

OCTOBER 2025

FP VOL. 1 ISSUE 4

Iowa Focus
family options and community supports

FOCAL POINT



• Iowa FOCUS Creston Staff Party (see page 5)

'Focal Point' on FOCUS Family



— Derek Laney

Hello all, and welcome to another edition of 'Focal Point', the quarterly newsletter for Iowa FOCUS.

Iowa FOCUS is all about people, from our excellent staff to our amazing members. We are grateful for our community and want to start highlighting an individual from our FOCUS family each quarter, starting this edition on page 2 with Tiphani Tallman. Above, you can see many of the caring faces of our staff in Creston who celebrated their team and accomplishments at their annual staff party.

In addition to our spotlight article, you'll also find some wonderful stories about member activities and accomplishments over the past three months. You will also find useful tips and guidance on issues like activity planning and shift documentation. I hope you find it helpful.

In previous issues, I've encouraged everyone to suggest topics or submit articles for inclusion in this newsletter. That invitation stands. Whether it is a general topic, a thought or two, or a complete article, I welcome your input. Anything that you think would benefit our members or team, you can forward to me at my email address derek@iowafocus.com.

In the Spotlight with Tiphani Tallman

Tiphani Tallman is a longtime member of the Iowa FOCUS family. As this edition's subject for our 'Employee Spotlight', we sat down and asked her some questions about her role at Iowa FOCUS and personal life.

How long have you worked for Iowa FOCUS? What jobs?

What do you do now? Oct 8th was my 23 year anniversary with Iowa FOCUS. I have held many positions within the agency. DSP, site manager, office manager, Respite coordinator, HR, Mandt instructor, FA instructor, and currently the Billing Specialist.

What are some of your favorite things about this work and company?

One of my favorite things about working direct care was watching the members achieve goals they had set for themselves, and being a part of helping somebody learn new skills to become confident in things that I had realized I took for granted. It was very rewarding. Working in the office I really enjoyed greeting all of the visitors to the office and getting to know the employees so well. My favorite thing about Iowa FOCUS is having the ability to grow as a person through the work I have done. I have been blessed for all the opportunities I have been given within the company.

Tell a little something about your Family! I have been married for 19 years, have 2 grown children and a dog named Max. My daughter is a nurse at Jennie Edmunson hospital. My son has started his journey to becoming an electrician. I have an older brother and a younger sister. I am here to tell you the middle child syndrome is real!

What are your favorite hobbies? My favorite hobbies are reading and cleaning. I also love to have a good time and am not one to turn down the chance to hang out and have some drinks.

What are your favorite types of music and favorite movies/TV shows? I love hip hop and rap music. My favorite TV show of all times is The Golden Girls.

What is one of your goals? A goal that I have for the future is to see lots more of the country. I love to travel and am trying to visit as many national parks as I can.

What is something you're most proud of accomplishing in your personal life? My children are my proudest accomplishment!

And what is something you're proud of accomplishing at Iowa FOCUS? In 2017 I was the recipient of the Orlan Trapp award!

What advice would you give to people working at Iowa FOCUS? Asking questions is one of the best ways to learn. Don't be afraid to ask. The work may not always be easy, but it will always be worth it!

Iowa FOCUS wants to thank Tiphani for being an amazing employee and 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 collected enough pop tabs to fill 3 Ziploc bags and 1 ice cream bucket. Members and staff went to Ronald McDonald House in Des Moines to donate the pop tabs. CONNECT members Shane Stephens, Monica Belew, and Karen Inman entered items they have crafted into the Union County Fair to be judged. Shane Stephens and Karen Inman placed 1st and Monica Belew placed 3rd! They were excited to get a ribbon!

In August, CONNECT took a road trip to the Iowa Gold Star Military Museum in Johnston and had a picnic at Camp Dodge! Members toured the museum and enjoyed seeing the displays that were in the museum. Did you know National Aviation Day was on August 19? CONNECT was able to celebrate the day by touring the Greenfield Aviation Museum and learning about the history of all the planes in the museum. Members thought it was cool how Amelia Earhart saw her first plane at the Iowa State Fair!

In September, CONNECT had the opportunity to tour the Jordan House in West Des Moines. During the Antebellum period, the Jordan House was a designated stopover on the Underground Railroad! Members enjoyed learning about the Underground Railroad Exhibit and the artifacts from the regular railroad, which played an important role in the early years of West Des Moines. The last stop of the month was at Karen's Crafty Corner. CONNECT members made a fall door tag to take home and decorate their doors for Fall! Member Shane Stephens said he picked out a horse picture because it reminds him of his dad.



Council Bluffs CONNECT Highlight



- Hollie Parks

Last quarter came and flew! Then, we bragged about the nice weather that had finally arrived, and now this quarter members are starting to soak in the last of it. Members didn't take the nice weather for granted while we have it. They hit the nice breeze and clear skies head on with their annual summer grill out in the middle of July. Members grilled hot dogs, played yard games, such as horseshoe, and tossed some basketballs around on the court. Every day leading up to the event, Cathy reminded the room that this is her "favorite day of summer." After fulfilling their appetite, members spent July donating to those in their communities. Members went shopping for school supplies, including backpacks and other classroom necessities, for KETV 7's annual backpack drive. After all of their shopping was done, members dropped off the supplies at their local donation centers.

In August, members leaned into their creative side and created funky plants at Nodest. After exploring the options, members each selected a pot, plant, and decorative accessory to top it all off. Members enjoyed this creative activity and laughed at cacti with crowns, cowboy hats, and more! Members also showed off their creative edge at True Pottery where they picked out ceramic designs and painted them. After 2-3 weeks, members received their finished pieces. Joselynn was so excited to see the result of her dragon, calling it one of her favorite crafts.

In September, members welcomed the coming fall season in full swing! Members stopped by the Homestead for some produce and fall goods and made some beautiful fall decor. Members painted, glued, and designed a fall-tastic floral table piece for their homes and then spray-painted and designed seasonal kitchen utensil holders. Gerrie felt proud of her work and enjoyed sharing her creations with the room of her peers, commenting on how pretty it turned out.



Celebrating our FOCUS Family



- Derek Laney

2025 has been a great year for Iowa FOCUS, and we wish to celebrate our amazing staff. The Creston and Council Bluffs teams each had a party to celebrate the incoming holiday season and their yearly accomplishments. Thank you to everyone who celebrated with us and for all of our community, and congratulations to Kindrea Smolk (Creston) and Amanuael Wade (Council Bluffs) who were recognized with deep appreciation for their hardwork and service.

We are grateful for you and wish you a happy and healthy rest of 2025.



2025 Wellness Initiative



– Marlena Laney

The holiday season is portrayed as a time of joy, but can bring stress as well. With those who may be suffering from mental health issues or have other barriers to social/family connections, our job is to help those we serve to create meaningful holiday memories, routines, and habits

Create meaningful traditions. While many people have traditions within the holiday season, there is always room for something new. Think about what is important to the person you serve. If they are foodies, perhaps pulling out a recipe for sugar cookies and decorating them would be an enjoyable tradition. If they are limited in mobility, perhaps choosing a list of holiday movies and snuggling in for viewing. If the person you serve is into crafts, there are many holiday craft ideas that take very little supplies.

Acknowledge your feelings. The holidays can amplify feelings of grief, loneliness, and sadness. Allow yourself to feel these emotions and be mindful of losses in the lives of the people you are supporting. Some people find journaling, lighting a candle, or attending grief groups helpful during the holidays. Others find spending time out of doors, going to celebrations, and doing self care important. Feeling a feeling is not bad but stuffing feelings can be.

Embrace mindfulness and gratitude. Taking a few minutes for quiet reflection can help center you amidst the chaos. Simple techniques like deep breathing, meditation, or gratitude journaling can restore inner calm.

Keep up your routine. As much as possible, maintain your sleep schedule, regular mealtimes, and daily activities. Consistency in your routine is key to avoiding exhaustion and keeping your mood stable.

Stay active. Regular physical activity is a powerful stress reducer and mood booster. This can be as simple as a brisk walk to see holiday lights or going to the mall to appreciate decorations. Even short, 10-minute bursts of activity throughout the day can be beneficial. Always start small and under doctor advisement when beginning a new physical routine. Reach out to others.

Loneliness and isolation can spike during the holidays. If you can't be with loved ones in person, connect through a phone or video call. The same is true for our members. They may need help contacting their friends and family.



FOCUS on Physical Health



— Brenda McIntosh

As we head into the fall and winter months, it's important to highlight physical health for our staff and members. There are many ways we can ensure a healthy community, so let's all try to do our part.

- 1) Ensure members are meeting with their medical providers, as aligned with clinical recommendations, and pursuing annual physicals.
- 2) Cold and flu season is here! Remember to wash your hands frequently and keep shared spaces clean. Many clinics and pharmacies are offering flu shots. It is important to speak to your doctor to ensure the flu shot is right for you.
- 3) In addition to physical exams, there are several other annual medical visits that staff and members should strive to complete including: vision exams, dental exams, hearing exams, and any specific age-appropriate exams.



It's also important to highlight that October is **Breast Cancer Awareness Month!**

It is widely estimated that 1 in 8 women and 1 in 700 men will develop breast cancer at some point in their life. Prevention and early-detection are key to positive outcomes. Women are encouraged to start doing self-exams in their 20s, followed by completing mammograms at the age of 40. Men are also at risk for breast cancer and should also perform self-checks.



If you have any concerns or believe you are at a higher risk of developing breast cancer, please contact your local care provider.

Fall Shop Announcement



— Derek Laney

The Iowa FOCUS Fall shop opens soon!

If you have any requests for items, designs, or colors please forward them to derek@iowafocus.com. We would be happy to hear your feedback!



Therap[®] Corner Updates



— Erin Spencer

We use the Therap system for quick, easy, and accurate record keeping of shift work, and we regularly use this space of the newsletter to review how-to topics like Therap scoring or Therap login. However, this time it's not 'how-to' advice. It's 'when-to'.

Completing your shift entry is best done at the end of the shift itself. For example, a 9am-Noon shift ought to be documented in the Therap portal immediately after supports are ended; that is, login and begin documentation at Noon or a few moments after. You may choose to login just before shift's end, but only if the member is safe and secure and the shift activities are complete. At no time should documentation get in the way of support and supervision

For Iowa Focus hosts, who have 24/7 staffing responsibilities, the expectation is for the day's support to be entered into Therap at the end of each calendar day.

Documenting your supports immediately upon shift's end ensures the most accurate and thorough information is captured. It's a good practice for you that benefits the member, as well. And it's also a company requirement and state expectation.

Please contact your supervisor or Director if you have any questions.

In addition to this "when-to", we also want to inform our team of a recent software update on Therap's Dashboard. **Quick Links has been discontinued.**

Therap remains user friendly, however, by still offering 2 routes to the same destination where you can record your Entry/Shift Summary

The 1st route to access Entry/Shift Summary is through the 'Individual Homepage'. Simply type in the member's name, and after the first three letters of their first or last name have been written, the member pops right up. The DSP can now click on them!

From there – 1) Find the member's program, 2) Scroll over to ISP Data, and 3) Click new.



The 2nd route to access Entry/Shift Summary is through the 'To Do' tab on the left-hand side. On the 'To Do tab' there are two Modules that appear -- 'General Event Reports' and 'ISP Data'.

From the 'ISP Data' tab – 1) Click new, 2) Find the Program, and 3) Then the member.



If there are any other questions about the Dashboard updates, please don't hesitate to reach out to me via email at erin@iowafocus.com or SComm.

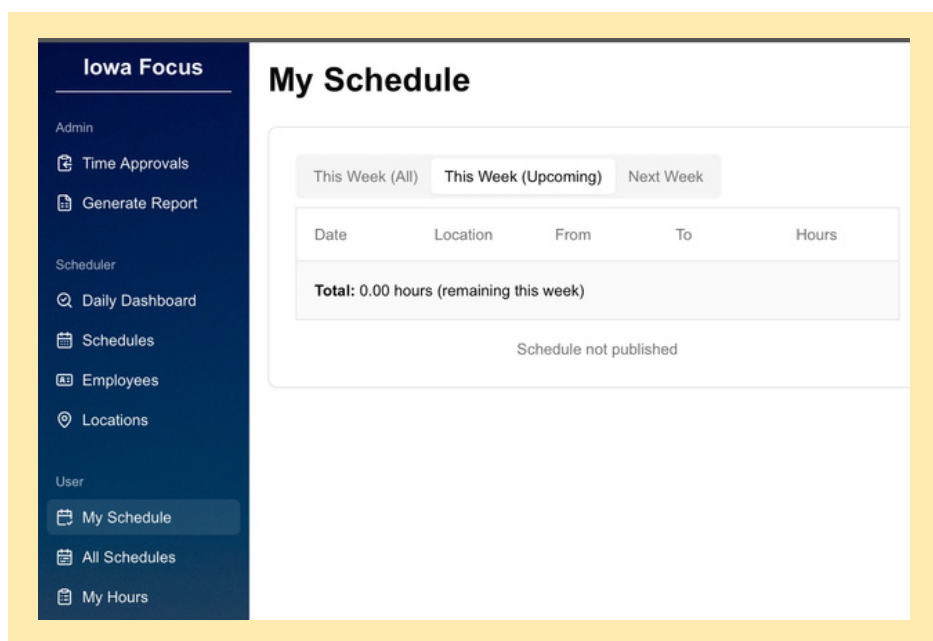
E-Scheduling and E-Timesheet Report



— Derek Laney

The FOCUS online scheduling and time card system is now being test-run by several team members. So far so good! Soon we'll all begin transferring to a system of schedule retrieval and time card submission that's managed entirely on your phone, tablet, or computer. You'll learn more about it in coming weeks. Thank you for your patience while we ensure the system is safe, accurate, and easy-to-use!

Below is an image featuring the 'My Schedule' page of the developing platform.



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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