



# Iowa Department of Human Services

Terry E. Branstad  
Governor

Kim Reynolds  
Lt. Governor

Charles M. Palmer  
Director

December 31, 2015

Michael Marshall  
Secretary of the Senate  
State Capitol Building  
LOCAL

Carmine Boal  
Chief Clerk of the House  
State Capitol Building  
LOCAL

Dear Ms. Boal and Mr. Marshall:

Enclosed please find copies of reports to the General Assembly relative to Independent Living Services.

This report was prepared pursuant to the directive contained in Iowa Code Section 234.35, Section 4.

Please feel free to contact me if you need additional information.

Sincerely,

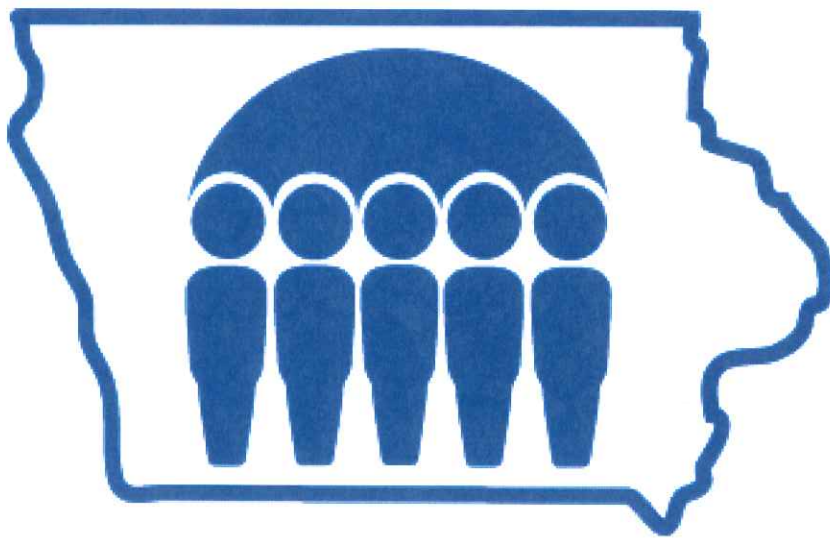
Paige M. Thorson  
Policy Advisor

PMT/mm

Enclosure

cc: Terry E. Branstad, Governor

# **Iowa Department of Human Services**



## ***Independent Living Services Report***

**December 2015**

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## Executive Summary:

Iowa Code 234.35 (4) requires the Department of Human Services (DHS) to report annually on the independent living foster care placement (now called supervised apartment living, SAL). The report must include any enhancements to the program.

The four significant enhancements made to the SAL foster care program beginning in SFY 2012 have continued to make the SAL program a more effective foster care placement option for older youth during SFY 2015. The enhancements include:

- Increased minimum age for youth to be placed in SAL foster care to better ensure appropriateness and maturity necessary for successful placement;
- Increased youth's monthly maintenance stipend (payment) to strengthen the ability to rent a safe and stable living arrangement and to focus primarily on education (as opposed to employment "in order to make ends meet");
- Contractors are required to meet specific outcomes related to safety, permanency, and well-being, through various performance measures;
- Enhanced required services necessary for youth to be successful in the program.

## Introduction:

Iowa Code 234.35(4) requires the 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 during the immediately preceding fiscal year. 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." The legislative action was a result of a Citizen's Aide/Ombudsman report, dated January 14, 2003, regarding a youth, Reggie Kelsey, who was in the foster care system and eventually aged out. On May 28, 2001, Reggie's body was found in the Des Moines River. Reggie's death was ruled a suicide.

The independent foster care program (renamed in 2004 to supervised apartment living, SAL) is the least restrictive type of foster care placement in Iowa. The program is set up for older youth for whom neither reunification nor adoption is likely and who are perceived by referring workers and SAL contractors as capable of living within the community with the appropriate level of services, supports, and supervision. Services and supports are tailored to prepare the youth for a level of self-sufficiency necessary to be successful in emerging adulthood.

## Overview:

The DHS renewed all six agency SAL contracts for SFY 2015. The six agencies were originally awarded a two year contract effective 07/01/11, with four one year renewals possible, based on a DHS Request For Proposals (RFP). The SAL contractors are Florence Crittenton Home of Sioux City, Hillcrest Family Services, Lutheran Services of



Iowa, Inc., Quakerdale, Woodward Youth Corporation, and Youth Homes of Mid-America.

There are two types of SAL living arrangements, scattered site settings and cluster site settings. Youth placed in a scattered site setting typically live in an apartment unit with services and supports centered on supervision and development of life skills to assist in preparation for self-sufficiency. Youth have access to SAL staff 24/7 (typically by phone) but live on their own. Cluster site settings are those in which up to six youth reside in apartments located in one building or a house with adequate numbers of bedrooms and are supervised by one agency, with staff on site at all times when more than one youth is present in the cluster site setting.

Due to the RFP, the minimum age for placement into a SAL program was raised from 16 years of age to 16 ½ years of age for cluster site settings, and 17 years of age for scattered site settings. Increasing the minimum age, along with increasing the number of cluster site settings from 1 setting prior to the RFP to currently 6 settings has and is expected to continue to better ensure that youth receive the appropriate level of living arrangements and services according to each youth's strengths and needs.

The RFP also required programs to place emphasis on education, removing the former requirement that youth in SAL both attend school and work part time. Youth are expected to be attending school to obtain their high school diploma (or, when deemed more appropriate, their GED) and are not required to work unless doing so would not comprise their education. If youth are under 18 years and no longer attending high school, they may attend post-secondary school or choose to work at least an average of 80 hours per month.

Another change increased the monthly stipend from \$573.90 per month to the current rate of \$787.50 per month. The previous amount was well below poverty guidelines and contributed to participants living in rundown neighborhoods that were often infested with drug activity. The low stipend also caused youth to drop out of school and find jobs to pay bills.

## **Outcomes:**

SAL contracts are outcome-based and are aligned with federal Child and Family Service Review outcomes of safety, permanency, and well-being. The expected outcomes for SFY 2015 were:

- Safety outcome performance measure: There will be no founded or confirmed cases of abuse or neglect of the youth in the SAL contractor's care by the contractor or subcontractor or by other youth in the contractor's SAL foster care program.
- Permanency Outcome 1 performance measure: The contractor will ensure that permanent connections are maintained or secured through active connections with the youth's family members and/or other people important in the youth's life, with at least 75 percent of youth served maintaining at least twice a month

contact with the youth's positive support system.

- Permanency Outcome 2 performance measure: The contractor will ensure youth engagement within the community, with at least 75 percent of youth served regularly participating in organized community activity (including extra-curricular school activities, faith based activities, community clubs, volunteer work) at a minimum of four times per month.
- Well-Being Outcome performance measure: Emphasis on educational achievement for youth, with at least 80 percent of youth served complying with satisfactory school attendance leading to a high school diploma or GED.

The cumulative results for the first year, SFY 2012 were:

- Safety Outcome – 100 percent met.
- Permanency Outcome 1 – 87 percent met.
- Permanency Outcome 2 – 58 percent met.
- Well-Being Outcome – 86 percent met.

The cumulative results for SFY 2013 were:

- Safety Outcome – 100 percent met.
- Permanency Outcome 1 – 93 percent met.
- Permanency Outcome 2 – 87 percent met.
- Well-Being Outcome – 95 percent met.

The cumulative results for SFY 2014 were:

- Safety Outcome – 100 percent met.
- Permanency Outcome 1 – 99 percent met.
- Permanency Outcome 2 – 81 percent met.
- Well-Being Outcome – 96 percent met.

The cumulative results for SFY 2015 were:

- Safety Outcome – 99.92 percent met
- Permanency Outcome 1 – 97.49 percent met
- Permanency Outcome 2 – 83.16 percent met
- Well-Being Outcome – 95.94 percent met

Although 3 of the outcome measurements went down slightly, with the Well-Being outcome improving by over 2 percent, just looking at the outcome percentages doesn't give the complete picture. Averages of 57 youth per month were served in the SAL foster care program during SFY 15. One of the SAL contractors served 42 percent of the youth placed in the SAL program during SFY 2015, and met the above four outcomes respectively by 100 percent, 99.54 percent, 100 percent, and 98.05 percent. DHS has at least two SAL contractors (and this can vary to up to three) that serve a very small percentage of overall youth in the SAL program per SFY (approximately 2 youth on average per month). DHS staff meets with SAL contractors on a quarterly basis, with the primary goal being continual improvement of the program. The meetings have proven to be effective in problem solving and networking among contractors.



## Data Summary:

The total number of unduplicated youth for whom the state paid for SAL services during SFY2015 was 180, up from 133 for SFY 2014. The spreadsheet below shows the number of youth served by county; under the responsibility of either the DHS or juvenile court services, by legal status, whether discharged from such services, and the reasons for discharge.

Of the six contractors, the majority provided 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 and a richer array of community services.

For SFY 2015, 1 percent of youth in the SAL program were placed on a voluntary basis (placement status for youth 18 through 19 years of age still working on their high school education) as compared to 5 percent for SFY 2014. In order for youth to continue to be served past their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, the youth must agree to stay in care (by signing a voluntary placement) in addition to completing their high school education. The decrease for SFY 2015 is significant when you take into account the number of youth placed in the SAL program for SFY 2014 (133) and for SFY 2015 (180), indicating two things: 1) More youth completing high school by age 18, and 2) Less desire of youth who have not completed their high school education to voluntarily continue in the foster care system; they are often very ready to be "on their own." However, 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 in order to complete their high school education or obtain a general equivalency diploma. This is an important option for youth who leave the system and who later learn they need help.

### SFY 2015 SAL SUMMARY

County Number			Placement Responsibility			Legal Status					Exit Reason						
			DHS	JCS		Voluntary	CINA	Delinquent	TPR	Custody Transferred	Total	Return Home	Placed with Suitable Person	Aged Out	Change in Placement	Change in Level of Care	Runaway
1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
4	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1



County Number	Total Served FY2015 Remaining in SAL as of 6/30/2015		Placement Responsibility		Voluntary	Legal Status					Exit Reason						
			DHS	JCS		CINA	Delinquent	TPR	Custody Transferred	Total	Return Home	Placed with Suitable Person	Aged Out	Change in Placement	Change in Level of Care	Runaway	Total
5	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
6	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
7	3	1	2	1	1	1	1	0	0	3	0	0	1	0	0	1	2
8	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
11	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
12	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
13	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
14	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
15	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
16	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
17	3	0	0	3	0	0	3	0	0	3	0	0	2	0	1	0	3
18	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
19	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
20	2	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
21	3	0	1	2	0	1	1	0	1	3	0	0	1	1	0	1	3
22	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
23	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
24	2	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
25	2	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	1	2
26	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
27	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
28	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
29	2	0	1	1	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	1	1	0	0	2
30	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
31	5	1	2	3	0	2	3	0	0	5	1	0	3	0	0	0	4
32	3	1	3	0	0	3	0	0	0	3	0	0	1	1	0	0	2
33	2	2	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
34	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
35	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
36	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1



County Number			Placement Responsibility			Legal Status					Exit Reason						
			DHS	JCS		Voluntary	CINA	Delinquent	TPR	Custody Transferred	Total	Return Home	Placed with Suitable Person	Aged Out	Change in Placement	Change in Level of Care	Runaway
37	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
38	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
39	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1
40	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
41	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
42	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
43	2	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	1	0	2
44	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
45	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
46	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
47	3	0	1	2	1	0	2	0	0	0	3	0	0	3	0	0	3
48	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
49	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
50	5	0	4	1	1	3	1	0	0	0	5	0	0	5	0	0	5
51	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1
52	6	3	3	3	1	2	3	0	0	0	6	0	0	3	0	0	3
53	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
54	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1
55	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
56	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1
57	28	8	22	6	2	16	6	4	0	28	0	0	15	1	1	3	20
58	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
59	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
60	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1
61	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1
62	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
63	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1
64	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
65	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1
66	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
67	2	1	1	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	1
68	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1



County Number			Placement Responsibility		Legal Status						Exit Reason					
	Total Served FY2015	Remaining in SAL as of 6/30/2015	DHS	JCS	Voluntary	CINA	Delinquent	TPR	Custody Transferred	Total	Return Home	Placed with Suitable Person	Aged Out	Change in Placement	Change in Level of Care	Total
69	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
70	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
71	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
72	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1
73	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
74	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
75	6	0	6	0	1	5	0	0	0	6	0	0	5	0	1	6
76	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
77	44	10	27	17	6	17	19	2	0	44	3	0	19	6	0	34
78	6	2	4	2	0	3	2	1	0	6	1	0	2	1	0	4
79	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
80	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
81	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
82	2	0	0	2	1	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	1	1	0	2
83	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
84	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1
85	4	1	3	1	0	3	1	0	0	4	0	1	2	0	0	3
86	2	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	1	2
87	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
88	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
89	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
90	2	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	1	2
91	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
92	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1
93	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
94	3	1	3	0	0	3	0	0	0	3	1	0	0	0	1	2
95	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
96	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
97	11	2	9	2	1	7	2	1	0	11	1	0	6	0	2	9
98	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
99	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	180	41	121	59	18	94	58	9	1	180	10	1	90	15	8	139



## Exit Reason:

There were 139 youth discharged from the program during the year. Of those discharged, 65 percent aged out of care (left care because they attained 18 years of age or older). Another 7 percent were discharged to return home, 11 percent 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) compared to 3 percent in SFY 2014, and 11 percent ran away from placement, the same percentage in SFY 2014. The increase in youth who had a change in placement or level of care this past SFY indicates the both the trauma and issues these youth are dealing with in addition to lack of appropriate placement options. The majority of runaways for SFY 2015 were youth who were in voluntary foster care due to being 18 years and older and not having completed their high school education.

Exit Reason		
Return Home	10	7%
Transfer Custody To other parent	1	1%
Aged Out	90	65%
Change in Placement	15	11%
Change in Level of Care	8	6%
Runaway	15	11%
Total	139	100%

## Conclusion:

The SAL program continues to be a small but valuable alternative program for older foster youth who most likely will not be reunified or adopted and who are deemed capable to live on their own with guidance and support. Important recent improvements include: a revamped contract requiring providers to meet goals that are aligned with other federal child welfare outcomes; an increase in minimum age for participation; an increase in the monthly maintenance stipend, and; enhanced required services to youth participants.