



Findings from the 2024 Annual Iowa Aftercare Participant Satisfaction Survey

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“I just wanted to let you know how helpful this program is to us less fortunate young adults, it allows us some independence to grow that maturity for the future.” — Core Aftercare Participant

Introduction

The [Iowa Aftercare Services Network \(IASN\)](#) provides services and support to help young adults who exit foster care near the age of 18 years make a successful transition to adulthood, supporting them up to age 23 as they pursue self-sufficiency. Aftercare Self-Sufficiency Advocates (“advocates”) meet with young people 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. Youths receiving Core Aftercare services (age 18-20) are expected to meet monthly with their advocate. Extended Aftercare services (age 21-22) do not require monthly meetings to remain eligible.

The Network administers an annual survey to solicit feedback from Aftercare participants and assess their satisfaction with the services they are receiving. The results inform policy and program decisions as part of the Network’s ongoing quality assurance efforts. The survey also provides a snapshot of the status of participants in terms of three primary outcomes: sufficient resources, stable housing, and supportive relationships. Drawing on prior annual youth surveys, the 2024 survey was developed by the IASN leadership at Iowa State University (ISU) in consultation with the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and YSS, the lead agency for the IASN.

Aftercare advocates strive to provide an opportunity for all active participants to share their feedback by completing an online confidential survey during the month the survey is administered. However, doing so is voluntary for the participants. Typically, IASN leadership provides the survey link to advocates, and it is suggested that they give the survey link to participants when they meet. The intent is for participants to complete the survey during their meeting with their advocate, who should provide privacy during survey completion.

In April 2024, 362 youth engaged with their advocate. Of these youth, 282 young people (ages 18 to 20) were receiving Core Aftercare services, and 80 participants (ages 21 to 22) obtained Extended Aftercare services. Of all continuing¹ Core Aftercare participants who met with an advocate at least once during the month of April, 246 (87.2%) completed a survey. Similarly, of 80 Extended Aftercare participants who met with an advocate in April, 60 (75%) completed a survey. This resulted in a total of 312 survey respondents. However, six (6) did not provide their age or other demographic information requested at the end of the survey, yielding 306 with demographic data. All respondents completed the survey electronically using a link provided by their advocate at an in-person meeting.

All eight agencies in the Network providing services had youth who participated, as determined by the agency that the youth identified in their survey responses. Across the eight agencies, the youth participation rate varied from 25% to 100%.

This report shows survey results for Core and Extended Aftercare recipients separately and across all respondents. Those who did not provide their age are included in the total data but not in the disaggregated Core or Extended Aftercare responses. Survey respondents were not required to answer every question, and some discontinued the survey before reaching the end. Therefore, the total responses for each question varies, as noted in the n’s listed in each table.

¹ Because the survey results are used to assess the quality of services participants receive over time, young people entering Aftercare during the month the survey is administered are not asked to complete a survey.

Participant Characteristics

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

As shown below in [Table 1](#), of all 2024 survey responders, just under one-fifth (19.7%) fell into the Extended Aftercare category (ages 21 and 22).

Table 1: Age by Survey Year

	2021 (n=370)	2022 (n=316)	2023 (n=325)	2024 (n=306)
18	21.6%	20.9%	24.9%	23.5%
19	27.8%	26.6%	33.5%	30.4%
20	35.4%	32.9%	22.8%	26.5%
21	7.6%	13.0%	10.5%	10.5%
22	7.6%	6.6%	8.3%	9.2%

Across all 2024 respondents (see [Table 2](#)), just over half (51.0%) identified as female, 42.3% identified as male, and 4.5% identified as transgender or other. Older respondents receiving Extended services were more likely to be female (58.3%) than male (31.7%), and 8.4% of respondents identified as transgender or another gender.

Table 2: Gender Identity

	Core (n=246)	Extended (n=60)	Total (n=306)
Female	50.4%	58.3%	51.0%
Male	45.9%	31.7%	42.3%
Transgender	0.8%	1.7%	1.0%
Other	2.8%	6.7%	3.5%
Prefer Not to Answer	0%	1.7%	0.3%

Aftercare participants are racially and ethnically diverse. When asked which race/ethnicity they “most closely identify with,” over one-third of the respondents identified as people of color, while nearly three-fifths of all participants identified as White (see [Table 3](#)). 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.

Table 3: Race/Ethnicity “Most Closely Identified With.”

	Core (n=246)	Extended (n=60)	Total (n=306)
African American or Black	15.9%	16.7%	15.7%
Asian American	0.8%	1.7%	1.0%
Hispanic or Latino	6.1%	6.7%	6.1%
Native American or American Indian	2.0%	5.0%	2.6%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0.4%	1.7%	0.3%
White	60.2%	61.7%	59.3%
Multiracial	12.6%	5.0%	10.9%
Other	1.6%	1.7%	1.6%
Prefer Not to Answer	0.4%	1.7%	0.6%

Participant Outcomes and Satisfaction

The Aftercare contract includes performance measures in three key areas that are monitored, in part, using three questions with yes/no response options 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 (96% or more) of both Core and Extended Aftercare respondents reported that they had stable housing and supportive relationships. As shown in [Table 4](#), nearly three-fourths of all Aftercare respondents (74.4%) reported that they had sufficient resources to meet their expenses. However, the rate was lower for Extended (70.0%) than for Core (75.6%). These responses indicate that most 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.

Table 4: Self-Sufficiency Performance Measures

% Responding “Yes”	Core (n=246)	Extended (n=60)	Total (n=312)
Sufficient Resources	75.6%	70.0%	74.4%
Stable Housing	96.3%	96.7%	96.5%
Supportive Relationships	95.1%	100%	96.2%

The Aftercare Network strives to treat each participant fairly and respect each young person’s race, culture, and identity. Establishing a positive relationship with participants is critical to keeping young people engaged and making progress. As shown in [Tables 5a, 5b, and 5c](#) below, responses to statements about how participants feel their advocates treat them were overwhelmingly positive. For reporting purposes, responses to the options “rarely” and “never true” were combined throughout the report, given the very low response rate for both. Totals may not be exactly 100% due to rounding.

Table 5a: “Please tell us how often each of the following statements about your experience in Aftercare is true.” (Core Aftercare, n=246)

<i>Core Aftercare</i>	Always True	Most of the time	Just Sometimes	Rarely or Never True
I am treated fairly.	87.4%	8.9%	3.3%	0.4%
My race and cultural heritage are respected.	90.2%	7.3%	2.4%	0%
My gender and gender identity are respected.	95.5%	3.7%	0.8%	0%
My sexual orientation is respected.	95.9%	4.1%	0%	0%
My advocate is someone I can count on and trust.	91.1%	6.5%	2.0%	0.4%

Table 5b: “Please tell us how often each of the following statements about your experience in Aftercare is true.” (Extended Aftercare, n=60)

<i>Extended Aftercare</i>	Always True	Most of the time	Just Sometimes	Rarely or Never True
I am treated fairly.	88.3%	6.7%	5.0%	0%
My race and cultural heritage are respected.	95.0%	1.7%	3.3%	0%
My gender and gender identity are respected.	95.0%	1.7%	1.7%	1.7%
My sexual orientation is respected.	93.3%	3.3%	1.7%	1.7%
My advocate is someone I can count on and trust.	85.0%	6.7%	8.3%	0%

Table 5c: “Please tell us how often each of the following statements about your experience in Aftercare is true.” (Total, n=308)

<i>Total (Core + Extended Aftercare)</i>	Always True	Most of the time	Just Sometimes	Rarely or Never True
I am treated fairly.	86.5%	8.3%	3.5%	0.3%
My race and cultural heritage are respected.	90.1%	6.1%	2.6%	0%
My gender and gender identity are respected.	94.2%	3.8%	0.3%	0.3%
My sexual orientation is respected.	94.2%	3.8%	0.3%	0.3%
My advocate is someone I can count on and trust.	88.8%	6.4%	3.2%	0.3%

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, with most of the participants responding with “Always True” to each item listed in [Tables 6a](#), [6b](#), and [6c](#) below.

Table 6a: "Please tell us how often each of the following statements about your experience in Aftercare is true." (Core Aftercare, n=246)

<i>Core Aftercare</i>	Always True	Most of the time	Just Sometimes	Rarely or Never True
Financial support from Aftercare (PAL stipend, vendor payment, etc.) helps keep me working toward my goals.	78.0%	16.3%	4.5%	1.2%
My advocate helps me connect with people and resources that will help me succeed.	88.6%	8.9%	1.6%	0.8%
My advocate helps me feel hopeful about my future.	84.6%	12.2%	2.4%	0.8%

Table 6b: "Please tell us how often each of the following statements about your experience in Aftercare is true." (Extended Aftercare, n=60)

<i>Extended Aftercare</i>	Always True	Most of the time	Just Sometimes	Rarely or Never True
Financial support from Aftercare (PAL stipend, vendor payment, etc.) helps keep me working toward my goals.	83.3%	8.3%	6.7%	1.7%
My advocate helps me connect with people and resources that will help me succeed.	85.0%	10.0%	5.0%	0%
My advocate helps me feel hopeful about my future.	83.3%	8.3%	8.3%	0%

Table 6c: "Please tell us how often each of the following statements about your experience in Aftercare is true." (Total, n=308)

<i>Total (Core + Extended Aftercare)</i>	Always True	Most of the time	Just Sometimes	Rarely or Never True
Financial support from Aftercare (PAL stipend, vendor payment, etc.) helps keep me working toward my goals.	78.2%	14.4%	4.8%	1.3%
My advocate helps me connect with people and resources that will help me succeed.	86.9%	9.0%	2.2%	0.6%
My advocate helps me feel hopeful about my future.	83.3%	11.2%	3.5%	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 (see [Tables 7a, 7b, and 7c](#)). Totals may not be exactly 100% due to rounding.

Table 7a: "Please tell us how often each of the following statements about your experience in Aftercare is true." (Core Aftercare, n=246)

<i>Core Aftercare</i>	Always True	Most of the time	Just Sometimes	Rarely or Never True
I am confident I will achieve my goals.	60.6%	28.9%	8.5%	2.0%
I have a plan for my long-term education and/or employment that is helpful.	64.2%	24.4%	6.9%	4.5%
I have <u>reliable</u> transportation to get to school and/or work.	63.0%	18.7%	8.5%	9.8%

Table 7b: "Please tell us how often each of the following statements about your experience in Aftercare is true." (Extended Aftercare, n=60)

<i>Extended Aftercare</i>	Always True	Most of the time	Just Sometimes	Rarely or Never True
I am confident I will achieve my goals.	73.3%	11.7%	13.3%	1.7%
I have a plan for my long-term education and/or employment that is helpful.	66.7%	20.0%	6.7%	6.7%
I have <u>reliable</u> transportation to get to school and/or work.	60.0%	26.7%	10.0%	3.3%

Table 7c: "Please tell us how often each of the following statements about your experience in Aftercare is true." (n=308)

<i>Total (Core + Extended Aftercare)</i>	Always True	Most of the time	Just Sometimes	Rarely or Never True
I am confident I will achieve my goals.	62.5%	25.0%	9.3%	1.9%
I have a plan for my long-term education and/or employment that is helpful.	64.1%	23.1%	6.7%	4.8%
I have <u>reliable</u> transportation to get to school and/or work.	61.9%	19.9%	8.7%	8.4%

To assess participants' general satisfaction with the Aftercare services they have received, the survey invited respondents to rate Aftercare's overall helpfulness on a five-point scale (where "1" is not at all helpful and "5" is very helpful). The average rating by all respondents in the 2024 survey was 4.68, with just over three-quarters of respondents (77.6%) offering a five-star rating. Fewer than 6% gave Aftercare less than a three- rating, as shown in [Table 8](#).

Table 8: "How helpful is Aftercare/PAL to you overall?" (n=308)

	Core (n=246)	Extended (n=60)	Total (n=308)
5	78.5%	78.3%	77.6%
4	16.7%	15.0%	16.0%
3	4.9%	6.7%	5.1%
2	0%	0%	0%
1	0%	0%	0%

Social Media Use

Introduced in the 2024 survey, participants were asked about their social media usage and the types of social media accessed. Youth in Aftercare may use social media to maintain connections with friends, family, or support networks. They may also use social media to access resources, information, and opportunities. Understanding how and why youth use social media may help Aftercare facilitate healthy ways to maintain these connections and provide necessary support, guide youth to reliable sources, and help prevent misinformation.

Of all participants, 306 provided information on their social media usage, with 95.8% reporting they use social media. Percentages of use, from daily to yearly to never, are reported in [Tables 9a, 9b, and 9c](#). Overall, for daily social media use, youth report using Snapchat the most (78.2%), followed by TikTok (67.0%) and Facebook (57.7%). Totals may not be exactly 100% due to rounding.

Table 9a: “How often do you use these social media sites?” (Core Aftercare, n=246)

<i>Core Aftercare</i>	Use Daily	Use Weekly	Use Monthly	Use Yearly	Never Use	<i>Missing</i>
Facebook	57.3%	19.9%	8.9%	1.2%	9.3%	3.3%
Twitter (X)	6.9%	12.6%	10.6%	2.8%	61.8%	5.3%
YouTube	46.7%	30.5%	10.6%	1.6%	7.3%	3.3%
Pinterest	10.6%	14.2%	16.3%	3.7%	51.2%	4.1%
Instagram	50.8%	20.3%	7.7%	1.2%	15.0%	4.9%
Snapchat	79.7%	7.3%	2.8%	2.0%	4.9%	3.3%
TikTok	70.3%	9.3%	4.9%	0.8%	11.4%	3.3%
Reddit	4.9%	6.9%	13.4%	4.1%	65.9%	4.9%
Twitch	6.9%	6.9%	8.1%	4.9%	69.5%	3.7%
Discord	15.9%	5.3%	7.7%	4.9%	61.8%	3.7%

Table 9b: “How often do you use these social media sites?” (Extended Aftercare, n=60)

<i>Extended Aftercare</i>	Use Daily	Use Weekly	Use Monthly	Use Yearly	Never Use	<i>Missing</i>
Facebook	65.0%	18.3%	10.0%	0%	3.3%	3.3%
Twitter (X)	13.3%	16.7%	10%	1.7%	53.3%	5.0%
YouTube	50.0%	20.0%	10.0%	1.7%	15.0%	3.3%
Pinterest	13.3%	16.7%	10.0%	3.3%	53.3%	3.3%
Instagram	33.3%	16.7%	18.3%	1.7%	26.7%	3.3%
Snapchat	80.0%	10.0%	0%	1.7%	5.0%	3.3%

TikTok	60.0%	10.0%	5.0%	1.7%	20.0%	3.3%
Reddit	8.3%	16.7%	10.0%	1.7%	60.0%	3.3%
Twitch	1.7%	10.0%	11.7%	5.0%	68.3%	3.3%
Discord	8.3%	8.3%	8.3%	0%	71.7%	3.3%

Table 9c: “How often do you use these social media sites?” (Total, n=296)

<i>Total (Core + Extended Aftercare)</i>	Use Daily	Use Weekly	Use Monthly	Use Yearly	Never Use	Missing
Facebook	57.7%	19.2%	9.0%	1.0%	8.0%	5.1%
Twitter (X)	8.0%	13.1%	10.3%	2.6%	59.0%	7.1%
YouTube	46.5%	27.9%	10.3%	1.6%	8.7%	5.1%
Pinterest	10.9%	14.4%	14.7%	3.5%	50.6%	5.8%
Instagram	46.5%	19.2%	9.6%	1.3%	17.0%	6.4%
Snapchat	78.2%	7.7%	2.2%	1.9%	4.8%	5.1%
TikTok	67.0%	9.3%	4.8%	1.0%	12.9%	5.1%
Reddit	5.4%	8.7%	12.5%	3.5%	63.5%	6.4%
Twitch	5.8%	7.4%	8.7%	4.8%	67.9%	5.4%
Discord	14.1%	5.8%	7.7%	3.8%	62.5%	6.1%

Additionally, we assessed the **primary** reason youth use social media. [Table 10](#) outlines Core Aftercare, Extended Aftercare, and total responses.

Table 10: “What is the primary reason you use social media?” (n=296)*

	Core (n=246)	Extended (n=60)	Total (n=296)
Entertainment	52.0%	50.0%	50.6%
To keep in touch with family and friends	38.6%	40.0%	38.1%
To learn new things or find information	6.1%	6.7%	6.1%

*Note. Eight Core Aftercare respondents (3.3%) and two Extended Aftercare (3.3%) respondents were missing information. Sixteen total respondents (5.1%) were missing information.

Comments from Young People

In each year's survey, participants are invited to share additional comments about their experience in Aftercare in response to the question, ***"Is there anything else you would like to share with us about your experience in Aftercare?"*** Typically, most 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 2024 survey, 69 respondents provided substantive comments, 86% of which were positive. Forty-two (42) comments acknowledged the help and support they have received from the program and the relationship participants had with their advocate, including twenty-two who praised their advocate by name. Four participants specifically mentioned Aftercare's role in helping them set and achieve their own goals, such as: ***"Aftercare has been very helpful and resourceful since aging out of the foster care system. I really don't know where I would be if i didn't get the help from Aftercare. They really helped put me on a better path. They helped me with college, affording rent, and more. Aftercare is a great program to those."***

Less positive comments related to slow responsiveness and the desire for more support. Some participants had suggestions for improvements to the program and include the following: ***"I love my aftercare worker and the help I received but I feel as if the program could help us more with the checks and transportation as well and food assistance would really be helpful as well."***, ***"Driving practice help would be a good thing to add."***, and ***"More housing options."***

A few participants offered longer comments about the impact of Aftercare (*see below*).

Impact of Aftercare

- “It's been good. It's helped me for aging out of care. It's best to get into Aftercare. They are helpful and helps a lot.” (*Core Aftercare participant*)
- “I really enjoyed the support and care I received; it really helped me get where I thought I wouldn't be able to get.” (*Core or Extended Aftercare participant*)
- “I also was in Extended Aftercare and that helped me when I needed money to fix my car, pay rent, and get resources in the community I was living in.” (*Extended Aftercare participant*)

Impact of Aftercare

“I just wanted to let you know how helpful this program is to us less fortunate young adults, it allows us some independence to grow that maturity for the future.” (Core Aftercare participant)

Advocates as Support

- “I had such a great experience with Aftercare the last four years my advocate has gone above and beyond every day to make sure that all my needs for the cost-of-living and my day-to-day are needed and fulfilled. I just wanna give her a shout out and say thank you to [my advocate] for all the hard work. Keep it up and I can't wait to continue this journey.” (*Extended Aftercare participant*)
- “Was hesitant at first but [my advocate] didn't give up on me and kept trying to get me to go to college and now I have applied and am completely capable.” (*Core Aftercare participant*)
- “[My advocate] is awesome! She's super respectful and personable. I know i can always count on her!!” (*Core Aftercare participant*)
- “With myself aging out of foster care and not having many friends or close family members I can state my Aftercare advocate has been astounding with helping me to feel not so alone while also teaching me navigation towards my goals as a young adult.” (*Extended Aftercare participant*)
- “[My advocate] is the best worker he has helped me through a lot he has made me a better me. [My advocate] is there when I need him and he helps walk me through my battles that I face. [My advocate] is truly someone I trust, and I don't trust anyone. [My advocate] is like a father/brother to me.” (*Core Aftercare participant*)

Strong Relationship with Advocate

“My worker is the best!! I love communicating and sharing all my new interests and things I have done when I get to see her. [My advocate]'s kind of like the friend I've never had but in an advocate way!! She always gets straight to the point and doesn't tell me what I want to hear but tells me what I need to hear and that really steers me in the [right direction].” (Core Aftercare participant)

Survey Limitations

Young adults participating in Aftercare do so on a voluntary basis. All Core and Extended Aftercare youth who met with their advocate during the survey period had an opportunity to complete the survey. This means that some youth did not have an opportunity to respond despite attempts by the advocate to contact each Core youth being served. Youths in Extended Aftercare self-initiate contact with their advocate, so they do not necessarily meet monthly. While the annual participant survey historically has shown very high levels of satisfaction with the services provided, it could be that those dissatisfied simply do not stay involved in the program long enough to be surveyed for their feedback. Further, the 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.

Acknowledgment

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About the Child Welfare Research and Training Project

The [Child Welfare Research and Training Project](#) (CWRTP) at [Iowa State University](#) (ISU) facilitates and evaluates programs and training for human services professionals and community providers to advance best practices for children, youth, families, and communities. Beginning in July 2022, CWRTP has provided coordination, quality assurance, marketing, and evaluation support for the [Iowa Aftercare Services Network](#) under subcontract with [YSS](#), the lead agency of the Network.

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