



Department of  
**HUMAN SERVICES**

***Independent Living Services  
Annual Report***

**December 2021**

## Introduction/Overview

The Code of Iowa section 234.35(4) requires the Department of Human Services (DHS or Department) 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.

Supervised apartment living arrangements provide older children in foster care (ages 16.5 through 19) 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.

While the program is a foster care program, and, therefore, typically intended for youth up to age 18, youth age 18 or 19 may remain in SAL, if approved by DHS, by committing to continue their high school education and by signing a voluntary placement agreement. Youth age 18 or 19 must exit the program when they achieve a high school diploma or equivalency. Youth who have not achieved a high school diploma upon reaching age 20 age out of the program. 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 20<sup>th</sup> birthday. 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. Youth 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. 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-site SAL, youth 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.

In 2017, DHS used a competitive Request for Proposal (RFP) process to select SAL providers to deliver SAL services in Iowa. The contract is continued annually, and assuming DHS continued each year, contracts will run through June 2023. The three SAL contractors and site locations in SFY21 were as follows:

- 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
- Youth Homes of Mid-America contracted in the DHS Des Moines Service Area

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.

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. See below for a quick snapshot of SAL participation in SFY 2021.

July 2020-June 2021 SAL Participation		
Total number served	140	
Number of counties which had children in SAL	48	
Dept. of Human Services (DHS) supervised cases	97	69%
Male	46	33%
Female	51	36%
Juvenile Court Services (JCS) supervised cases	43	30%
Male	33	24%
Female	10	7%
Voluntary cases	8	1%
Youth discharged/exited from SAL	112	80%

## Key Strategies for 2022

Status and changes for 2022 include:

- Maintain existing three contractors (Florence Crittenton, LSI, YHMA)
- Continue to provide SAL Cluster and SAL Scattered options
- Continue pay for performance

## Conclusion

The SAL program continues to be a valuable alternative for certain older youth who may be unable or willing to live in a family home or who are expected to age out of the foster care system. SAL is a small program that continues to be an important part of Iowa's array of child welfare services. DHS is confident the SAL program will remain beneficial as part of the DHS service array by focusing on the following:

- 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.

## Appendix: SFY21 SAL Summary

County Name	Total Served SFY21	Remaining in SAL as of 12-3-21	Placement Responsibility				Legal Status					Exit Reasons							
			DHS		JCS		Voluntary	CINA	Delinquent	TPR CINA	Total	RETURN HOME	PLCMT W PERSON	INDEP LIVING	AGED OUT	CHGE IN PLCMT	CHGE LVL CARE	RUNAWAY	Total
			Male	Female	Male	Female													
<b>Total</b>	140	19	46	51	33	10	8	69	42	21	140	7	1	1	67	16	5	15	112
<b>Overall Percentages</b>		14%	33%	36%	24%	7%	6%	49%	30%	15%		6%	1%	1%	60%	14%	4%	13%	
Benton			0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Black Hawk			0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Boone			0	2	1	0	0	0	1	2	3	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	3
Buena Vista			1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Butler			1	2	0	0	0	3	0	0	3	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
Calhoun			0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Carroll			1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Cerro Gordo			2	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	2	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
Cherokee			0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Clarke			0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Clay			0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Dallas			2	0	0	2	0	2	2	0	4	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	3
Decatur			0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Dubuque			1	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	2
Emmet			0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Fayette			0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Franklin			0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Greene			0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Grundy			1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Hamilton			2	1	0	0	0	3	0	0	3	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
Hardin			1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Iowa			1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Johnson		1	1	1	1	0	0	2	0	1	3	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
Jones			1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Kossuth			1	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	2	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	2
Linn		1	2	2	2	0	0	3	2	1	6	0	0	0	3	1	1	0	5
Louisa			0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Lucas			1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Lyon			1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Madison		1	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Marshall			0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Monona			0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Muscatine			0	0	2	0	1	0	1	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
O'Brien		1	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Plymouth			1	1	1	2	0	2	3	0	5	0	0	0	3	1	1	0	5
Polk		4	9	19	7	2	5	21	9	2	37	1	0	1	20	4	1	4	31
Poweshiek			0	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	2	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	2
Ringgold			0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Scott		2	2	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sioux			0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Story		2	3	3	2	0	1	4	2	1	8	1	0	0	2	1	0	2	6
Tama			1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Warren		1	2	1	0	0	0	2	0	1	3	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	2
Webster		1	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Winneshiek			1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Woodbury		5	4	5	4	3	0	5	7	4	16	0	0	0	8	0	1	0	9
Worth			1	3	0	0	0	3	1	0	4	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	2
Wright			0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1