Iowa Department of Human Services

Terry E. Branstad
Governor

Kim Reynolds
Lt. Governor

Charles M. Palmer
Director

December 23, 2013

Michael Marshall
Secretary of the Senate
State Capitol Building
L O C A L

Carmine Boal
Chief Clerk of the House
State Capitol Building
L O C A L

Dear Mr. Marshall and Ms. Boal:

Enclosed please find the Independent Living Services Report.

This report was prepared pursuant to Iowa Code Section 234.35, Section 4.

This report is also available on the Department of Human Services website at http://www.dhs.iowa.gov/Partners/Reports/LegislativeReports/LegisReports.html.

Sincerely,

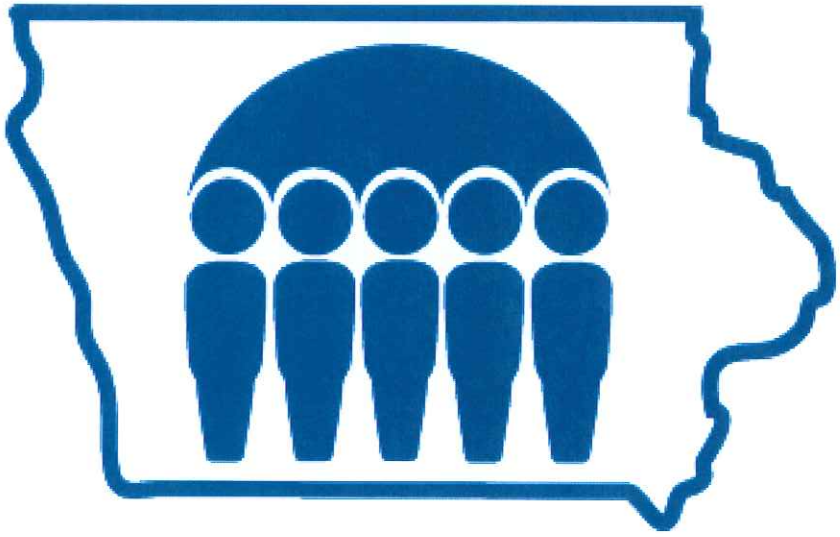
Jennifer Davis Harbison

Jennifer Davis Harbison
Policy Advisor

Enclosure

cc: Governor Terry E. Branstad
Senator Jack Hatch
Senator David Johnson
Representative David Heaton
Representative Lisa Heddens
Legislative Services Agency
Aaron Todd, Senate Majority Staff
Josh Bronsink, Senate Minority Staff
Carrie Malone, House Majority Staff
Zeke Furlong, House Minority Staff

Iowa Department of Human Services



Independent Living Services Report

December 2013

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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 may to the SAL foster care program is SFY 2012 have continued to make the SAL program a more effective foster care placement option for older youth during SFY 2013. 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 secure 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 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 have the maturity needed to live in the community with supervision. Services and supports aimed at preparing the youth for self-sufficiency are provided.

Overview:

The DHS renewed the seven agencies contracts for SFY 2013. The seven agencies were awarded a two year contract effective 07/01/11. The SAL contractors are Florence Crittenton Home of Sioux City, Hillcrest Family Services, Lutheran Services of Iowa, Inc., Quakerdale, Woodward Youth Corporation, Youth Homes of Mid-America, and Youth and Shelter Services, Inc. There are two types of SAL living arrangements, scattered site and cluster. Youth placed in a scattered site setting 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 four to six youth reside in apartments located in one building and are supervised by one agency, with staff on site at all times when more than one youth is present in the cluster setting.

In order to focus on outcomes, several key program components were changed. 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 is expected to increase the appropriateness and maturity of youth placed in SAL. In addition it will allow some youth to live in a cluster site setting with basically 24/7 staffing prior to moving to a scattered site setting, in which the youth live on their own.

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. With fewer youth eligible for the service due to the age change, more resources became available for stipends and support.

Outcomes:

SAL contracts are outcome-based and are lined up with federal Child and Family Service Review outcomes of safety, permanency, and well-being. The expected outcomes for SFY 2013 were:

- Safety outcome performance measure: There will be no founded 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 60 percent of youth served during year one of the contract maintaining at least twice a month contact with the youth's positive support system, and 70 percent of youth served during year two of the contract.

- Permanency Outcome 2 performance measure: The contractor will ensure youth engagement within the community, with 60 percent of youth served during year one of the contract regularly participating (at least weekly) in organized community activity (including extra-curricular school activities, faith based activities, community clubs, volunteer work), and 70 percent of youth served during year two of the contract.

- Well-Being Outcome performance measure: Emphasis on educational achievement for youth, with 70 percent of youth served during year one of the contract complying with satisfactory school attendance leading to a high school diploma or GED, and 75 percent of youth served during year two.

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 Safety outcome remained at 100 percent met; all other outcome measures improved from SFY 2012 to SFY 2013. 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 SFY2013 was 202, up from 174 from SFY 2012. 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 seven 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.

For SFY2013, about 3 percent of youth in the SAL program are 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 to voluntarily return into care prior to their 20th 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 2013 SAL SUMMARY

			Placement Responsibility			Legal Status					Exit Reason						
County Number	Total Served FY2012	Remaining in SAL as of 6/30/2013	DHS	JCS	Voluntary	CINA	Delinquent	TPR	Custody Transferred	Total	Return Home	Transfer Custody To Another Parent	Aged Out	Change in Placement	Change in Level of Care	Runaway	Total
1	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
4	2	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
5	2	1	2	0	0	1	1	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
7	6	2	2	4	0	2	4	0	0	6	0	0	4	0	0	0	4
8	3	1	3	0	0	3	0	0	0	3	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
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	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	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	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	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	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
18	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	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	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
21	2	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	1	1	0	0	2
22	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
23	3	0	0	3	0	0	3	0	0	3	1	0	0	0	2	0	3
24	2	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	2

25	5	0	5	0	0	5	0	0	0	5	0	0	3	0	2	0	5
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	3	1	0	3	0	0	3	0	0	3	1	0	1	0	0	0	2
30	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
31	4	1	4	0	0	4	0	0	0	4	1	0	2	0	0	0	3
32	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
33	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
34	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
35	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
36	2	2	2	0	0	0	1	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
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	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	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	2	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	2	0	0	1	1	0	0	2
43	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
44	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	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	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
48	3	1	2	1	0	2	1	0	0	3	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
49	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
50	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
51	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
52	11	2	4	7	1	3	7	0	0	11	4	0	4	0	1	0	9
53	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
54	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
55	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
56	2	2	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
57	11	4	8	3	0	7	3	1	0	11	0	0	6	0	0	1	7
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	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
61	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
62	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
63	3	2	2	1	0	2	1	0	0	3	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
64	4	2	3	1	0	3	1	0	0	4	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
65	2	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	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	1	1	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
68	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
69	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
70	0	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	0
72	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
73	2	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
74	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
75	5	1	3	1	1	3	1	0	0	5	0	0	4	0	0	0	4
76	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
77	53	14	33	20	2	21	26	4	0	53	2	0	29	5	0	3	39
78	10	0	10	0	1	4	0	0	5	10	0	0	7	1	1	1	10
79	2	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	2
80	0	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	0
82	4	0	3	1	0	2	1	1	0	4	0	0	2	0	1	1	4
83	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
84	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
85	3	0	3	0	0	1	1	1	0	3	0	0	3	0	0	0	3
86	2	2	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
87	0	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	0
89	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
90	4	0	4	0	0	4	0	0	0	4	0	0	3	0	0	1	4
91	3	0	3	0	1	2	0	0	0	3	0	0	3	0	0	0	3
92	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
93	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
94	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
95	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
96	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
97	21	5	12	9	0	8	8	5	0	21	0	1	12	2	0	1	16
98	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
99	2	0	0	2	0	1	1	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
	202	**51**	**133**	**68**	**6**	**99**	**76**	**15**	**6**	**202**	**11**	**1**	**113**	**11**	**7**	**8**	**151**

Exit Reasons:

There were 151 youth discharged from the program during the year. Of those discharged, 75 percent aged out of care (left care because they attained 18 years of age or older). Another 7 percent were discharged to return home, 12 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), and 5 percent ran away from placement.

Exit Reason		
Return Home	11	7%
Transfer Custody to Other Parent	1	1%
Aged Out	113	75%
Change in Placement	11	7%
Change in Level of Care	7	5%
Runaway	8	5%
Total	151	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 mature enough to live on their own with guidance and support. Important recent improvements include: a revamped contract requiring providers to meet goals that are in line 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.