

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 11, 2021

Department of Human Services Announces \$5 Million Investment in Pandemic Relief for Iowa Foster Youth and Alumni

(DES MOINES, Iowa) – The Iowa Department of Human Services (DHS) announced today that they are allocating over \$5 million in new funding to benefit current and former foster care youth adversely affected by COVID-19. Pandemic Relief for Iowa Foster Youth and Alumni is made possible as part of the federal Consolidated Appropriations Act (CAA).

CAA awarded Iowa DHS \$4.7 million to create a pandemic response benefitting youth in and aging out of foster care and entering adulthood. The award supplements the Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood (Chafee), which provides federal funding to states to assist older youth in foster care and those who age out. Education and Training Voucher (ETV) funds are also included, adding \$697,314 to the support for youth who have aged out of foster care and are attending college. States can use the new funds through Sept. 30, 2022. These amounts are in addition to Iowa's annual Chafee allocation of approximately \$2.2 million.

"It's hard enough for these young people to get started on their own; the pandemic makes it almost impossible," said Janee Harvey, who serves as the division administrator for Adult, Children and Family Services (ACFS). "Foster care children and alumni need our support to get through this difficult time. We're ramping up funding to enhance outreach, services, and financial supports intended to help youth recover quickly from the pandemic and stay on track to accomplish their goals."

DHS will deliver *Pandemic Relief for Iowa Foster Youth and Alumni* primarily through contracted service providers, including [YSS](#), which oversees the statewide [Iowa Aftercare Services Network](#) and [Achieving Maximum Potential](#) (AMP), the Iowa foster care youth council.

"This financial support is coming at just the right time for an extremely vulnerable population. The Iowa Aftercare Services Network was built to help transition-age youth who have 'aged out' of the

system, and we're grateful for this public private partnership to support their successful transition to adulthood," said Andrew Allen, president and CEO of YSS.

DHS is also directing case managers for children in foster care to ensure that older youth have the opportunity to remain in care through the end of the pandemic, or return to care if they aged out recently, in the event they do not have a safe alternative to foster care.

"Children in the foster care system and those who have recently exited have been heavily impacted by COVID-19. Every child and youth needs to know the adults are on their side," Harvey said.

Major components of the *Pandemic Relief for Iowa Foster Youth and Alumni* include:

- **Moratorium on Aging Out and Re-entry into Foster Care:** In Iowa, youth in care typically must exit the system at age 18. DHS has suspended this age restriction and will not require youth to leave foster care due to their age through September 30, 2021, though they may voluntarily elect to do so. Young people who have aged out of foster care since Jan. 27, 2020 can re-enter care during this time and are encouraged to contact DHS at the following link or call your local DHS office: https://secureapp.dhs.state.ia.us/dhs_titan_public/contactus/.
- **Direct Payment to Foster Care Alumni:** Young adults ages 18 to 26 who aged out of foster care may be eligible for a direct pandemic relief payment of \$750. The Iowa Aftercare Services Network will administer an application process and make payments to eligible youth on behalf of DHS.
- **Extra Support for Teens in Foster Care:** DHS is providing additional funds to reduce the isolation felt by many foster youth by supporting their participation in social, extracurricular, and cultural activities. Fo\$ter Fund\$ grants (temporarily up to \$600 per child) are available to youth ages 14 and older who are currently in a foster care placement, including family foster care, group care, and supervised apartment living. Additionally, up to \$300 per year is available to relative caregivers through a similar program called Kinship Funds. Both funds are administered by YSS through AMP.
- **Increased Education and Training Voucher Program (ETV) Funding:** ETV contractor, Iowa College Aid, and DHS will offer an additional \$2,500 summer payment to those students attending college in the 2020-2021 school year. Also, the annual maximum for the 2021-2022 school year will be increased to \$12,000. Part time students will receive a pro-rated amount based on enrollment.

Additional information regarding these and other features of Pandemic Relief for Iowa Foster Youth and Alumni, including application information, is available on the Iowa Aftercare pandemic relief webpage: <https://iowaaftercare.org/pandemic-relief/>

For DHS's full list of COVID-19 resources, visit <https://dhs.iowa.gov/COVID19>.

#

Program contact:
Doug Wolfe
dwolfe@dhs.state.ia.us
515-242-5452

Media contact:
Matt Highland
mhighla@dhs.state.ia.us
515-281-4848