



Findings from the 2025 Annual Iowa Aftercare Participant Satisfaction Survey

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*“Having [my advocate] as my Aftercare worker has helped me 1000% more and has gotten me further in life. I appreciate everything she does for me—let [my advocate] know”
—Core Aftercare participant*

Executive Summary

This report presents the results of the 2025 Participant Satisfaction Survey. Key findings suggest *high satisfaction with Aftercare and advocates*.

Youth in both Core and Extended Aftercare report high satisfaction with their participation in Aftercare, and nearly all youth report that their advocate shows respect, fair treatment, trustworthiness, and reliability. Youth in both Core and Extended Aftercare report that financial support from Aftercare helps keep them working toward their goals. Additionally, youth report that their advocates help connect them with people and resources that will help them succeed, and that their advocates help them feel hopeful about their future. Overall rating of the helpfulness of services was high. Participants in Extended Aftercare report more challenges in obtaining sufficient resources, obtaining housing, and securing reliable transportation to get to school and/or work compared to youths in Core Aftercare. Youth reported that the main barriers they faced in obtaining housing include high costs, lack of affordable options, and not enough income or savings.

Expanding outreach and support to youth who would benefit from Aftercare through internet advertising and social media, as well as facilitating connections through youths' proximal sources of information (i.e., foster parents, caregivers, family, and friends), may be useful.

Introduction

The [Iowa Aftercare Services Network \(IASN\)](#) provides services and support to help young adults who exit foster care near the age of 18 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 Core and Extended 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 upon prior annual youth surveys, the 2025 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, although doing so is voluntary for the participants. Typically, IASN leadership provides the survey link to advocates, and it is suggested that they provide 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 2025, 370 youth engaged with their advocate. Of these youth, 301 young people (ages 18 to 20) were receiving Core Aftercare services, and 69 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, 251 (95%) completed a survey. Of the Extended Aftercare participants who met with an advocate in April, 53 (76.8%) completed a survey. One respondent did not provide their age or other demographic information requested at the end of the survey. All respondents completed the survey electronically.

Young people from all eight agencies in the Network participated, as determined by the agency that the youth receiving services identified in their survey responses. Participants served by Foundation 2 accounted for approximately 26.3% of all survey responses in the analysis. Across the eight agencies, the participation rate varied from 68% to 100%.

This report shows survey results for Core and Extended Aftercare 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 Aftercare responses. Survey respondents were required to answer every question; those who did not complete the survey (2.6%) were excluded from analysis.

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 by age, sex, and race. In comparison to previous years, 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 2025 survey responders, under one-fifth (17.4%) fell into the Extended Aftercare category (ages 21 and 22).

Table 1: Age by Survey Year

	2022 (n=316)	2023 (n=325)	2024 (n=306)	2025 (n=304)
18	20.9%	24.9%	23.5%	29.9%
19	26.6%	33.5%	30.4%	22.4%
20	32.9%	22.8%	26.5%	30.3%
21	13.0%	10.5%	10.5%	10.2%
22	6.6%	8.3%	9.2%	7.2%

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.

Across all 2025 respondents (see [Table 2](#)), three-fifths (55.9%) identified as female, 40.8% identified as male, and 2% of youth did not choose Male or Female. Older respondents receiving Extended services were more likely to be female (62.3%) than male (37.7%).

Table 2: Sex

	Core (n=251)	Extended (n=53)	Total (n=304)
Female	54.6%	62.3%	55.9%
Male	41.4%	37.7%	40.8%
Prefer Not to Answer	4%	0.0%	3.3%

Aftercare participants are racially and ethnically diverse. When asked which race/ethnicity they “most closely identify with,” two-fifths of respondents identified as people of color (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=251)	Extended (n=53)	Total (n=304)
African American or Black	17.1%	18.9%	17.4%
Asian American	1.2%	0.0%	1.0%
Hispanic or Latino	7.2%	7.5%	7.2%
Native American or American Indian	1.2%	1.9%	1.3%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
White	61%	58.5%	60.5%
Multiracial	8.8%	11.3%	9.2%
Other	2.4%	1.9%	2.3%
Prefer Not to Answer	1.2%	0.0%	1.0%

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 (95% or more) of both Core and Extended Aftercare respondents reported that they had stable housing and supportive relationships. As shown in [Table 4](#), four-fifths of all Aftercare respondents (80.6%) reported that they had sufficient resources to meet their expenses. However, the rate was lower for Extended (73.6%) than for Core (82.1%), indicating the additional needs of youth qualifying for and receiving Extended services. Data analyses indicated no demographic differences emerged. Overall, these responses reveal 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=251)	Extended (n=53)	Total (n=304)
Sufficient Resources	82.1%	73.6%	80.6%
Stable Housing	95.2%	96.2%	95.4%
Supportive Relationships	98.0%	92.6%	97.7%

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.

Table 5a: “Please tell us how often each of the following statements about your experience in Aftercare is true.” (Core Aftercare, n=251)

Core Aftercare	Always True	Most of the time	Just Sometimes	Rarely or Never True*
I am treated fairly.	86.9%	12%	1.2%	0.0%
My race and cultural heritage are respected.	94.0%	6.0%	0.0%	0.0%
My gender and gender identity are respected.	96.4%	3.2%	0.0%	0.4%
My sexual orientation is respected.	97.6%	2.4%	0.0%	0.0%
My advocate is someone I can count on and trust.	93.6%	4.8%	1.6%	0.0%

*Note. For reporting purposes, responses to the options “rarely” and “never true” were combined throughout the report. Totals may not be exactly 100% due to rounding.

Table 5b: “Please tell us how often each of the following statements about your experience in Aftercare is true.” (Extended Aftercare, n=53)

<i>Extended Aftercare</i>	Always True	Most of the time	Just Sometimes	Rarely or Never True
I am treated fairly.	94.3%	1.9%	3.8%	0.0%
My race and cultural heritage are respected.	94.3%	5.7%	0.0%	0.0%
My gender and gender identity are respected.	96.2%	1.9%	1.9%	0.0%
My sexual orientation is respected.	96.2%	3.8%	0.0%	0.0%
My advocate is someone I can count on and trust.	96.2%	0.0%	3.8%	0.0%

*Note. Totals may not be exactly 100% due to rounding.

Table 5c: “Please tell us how often each of the following statements about your experience in Aftercare is true.” (Total, n=304)

<i>Total (Core + Extended Aftercare)</i>	Always True	Most of the time	Just Sometimes	Rarely or Never True
I am treated fairly.	88.2%	10.2%	1.6%	0.0%
My race and cultural heritage are respected.	94.1%	5.9%	0.0%	0.0%
My sexual orientation is respected.	97.4%	2.6%	0.0%	0.0%
My advocate is someone I can count on and trust.	94.1%	3.9%	2.0%	0.0%

*Note. Totals may not be exactly 100% due to rounding.

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=251)

<i>Core Aftercare</i>	Always True	Most of the time	Just Sometimes	Rarely or Never
Financial support from Aftercare (PAL stipend, vendor payment, etc.) helps keep me working toward my goals.	88.0%	8.8%	2.8%	0.4%
My advocate helps me connect with people and resources that will help me succeed.	92.4%	6.0%	0.8%	0.8%
My advocate helps me feel hopeful about my future.	91.2%	5.6%	2.8%	0.4%

*Note. Totals may not be exactly 100% due to rounding.

Table 6b: "Please tell us how often each of the following statements about your experience in Aftercare is true." (Extended Aftercare, n=53)

<i>Extended Aftercare</i>	Always True	Most of the time	Just Sometimes	Rarely or Never
Financial support from Aftercare (PAL stipend, vendor payment, etc.) helps keep me working toward my goals.	86.8%	7.5%	3.8%	1.9%
My advocate helps me connect with people and resources that will help me succeed.	94.3%	3.8%	1.9%	0.0%
My advocate helps me feel hopeful about my future.	94.3%	3.8%	0.0%	1.9%

*Note. Totals may not be exactly 100% due to rounding.

Table 6c: "Please tell us how often each of the following statements about your experience in Aftercare is true." (Total, n=304)

<i>Total (Core + Extended Aftercare)</i>	Always True	Most of the time	Just Sometimes	Rarely or Never
Financial support from Aftercare (PAL stipend, vendor payment, etc.) helps keep me working toward my goals.	87.8%	8.6%	3.0%	0.6%
My advocate helps me connect with people and resources that will help me succeed.	92.8%	5.6%	1.0%	0.7%
My advocate helps me feel hopeful about my future.	91.8%	5.3%	2.3%	0.7%

*Note. Totals may not be exactly 100% due to rounding.

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](#)).

Table 7a: "Please tell us how often each of the following statements about your experience in Aftercare is true." (Core Aftercare, n=251)

<i>Core Aftercare</i>	Always True	Most of the time	Just Sometimes	Rarely or Never True
I am confident I will achieve my goals.	73.3%	18.7%	7.2%	0.8%
I have a plan for my long-term education and/or employment that is helpful.	72.1%	19.1%	8.0%	0.8%
I have <u>reliable</u> transportation to get to school and/or work.	70.5%	16.7%	8.4%	4.4%

*Note. Totals may not be exactly 100% due to rounding.

Table 7b: "Please tell us how often each of the following statements about your experience in Aftercare is true." (Extended Aftercare, n=53)

<i>Extended Aftercare</i>	Always True	Most of the time	Just Sometimes	Rarely or Never True
I am confident I will achieve my goals.	79.2%	15.1%	5.7%	0.0%
I have a plan for my long-term education and/or employment that is helpful.	75.5%	11.3%	11.3%	1.9%
I have <u>reliable</u> transportation to get to school and/or work.	66.0%	22.6%	5.7%	5.7%

*Note. Totals may not be exactly 100% due to rounding.

Table 7c: "Please tell us how often each of the following statements about your experience in Aftercare is true." (Total, n=304)

<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.	74.3%	18.1%	6.9%	0.7%
I have a plan for my long-term education and/or employment that is helpful.	72.7%	17.8%	8.6%	1.0%

Total (Core + Extended Aftercare)	Always True	Most of the time	Just Sometimes	Rarely or Never True
I have <u>reliable</u> transportation to get to school and/or work.	69.7%	17.8%	7.9%	4.6%

*Note. Totals may not be exactly 100% due to rounding.

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 sliding scale (where "1" is not at all helpful and "5" is very helpful). The average rating by all respondents in the 2025 survey was 4.71, with just over three-quarters of respondents (77.3%) offering a five-star rating. Fewer than 2% gave Aftercare less than a three-star rating, as shown in [Table 8](#).

Table 8: "How helpful is Aftercare/PAL to you overall?"

	Core (n=251)	Extended (n=53)	Total (n=304)
5	77.7%	75.5%	77.3%
4	17.5%	17.0%	17.4%
3	4.0%	3.8%	3.9%
2	0.8%	3.8%	1.3%
1	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

*Note. Totals may not be exactly 100% due to rounding.

Barriers to Living

Youth in Aftercare may face unique challenges in acquiring affordable, sustainable housing. Introduced in the 2025 survey, participants were asked questions surrounding their housing experiences, including the size of the town they currently reside in, potential challenges they face in obtaining housing, and barriers faced that make or have made difficulties in obtaining housing. Understanding these challenges can help Aftercare facilitate ways to provide necessary support, guide youth to reliable sources, and help set individualized goals.

All participants provided information on the size and accessibility of resources where they currently reside, and survey results are described in [Table 9](#). Overall, participants were more likely to live in areas that were in or near a big city with lots of people, restaurants, shopping, and things to do (45.1%) and less likely to live in an area that required long-distance travel to access restaurants, shopping, or things to do (2.6%).

Table 9: “How big is the area where you live?”

	Core (n=251)	Extended (n=53)	Total (n=304)
In or near a big city with lots of people, restaurants, shopping and things to do.	44.6%	47.2%	45.1%
In or near a medium-sized town with some people, restaurants, shopping and things to do.	37.1%	41.5%	37.8%
In or near a small town with very few people, maybe one or two restaurants, little or no shopping or things to do.	15.1%	11.3%	14.5%
Where I live, we need to travel quite a distance to find any restaurants, shopping, or things to do.	3.2%	0%	2.6%

*Note. Totals may not be exactly 100% due to rounding.

Additionally, we assessed the problems youth face, if any, in obtaining housing or a place to live. Table 10 outlines Core Aftercare, Extended Aftercare, and total responses. Notably, nearly one-fourth (23.4%) of all respondents indicated they have faced problems in obtaining housing. When excluding youth who indicated they have not yet needed to get housing, this rate increased to over one-third (35.2%).

Table 10: “What problems, if any, have you had obtaining housing (or a place to live)?”

	Core (n=251)	Extended (n=53)	Total (n=304)
Problems obtaining housing.	20.7%	35.8%	23.4%
No problems obtaining housing.	48.6%	54.7%	49.7%
Not needed to get housing yet.	30.7%	9.4%	27.0%

*Note. Totals may not be exactly 100% due to rounding.

To better understand the specific challenges youth face, we assessed the contexts that surround youths’ difficulty in obtaining housing or a place to live. Of all options, youth were instructed to indicate all that applied; results are presented in Table 11. Based on responses, the most reported barriers stemmed from financial concerns, including high costs (15.8%), not enough income or savings (15.1%), lack of affordable options (14.1%), and unstable employment (10.5%). Compared to youth in Core Aftercare, youth in Extended Aftercare were more likely to select financial concerns as their main barriers, including higher percentages of Extended youth reporting poor credit history, needing but lacking a co-signer, and lack of rental history or references.

Table 11: “What are the main barriers you faced in obtaining housing? (check all that apply)”

	Core (n=251)	Extended (n=53)	Total (n=304)
High costs	13.1%	28.3%	15.8%
Lack of affordable options	12.0%	24.5%	14.1%
Not enough income or savings	13.9%	20.8%	15.1%
Unstable employment	9.6%	15.1%	10.5%
Poor credit history	6.0%	20.8%	8.6%
Safety concerns	1.6%	5.7%	2.3%
Lack of rental history or references	7.2%	13.2%	8.2%
Need a co-signer and don’t have one	5.6%	13.2%	6.9%
Criminal history record	4.0%	3.8%	3.9%
Other	3.6%	1.9%	3.3%
I have not looked for my own housing yet¹	0.4%	0%	0.3%

*Note. Some youth may have selected more than one option, and 233 (76.6%) youth did not select a barrier. Totals will not be exactly 100%.

¹One youth indicated they have faced problems in obtaining housing while also indicating they have not looked for their own housing yet.

Some ($n=10$) youth indicated other main barriers and were given the option to list their specific challenges; these challenges for Core youth ($n=9$) included “age,” “documents needed,” “down payment and rent cost,” “get denied because of mental health history,” “I was 17 in the SAL program which made it hard to find a landlord who’d rent to [me],” “my age was the biggest problem,” “needed credit,” “pet friendly,” and “sex offender registry.” One Extended youth identified their main barrier as “mental health issues and physical health issues which make it hard to safely live on my own.”

Where Young People Spend Free Time

Understanding where young people spend their time assists programs like Aftercare in supporting their development into self-sufficient adults. Knowing common areas where youth socialize, such as parks, libraries, coffee shops, or community centers, helps further our understanding of where youth feel most comfortable, how youth socialize, and where they build social networks. Additionally, knowing where youth are exposed to information or situations that can impact how youth build life skills and form habits can help us understand the contextual factors that influence their long-term well-being. Identifying where youth prioritize their free time can help advocates “meet youth where they are,” whether this occurs in

physical spaces or through tailored assistance that builds common ground while being contextually relevant. To achieve this, the 2025 Participant Satisfaction Survey included a question prompting participants to select places where they typically spend their free time. Results for Core, Extended, and all youth are presented in [Table 12](#). Notably, most participants report spending their free time at home (86.8%), followed by a friend’s house (39.8%), other family’s house (31.3%), parks and outdoor spaces (26.3%), and gyms or sports centers (20.1%). Few youths report spending their free time at community centers or clubs (3.3%), coffee shops (5.9%), and cafés or restaurants (7.9%).

Table 12: “Where do you typically spend your free time outside of school or work? (check all that apply)”

	Core (n=251)	Extended (n=53)	Total (n=304)
Home	86.9%	86.8%	86.8%
Friend’s house	40.6%	35.8%	39.8%
Family’s house	32.3%	26.4%	31.3%
Park or outdoor space	26.3%	26.4%	26.3%
Gym or sport center	21.9%	11.3%	20.1%
Shopping mall or entertainment place	20.7%	17.0%	20.1%
Library or bookstore	10.0%	9.4%	9.9%
Church	10.8%	5.7%	9.9%
Café or restaurant	8.4%	5.7%	7.9%
Other	7.2%	5.7%	6.9%
Coffee shops	6.8%	1.9%	5.9%
Community center or club	3.6%	1.9%	3.3%

**Note.* Some youth may have selected more than one option. Totals will not be exactly 100%.

Youth were given the option to describe “other” places they spend their free time outside of school or work. Notably, the majority of responses indicated a school or work-like setting; for example, responses included “building business,” “college,” “my job,” “school,” “work,” “dorm,” “working,” and “work, friends.” These responses may indicate that young people choose to spend their free time and socialize at their school or job, even when they are not actively in classes or working. Other responses indicated recreational activities such as “basketball,” “fishing,” “practicing music,” and “my couch, playing video games.”

Where and How Youth Learn about Aftercare and Resources

Knowing where youth learn about Aftercare can help program staff know where conversations surrounding aging out of foster care and accessing important resources occur. Additionally, pinpointing the places where exposure to enrollment in Aftercare is relevant but lacking can help the program improve its visibility and aid youth in need who are unaware of services. To achieve this, the 2025 edition of the Participant Satisfaction Survey included two additional questions: 1) “How did you learn about the Aftercare program?” and 2) “Where or who do you turn to find resources and information?”. Results are reported in [Table 13](#) and [Table 14](#). Over half of all participants (56.6%) reported learning about Aftercare from their HHS social worker or JCO/probation officer, followed by their transition planning meeting (17.8%) and a foster parent or caregiver (16.4%).

Table 13: “How did you learn about the Aftercare program? (check all that apply)”

	Core (n=251)	Extended (n=53)	Total (n=304)
HHS social worker or JCO/probation officer	57.4%	52.8%	56.6%
At my transition planning meeting	17.5%	18.9%	17.8%
Foster parent or caregiver	17.5%	11.3%	16.4%
Staff at my placement or other service provider	13.5%	15.1%	13.8%
Can’t remember	12.0%	11.3%	11.8%
Family	8.4%	3.8%	7.6%
Other	4.4%	7.5%	4.9%
School or community organization	3.6%	1.9%	3.3%
Friends or peers	2.8%	3.8%	3.0%
Found the website on the internet	1.6%	0.0%	1.3%
Read a brochure or saw a poster	0.4%	1.9%	0.7%
Social media	0.8%	0.0%	0.7%
Faith community or church	0.4%	0.0%	0.3%

**Note.* Some youth may have selected more than one option. Totals will not be exactly 100%.

Youth were given the option to describe “other” sources of information on Aftercare. Some responses included “AMP,” “DHS,” “Ellipsis caseworker,” “foster care,” “I think I was referred by someone,” “state training school staff,” “substance abuse counselor,” “Aftercare reached out to me while in foster care,” and “homeless shelter behind YSS.”

Table 14: “Where or who do you turn to find resources and information? (check all that apply)”

	Core (n=251)	Extended (n=53)	Total (n=304)
Case manager/Advocate/Worker	64.5%	77.4%	66.8%
Online search	61.0%	54.7%	59.9%
Family	49.0%	49.1%	49.0%
Friends or peers	46.2%	41.5%	45.4%
Social media	21.9%	20.8%	21.7%
School or college (e.g., counselor, teacher, professor, advisor)	18.3%	3.8%	15.8%
Health provider	12.7%	9.4%	12.2%
Faith community or church	6.4%	5.7%	6.3%
Other	3.6%	1.9%	3.3%
211.org	0.8%	3.8%	1.3%

*Note. Some youth may have selected more than one option. Totals will not be exactly 100%.

Similarly, youth were given the option to describe “other” people or places they turn to find resources and information. Responses included “Aftercare worker,” “books,” “ChatGPT,” “my worker,” “fictive kin,” and “OP.”

Comments from Participants

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 2025 survey, 63 respondents provided substantive comments, 93.7% of which were positive. Twenty-nine (29) comments acknowledged the help and support they have received from the program and the relationship participants had with their advocate, including twenty-four (24) 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 really helps me with understanding ‘adult’ situations that I wouldn’t have anyone to ask if not for Aftercare! It has really helped me with transitioning into an adult and understanding resources out there to help me achieve my goals!”**

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:

“Come to visits when they say they are. Have trouble with SCL,” “Money is really tuff right now with the rising prices of everything maybe a little more financial help could help a lot of people in the aftercare program,” “I would like help being informed on how I could apply for Medicaid,” and “Having a Roommate should be addressed more appropriately and generally more frequent effort (in all aspects of having a roommate) should go into two strangers in “crisis” or specific situations living together.”

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

Impact of Aftercare

- *“[My Aftercare agency] has helped my family and I in ways and I can't even begin to express how helpful you guys have been to us and how much we appreciate the things you guys do! Thank you!”
(Extended Aftercare participant)*
- *“Aftercare services have helped me with me moving into my new apartment”
(Core Aftercare participant)*
- *“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)*

Aftercare as a Life Jacket

“This program has really helped me when I first got into it. I didn't know what was up or down [and] I was going through a difficult time- this program helped keep me afloat when I was drowning.”

(Core Aftercare participant)

“Aftercare has kept me afloat financially through hard times.”

(Core Aftercare participant)

Advocates as Support

- *“I feel my advocate is the best, she always has a helping hand. And always trying to make sure I'm doing well, and have my mind in the right path in my life. Always make sure I have food and have clothes and stuff for daily tasks. Helps with also trying to get my sister into the program as well. I truly love the staff and advocates here, you guys truly blessed me with the opportunity to bless people around me with your guys resources. Very much grateful and blessed truly. God bless and thank youuuuu guys so much, I LOVE YALL!!! 🤍🙏” (Extended Aftercare participant)*

- *“[My advocate] has done everything to help me with the needs that I need met! She is a very wonderful person and she has been very helpful to me from the start! [My advocates] have been there for me through all the roughness in my life and do [their] very best to help me.”*
(Core Aftercare participant)
- *“Aftercare has really helped me improve my life. I’ve been struggling financially and being a new mom. [My advocate] is always helpful if we need help with household items, diapers, wipes, etc. Aftercare gave me a good start to my education and I hope to someday continue my education. It’s helped me reach so many goals in my life so I can succeed. [My advocate] has been my favorite worker to work with. She’s always willing to help out when we need it. She loves [my child] and hanging out with her”*
(Extended Aftercare participant)
- *“My advocate constantly goes out of her way to help and make sure I am okay, always checking in and helping me find new ways to succeed”*
(Core Aftercare participant)
- *“Having [my advocate] as my Aftercare worker has helped me 1000% more and has gotten me further in life. I appreciate everything she does for me- let [my advocate] know”* (Core Aftercare participant)

Strong, Lasting Impacts of Advocates

“I just want to share that my best worker I’ve ever had in or out of foster care has been [my advocate]. She no longer works with YSS but she was the most inspirational and relatable worker I’ve ever had. She’s given me so much genuine advice as well as shown me that the goals I set in this program I can actually reach. She helped me be able to move and get a better job. She’s helped me through some rough times while working with some very unfair and rude people/managers. She’s so down to earth and honest.” (Core Aftercare participant)

Survey Limitations

Young adults participating in Aftercare do so on a voluntary basis. All Core and Extended Care youth who met with their Aftercare 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. Youth in Extended Care 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 who are 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 in their participation and are highly satisfied with the services and support they receive.

Summary

Participating youths highly rate their experiences within Aftercare and working with their Aftercare advocate. Nearly all youth report a sense of respect and fair treatment and believe their advocate is someone they can trust and count on for support. When rating the helpfulness of Aftercare on a scale of 1 to 5, over 95% of Core youth and over 92% of Extended youth rated the helpfulness of Aftercare as “4” or “5.” Overall, both Core and Extended youth have excellent experiences within Aftercare and working with their advocates.

Aftercare monitors youth’s ratings of self-sufficiency as they participate in the program while navigating the transition to adulthood. Youth completing the survey indicated high self-sufficiency while participating in the program. For example, the majority (over 95%) of youth in Core and Extended Aftercare reported that they had stable housing, and nearly all (98%) reported having supportive relationships. When asked about current challenges they face, however, youth participating in Extended Aftercare were more likely to report challenges with having enough money or other resources to cover expenses, as well as securing reliable transportation to and from school or work. When asked about barriers related to obtaining housing, more youth in Extended (35.8%) noted that they have faced problems obtaining housing compared to Core youth (20.7%). Extended youth were more likely than Core youth to identify high costs, lack of affordable options, not having enough income or savings, unstable employment, poor credit history, lack of rental history or references, and needing a co-signer but not having one as the main barriers faced when obtaining housing. The challenges youth in Extended Aftercare face are unsurprising, as youth who qualify for Extended Aftercare may need additional financial support. Importantly, only 82.1% of youth in Core Aftercare and 73.6% of youth in Extended Aftercare indicate having sufficient resources compared to other self-sufficiency measures; however, youth in Core and Extended Aftercare overwhelmingly report that they are receiving financial support from Aftercare that helps keep them working toward their goals, that their advocate helps them connect with people and resources that will help them succeed, and that their advocate helps them feel hopeful about the future. Thus, while many youths report having insufficient resources, Aftercare may be youths’ main resource in receiving financial assistance and building connections with other important resources.

The 2025 Participant Satisfaction Survey added questions based on where young people learn about Aftercare and the sources they turn to most for information and resources. Notably, nearly 60% of youth seek information from online searches, and just over 20% report seeking information through social media; however, few youths learn about Aftercare through general internet browsing or through social media. Future considerations include expanding outreach efforts through sources youth actively search for information (e.g., online spaces) as well as where youth spend most of their free time (e.g., with family and friends). Furthermore, youth are expected to learn about Aftercare through their HHS social worker, JCO/probation officer, or during their transition planning meeting. However, under 57% report learning about Aftercare through their HSS social worker or JCO/probation officer, and under 18% report learning about Aftercare in transition planning meetings. Encouraging conversations with youth

about Aftercare when meeting with their social worker or probation officer, transition meeting facilitators, providers, or other important sources such as their foster parent(s) can help guide youth to Aftercare services and access to important resources, build trusting, supportive relationships, and learn or improve life skills as they transition into young adulthood.

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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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