Youth Aging Out of Foster Care Making Successful Transition to Adulthood

Des Moines, Iowa – September 24, 2019 – Increases in education attainment, full-time employment, and secure housing are among the improved outcomes highlighted in the most recent annual report on Iowa’s Aftercare program for former foster youth. Prepared by the Youth Policy Institute of Iowa, the annual report includes detailed information on the outcomes of services provided by the Iowa Aftercare Services Network. The Network supports some of the most vulnerable young people in our state – those who have been involved in the child welfare (foster care) or juvenile justice systems.

Young people who are discharged from foster care at or near the age of 18 are at high risk of poor outcomes, struggling with both immediate needs and long-term goals as they transition to adulthood. Available on a voluntary basis up to age 21, Aftercare services help youth make connections to community resources and develop the knowledge and skills that will enable them to live on their own.

“It’s generally accepted that young people are not ready to be entirely on their own at the age of 18, so it’s not surprising that the outcomes for youth who age out of foster care absent ongoing support and services are extremely vulnerable to poor outcomes,” states Carol Behrer, Executive Director of the Youth Policy Institute and author of the annual report. “Without consistent support of a stable family and social network, small setbacks can completely derail even the most capable of these young adults.”

The efforts of the Aftercare Network pay-off in improved results among the participating youth. Participant outcomes for SFY 2019 are assessed by comparing the original intake data collected when participants first accessed services with their last exit interview data. Outcomes for SFY 2019 include:

- At the time of their exit, 62.5% reported employment of any kind. While in the program, employment of 35 or more hours per week tripled from intake to exit (9.2% to 28.8%).

- Participants with safe and stable housing more than doubled (20.7% to 53.8%) from intake to exit.

- At intake, only 69% of youth had earned a high school diploma or equivalent. Of young people completing an exit interview from Aftercare, 84.7% had earned at least a high school diploma, its equivalent, a vocational certificate, or an associate degree.

“While the emerging adults who participate in Aftercare will continue to face challenges as they make their own way, the support they receive while in Aftercare positions them for a more successful future,” says Joanie Havel, IASN Coordinator.
Funded by the Iowa Department of Human Services using a combination of state and federal funding sources, the Aftercare Network provided services to 760 young adults in SFY 2019. Outcomes of 184 of those young people who exited Aftercare services during the year are summarized in the YPII report which is available at [www.ypii.org](http://www.ypii.org). YSS is the lead provider agency for the Network.

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**About Youth Policy Institute of Iowa**

The Youth Policy Institute of Iowa is a non-profit intermediary that concentrates on improving policies, programs and practices affecting young people transitioning from adolescence to adulthood, especially those who have been involved in Iowa’s child welfare or juvenile justice systems. Founded in 2000, YPII embraces the principles of youth engagement, research and data-informed decision-making, and equity and inclusion. Since 2002, YPII has provided policy development, coordination, quality assurance and evaluation support for Iowa’s Aftercare Services Network, which serves young adults ages 18-21 who have aged out of foster care or juvenile justice placements.