



# Understanding and Addressing The Needs of Foster Care Alumni 2008 Outcomes Summary



## Participating Youth 2002-2008

(N=1,285)

- 60% women and 25% people of color
- 18 yrs 10 mo: Average age of youth accessing IASN
- Youth have been served in all of Iowa's 99 counties
- 39% served are from rural counties
- 61% are from urban counties with populations of 50,000 or more.
- Since PAL was introduced in July 2006 more than 450 young people have benefited from the state funded program.

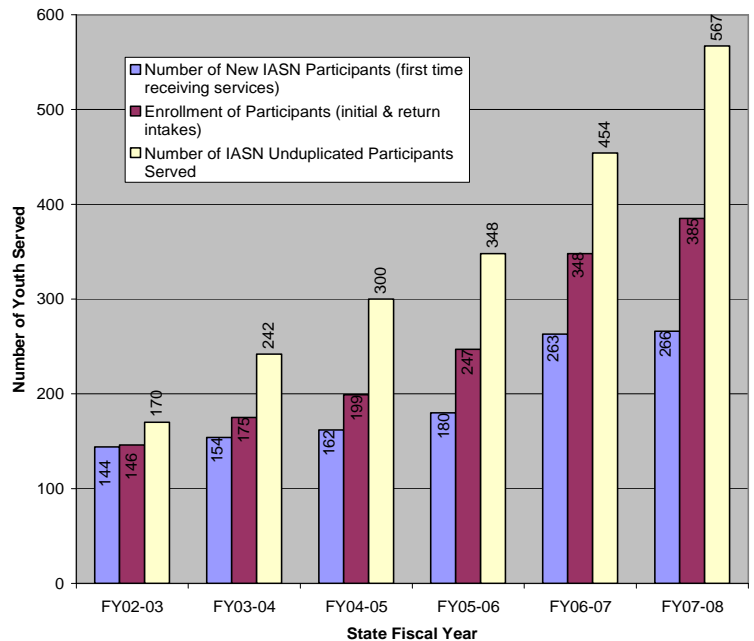
The IASN has provided aftercare services to over 1,200 of Iowa's eligible foster care alumni since 2002 with funds allocated to the state from the federal Chafee Foster Care Independence Program. In 2006, the Iowa Legislature authorized additional support for these youth and appropriated state funding to create the Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) program.

The PAL program provides financial support for youth who exit Iowa's foster care system at age 18 or older as long as they are either enrolled in post-secondary education, are employed, or both. The IASN implements PAL as a component of Iowa's aftercare services for those eligible.

Each young adult works directly with a Self-Sufficiency Advocate (SSA), meeting at least twice monthly for the duration of the alumni's participation. Each participant sets goals and creates a plan to achieve self-sufficiency.

Data for IASN is collected through interviews with aftercare participants conducted at the initial time of service, interval periods during their enrollment in aftercare, and at the time of exit from services.

Youth Enrolled and Served in IASN



*"It is great support – financially and emotionally"*  
PAL Participant (4/25/08)

*"Aftercare provides help and support because it is very overwhelming to be on your own without the help of family."* - PAL Participant (4/9/08)

Enrollment into the IASN has consistently increased since its start in April 2002. In the most recent fiscal year, July 2007 to June 2008, 557 unduplicated youth participated in Aftercare services. Of those, 266 were new participants enrolling in services for the first time.



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## Challenges facing Foster Care Alumni

Compared to the general population, a disproportionate number of foster care alumni had mental health disorders. Within the 12 months prior to being interviewed, they had confirmed diagnoses qualifying them as SED.

- 56% received treatment for a serious emotional disorder (SED) during the last 12 months
- 39% have diagnoses of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) or Major depressive disorder such as depression
- 25% have attempted suicide (compared to the .01% national suicide rate for general population 14-24)

At their initial interview youth served in both PAL and Aftercare:

- 56% have received a high school diploma
- 10% completed high school via GED
- 51% report \$0 gross monthly income
- 56% are unemployed
- 39% have their social security card
- 30% have their birth certificate

Of the Iowa foster care alumni served, 34% fail to complete high school prior to exiting care. This is a rate more than twice that of the general population (15%).

## IASN Outcomes 2007-2008

Each year IASN has demonstrated improved outcomes in the lives of foster care alumni who access the services provided.

In FY 2007-2008 youth who participated in IASN and completed a planned exit had much better outcomes than those who did not.

- 83% have finished high school or received a GED.
- 2% have completed a vocational certificate
- 2% have an Associates Degree
- 71% had a budget to cover monthly expenses compared to the 31% who did prior to receiving services.
- 67% have held a job for 3 or more consecutive months.
- Nearly all, 99%, of youth have made connections with supportive adults in addition to their IASN self-sufficiency advocate.

Feedback from participants

- 99% of participants surveyed said they would refer a friend to IASN.
- Only 37% agree that they could make it on their own without IASN services.
- 97% agreed that Aftercare assisted them in connecting with community resources that were helpful.

## What Can Iowa Aftercare Services do for Foster Care Alumni?

Each youth works directly with a Self-Sufficiency Advocate (SSA), meeting at least twice monthly for the duration of the alumni's participation. The alumni set goals and create a plan to achieve self-sufficiency. The SSA assists the youth to:

- Find and keep a safe, affordable place to live
- Complete education goals
- Obtain and or sustain employment
- Locate mental and medical professionals to address individual needs and concerns
- Connect to community resources
- Create and balance a monthly living budget
- Cover unexpected expenses
- Financially assist with self-sufficiency goals

Iowa Aftercare Services is for all former foster youth who have the goal and ability to achieve self-sufficiency. The program is available state-wide in Iowa. The 24 hour contact number is run through Iowa Extension and they can give a direct number to the Iowa Aftercare Service Network agency in each county. That number is 1-800-443-8336. More information can be found on the [www.ypii.org](http://www.ypii.org) website.