



# STATE OF IOWA

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

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES  
CHARLES J. KROGMEIER, DIRECTOR

December 22, 2010

Michael Marshall  
Secretary of Senate  
State Capitol  
LOCAL

Charlie Smithson  
Chief Clerk of House  
State Capitol  
LOCAL

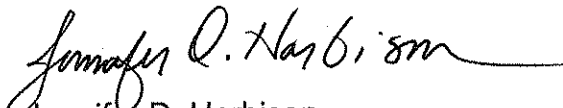
## RE: Independent Living Services Annual Report

Dear Mr. Marshall and Mr. Smithson:

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 81<sup>st</sup> 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,

  
Jennifer D. Harbison  
Legislative Liaison

Enclosure

cc: Governor Chet Culver  
Legislative Service Agency  
Kris Bell, Senate Majority Caucus  
Russ Trimble, Senate Minority Caucus  
Zeké Furlong, House Majority Caucus  
Brad Trow, House Minority Caucus



# STATE OF IOWA

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

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES  
CHARLES J. KROGMEIER, DIRECTOR

December 22, 2010

The Honorable Chester J. Culver  
Governor  
State Capitol  
LOCAL


**RE: Independent Living Services Annual Report**

Dear Governor Culver:

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 81<sup>st</sup> 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,

  
Jennifer D. Harbison  
Legislative Liaison

Enclosure

cc: Michael Marshall, Secretary Iowa Senate  
Charlie Smithson, Chief Clerk of the House

## 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 can be a third to twice as expensive for cluster arrangements as opposed to scattered-site arrangements; SAL foster care is 100% state funded (both maintenance and service payments).

The total number of unduplicated youth for whom the state paid for SAL services during state fiscal year (SFY)'10 was 189; down from 196 for SFY '09. 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'10).

Clearly the largest percent of youth receiving SAL services, 33% were from Polk County, with Linn County (7%) and Woodbury County (7%) coming in next, amounting to three out of Iowa's ninety-nine counties representing 44% of all youth served in the program, with no youth represented from 50 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'10, there were approximately 4% 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 18<sup>th</sup> 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 20<sup>th</sup> 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 18<sup>th</sup> 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 149 youth discharged from this particular program during SFY '10. Of those discharged, 74% "aged out" of care (left care because they have attained 18 years of age or older), with another 6% being discharged to return home, 12% 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), 7% ran away from placement, and one youth died while in placement, cause of death unknown (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 16% of youth placed; white youth comprised 72% placed (see attached SAL by Race chart).

DHS requested surveys be completed by the 13 provider agencies for each of the youth who exited out of the SAL programs in SFY 2010 (although not required in current contract language, providers returned completed surveys on 62 youth). Overall, outcomes for SFY'10 are poorer than outcomes from SFY'09 for the youth who left a SAL program; for youth who leave prior to 18, for reasons such as a more restricted placement or runaway, the commonly held beliefs are, 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 in SFY'10 followed by measurement of these same outcomes for SFY'09 for 46 of the 86 youth who left a SAL program in SFY'09:

For youth exiting a SAL program in SFY 2010:

- **Education Status:** 52% of youth exited SAL with a diploma or a GED; 37% were still attending school; and 11% dropped out.
- **Employment Status:** 31% exited SAL with full or part-time employment; and 32% were unemployed but looking for work.
- **Housing Status:** 84% had housing or housing plans at discharge and housing plans were unknown for 15%.

For youth exiting a SAL program 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 but looking for work.
- **Housing Status:** 100% had housing or housing plans at discharge and housing plans were unknown for 15%.

Education outcomes are mixed somewhat between the 2 SFYs; with slightly more youth leaving with a high school diploma or GED in SFY'09 but fewer youth still attending school. However, in SFY'10, dropout rates are significantly higher. Employment outcomes are especially significant between the 2 SFYs, with 10% more youth unemployed but looking for work for SFY'10. This speaks to the overall downturn in the economic state of the country, including increased unemployment rates. It is very disturbing that 16% of youth who left a SAL program in SFY'10 with housing plans unknown.

It is interesting to note that 39% of total youth placed in SAL during SFY'10 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 (once every two weeks) 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. Family-centered services can be utilized for services not covered under the units of services purchased but which would benefit the youth, such as 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). At times, there is a push to put a youth in SAL that is ill prepared to be in such an unrestrictive placement setting and for which another type of foster care setting may be more appropriate but is not viable. 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. Youth released from the state training schools have even been placed directly into the SAL program; which is going from a very structured setting to the least structured setting in Iowa’s foster care placement types. It is not uncommon for youth to get evicted from their apartment, run into money management issues (even with the provider often 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 providers offering cluster arrangements, which offer more structure to a youth initially. Meetings and conference calls were held with SAL providers on a quarterly basis during calendar year 2009 and two conference calls were held in 2010 for provider input concerning what is working and what is not working in the SAL program and solution based brainstorming to assist in the formation of an upcoming request for proposals (RFP) for SAL foster care. 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 many youth need the option to live in a cluster 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. The SAL foster care RFP will be released before end of year, 2010.







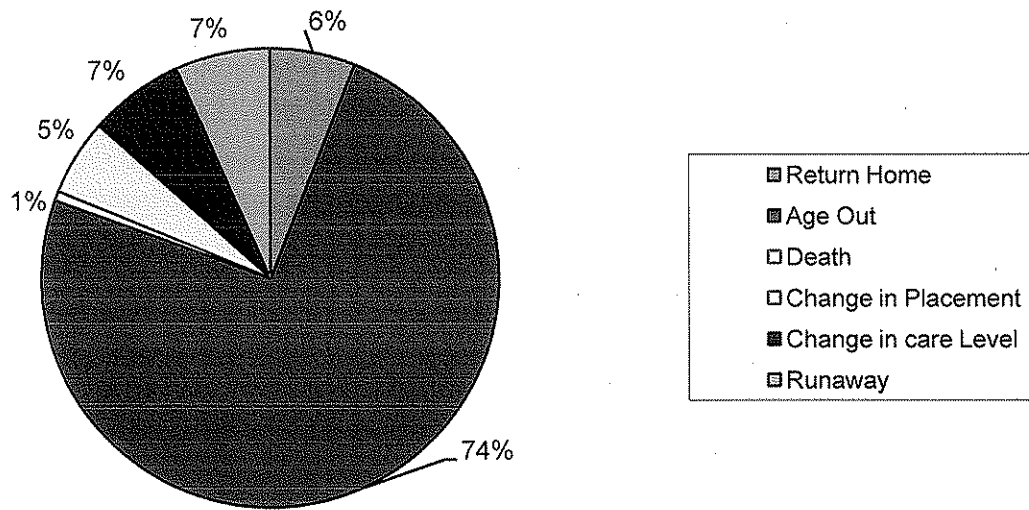
SAL SUMMARY-- FY'10

County	County Number	Total Served FY2010	Remaining in SAL as of 6/30/2010	Placement		Legal Status						Exit Reason							
				DHS	JCS	Voluntary	Court Ordered	CINA	Delinquent	TPR	Custody Transferred	Total	Return Home	Aged Out	Death	Change in Placement	Change in Level of Care	Runaway	Total
Linn	57	11	0	6	5	0	0	5	5	0	0	0	1	5	0	1	1	3	11
Louisa	58	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lucas	59	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lyon	60	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Madison	61	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mahaska	62	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Marion	63	2	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
Marshall	64	6	1	4	2	0	0	4	2	0	0	1	3	0	0	1	0	5	
Mills	65	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	
Mitchell	66	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Monona	67	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	
Monroe	68	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Montgomery	69	2	1	2	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	1	
Muscatine	70	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
OBrien	71	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Osceola	72	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Page	73	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Palo Alto	74	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Plymouth	75	1	-1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	2	
Pocahontas	76	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Polk	77	62	16	39	23	1	0	32	22	6	1	3	36	0	3	2	2	46	
Pottawattamie	78	7	3	7	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	4	
Poweshiek	79	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	
Ringgold	80	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	
Sac	81	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Scott	82	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Shelby	83	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Sioux	84	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	3	

SAL SUMMARY -- FY'10

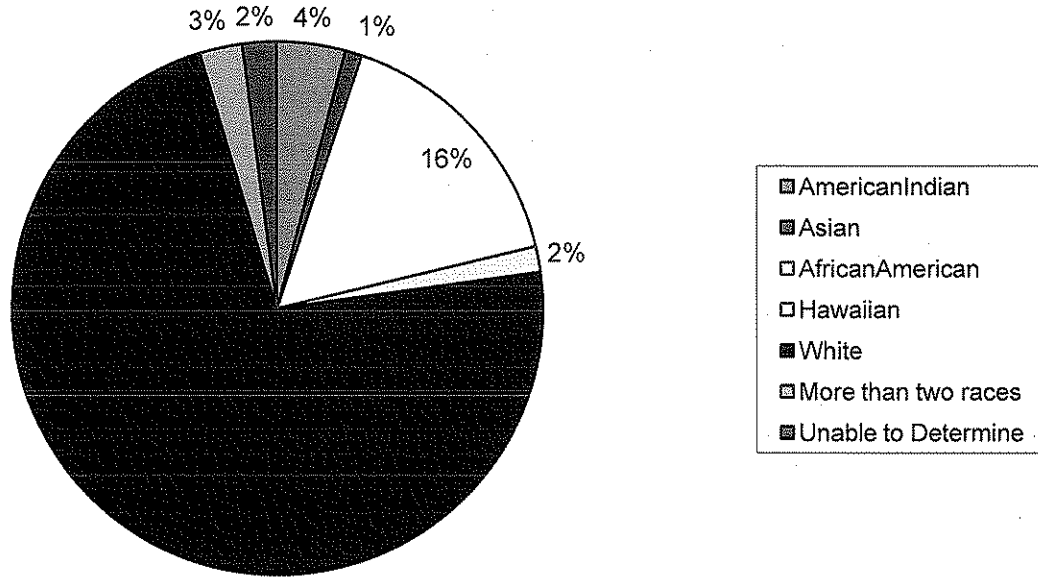
County	County Number	Total Served FY2010	Remaining in SAL as of 6/30/2010	Placement		Legal Status						Exit Reason											
				DHS	JCS	Voluntary	Court Ordered	GINA	Delinquent	TPR	Custody Transferred	Total	Return Home	Aged Out	Death	Change in Placement	Change in Level of Care	Runaway	Total				
Story	85	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1					
Tama	86	8	0	6	2	1	0	4	2	1	0	0	8	1	4	0	0	1	2	8			
Taylor	87	0	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	0	0	
Van Buren	89	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	
Wapello	90	3	0	3	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	3	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	3	3	
Warren	91	3	2	3	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	
Washington	92	0	0	0	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	0	0	0
Webster	94	5	2	2	3	0	0	3	2	0	0	0	5	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	3	3	3
Winneshiek	95	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Winneshiek	96	2	0	2	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	2
Woodbury	97	11	4	11	0	0	0	8	0	3	0	0	11	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	7	7	7
Worth	98	0	0	0	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	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>		<b>189</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>189</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>149</b>	

### Exit Reason



Exit Reason		
Return Home	9	6%
Age Out	111	74%
Death	1	1%
Change in Placement	8	5%
Change in care Level	10	7%
Runaway	10	7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>100%</b>

### Supervised Apartment Living By Race



Race	Counts	Percent
American Indian	8	4%
Asian	2	1%
African American	31	16%
Hawaiian	3	2%
White	136	74%
More than two races	5	3%
Unable to Determine	4	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>189</b>	<b>100%</b>