



STATE OF IOWA

CHESTER J. CULVER, GOVERNOR
PATTY JUDGE, LT. GOVERNOR

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
CHARLES J. KROGMEIER, DIRECTOR



December 15, 2009

Michael Marshall
Secretary of Senate
State Capitol
LOCAL

Mark Brandsgard
Chief Clerk of House
State Capitol
LOCAL

RE: Independent Living Services Annual Report

Dear Mr. Marshall and Mr. Brandsgard:

Enclosed please find copies of a report to the General Assembly relative to the Department of Human Services Independent Living foster care program. These reports were prepared pursuant to directive contained in House File 457 of the 81st General Assembly.

Section 234.35, subsection 4, directs the Department of Human Services (Department) to report to the Governor and the General Assembly annually by January 1 on data concerning youth who received independent living (IL) foster care services during the immediately preceding fiscal year and to assess the data as part of any evaluation of services or consideration for improving the services. Effective June 1, 2004 IL Iowa Administrative Rules were revised; the foster care placement was renamed to Supervised Apartment Living (SAL). Following is the report data and assessment as required.

Sincerely,

Julie Fleming
Legislative Liaison

Enclosure

cc: Governor Chet Culver
Legislative Service Agency
Kris Bell, Senate Majority Caucus
Peter Matthes, Senate Minority Caucus
Zeke Furlong, House Majority Caucus
Brad Trow, House Minority Caucus

Independent Living Services Annual Report

Independent Living foster care (renamed to Supervised Apartment Living [SAL] June, 2004) is a foster care type of placement, in which youth served must be at least 16 years of age and have the capacity to function outside the structure of a foster family or group care setting. There are two types of SAL living arrangements, scattered-site and cluster. Youth placed in a scattered-site arrangement live in an apartment unit within the community with supervision provided by a provider that the Department contracts with to provide needed supervision and skills to assist the youth in preparation for self-sufficiency. Cluster arrangements are those in which four to six youth reside in apartments located in one building and are supervised by one agency, with staff on site at any time that more than one youth is present in the cluster arrangement. Youth in SAL are required to attend school full-time and work part-time or, if not in school, work full-time.

The vast majority of youth participating in the SAL program are placed in a scattered-site arrangement, living in their own apartment within the community, primarily because at this point there are only two providers in the state that have an active SAL cluster program. Staff and providers are aware of the benefits that a cluster arrangement provides for youth, with more provider staff involvement and more interaction between the youth. Youth between the ages of 16 and 18 are often not prepared to live on their own in their own apartment and loneliness is often an issue that can cause the youth to divert from their plan of course. Providers however have moved away from contracting with the Department for cluster arrangements primarily because it is viewed as cost prohibitive, with the required staff/client ratio and lack of referrals by the Department to such a placement. Units of services that the Department purchases from providers are often twice as expensive for cluster arrangements as opposed to scattered-site arrangements; SAL foster care is 100% state funded (both maintenance and services).

The total number of youth for whom the state paid for SAL services during state fiscal year (SFY) '09 was 196. Attached is a spreadsheet detailing the number of youth served: by county; under the responsibility of either the Department or Juvenile Court Services; by legal status; discharged from such services and the reasons for discharge (see attached SAL Summary FY'09).

Clearly the largest percent of youth receiving SAL services, 36% were from Polk County, with Woodbury County (7%) and Linn County (6%) coming in next, amounting to three out of Iowa's ninety-nine counties representing almost 50% of all youth served in the program, with no youth represented from 53 counties. This over and under representation for this particular foster care placement is not surprising when compared to overall representation of youth in foster care by county. Out of the 13 child placing agencies that the Department contracts with to provide SAL services, the majority provide services in Iowa's more urban areas, primarily due to availability of apartment units and landlords willing to rent to youth under the age of eighteen. Moreover, only a handful of the 13 providers DHS contracts with have active SAL programs, with over

half of providers only occasionally serving youth in this type of placement. The over-represented counties are those counties in which there are stronger SAL programs.

For SFY '09, there were approximately 5% of youth in the SAL program on a voluntary basis (placement status for youth 18 through 19 years of age still working on their high school education). In order for youth to continue to be served past their 18th birthday, the youth must agree to stay in care in addition to completing their high school education. Additionally, funding must be available for the services. While funding is always an issue, it is not uncommon for youth who could remain in foster care past 18 years of age to choose not to. 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 (regardless of level of placement, i.e., family foster care, group care, SAL) to voluntarily return to a SAL foster care placement prior to their 20th birthday in order to complete their high school education or obtain a general equivalency diploma without going through an exception to policy request; this is an important option for those youth who could elect to stay past their 18th birthday in order to complete their education but choose not to, oftentimes wanting to be "free" from "the system" and believing they can do better on their own, only to find out otherwise several months down the road. There were 154 youth discharged from this particular program during SFY '09. Of those discharged, 72% "aged out" of care (left care because they have attained 18 years of age or older), with another 5% being discharged to return home, 16% had a change in placement or level of care (typically to a more restrictive placement due to behavior issues, often due to substance abuse and/or mental illness), 5% ran away from placement, and 2% were placed with a suitable person (i.e., relative, guardian) (see attached Exit Reason chart).

Not surprisingly, African American youth were over-represented in this particular foster care placement, as is the case in all foster care placement types, comprising 19% of youth placed; white youth comprised 74% placed (see attached SAL by Race chart).

DHS requested surveys be completed by the 13 provider agencies for each of the youth who "aged out" (left care due to turning 18 years of age) of the SAL programs in SFY 2009. Providers returned outcome information for 46 of the 86 youth who had "aged out" of SAL. Findings are improved outcomes from last year for the youth who leave SAL at 18 or older; for those youth who leave prior to 18, for reasons such as a more restricted placement or runaway, the commonly held beliefs that while planning efforts and activities to prepare youth to successfully transition to adulthood are effective for some, there are still many youth whose needs are not met by this program. Comments from providers suggest this, in large part, is a result of youth being placed in SAL and not adequately prepared for living in this type of least-restrictive setting or who have mental health/behavioral issues beyond what the program is designed to handle. The following bullets provide a glimpse at the education, employment, and housing outcomes for youth exiting SAL at age 18 or older in SFY '09.

For youth exiting an SAL program at the age of 18 or older in SFY 2009:

- **Education Status:** 61% of youth exited SAL with a diploma or a GED; 19% were still attending school; and 2% dropped out.
- **Employment Status:** 31% exited SAL with full or part-time employment; and 22% were unemployed.
- **Housing Status:** 100% had housing or housing plans at discharge.

It is interesting to note that 30% of total youth placed in SAL during SFY '09 were managed through juvenile court services (indicating adjudicated delinquent) as opposed to the Department. Such data profiling of youth characteristics is important to keep in mind when evaluating effectiveness of program services. Often times, SAL placement is a "last resort" placement for older teens that can't go home and for who other foster care placement settings (group care or family foster care) are not options due to the needs and issues of the youth. Many of these youth have mental health and substance abuse issues; additionally some are adjudicated as a sex offender, which eliminates other placement options, particularly family foster care, due to safety factors. Case planning and services need to be tailored to meet the individual needs of each youth served.

Evaluation of SAL services

Eligibility for SAL placement is based, among other things, on a comprehensive assessment of the youth that reviews available information on the youth, especially as it pertains to the youth's ability to live independently, participate in services and activities to achieve self-sufficiency, and in following the provisions of their case plan (see attached Preplacement Screening for Supervised Apartment Living Foster Care in addition to the Request for Approval of Supervised Apartment Living Foster Care Placement, both of which must be completed prior to placing a youth in SAL). Additionally, a transition plan must be completed and updated at each case review for youth in foster care who are 16 years of age and older; the plan reviews strengths and needs of youth particularly around life skills along with the possible need for disability services as an adult, significant information needed for appropriate placement into the SAL program. Caseworkers contract with SAL providers for a certain number of units of service per month, with current minimum requirements of weekly face-to-face provider contacts with youth under 18 years of age and biweekly face-to-face contacts with youth over age 18. DHS staff can always contract for more units than the minimum requirement (and usually do) though budget constraints often limit the number of units approved and needed. Caseworkers need to be specific with providers on use of units and expected outcomes to best meet the needs of the youth. Contracted staff are expected to provide guidance, oversight, behavior monitoring and services and supports for development of life skills to prepare them as much as possible for self-sufficiency.

The "de-linking" of child welfare services and rehabilitative services for children during SFY '07, now offers an additional avenue for services for youth in SAL; youth are not only eligible for hourly units of services (to provide needed supervision and life skills) purchased under SAL provider contracts but are also eligible to receive family-centered child welfare services in addition if necessary. These services are purchased based on a calendar month as one unit of service and can be used to further enhance SAL services, tailored to meet the needs of the youth. Services could include, among other things,

transitional life skills, transportation assistance to access needed services and supports and permanency planning activities, including help in identifying and achieving alternative permanent family connections for the child.

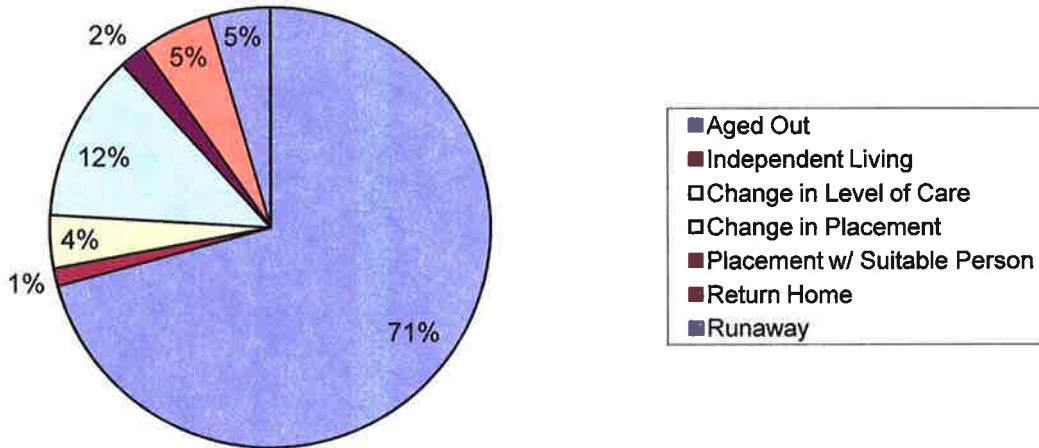
Research indicates that adolescents in foster care are very often behind their peers in life skills, including employment skills, attendance/performance at school, money management, and skills leading to a healthy lifestyle and relationships. This lack of preparation is no less for those youth placed into SAL. Additionally, youth in this placement often lack a positive support system even more so than other youth in care, experience loneliness, and are apt to be prey for others to take advantage of (e.g., moving in with them, couch surfing in their apartments, illegal behaviors). There is often a push to put a youth into this program that is ill prepared to be in such an unrestrictive placement setting. This is due to the lack of foster families willing to take teen-agers, high-cost of group care, youth not needing a treatment setting (but still requiring more structure than living in their own apartment), and sometimes due to the fact that this is the last placement option for a youth (that is, they cannot function or be placed in a family setting due to behaviors/mental health issues) and they have “burned their bridges” with group care placements. It is not uncommon to have youth released from Eldora state training school and be placed into a SAL placement. It is not uncommon for a youth to get evicted from their apartment, run into money management issues (even with the provider being the payee for the monthly maintenance checks), not attend school or fail to keep the working requirements.

While DHS has taken certain steps to better “shore up” the SAL program, most notably developing/implementing the prescreening tool for the purpose of better placement match, it is clear that more needs to be done to better meet the needs of youth in this program, and more notably, there needs to be more placement options for a better continuum of living arrangements to best meet the needs of adolescents in foster care. Meetings and conference calls have been held on a quarterly basis during calendar year 2009 for provider input concerning what is working and what is not working in the SAL program and solution based brainstorming. It has become clear that a one size fits all in this type of setting does not work; providers are strong in their beliefs that youth need to live in a cluster/transitional living type SAL setting, with other peers and 24 hour staffing prior to being moved to their own apartment with minimal staffing and that the maintenance payment youth receive needs to be more than what a foster family receives for a teen, due to economies of scale. Youth input has also been along the same lines. Meetings and calls will continue through 2010 to get necessary input prior to the release of a request for proposals for the SAL foster care placement program.

SAL SUMMARY -- FY'09

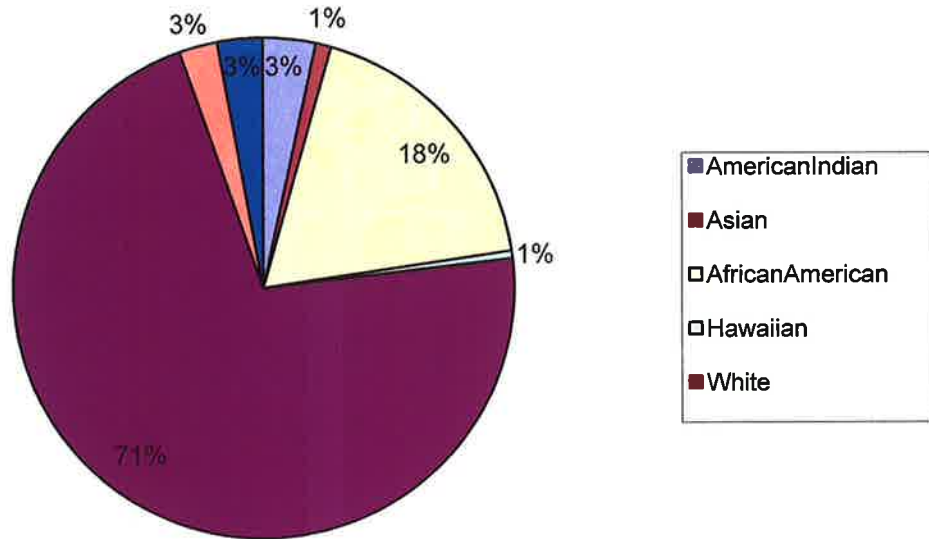
| County | County Number | Total Served FY09 | Remaining in SAL as of 6/30/09 | Placement | | Legal Status | | | | | Exit Reason | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------|---------------|-------------------|--------------------------------|------------|-----------|--------------|------------|------------|-----------|---------------------|-------------|-------------|------------------------------|--------------------|------------|---------------------|-------------------------|----------|------------|----|
| | | | | DHS | JCS | Voluntary | CINA | Delinquent | TFR | Custody Transferred | Total | Return Home | Placement w/ Suitable Person | Independent Living | Aged Out | Change in Placement | Change in Level of Care | Runaway | Total | |
| Story | 85 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| Tama | 86 | 8 | 2 | 6 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 8 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 6 |
| Taylor | 87 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Union | 88 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Van Buren | 89 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Wapello | 90 | 4 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| Warren | 91 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Washington | 92 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Wayne | 93 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Webster | 94 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Winnebago | 95 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Winneshiek | 96 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Woodbury | 97 | 14 | 4 | 13 | 1 | 0 | 9 | 1 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 14 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 8 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 10 |
| Worth | 98 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Wright | 99 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | | 196 | 42 | 137 | 59 | 10 | 105 | 58 | 20 | 3 | 196 | 8 | 3 | 2 | 109 | 19 | 6 | 7 | 154 | |

Exit Reason



| Exit Reason | | |
|------------------------------|------------|-------------|
| Aged Out | 109 | 71% |
| Independent Living | 2 | 1% |
| Change in Level of Care | 6 | 4% |
| Change in Placement | 19 | 12% |
| Placement w/ Suitable Person | 3 | 2% |
| Return Home | 8 | 5% |
| Runaway | 7 | 5% |
| Total | 154 | 100% |

Supervised Apartment Living By Race



| Race | Counts | Percent |
|---------------------|------------|-------------|
| AmericanIndian | 7 | 4% |
| Asian | 2 | 1% |
| AfricanAmerican | 37 | 19% |
| Hawaiian | 1 | 1% |
| White | 138 | 74% |
| More than two races | 5 | 3% |
| Unable to Determine | 6 | 3% |
| Total | 196 | 100% |

PREPLACEMENT SCREENING FOR SUPERVISED APARTMENT LIVING FOSTER CARE

Date:

| | | | |
|--|---------------|---------|---|
| Client Name | Date of Birth | FACS ID | County |
| Current Living Arrangement | | | Legal Status: <input type="checkbox"/> CINA <input type="checkbox"/> Delinquent <input type="checkbox"/> Voluntary |
| Date Life Skill Assessment was completed: <i>(Attach a copy of the results to this assessment.)</i> | | | |

School and Work History

Currently enrolled in school or GED

| | | |
|-------|--------|---|
| Grade | School | IEP? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
|-------|--------|---|

- Performing at appropriate level in school
- Mild to moderate problems at school including underachievement or discipline problems
- Serious school difficulties including suspensions, frequent truancy, significant discipline problems or failing

Not currently enrolled in school

| | |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| Last School Attended | Last Grade Completed |
|----------------------|----------------------|

Currently employed

- Full-time
- Part-time

Not currently employed

| |
|------------------|
| Date Last Worked |
|------------------|

- Has held a job for at least six months with few to no problems
- Has held a job for at least one month or has mild attendance or disciplinary problems
- Serious difficulties finding or maintaining employment
- No work history
- No opportunity to work

Medical or Mental Health Issues (Including Pregnancy)

Diagnosis:

Medications:

Is the youth able to manage own medication?
 Yes No N/A

Substance Abuse

- No notable substance use difficulties currently or in recovery for at least one year
- Mild to moderate substance use problems that occasionally present problems of living or in recovery for less than one year
- Moderate to serious substance abuse problem that requires treatment and exacerbates current problems and conditions

Describe current substance abuse treatment:

Parenting

Does the youth have any children?

- Yes. If yes, how many?
- No

Does the youth have custody of the children?

- Yes
- No

Does the youth's child have any health concerns or special needs?

- Yes. If yes, please describe:
- No

Cooperation/Compliance at Current Placement

- Generally compliant and cooperative
- Occasionally noncompliant to some rules or adult instructions
- Frequently noncompliant to rules and adult instructions

History of Delinquency

- Yes. If yes, describe:
- No

Date and degree of most recent charge:

Currently on probation?

- Yes. If yes, describe youth's compliance with terms of probation:
- No

History of Violence Toward Self, Others, or Property

- Yes. If yes, describe:
- No

Current (within past three months) violent/aggressive behavior:

- Yes. If yes, describe:
- No

List names of team members consulted in making the recommendations for SAL placement:

Other comments:

List the plan of services and resources available to address the identified needs of the youth in SAL placement (i.e., positive connections, economic, community programs):

Number of hours of supervision that will be authorized:

Overall assessment of suitability for Supervised Apartment Living Foster Care:

- Appropriate for SAL-scattered site
- Appropriate for SAL-cluster site
- Not appropriate for SAL

What is the plan if SAL placement is not approved or if SAL services are terminated:

Case Manager/JCO

Date

REQUEST FOR APPROVAL OF SUPERVISED APARTMENT LIVING FOSTER CARE PLACEMENT

| | | | |
|---------------------|----------------------|---------------|-------------|
| <i>Youth's Name</i> | <i>Date of Birth</i> | <i>County</i> | <i>Date</i> |
|---------------------|----------------------|---------------|-------------|

The youth must meet the following criteria for approval of Supervised Apartment Living Foster Care:

- Youth is at least 16 years old.
- Needs foster care placement and services according to Employees' Manual XIII-J.
- Pre-Placement Screening for Supervised Apartment Living Foster Care*, form 470-4063, is attached.
- Youth will have an approved living arrangement that meets required standards.

If under age 18 (check one):

- Attending high school and working (or in work training) part time.
- Attending GED program and working (or in work training) part time.
- Attending post-secondary classes and working (or in work training) part time.
- Attending high school, GED or post-secondary program. Work requirement waiver is requested until _____ month/year.

Reason for waiving work requirement:

- Working full time.

If age 18 or over (check one):

- Attending high school and working (or in work training) part time.
- Attending GED program and working (or in work training) part time.
- Attending high school or GED program. Work requirement waiver is requested until _____ month/year.

Reason for waiving work requirement:

- Request waiver of requirement for continuous placement in order for youth to return to foster care to complete high school or obtain GED. Youth is working (or in work training) part time or work requirement waiver is requested until _____ month/year.

Reason for waiving work requirement:

An initial allowance in the amount of _____ (*maximum \$400*) is requested to assist the youth in paying for deposits, furnishings, and other start-up costs.

| | | | |
|---------------|-------------|-------------------|-------------|
| <i>Worker</i> | <i>Date</i> | <i>Supervisor</i> | <i>Date</i> |
|---------------|-------------|-------------------|-------------|

APPROVAL FOR SUPERVISED APARTMENT LIVING FOSTER CARE PLACEMENT

The request for a Supervised Apartment Living Foster Care Placement is: Approved Denied

Work requirement waiver is: Approved Denied

The request for an initial allowance is approved in the amount of: _____

| | |
|---|-------------|
| <i>Service Area Manager or Designee</i> | <i>Date</i> |
|---|-------------|

If youth is under age 18, obtain Juvenile Court Order for Supervised Apartment Living Placement after receiving SAM approval.