



Department of
HUMAN SERVICES

***Independent Living Services
Annual Report***

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Executive Summary

This report is prepared for the Governor and the Iowa General Assembly pursuant to the requirements of the Code of Iowa section 234.35(4). DHS is required to annually report the program statistics of children (also referred to in this report as youth) for whom the state paid for independent living services during the immediately preceding state fiscal year (SFY). The period covered by this report is July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2019.

This independent living foster care program has been known as Supervised Apartment Living (SAL) since 2004. A profile summary of the 168 youth that received SAL services in SFY19 from four contractors (138 youth) and Department caseworkers (30 youth) is shown in the table below:

Total No. served	168	
Youths from this No. of Iowa Counties were served	48	
Dept. of Human Services (DHS)		
Cases	112	67%
Male	45	27%
Female	67	40%
Juvenile Court Services (JCS)		
Cases	55	32%
Male	31	18%
Female	24	14%
Voluntary Cases	1	1%
Youth Discharged/Exited From SAL	130	78%

Iowa's child welfare programs have performance expectations that focus on participant safety, permanency and well-being. For SFY19, a new competitive procurement resulted in four contractors with each offering both cluster and scattered site SAL settings. Outcomes of the performance measures for this program are included later in this report.

Introduction

The Code of Iowa section 234.35(4) requires DHS to report annually to the governor and general assembly by January 1, on the numbers of children for whom the state paid for independent living services. The report shall detail the number of children, by county, who received such services, were discharged from such services, the voluntary or involuntary status of such services, and the reasons for discharge. This report addresses those areas of the program.

Overview

Supervised apartment living arrangements provide older foster care children (beginning at age 16½) with an environment in which they can experience living in the community with varying levels of supervision. Participants must have the ability to live in the community with less supervision than that provided by a foster family or foster group care. They must also be able to follow the provisions of their case plan and participate in activities and services to achieve self-sufficiency.

SAL is the least restrictive type of Iowa foster care placement and the program is designed for older youth for whom neither reunification nor adoption is likely and who are perceived by referring workers to be capable of living in the community with the appropriate level of services, guidance, supports, and supervision. Services and supports are tailored to prepare the youth to be successful in adulthood.

Youth aged 18 or 19 who continue to meet foster care payment and other eligibility requirements may be served in SAL if they have been in foster care immediately before reaching the age of 18 and have continued in foster care since reaching the age of 18. Youth aged 18 or older must also agree to stay in care by signing a voluntary placement agreement.

A DHS Service Area Manager or designee may waive the requirement for continuous foster care placement for a youth who leaves foster care at age 18 and voluntarily returns before the youth's 20th birthday in order to complete high school or obtain a high school diploma equivalency. The SAL foster care program is Iowa's only foster care program that allows for a youth who has left foster care at age 18 to voluntarily return into care prior to their 20th birthday in order to complete their high school education or obtain a high school equivalency diploma. SAL is an important option for youth who leave the child welfare system and later learn they need help.

There are two types of SAL living arrangements. One is a cluster setting (for ages 16½ and older) which provides support in a structured setting for up to six youth residing in apartments or bedrooms in one building. Youths in this setting receive guidance in daily life skills including, but not limited to, maintaining their own living quarters, preparing their own meals and budgeting. The second is a scattered-site setting which also focuses on developing life skills. Scattered-sites are for youth aged 17 and older and for whom it has been determined by the DHS or Juvenile Court Services referral worker that the child has lived successfully in a SAL cluster setting until the child is able to live in a more independent placement in a scattered-site. Exceptions to living in a cluster setting first may be granted if appropriate. Scattered-site SAL is the less restrictive of the two types of living arrangements.

Cluster sites are structured settings and supervised by the SAL contractor with staff on site when more than one youth is present. Youth must be able to contact supervising agency staff 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

In scattered-sites youths typically live in an apartment unit with services and supports available from the SAL contractor that focus on supervision and guidance with activities of

community living. Youth live on their own with access to SAL staff around the clock, typically by phone.

During SFY19, DHS contracted with four SAL providers that were selected to provide SAL services using a competitive Request For Proposal (RFP) process. This procurement allowed a funding cycle of up to six-years: SFYs 2018 - 2023. The four SAL contractors in SFY19 were:

- Florence Crittenton Home of Sioux City contracted in the DHS Western Service Area
- Lutheran Services of Iowa, Inc. contracted in the DHS Northern Service Area
- Hillcrest Family Services contracted in the DHS Eastern Service Area
- Youth Homes of Mid-America contracted in the DHS Des Moines Service Area

SAL programs are required to place an emphasis on education and skill development and youth are expected to attend school to obtain their high school diploma or equivalency but are not required to work. However, work in itself builds certain skills and it is allowed if it does not negatively affect a youth's academic participation. Youth who are no longer attending high school but remain foster care eligible under the age of 18 may attend post-secondary school or choose to work.

Youth in the SAL program receive a monthly stipend of \$787.50 that is intended to help them pay their monthly living expenses. This was increased in recent years to replace the previous amount that was well below poverty guidelines and contributed to participants living in rundown neighborhoods. The lower stipend also caused youth to drop out of school and find jobs to pay bills.

Data Summary

The total number of unduplicated youth for whom the state paid for SAL services during SFY19 was 168, down from 170 in SFY18. Sixty-seven percent (67%) of these were DHS cases and thirty-two percent (32%) were JCS cases. The remaining one percent were Voluntary/Meskwaki Family Services cases.

The following SFY19 SAL SUMMARY table shows: 1) the number of youth served overall; 2) agency placement responsibility (DHS and JCS); 3) legal status; and, 4) an exit summary. This information is organized by county, excluding the counties that did not have a youth in SAL.

Most services provided by the four contractors were around Iowa's more urban areas. This is often due to availability of apartment units and landlords willing to rent to youth under the age of 18. These areas also have a richer array of community services.

SFY19 SAL Summary

County Name	Total Served SFY19		Placement Responsibility						Legal Status						Exit Reasons							
	Total	Remaining in SAL as of 6-30-2019	DHS		JCS		MFS		Voluntary	CINA	Delinquent	TPR CINA	Custody Trans	Total	RETURN HOME	PLCMT W PERSON	AGED OUT	DEATH	CHGE IN PLCMT	CHGE LVL CARE	RUNAWAY	Total
			Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female														
Total	168	23	45	67	31	24	0	1	6	88	50	16	8	168	8	1	80	1	14	11	15	130
Overall percentages		14%	27%	40%	18%	14%	0%	1%	4%	52%	30%	10%	5%		6%	1%	62%	1%	11%	8%	12%	
Adams	1		1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
Audubon	2	1	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	2	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Benton	3		1	2	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	3	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	3
Black Hawk	2		-	1	-	1	-	-	-	1	1	-	2	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	2
Boone	1		-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
Bremer	1		-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
Buena Vista	3	2	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	3	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Butler	3	2	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	2	1	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Cass	1		1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Cerro Gordo	3	1	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	1	3	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	2
Cherokee	2	1	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	2	-	2	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	1
Clarke	1		-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
Clay	3		-	-	2	1	-	-	-	-	3	-	3	1	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	3
Clinton	1		-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Crawford	3		-	-	2	1	-	-	-	-	3	-	3	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	3
Dallas	2		-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	2	-	2	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	2
Decatur	1		-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
Des Moines	1		1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
Dickinson	1	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
Dubuque	9		3	6	-	-	-	-	1	8	-	-	9	1	-	2	-	-	-	-	4	7
Emmet	2	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	2	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Fayette	1		1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
Franklin	1		-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Greene	3		-	2	1	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	1	3	-	-	2	-	1	-	-	3
Guthrie	1		1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
Jasper	2	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
Johnson	4	1	1	2	-	1	-	-	-	3	-	-	1	4	-	1	2	-	-	-	-	3
Keokuk	1		-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Linn	1	1	-	8	2	-	-	-	-	8	1	-	1	1	-	-	5	-	1	-	1	7
Lyon	1		-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
Madison	2		1	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	2	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	2
Mahaska	3		1	2	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	3	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	3
Marion	1		1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
Marshall	4		-	-	3	1	-	-	-	-	3	-	1	4	1	-	2	-	-	-	-	3
Monona	1		1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
Muscatine	4		2	2	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	4	-	-	2	-	1	-	-	-	3
Palo Alto	1		1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Plymouth	1		-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Polk	45	8	15	18	2	1	-	-	3	24	12	6	-	45	1	-	21	-	3	5	2	32
Pottawattamie	4		1	1	2	-	-	-	-	1	2	-	1	4	1	-	3	-	-	-	-	4
Poweshiek	1	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
Scott	1		-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Story	5		2	2	-	1	-	-	1	3	1	-	5	1	-	3	-	-	1	-	-	5
Tama	1		-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
Wapello	2		-	2	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	2	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	2
Winnebago	2		-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
Winnesiek	2		-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Woodbury	18	1	5	9	2	2	-	-	1	1	4	3	-	18	-	-	1	-	2	1	2	15

Exit Reason

One hundred and thirty (130) youth exited the program during the year. Of those:

- Sixty-two percent (62%) aged out of care (left because they reached 18 years of age or older)
- Eight returned home (6%)
- One went to live with another suitable person (<1%)
- Nineteen percent (19%) had a change in placement or level of care
- Twelve percent (12%) ran away from placement

Performance Measure Outcomes

The latest SAL contracts that began with SFY18 include outcome-based measures that are also tied to payment incentives. Payment incentives have never been used in this program before. The outcome expectations were updated for SFY18 and the SAL performance measures are the following:

Stability

In accordance with DHS's overall stability and permanency goals, and recognizing the importance of a child's completion of education and acquisition of life skills prior to aging out of child welfare programming, this measure is in place so that contractors promote participant retention in SAL Placement. The intent is that a youth acquire maximum benefit from this service and not experience an unplanned discharge from SAL services.

Two levels of accomplishment were set: Gold, which says that greater than or equal to 60% of youth transitioning out of SAL are transitioning at age 18, or older as permitted by law and regulations, or discharging to their family, a family-like setting, or a positive support system placement; and, Silver, which is set between 50% and 59%.

Statewide achievement in the second contract year was 66.7%.

Aftercare Engagement

For this measure contractors shall continue to communicate with youth after they transition out of SAL by encouraging the youth's participation in Iowa's Aftercare program. When eligible, each youth is expected to participate in Aftercare and the contractor's responsibility is to advocate for the youth's participation in order to promote the youth's success in early adulthood.

Two levels of accomplishment were set: Gold, which says that greater than or equal to 85% of Aftercare-eligible youth will have engaged in at least two contacts during the calendar month of discharge or any of the six full calendar months immediately following the youth's date of discharge from SAL; and, Silver, which is set between 75% and 84%.

Statewide achievement in the second contract year was 70.9%, up from 54% in the first contract year.

Life Skills Attainment

For this measure contractors promote life skills attainment by all youth in the program. Achievement data was not available at the time of this report, but contractors track youth's performance using pre-placement and discharge information from the Casey Life Skills Assessments to measure youth's acquisition of life skills during their stay in SAL.

Two levels of accomplishment were set: Gold, which says that greater than or equal to 80% of youth discharged will have shown improvement in their Casey Life Skills Assessment; and, Silver, which is set between 70% and 79%.

Conclusion and SAL's Focus Going Forward

The SAL program continues to be a valuable alternative for older foster youth who are aging out of the foster care system but can still benefit from the guidance and supports this service offers. It is a small program that continues to be an important part of Iowa's array of child welfare services.

With the latest procurement and latest contracts beginning the previous state fiscal year, Supervised Apartment Living entered a new phase with hopefully improved approaches to service. SAL service providers are now contracted within particular DHS Service Areas with the intent to follow the principle of serving youth as close to home as possible. Youth can be served within their Service Area while contractors maintain flexibility to provide guidance to youth who live in adjoining or nearby communities.

In addition to contracting within DHS Service Areas, today's contractors offer both cluster settings and scattered-site settings (unlike the past when contractors sometimes offered only one or the other). This approach is intended to assure that youth referred to SAL are appropriate for this program and have the opportunity to develop their independent living skills with the higher level of supervision provided in cluster settings before moving on to scattered-site settings.

The latest set of performance measures intends to bring focus to reaping the full benefits this program can provide by remaining in foster care through a youth's full eligibility and to connect with valuable services that can be provided when a youth leaves foster care. Continued guidance and assistance through the period of transition into young adulthood are valuable.

These new approaches are intended to enhance the child welfare system's ability to lead to better successes. Using these approaches the SAL program will continue to:

- Focus on youth who have the competence and desire to live with increasing independence in the community with supports;

- Provide guidance and support to develop life skills such as, but not limited to, chores and household duties, budgeting, job searching, job interviewing, and attainment of important personal documents (e.g., a driver's license or Social Security card);
- Assure school or work attendance;
- Prepare individualized transition plans with each youth from the time of SAL admission to successful discharge into young adulthood.