at intake to 68% at exit (both higher than the prior year). More than half (54.3%) of the participants reported working at least 25 hours or more per week at exit, more than double this level of employment at intake (24.6%).

Females were more likely than males to be employed at both intake and exit, but for fewer hours per week. Those differences narrowed while participating in Aftercare. At exit 69.6% of females and 65.3% of males were employed at any level, including 51.9% of females and 56.9% of males who were working more than 25 hours per week. About one-in-five youth were not in the workforce at both intake and exit, a group that includes full-time students.

Outcomes Group – Employment Status by Interview Type

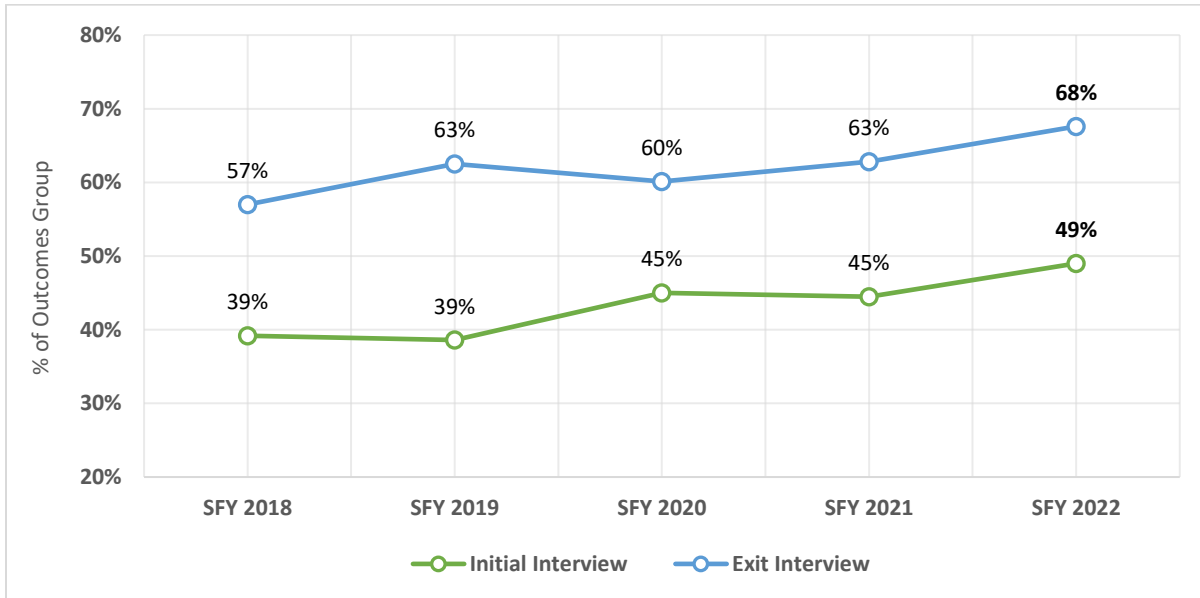
	All (n=151)		Male (n=72)		Female (n=79)	
	Initial	Exit	Initial	Exit	Initial	Exit
Employed full-time (35+ hours)	8.0%	31.1%	9.7%	37.5%	6.3%	25.3%
Employed part-time (25-34 hours)	16.6%	23.2%	19.4%	19.4%	13.9%	26.6%
Employed part-time (<25 hours)	24.5%	13.3%	13.9%	8.3%	34.2%	17.7%
Unemployed, seeking work	29.8%	9.3%	34.7%	6.9%	25.3%	11.4%
Unemployed, long-term disability	1.3%	1.3%	1.4%	1.4%	1.3%	1.3%
Not in workforce	19.9%	19.9%	20.8%	23.6%	19.0%	16.5%
Other/Not reported	--	2.0%	--%	2.8%	--	1.3%

Relative to state and national data from the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD), Aftercare employment outcomes (68% at exit) compare favorably to the larger population of former foster youth. According to the most recently available national NYTD data, 40% of youth at age 19 are employed (either full- or part-time) and 57% are employed at age 21.³ More recent Iowa NYTD data from FFY 19 and FFY 21 shows that of Iowa’s NYTD follow-up sample, 60% were working at both ages 19 and 21.

Over the last five years, an average of 43% of young people have entered Aftercare working full or part-time, and that proportion increases to an average of 62% at exit. Five year trends in employment at intake and exit are shown below.

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



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 no earned income drops significantly (54.3% to 26.5%) from intake to exit. Participants demonstrated strong earnings growth as the economy recovered and individuals continued to rebound from setbacks resulting from the pandemic. Almost four times as many youth were earning \$800 or more per month at exit (42.4%) than at intake (11.3%) in the SFY 2022 outcomes group.

Outcomes Group – Monthly Earned Income by Interview Type

	All (n=151)		Male (n=72)		Female (n=79)	
	Initial	Exit	Initial	Exit	Initial	Exit
\$0	54.3%	26.5%	58.3%	31.9%	50.6%	21.5%
\$1-399	12.6%	10.6%	6.9%	6.9%	17.7%	13.9%
\$400-799	21.9%	20.5%	23.6%	15.3%	20.3%	25.3%
\$800-1,199	8.6%	17.9%	6.9%	16.7%	10.1%	19.0%
\$1,200+	2.7%	24.5%	4.2%	29.2%	1.3%	20.3%

*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 67% of respondents and after-tax for the remaining 33%. Income at exit is after-tax for all respondents.*

While earnings increase during their time in Aftercare, it is still difficult for many participants to meet their expenses (especially with earned income alone) as they take on adult responsibilities. Eighteen percent (18.1%) of young people at exit reported not having enough resources to cover their expenses the prior month, an improvement from twenty-nine percent (29.1%) who could not cover their expenses at intake.

Outcomes Group – Resources for Monthly Expenses by Interview Type

	All (n=151)		Male (n=72)		Female (n=79)	
	Initial	Exit	Initial	Exit	Initial	Exit
Yes, with earned income alone	23.8%	30.5%	25.0%	30.6%	22.8%	30.4%
Yes, with earned income and other assistance	47.0%	51.4%	48.8%	51.4%	48.1%	49.4%
No, not enough to cover expenses last month	29.1%	18.1%	29.2%	18.1%	29.1%	20.3%

Other indications of financial capability also 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	42.4%	71.0%
Have a checking account	54.3%	84.1%
Have money saved for emergencies	34.4%	41.7%
Have received their credit report	8.0%	54.3%
Have their Social Security card	81.5%	89.4%

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, 80.1% of the outcomes group were living with family members, friends, or other unrelated adults. At exit, this number declined by about twenty percent, but 61.6% continued to live with other adults. Conversely, as shown below, the number living alone increased from intake (12.6%) to exit (21.9%).

Outcomes Group – Housing Status by Interview Type

	All (n=151)		Male (n=72)		Female (n=79)	
	Initial	Exit	Initial	Exit	Initial	Exit
Living alone, sole responsibility	12.6%	21.9%	13.9%	15.3%	11.4%	27.9%
With others, paying	43.7%	52.3%	40.3%	52.8%	46.8%	51.9%
With others, not paying	36.4%	9.3%	37.5%	12.5%	35.4%	6.3%
University housing	2.0%	2.0%	1.4%	2.8%	2.5%	1.3%
Supportive housing (shelter, rehabilitation, etc.)	2.7%	6.6%	4.2%	8.3%	1.3%	5.1%
Couch surfing or homeless	2.0%	4.0%	1.4%	2.8%	2.5%	5.1%
Other*	0.7%	4.0%	1.4%	5.6%	0.0%	2.5%

* Examples of other include, military housing, jail, hotels.

The vast majority of youth report feeling safe in their current living arrangement at both intake (98%) and exit (95.4%), 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 27.2% of those exiting indicated that they had experienced homelessness since aging out of foster care or other placement. This is comparable to Iowa FFY 2021 NYTD results which reported that 30% of those surveyed at age 21 had been homeless in the past two years.

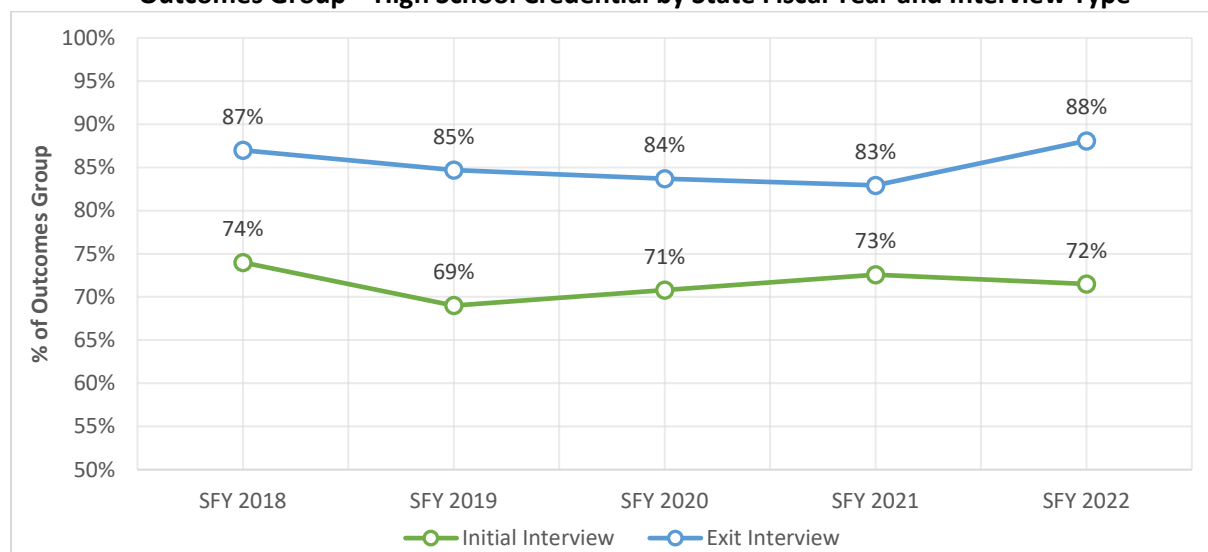
Of those in the outcomes group, 62.9% report being on a lease at exit (more than double the 29.8% at intake), but the affordability of housing remains tenuous for many, and other measures reflect housing insecurity among this population. For example, 41.1% of exiting participants indicated that more than half of their monthly income (earned and unearned) goes toward rent and utilities, and 10.6% are currently behind or late on rent and/or utility bills.

Housing assistance specifically for former foster youth, such as Iowa’s Aftercare Rent Subsidy program (see page 20) 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

A fair share of young people complete high school or earn a high school credential while participating in Aftercare. Among this year’s outcomes group, 71.5% had earned a high school credential prior to accessing Aftercare. By the time they exited services, 88.1% of these young people had achieved this milestone, setting a five-year high and reversing a three-year trend of a slight decline in the proportion of youth exiting Aftercare with a high school credential.

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



While all subgroups improved, disaggregation of the data on education attainment shows that young men and Youth of Color especially made significant gains while participating in Aftercare. At exit, males had a higher rate of education attainment (high school or more) at 91.6% than females (84.8%).

Outcomes Group – Education Attainment by Interview Type

	All (n=151)		Male (n=72)		Female (n=79)	
	Initial	Exit	Initial	Exit	Initial	Exit
Associate degree	0.0%	0.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.3%
High School Diploma	67.6%	77.5%	69.4%	81.9%	65.8%	73.4%
High School Equivalency Degree	4.0%	9.9%	7.0%	9.7%	1.3%	10.1%
None of the Above	28.5%	11.9%	23.6%	8.3%	32.9%	15.2%

Encouragingly, disparity in education attainment between White non-Hispanic youth and Youth of Color evident in last year’s data was not present in this year’s Outcomes Group. In fact, the rate of high school completion/credential among Youth of Color well exceeded that of White, Non-Hispanic youth at exit this year. Among Youth of Color, 93.5% had earned a high school credential by the time they exited Aftercare, compared to 83.2% of White, NH youth.

Outcomes Group – Education Attainment at Exit by Race/Ethnicity

	White, NH (n=89)		Youth of Color (n=62)	
	Initial	Exit	Initial	Exit
Associate Degree	0.0%	1.1%	0.0%	0.0%
High School Diploma	68.5%	75.3%	66.1%	80.6%
High School Equivalency	3.4%	7.9%	4.8%	12.9%
None of the Above	28.1%	15.7%	29.0%	6.5%

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, 78% of NYTD respondents in Iowa (cohort 3, FFY 2021) and 69% nationally (cohort 2, FFY 2018) had earned a High School Diploma or equivalent. However, post-secondary completion remains uncommon – at exit, only 4.6% of youth had earned a vocational, trade or technical certificate or license and less than 1% had earned an Associate degree.

At exit, 33.8% of participants were currently enrolled in an education program, including 15% continuing to work toward a high school credential and 18.5% who were enrolled in a post-secondary education or training program. Another 6% indicated that they intended to enroll in an education program in an upcoming semester or session.

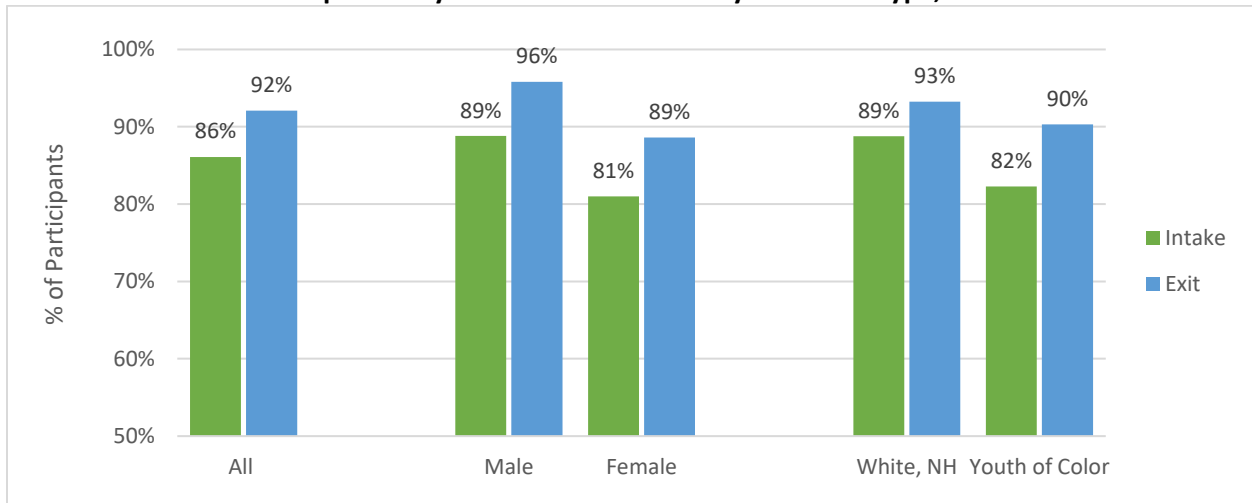
Continuing enrollment of exiting Aftercare participants also compares favorably to NYTD survey data, which shows 19% of Iowa youth (FFY 2021) and 28% of youth nationally (FFY 2018) reporting education enrollment among 21-year-olds in the NYTD samples.

Positive Relationships

Social relationships and networks of positive adults support healthy development and are essential for all young people. Those who age out of foster care have often experienced loss, separation, and disruption of relationships with family members and other caring adults. Ability to create and maintain positive relationships can be hindered by past trauma. It is, therefore, promising that most participants report that they have adults that they “will always be able to turn to for support, advice, [to] share or celebrate personal achievements, [and to] help solve problems” at both intake and exit from Aftercare.

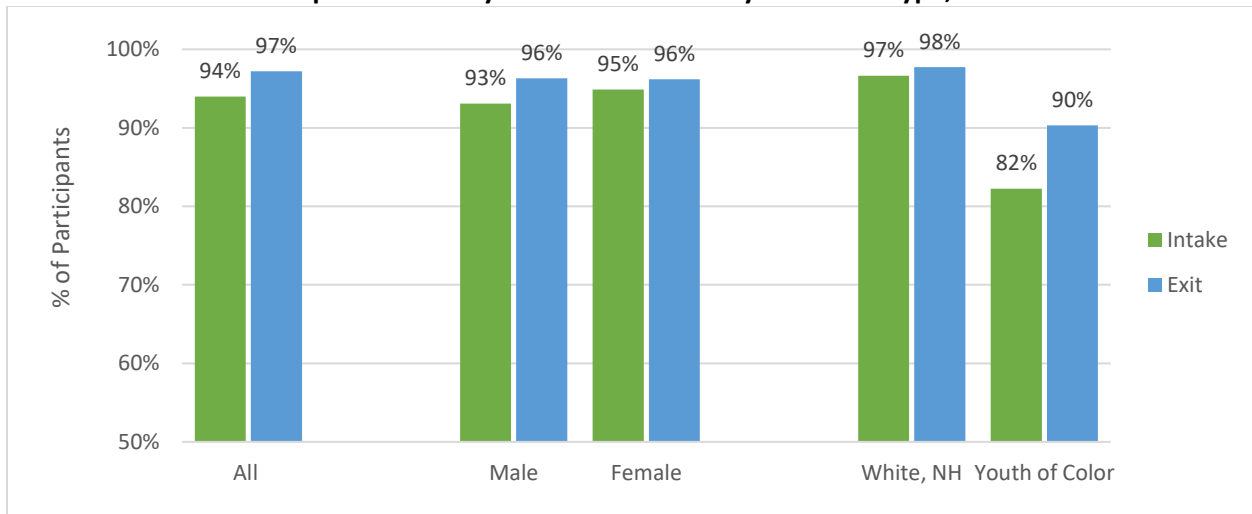
At intake, 86% of the outcomes group reported having a family member that they could count on for support, while at exit 92% of participants reported family support. Males and White, Non-Hispanic youth reported higher rates of having a family member they can count on than females and Youth of Color respectively. Exiting youth named a variety of family members with whom they have positive relationships, including birth parents (46.4%), adult siblings (36.4%), extended family members (58.9%), and fictive kin (43.7%).

Outcomes Group – Family Member to Count on by Interview Type, Gender & Race



Similarly, more than 90% of participants are able to identify non-family adults that they can rely on at both intake (94%) and exit (96.7%). Evidence of the positive relationship Aftercare staff establish with young people, 91% of exiting participants report that their Aftercare Advocate is someone they are able to turn to for support. Other supportive adults mentioned by youth at exit include (former) foster parents (23.8%), adult friends (72.6%), and significant others (49%).

Outcomes Group – Non-Family Adult to Count on by Interview Type, Gender & Race



When asked which one adult (family or otherwise) they turn to most often for support, 31.8% said their spouse or significant other, 18.5% said a birth parent, and 9.3% said an extended family member. While almost all young people report some connections with both family and non-family members, 24.5% reported at exit that they had some, but not enough people to count on.

Parenting

Of this year’s outcomes group, eleven (7.3%) were parents when first accessing services. This increased to forty-two youth (27.8%) at exit. About 20% of males and 35% of females were parents at exit. Additional questions related to parenting experiences were added to intake and exit interviews beginning in SFY 2020. Three-year data on these factors is shown below, but because of the relatively

small number of participants responding to these questions, caution should be used when interpreting this information.

Outcomes Group – Parenting Factors Among Exiting Parents

	SFY 2020 (n=37)	SFY 2021 (n=45)	SFY 2022 (n=38)
Custody of (some or all) child(ren)	78.4%	73.3%	89.5%
Paternity established	64.9%	62.2%	73.0%
Not custody, but regularly involved	13.5%	17.8%	15.8%
Pay or receive child support	10.8%	6.7%	0.0%
Participated in parenting program	40.5%	55.6%	44.7%
Enough parenting support from others	62.2%	68.9%	76.3%

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 or truthfully reported by participants. Especially at intake before a trusting relationship with an Advocate has been established, youth may be reluctant to honestly report on these behaviors. Youth are also given the option to decline to answer interview 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.

About one-third of youth indicate past-month tobacco use at intake (35.1%) and exit (29.8%). Recent binge drinking (9.9% to 31.1%) and marijuana use (13.9% to 27.2%) 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 Iowans ages 18 – 25, the NSDUH estimates past month tobacco use at 28%; past month binge alcohol use at 40.1%; and past month marijuana use at 21.3%.⁴

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

	All (n=151)		Male (n=72)		Female (n=79)	
	Initial	Exit	Initial	Exit	Initial	Exit
Alcohol to intoxication	9.9%	31.1%	6.9%	40.3%	12.7%	22.8%
Tobacco	35.1%	29.8%	33.3%	33.3%	36.7%	26.6%
Marijuana	13.9%	27.2%	11.1%	36.1%	16.5%	19.0%
Meth and/or opioids	2.0%	1.6%	0.0%	2.8%	3.8%	0.0%
Prescription misuse	0.7%	2.0%	0.0%	4.2%	1.3%	0.0%

In the two years prior to their initial Aftercare intake, 34.4% 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. Interestingly, 30% of females also reported being incarcerated or detained prior to accessing Aftercare. At exit, criminal

⁴National Survey on Drug Use and Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration; [2019-2020 NSDUH State-Specific Tables | CBHSQ Data \(samhsa.gov\)](#) retrieved 8/23/2022.

justice involvement since leaving their last juvenile placement had declined to 17.9% overall (27.8% among males, and 8.9% among females).

It is important to note that the Aftercare interview asks whether participants were “incarcerated or detained” (consistent with a similar question on the NYTD outcomes survey), not whether they were charged or convicted of any crimes. In the Iowa NYTD sample of 21-year olds surveyed in FFY 21, 25% indicated that they had been incarcerated or detained in the prior two years.

A relatively small number of participants self-report specific criminal activities. Among the categories covered in the interview, stealing is the crime most often reported at intake (18.5%) but declines sharply by the time youth exit Aftercare (7.3%). A small, but persistent proportion of participants (5-10%) are involved with gang activity and illicit drug trading, both of which are 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=151)		Male (n=72)		Female (n=79)	
	Initial	Exit	Initial	Exit	Initial	Exit
Incarcerated or detained	34.4%	17.9%	38.9%	27.8%	30.4%	8.9%
Stealing	18.5%	7.3%	20.8%	12.5%	16.5%	2.5%
Selling or distributing drugs	9.9%	2.7%	12.5%	4.2%	7.6%	1.3%
Gang activity	8.0%	4.6%	9.7%	8.3%	6.3%	1.3%

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.” (35.1%), planning suicide (36.4%), and attempting suicide (30.5%) 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 participants 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=151)		Male (n=72)		Female (n=79)	
	Initial	Exit	Initial	Exit	Initial	Exit
Ever inflicted self-harm	37.1%	35.1%	25.0%	29.2%	48.1%	41.8%
Self-harm last 12 months		6.0%		6.9%		6.3%
Ever planned suicide	39.7%	36.4%	30.6%	34.7%	48.1%	38.0%
Planned suicide last 12 months		9.9%		12.5%		7.6%
Ever attempted suicide	35.1%	30.5%	27.8%	26.4%	41.8%	34.2%
Attempted suicide last 12 months		2.7%		4.2%		1.3%

Physical and Mental Health Services

Nearly all participants have health insurance when they enter and exit services, with most enrolled in Medicaid which is available to youth who age out of foster care up to age 26 in Iowa. Aftercare Advocates work with participants to understand their insurance coverage and to complete annual renewal applications as needed.

Outcomes Group – Health Insurance Coverage by Interview Type

	All (n=151)		Male (n=72)		Female (n=79)	
	Initial	Exit	Initial	Exit	Initial	Exit
Medicaid	95.4%	95.4%	91.7%	93.1%	98.7%	97.5%
Someone else's plan	4.0%	4.0%	4.2%	2.8%	3.8%	5.1%
Employer	0.7%	2.7%	0.0%	5.6%	1.3%	0.0%
Self (private pay)	0.7%	0.7%	1.4%	1.4%	0.0%	0.0%

Many Aftercare participants have chronic physical and mental health problems which require ongoing treatment or medications. For example, more than half (53%) of the outcomes group were taking prescribed medications at intake, and about one-third (32.5%) were doing so at exit. Among females, 45.6% had been diagnosed with a mental health disorder in the 3 years prior to exiting Aftercare.

Outcomes Group – Health Conditions and Treatments by Interview Type

	All (n=151)		Male (n=72)		Female (n=79)	
	Initial	Exit	Initial	Exit	Initial	Exit
Current prescribed medication(s)	53.0%	32.5%	45.8%	30.6%	59.5%	34.2%
Mental health diagnosis, past 3 years		37.8%		29.2%		45.6%
Current counseling/therapy		25.2%		23.6%		26.6%
Substance abuse diagnosis, past 3 years	N/A	11.2%	N/A	13.9%	N/A	10.1%
Current substance abuse treatment		2.0%		2.8%		1.3%

Essential Documents

Due to their transitions between placements and, ultimately, out of foster care, it can be difficult for youth to acquire and retain important documents. While consistently high, many young people who lacked these documents at intake have gained access to them while participating in Aftercare.

Outcomes Group – Essential Document Possession by Interview Type

	All (n=151)		Male (n=72)		Female (n=79)	
	Initial	Exit	Initial	Exit	Initial	Exit
Birth Certificate	81.5%	87.4%	83.3%	83.3%	79.8%	91.1%
Social Security Card	81.5%	89.4%	84.7%	87.5%	78.5%	91.1%
Government Issued ID	N/A	94.7%	N/A	94.4%	N/A	94.9%
Verification of Foster Care	N/A	80.8%	N/A	73.6%	N/A	87.3%

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. Over the last few years, typically fewer than 40% of youth enter Aftercare with a Driver’s License. As of their exit from Aftercare in SFY 2022, over two-thirds of participants (68.2%) had a valid driver’s license, 17.2% of youth expressed that they “have never been able to get a Driver’s License but want one;” 9.9% had a license but it had been suspended or revoked; and 4.6% indicated that they didn’t “want or need a driver’s license at this time.”

Closing Comments

Twenty years ago, little attention was being given to young people who aged out of foster care usually around the age of 18. In Iowa and across most of the country, most publicly supported services specifically designed for this population were in their infancy, if they were available at all. Little was known about the experiences and outcomes of these young adults as they transitioned to adulthood, but evidence that was available was troubling.

Over the last two decades, significant progress has been made. Today, when young people age out of care there are well-established services and opportunities available for them. As the primary provider of these services in Iowa, IASN strives to provide individualized support and connections to the resources these young people need to become successful adults. IASN continually aims to provide quality, effective services, holding high expectations for itself, as well as for the youth it serves.

As a result, participating young people make progress in several outcome areas and most are on a path to a promising future. With the help of Aftercare Advocates, almost all exiting participants have maintained or strengthened positive relationships with supportive family members and other adults. Most have earned a high school credential, are gaining traction in jobs and careers, and have increased their earnings. While many still face challenges, these young people are generally hopeful about their futures. IASN agencies and staff are proud of them for their accomplishments and persistence in successfully navigating early adulthood.

In its 2022 session, the Iowa Legislature passed a DHS-initiated bill to allow young people to voluntarily stay in a foster family or Supervised Apartment Living placement up to the age of 21, even if they have earned a high school credential (the previous exception to aging out at age 18 in Iowa). With this new law, young people will have additional options to further ease the transition to adulthood. It remains to be seen how this policy change will impact participation in Aftercare services, which will remain available for those youth who choose to leave the system. The Network will approach these changes with the confidence that comes from twenty years of experience in adapting and refining its services to continue to best meet the needs of this population.

Appendix I

IASN Annual Participant Survey Report – April 2022 (pages 35 – 42)

Appendix II

SFY 2022 Required Performance Measures – July 2022 (pages 43 – 45)

Participant Experiences in Aftercare

Annual Participant Survey Report, April 2022

By Carol Behrer, Executive Director

Youth Policy Institute of Iowa

Introduction

The [Iowa Aftercare Services Network](#) provides services and support to help young adults who exit foster care near the age of 18 make a successful transition to adulthood, supporting 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. Assistance is provided to participants in the areas of education, employment, housing, health, life skills, and relationships.

The Network administers an annual survey to solicit feedback from Aftercare participants and assess their satisfaction with the services they are receiving. The survey is developed by the Youth Policy Institute of Iowa in consultation with DHS and YSS. 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 and early April 2022, 320 active Aftercare participants across the state completed the online, confidential survey. Young people receiving services from all eight agencies in the Network participated, with response rates proportional to agencies’ caseloads. Participants in the Des Moines and Cedar Rapids areas accounted for approximately 40% of all survey responses. As an incentive to complete the survey, respondents were given the opportunity to provide their name and contact information to be entered into a drawing for one of five \$50 gift cards. Those names were selected and gift cards distributed after the survey closed.

Of all respondents, 254 young people (ages 18 to 21) were receiving core services at the time of the survey, and 62 participants (those age 21 and 22), were receiving Extended Services. Four (4) respondents did not provide their age or other demographic information that is requested at the end of the survey. All respondents completed the survey electronically.

Aftercare Advocates strive to give every active participant in the month the survey is administered an opportunity to share their feedback by completing a survey, but doing so is voluntary on the part of the participants. Of all continuing⁵ core participants who met with an Advocate at least once during the month of March, 84% completed a survey (n=303). Similarly, of 75 extended participants who met with an Advocate at least once in March, 83% completed a survey.

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. Survey respondents were not required

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.

to answer every question and some discontinued the survey before reaching the end. Therefore the total number of responses for each question varies.

Participant Characteristics

Characteristics of the participants are collected through three demographic questions that are included at the end of the survey. This information allows us to analyze responses across age, gender, and race variables. Given the high response rate, those completing the survey are generally representative of all young people served by the Network during the year.

Beginning in January 2020, IASN was authorized to provide Extended Services to 21 and 22 year olds who had participated in Aftercare before their 21st birthday. Extended Services are more flexible and do not require monthly participation to remain eligible. Rather these services are available when young people need assistance. IASN first included these older participants in the annual survey in 2021, and continued that practice in 2022. Of all 2022 survey responders, one-fifth fell into the Extended Services category, reflecting the increasing participation of this older age group.

	Age Distribution by Survey Year		
	2020 (n=354)	2021 (n=370)	2022 (n=316)
18	28.8%	21.6%	20.9%
19	38.1%	27.8%	26.6%
20	33.0%	35.4%	32.9%
21	--	7.6%	13.0%
22	--	7.6%	6.6%

Similar to the SFY 2020 and 2021 surveys, just over half (52%) of all 2022 respondents identified as female; 44.6% identified as male; 2.3% identified as transgender or other. Older respondents receiving extended services were more likely to be female (73%) than male (27%). Male participants, particularly those receiving extended services, are somewhat under-represented among survey respondents relative to their proportion of total youth served by the Network in the months leading up to the survey.

	Gender Identity		
	Core (n=254)	Extended (n=62)	Total (n=316)
Female	47.2%	72.6%	52.2%
Male	48.8%	27.4%	44.6%
Transgender	1.2%	0.0%	1.0%
Other	1.6%	0.0%	1.3%
Prefer Not to Answer	1.2%	0.0%	1.0%

Aftercare participants are racially and ethnically diverse. When asked which race/ethnicity they “most closely identify with,” about one-third of the respondents identified as people of color, while two-thirds of participants, including those in both core and extended services, identify as White. This is consistent with the racial and ethnic composition 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.

Race/Ethnicity “Most Closely Identified With”			
	Core (n=253)	Extended (n=62)	Total (n=315)
African American or Black	12.3%	11.3%	12.1%
Asian American	0.4%	0.0%	0.3%
Hispanic or Latino	6.3%	1.6%	5.4%
Native American or American Indian	2.8%	3.2%	2.9%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0.0%	1.6%	0.3%
White	67.2%	67.7%	67.3%
Multiracial	8.3%	14.5%	9.5%
Prefer Not to Answer	0.8%	0.0%	1.6%

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 (95% or more) of both Core and Extended Services respondents reported that they had stable housing and supportive relationships. Four out of five also reported that they had sufficient resources to meet their expenses. These responses indicate that the majority of young people are navigating the transition to adulthood successfully while participating in Aftercare and taking advantage of the support and financial assistance available to them through the program.

Self-Sufficiency Performance Measures			
% Responding “Yes”	Core (n=254)	Extended (n=62)	Total (n=320)
Sufficient Resources	79.1%	80.7%	79.4%
Stable Housing	96.9%	100.0%	97.5%
Supportive Relationships	95.7%	98.4%	96.3%

The Aftercare Network strives to treat each participant fairly and to respect each young person’s individual race, culture, and identity. Establishing a positive relationship with participants is critical to keeping young people engaged and making progress. As shown in the table below, responses to statements related to how participants feel they treated by their Advocates were overwhelmingly positive.

"Please tell us how often each of the following statements about your experience in Aftercare is true. (n=320)				
	<i>Always True</i>	<i>Most of the time</i>	<i>Just Sometimes</i>	<i>Rarely or Never True</i>
I am treated fairly.	86.8%	12.9%	0.3%	0.0%
My race and cultural heritage is respected.	93.4%	5.6%	0.6%	0.3%
My gender and gender identity is respected.	95.3%	4.4%	0.0%	0.3%
My sexual orientation is respected.	94.7%	5.4%	0.0%	0.0%
My Advocate is someone I can count on and trust.	90.2%	7.9%	1.9%	0.0%

Additional questions in the survey asked how often the program helps participants achieve their goals, how they feel about their future, and if they have the tools needed to be successful. Again, answers reflect high levels of satisfaction with the services provided by the program.

"Please tell us how often each of the following statements about your experience in Aftercare is true. (n=320)				
	<i>Always True</i>	<i>Most of the time</i>	<i>Just Sometimes</i>	<i>Rarely or Never True</i>
Financial support from Aftercare (PAL stipend, vendor payment, etc.) helps keep me working toward my goals.	85.3%	11.3%	3.1%	0.3%
My Advocate helps me connect with people and resources that will help me succeed.	88.8%	10.3%	0.0%	0.9%
My Advocate helps me feel hopeful about my future.	86.8%	11.6%	0.9%	0.6%

Survey responses also revealed that young people were somewhat less confident about achieving their goals, having a long-term plan for education and/or employment, and having reliable transportation.

"Please tell us how often each of the following statements about your experience in Aftercare is true. (n=320)				
	<i>Always True</i>	<i>Most of the time</i>	<i>Just Sometimes</i>	<i>Rarely or Never True</i>
I am confident I will achieve my goals.	73.0%	22.9%	3.5%	0.6%

I have a plan for my long-term education and/or employment that is helpful.	75.3%	17.5%	5.3%	1.9%
I have <u>reliable</u> transportation to get to school and/or work.	70.7%	17.4%	8.8%	3.2%

To assess participants' general 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 in the 2022 survey was 4.7, with three-quarters (76.25%) offering a five-star rating. Fewer than 6% 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=254)	Extended (n=62)	Total (n=320)
5	74.4%	85.5%	76.25%
4	20.1%	8.1%	18.13%
3	3.9%	4.8%	4.06%
2	0.4%	1.6%	0.63%
1	1.2%	0.0%	0.94%

Pandemic Relief

Beginning in May 2021, many Aftercare participants were eligible to receive a pandemic relief payment of \$750 under the Pandemic Relief for Iowa Foster Care Alumni initiative. Some participants may have also received a second payment of \$500 if certain conditions were met. Finally, Aftercare was able to provide up to \$600 to participating youth to address an unmet need specifically related to the pandemic. To assess the reach and impact of the pandemic assistance among Aftercare participants, the Network took advantage of the 2022 annual survey to include questions related to these payments.

Not all Aftercare participants met the eligibility requirements for the pandemic assistance. Of 320 participants who completed the survey, 237 (74.1%) indicated that they had received one or more of the Foster Care pandemic relief payments or assistance. Thirty-seven (11.6%) reported that they had not received the assistance, and 46 (14.4%) were unsure. Of those that reported they had received a pandemic relief payment, 88% indicated that the assistance was "very helpful."

"How helpful was the pandemic relief assistance you received?"			
	Core (n=186)	Extended (n=48)	Total (n=234)
Very helpful	88.2%	87.5%	88.0%
Somewhat helpful	11.3%	10.4%	11.1%
Didn't really need it, but it was nice anyway	0.5%	2.1%	0.9%

The survey went on to ask how young people had used the financial assistance they had received (respondents could select multiple answers). Paying for basic needs, including food and housing, as well as transportation expenses, were the most prevalent uses of pandemic payments. In addition, forty-five respondents (21.5%) indicated that they were able to save at least some of the financial assistance for a future need or emergency.

“How did you use the money from the pandemic relief assistance?” (Respondents could select all that applied)			
	Core (n=186)	Extended (n=48)	Total (n=234)
Paid for food	56.5%	47.9%	54.7%
Paid rent, utilities, or other housing costs	71.5%	79.2%	73.1%
Paid down debt or repaid money I owed	15.6%	22.9%	17.1%
Put toward transportation costs	43.6%	29.2%	40.6%
Paid for child care or other parenting expenses	4.3%	14.6%	6.4%
Saved for a future need or emergency	21.5%	8.3%	18.8%
Paid for medical or health related expenses	2.2%	2.1%	2.1%
Bought something special for myself or someone else	16.7%	8.3%	15.0%
Something else*	5.4%	4.2%	5.1%

**Examples shared included: clothing, baby supplies, car payments or insurance, and phone bill.*

Several young people expressed gratitude for the extra help and how valuable it was when they were struggling financially during the pandemic. Typical comments shared by those surveyed include:

- *Beyond grateful, it was so helpful thank you*
- *It helped a lot especially since I was in a tight situation with money.*
- *Nice when a lot of work was not available*
- *Helped me when I needed it most*
- *The pandemic relief assistance helped me out tremendously!*
- *It caught me up with my bills during a very rough financial patch*

Comments from Young People

In each year’s survey, participants are invited to share additional comments about their experience in Aftercare. Typically, the majority of comments convey an extremely positive view of Aftercare services in general, and many participants take the opportunity to praise their Advocate specifically. Participants also offer valuable constructive criticism.

In the 2022 survey, sixty-eight respondents provided substantive comments, 90% of which were positive. Thirty-two comments acknowledged the help and support they have received from the program and the relationship participants had with their Advocate, including twenty-three who praised their Advocate by name in their comments. Six young people specifically mentioned Aftercare’s role in helping them set and achieve their own goals, such as the following comment from a core services participant: *My worker helps me set long term goals that will help even when I age out of after care.*

Less positive comments related to staff turnover and the desire for more financial support. Three participants expressed concern about having multiple Advocates while in Aftercare and the importance of the relationship that youth build with their Advocate. Two core services participants suggested that the program should provide “more money” and an extended services participant lamented the toll of inflation: *“As prices of literally everything are rising I feel like I am on a downhill slope financially, but so is everyone else around me.”*

A few participants offered longer comments about their lived experience in foster care and the impact of Aftercare (see sidebar).

Additional examples of comments from this year’s survey are shown below.

“Is there anything else you would like to share with us about your experience in Aftercare?”

Lived Experience

Being a single mom before my daughter was here was something I didn't plan on having to go through but in the end its always worth it. I just want to take the time to really genuinely say I appreciate my [Aftercare] worker as she always reminds me that I'm a good mommy, I didn't have the best life myself as a kid. I was in and out of foster care being months old to aging out but she always makes me feel good about myself whether I'm broke and have nothing, I know I can do it and I will always push myself to figure it out no matter what, thank you to aftercare!

Constructive Criticism

I am very happy with the quality and friendliness of the workers assigned to me. However, I will have had 4 different people in the last 3 years due to circumstances out of my control. I truly hope you reinstate [Advocate's] position so that I can continue my established rapport with my current aftercare worker. I enjoy the time I have spent with her, and I trust her with my personal information and my enrollment in your program. I truly hope that you consider these anecdotes and actually value my personal take on this program.

Praise for Advocates

- Vicky is amazing. I have never received this kind of help in my life. Gives me confidence to live on out on my own in the city.
- Jacinda never hesitates to help me discuss my life problems, and I couldn't thank her enough for it.
- Peri is an excellent person to have counseling me and checks in on me often and cares about me. She makes sure I have a good budget, checks on my mental health which is outstanding. She really cares about me as a person
- I want to say how much I appreciate Belinda and all the hard work and support she’s giving me!
- Matt has been working with me since I was 18. I’m almost 21 now. He’s helped show me how to be successful.

Impact of Aftercare

- I just want to say if I didn't have aftercare in my life I would have been jobless, no home no food and no experience with daily tasks but its aftercare [that] speaks for us kids struggling in life trying to get by and there to help us get there and strive for our goal I really appreciate the help and services it gives to us
- Aftercare has been a lifesaver to me & offered many resources that have helped so much my workers are very communicative & supportive they are the best so thank you for everything.
- I've been in the aftercare program for 2 years and I can honestly say it has been one of the most helpful things in my adult life.

Goal Orientation

It's been helping me towards my goals in life and I am almost there!

Appreciation for the help

- Has helped me through a lot and will always be thankful
 - Wish aftercare helped buying cars even if just the first car.
 - Aftercare has helped me out with many things and I appreciate those who I work with from aftercare
- Truthfully. Thank you for the aftercare experience after leaving foster care at 18. It is a wonderful thing you guys do for us kids whose family's couldn't do for us. I'm very proud and happy to have been in this program and I really couldn't thank you guys enough!

Final Note

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. Although only a sample of all youth served during the year complete the survey, respondents are generally representative of Aftercare participants at any given time. Further, typical duration of involvement in Aftercare consistently averages two or more years (including temporary interruptions in services), suggesting that young people find value from their participation and are highly satisfied with the services and support they receive.

Date: July 19, 2022

To: Andrew Allen, CEO, Youth and Shelter Services

From: Joanie Havel, IASN Coordinator

Re: Iowa Aftercare Services Network SFY 2022 Achievement of Performance Measures for Budgeted Incentive Funds

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 2022. The survey, which includes questions specific to the performance measures, was completed by 254 core youth in March representing 84% of core active participants that month. The results of the FY 2022 survey are presented below.

Outcomes Achieved:	FY 2022
<i>Last month, did you have enough money or other resources to cover your expenses? (Incentive Target – 65% Yes)</i>	
Yes	79.1%
No	20.9%
<i>Do you currently have a safe and stable place to live? (Incentive Target – 80% Yes)</i>	
Yes	96.9%
No	3.1%

Outcomes Achieved:	FY 2022
<i>Do you have a positive relationship with at least one adult in your community? (Incentive Target – 90%)</i>	
Yes	95.7%
No	4.3%

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 2022, there were 151 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 151 exit interviews between July 1, 2021 and June 30, 2022 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? <i>(Target Yes with earned income alone or with earned income and other assistance - 65%)</i> ACHIEVED – 80.8%		
Yes, with my earned income alone	46	30.5%
Yes, with my earned income and other assistance	76	50.3%
No	29	19.2%
Where are you living? <i>(Target safely house – 80%)</i> ACHIEVED 86.8%		
University (campus based) housing	3	2.0%
Apartment or house – sole responsibility for rent	33	21.8%
Apartment or house – shared responsibility for rent	54	35.8%
Living in someone else’s home (may or may not be contributing to rent or expenses)	39	25.8%
Living in an adult residential or rehabilitation facility or waiver home	2	1.3%
SUBTOTAL – SAFELY HOUSED	147	86.8%
Couch surfing or moving from house to house – no fixed address	4	2.7%
Transitional facility, shelter, or other supported housing	7	4.6%
Street/outdoors (homeless)	2	1.3%

⁶ SFY 2022 outcome data is preliminary.

Question	Number	Percent
Other	7	4.6%
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 – 96.7%		
YES	146	96.7%
No	5	3.3%

Based on this data, the exit interviews show that minimum thresholds on all three outcome performance measures were exceeded by the Network in SFY 2022.