

OCTOBER 2026

FP VOL. 2 ISSUE 4

Iowa Focus
family options and community supports

FOCAL POINT



- Council Bluffs CONNECT members taking a trip to the movies (see page 5)

'Focal Point' on Always Improving



— Derek Laney

Hi everyone,

It was a busy summer full of activities and fun that you can read about in this edition of 'Focal Point'. You will also find the results of 2 Quality Surveys we hosted.

The state HCBS survey was held in July, concluding with another best-in-class 3 Year Certification for Iowa FOCUS. The international CARF survey followed in August, targeting our CONNECT Day Program. This too produced a top level 3-Year Certification for Iowa FOCUS! To read some of the conclusions from the surveys, visit page 2.

We are grateful to see our team's efforts recognized. Thank you and congratulations to everyone who contributes daily to these outcomes.

If there's something you'd like to see included in an upcoming issue of 'Focal Point', let us know by emailing your requests, suggestions, and submissions to derek@iowafocus.com.

Quality Survey Updates



— Derek Laney

Iowa FOCUS hosts Quality Surveys Reviews to ensure our program implements Best Practices.

Here are some of the conclusions from this year's surveys:

- "FOCUS demonstrates a deep commitment to the empowerment of persons served, the provision of person-centered services, and to respecting members as unique individuals."
- "Personnel at Iowa FOCUS treat members served with respect, dignity, kindness, and courtesy; the abundant smiles and cheerful demeanor of members proves evidence of this fact"
- "Leadership at Iowa FOCUS demonstrates a genuine commitment to the members served by the organization in all aspects of life"

Based on the Reviews, quality improvements to our program will include revised forms and policies and some changes to training requirements.

Some examples of these are below.

- Revision to Medication Policy noting that locked medications are considered and must be treated as Rights Restrictions
- Revision to Abuse / Neglect Policy to match updated wording in state code
- Introduction of new forms for Hosts and hosted members, identifying rights, risks, and responsibilities of that service model.
- Include travel details and GER completion in Therap entries.
- Increase amount of training units for Habilitation services

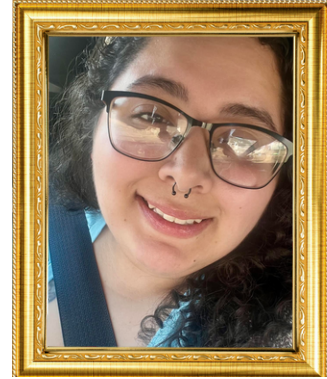
We are also to ensure that:

- Training to all team members is provided on these changes
- Inclusion/mention of changes is made in staff manuals

We have already begun revising these forms and practices. You'll be hearing about them in your team meetings and receiving an email to ensure clarity. Thank you to everyone for their efforts and energy to make Iowa FOCUS a safe, respectful, and ever-improving place.

In the Spotlight with Rosie Campbel

Rosie Campbel is one of our Service Coordinators in Council Bluffs. As this edition's subject for our 'Employee Spotlight', we sat down and asked her some questions about her role at Iowa FOCUS and her personal life. Here she is to tell you all about herself!



How long have you worked for Iowa FOCUS? What positions? What do you do now? I've worked with Iowa FOCUS for 8 years! I've been a DSP, Site Manager, and now Service Coordinator.

What are some of your favorite things about this work and company? One of my favorite parts about this work is the different personalities with whom I have been able to work. Learning to figure out how to better serve each individual has been my other favorite part!

Tell a little something about your family! I have 4 little girls who are always on the go! We enjoy camping, baking, going to the zoo, and watching movies together.

What are your favorite hobbies? I love to crochet and attend craft events. I've made plushies, baby wearables, and a variety of accessories.

What are your favorite bands/movies/TV shows? I enjoy watching *Grey's Anatomy* or any ER show. My favorite genre of movies is comedies, but I'm now forced to enjoy the newest animated movies too!

What's something you're most proud of in your personal life? Future goals? An accomplishment of which I'm most proud is becoming a mother and raising my children while continuing to grow as a person. Even through difficult times and challenges, I've continued to show up for my kids, provide for them, and work towards building a better future for our family. I'm proud of my strength, resilience, and the fact that I keep pushing forward when things aren't easy. A future goal I have for myself is to live a healthy lifestyle; I am starting a weight loss journey.

What's something you're proud of accomplishing at Iowa FOCUS? One of my proudest accomplishments at work is being able to support both my staff and the individuals I serve.

What advice would you give to people working at Iowa FOCUS? A piece of advice I would offer to others working at Iowa FOCUS would be to always ask for help and ask the question you don't want to. I'd also tell others that everyday is a fresh start for a better day!

Iowa FOCUS wants to thank Rosie for being an amazing asset to our community! We are able to do what we do thanks to great people like her.

Conversations with CONNECT!

Creston CONNECT Highlight



- Kaitlin Rosenbeck

In July, Creston CONNECT members worked hard on making crafts to enter in the Union County Fair!

This year, CONNECT had 5 members enter crafts that they made, and congratulations are in order!

- Jackie Zadina got two 1st place ribbons (paint pour and suncatcher).
- Monica Belew got one 1st place ribbon (sensory jar).
- Shane Stephens got one 2nd place ribbon (paint pour).
- Kristen Miller got 2nd place (picture frame craft).
- Karen Inman got 2nd place ribbon (egg paint pour).

CONNECT continued to stay busy in the community by attending various activities at the Gibson Memorial Library and volunteering at Creston Area Food Pantry.

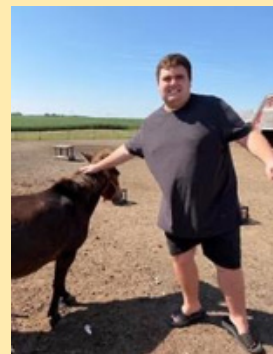
In August, CONNECT took a trip to Corning, IA to tour the Johnny Carson Birthplace Society. Members listened to the host and learned information about Johnny. Alex Wilkins enjoyed the tour and ended by saying, "I like Johnny Carson!"

Members collected dog treats/food throughout the month to donate to Southern Hills Vet Services for National Dog Day which was on August 26th. Members JoAnne Hardick and Kristen Miller took a picture with the food/treats that were donated! CONNECT later traveled to McFable Farm in Winterset to visit the animals. The group got to go inside the gate to pet donkeys, goats, horses, and sheep. Everyone loved being able to brush the donkeys!

In September, CONNECT members volunteered to pick up baked goods at Hy-Vee and delivered them to the Creston Area Food Pantry. Monica Belew said, "It makes me feel good to help out the community."

Members also enjoyed taking walks in the community, going to Grand Theatre & Video in Greenfield, IA to see *Practical Magic 2*, crafting at Karen's Crafty Corner, bowling at the Family Fun Center, and organizing a picnic at Green Valley Lake.

The group voted on and agreed to collect donations for the Blue Star Mothers of Iowa 2026 care packages for the troops overseas and will deliver donations to Rustic Graphic Creations in October!



Council Bluffs CONNECT Highlight



– Hollie Parks

Warmer weather, warmer weather, warmer weather! That was the theme of this quarter for Council Bluffs CONNECT.

In July, members channeled this energy by shopping at local homesteads and farm stands, taking safari trips, going to basketball games, and more! Steve said that he enjoyed the safari, exploring the swamp lands, and reading about the animals and their habitats.

After spending time in the warm sun, members took a break and went inside to continue their summer fun. They enjoyed the cooler indoors by using their fresh farm produce to celebrate National Cucumber Day! Members enjoyed picking their cucumbers, finding a recipe, and bringing it to life.

In August, CONNECT continued their annual community efforts by shopping and donating school supplies. This year, members chose to give their donations to DHS in support of their collecting endeavors.

Members explored the outdoors by putting on their tourist hats. CONNECT visited Nebraska's 15-foot-tall Fork with Pasta statue, The Black Angel Restaurant, the city look out, etc.

Members also took a trip to their local AMC Theatre to watch *Minions & Monsters* and enjoy some snacks. Cathy rated this as her "most favorite activity".

In September, the members' dedication to giving back did not slow down. Members spent the month of September shopping for and donating to The Council Bluffs Community Fridge. Members found great pride in stocking the shelves, fridge, and freezer and enjoyed seeing people within their community benefiting from CONNECT's help.

Members felt the excitement of fall coming as they began to introduce fall decor crafts and fall trivia themes. Everyone soaked up the last bit of summer warmth by taking walks outdoors.



More Exciting CONNECT News



— Derek Laney

Iowa FOCUS is proud to show off our Council Bluffs Day Program location's new paint and parking lot. We hope this makes coming to Council Bluffs CONNECT an even brighter part of your day!



2026 Wellness Initiative



— Marlena Laney

October is Emotional Wellness Month!

Emotional Wellness Month reminds us that our bodies don't always automatically take care of our mental and emotional health. Oftentimes, maintaining mental wellbeing requires consistent, intentional effort. As caregivers, you are likely a safe space for many in your community to discuss mental health.

Remember: You can't pour from an empty cup. Take some time this month to explore your own emotional needs, the coping tools that help you stay balanced, and the practices and rituals that support you through the hard moments.

Often, the holidays bring up complicated feelings. While it is supposed to be a time of joy and celebration, this time can also remind us of loss, missing others, and feelings of isolation. Those you serve may also have suffered loss, have disconnection from family, and may be missing the support to find joy. Take some time to review traditions, talk about connections, and maybe pivot by creating some joy in the homes where you serve. It is never too late for a new start.

For holiday traditions and coping skills, see these articles:

- <https://bestmindbh.com/blog/managing-seasonal-transitions-fall-depression-anxiety/>
- <https://www.nami.org/blog/self-help-techniques-for-coping-with-mental-illness/>

Shannon's Gardening Journey



— Brenda McIntosh

For this edition of 'Focal Point', our team spoke with Shannon to learn more about his interests and skills at gardening.

Shannon learned about gardening at a young age; his grandpa and grandma had a garden and would use the fresh vegetables that they grew for salads and meals. They also talked with him about different trees – showing what was safe to eat (like mulberries).

While discussing, Shannon recalled a time when his mom and dad took him to the Red Wood Forrest. He asked for a small redwood starter tree, and his parents purchased it for him. However, despite their efforts it did not grow because their yard did not have the proper soil to grow it.

Shannon learned more about flowers during his time at his Kansas City high school. After getting in trouble, he participated in community service at a greenhouse. He got to help water and care for the different plants and further learned that he enjoyed gardening. While reminiscing on his experiences, Shannon said, "Plants are a good therapy, and they help people breathe better because of the oxygen they release." At times, Shannon will send floral arrangements to members of the community, including his hairdresser, to brighten their days.

Shannon started his newest project quite recently. It is from a kit he purchased called "Master the Art of Bonsai." The kit included 3 different Bonsai seeds to grow: a Siberian Elm, a Colorado Blue Spruce, and a Japanese Black Pine. The first step was to put the seeds in wet paper towels for 24 hours. Next comes the soil part of the project. He is excited to see if he can get them to grow, as this will be his first attempt at Bonsai trees.

While enjoying to garden his own plants, Shannon also likes visiting the local florist in Creston. His most recent purchase was a purple arrangement. He was drawn to the colors and the simple butterfly they added to the arrangement. He also purchased a Venus flytrap plant to control any flies that may get into his apartment.

Shannon deeply loves plants and encourages others to explore them. He provided the following advice for those who may be interested in starting up their own plant-related hobby, "If you are new to flowers, when you purchase them they have an information tag with them. It is important to read that to see if plant needs sun or shade, and the tag has watering tips."

Our team sends a special thank you to Shannon for sharing his story!



Therap[®] Corner Updates



— Erin Spencer

State code now requires THERAP Entries to include:

- 1) The total number of miles driven on a shift, and
- 2) Whether or not a GER was completed and submitted for the shift.

Beginning in November, you'll see these two new TOPICS on your Therap ISP Data Form. You will include these two additional pieces of information in your shift Entry.

How to use these two new inclusions:

Total Miles: Is simply that – how many miles were driven on this shift?

- You score YES, and in the narrative identify the number of miles (for example: "25 miles").

GER Completed: Did you need to generate a GER on shift?

- You score YES if a GER was completed. Score NO if a GER was not completed

These additions to your shift Entry will help case managers better understand the service needs of members.

Throughout 2026, Iowa FOCUS is working to improve record keeping practices and outcomes. If you have ideas or suggestion on how to streamline the Entry process and/or improve our accuracy and thoroughness, please let us know! Contact Derek at derek@iowafocus.com.

If you have any more questions about documentation in Therap, please feel free to reach out to Erin Spencer via email at erin@iowafocus.com or via SComm.

Thank you to our community and amazing staff for all of your support and hard work!

For more updates until our January issue of 'Focal Point', connect with us via Facebook, Instagram, or by visiting our website.



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- Local Chambers of Commerce
- ANCOR National Foundation
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- RELIAS Training
- Therap
- CARF
- Mindspring

For further information about Iowa Focus and our services, contact Program Director Desiri Wilwerding by email desiri@iowafocus.com, or call (712) 323-4024.

