

JULY 2026

FP VOL. 2 ISSUE 3

Iowa Focus
family options and community supports

FOCAL POINT



- Council Bluffs CONNECT members catching up over iced beverages (see page 4)

'Focal Point' on Quality

 — Derek Laney

Hi everyone,

In this issue of 'Focal Point' you'll read about member activities, learn about progress toward annual goals, and find helpful information on member supports.

You'll also read about our ongoing quality improvement activities, including this summer's certification reviews with Iowa HCBS and CARF International. Doing good in our communities, for our members, and for one another... these are the outcomes that guide us.

As always, thank you for being part of the Iowa Focus family and for helping make the lives of our consumers happier, healthier, and more inclusive. 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.



In the Spotlight with Hollie Parks

Hollie Parks is one of our Service Coordinators. 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 at Iowa FOCUS for 9 years and have been a DSP, Site Manager, and now a Service Coordinator.

What are some of your favorite things about this work and company? One of my favorite things about the services I provide on the daily is the ability to be creative, help others express their creativity, find their creativity and assist with opportunities they didn't know were available. Iowa FOCUS advocates for experiences for each of their members, an active life out of their homes, and improving their quality of life, not just maintaining it. I enjoy being a part in each of the steps for our members.

Tell a little something about your family! As someone who comes from a very small family, we've kept the same traditions over the years. From the time I was 7 or 8 years old to approaching my 30s, we've always enjoyed a good card night. Some of the biggest laughs, dramatic moments, and memories come from sitting around the table and dealing out UNO and Skip-Bo cards until the most reigned loser taps!

What are your favorite hobbies? You can always find me doing a craft of some sort. If it's Monday night, then you can add wrestling and crafting as a two-in-one ordeal. My latest crafting obsession is painting accessories! I also love a good video game, primarily Fortnite.

What are your favorite bands/movies/TV shows? My all time favorite movie would probably be *Wicked*, but I've still yet to see the musical production. I'm not really a tv show person, though I'll never pass up 2000s reality tv if it comes on. I'm probably the worst person to ask about a favorite band. Everyone who gets in my car, members included, lectures me for changing the songs on the radio constantly because I am so indecisive!

What's something you're most proud of in your personal life? Future goals? Some of my goals are to return to focusing on my health. In 2022, I lost 100 lbs naturally. That is a lot of dedication, mental strength, and determination. This is a goal that has been revived, and I am hoping to accomplish it within the next year.

What's something you're proud of accomplishing at Iowa FOCUS? Something I'm most proud of accomplishing at Iowa FOCUS is seeing when the investment of encouragement, goal setting, role modeling, and problem solving turns into success for members. I advise Staff to pause and think of those you serve: where they were to where they are now with their skills, mental health, quality of life, etc. It's fantastic to see the growth.

What advice would you give to people working at Iowa FOCUS? I always tell people that this is our members' only life. We go home at the end of a shift, but these are members' homes and lives. It's important to remember this when entering their homes, opportunities to go out in the community arise, they're voicing concerns, etc. It's important to assure their lives aren't suffering from choices that aren't being offered. Iowa FOCUS does a great job with community options and ensuring all needs are not only heard but reasonably met.

Iowa FOCUS wants to thank Hollie 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 April, Creston CONNECT members had the opportunity to tour the Clearfield Fire Department. The group was able to learn how to correctly use a fire extinguisher and discussed stop, drop, and roll. They also learned a variety of information about the fire trucks, and some members had the opportunity to ride in the fire truck if they wanted!

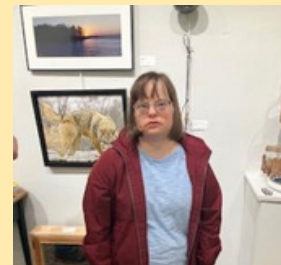
Member Alex Wilkins gave two thumbs up when he was asked how he enjoyed his ride on the fire truck. The volunteer fire fighter welcomed members' questions. After the tour, everyone had a great lunch at Bootleggers Bar & Grill in Clearfield, IA.

In May, CONNECT was busy out in the community. First, they took a trip to Corning, IA to tour the Corning Center for the Fine Arts. Members and staff walked around the center looking at different pieces that people in the Corning community and surrounding towns have made. It was neat getting to see the different sculptures and pictures on display. Member Karen Inman said, "The picture of the highland cow was my favorite."

CONNECT later traveled to Winterset, IA to Rusty Stars Alpacas. This adventure was popular amongst the members! The group enjoyed spending time with the alpacas. Member Jackie Zadina said, "I really enjoyed feeding the alpacas."

In June, CONNECT members explored a new area! Members and staff learned information about Montgomery County at the Montgomery County History Center and had a picnic at Chautauqua Park. Member Monica Belew was excited and said she could hardly wait for the day's activities.

CONNECT continued to be active in their community by attending events held at the Matilda J. Gibson Memorial Library and feeding the koi fish at Graceland. CONNECT was excited about the start of summer and have enjoyed the sun and warm weather!



Council Bluffs CONNECT Highlight



– Hollie Parks

Another quarter has come and gone!

April was the perfect start for a new quarter as the weather and seasons began to slowly change. In April, members took a trip to the zoo where they went to see the butterflies, jungle, and aquarium. Members enjoyed the jungle the best, with Laquila stating she loved the waterfall and surrounding leaves. She even asked for her own selfie in front of it! Members also engaged in artistic activities while onsite. Members crafted things from decor cutting boards to floral soaps and dove into tie-dyeing as well.

Members also potted their own plants and veggies in anticipation of summer. Cathy was most excited to be able to make her own homemade zucchini bread, as this is something she's done the last two years.

As May approached and the nice weather approached, members got to see all their dedication payoff. Members were able to take home their potted plants and veggies to replant at home. Gerrie was excited to learn how to garden with home Staff. In May, members also celebrated National Apple Pie Day. Members took on the serious task choosing from where to get pie. Members decided on Village Inn, with Denise wondering if she could Google the recipe because it was amazing! Members also continued their monthly volunteering efforts with Meals On Wheels deliveries. Members have given their time for 2 years and have always shown up rain, snow, or shine!

In June, members got to have fun at their annual grill and hang out in the sun! Members brought out yard games, hot dogs, and sunscreen for a day at the park. After the reviews came back, it's fair to say the annual tradition isn't going anywhere anytime soon!

Keeping up with the summer theme, the craft of the summer was crafted summer sunnies. Members crafted their own personal sunglasses! Many arrive wearing them and keep them on throughout all activities. The summer has been a great time at Focus CONNECT as members have gotten to revisit farm stands, engage with community walks, hold annual picnics, reconnect with friends, and take a few zoo trips.



Council Bluffs Parking Reminders and Updates



— Derek Laney

When visiting the Council Bluffs office on Main Street, free parking is available behind the building.

Unless you need to use a Handicapped Designated parking spot, please use one of the spaces assigned to Iowa FOCUS along the south fence, if available.

Please do **NOT** park in spaces assigned to another business or building resident.

When visiting the Council Bluffs CONNECT location at 600 4th Ave, you are welcome to park in any space now that the lot is repaved! Stripes are to be painted soon.



Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) Updates



— Derek Laney

A survey team from the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) International will be visiting from July 29th to July 31st.

We invited the surveyors to evaluate how well we meet international standards for quality. The survey will tell us what we are doing well and ways we might improve. Iowa FOCUS currently holds their highest level of certification.

As part of the survey, the surveyors will interview people who receive services, their families, our staff, and others.

Some questions the survey team members might ask people are:

- Do we provide a clean and safe setting?
- Do you receive the services you need and want?
- Are you treated with respect?
- Do you take part in planning your services?
- Are you told what you need to know about your services?
- Are your questions answered in a way you understand?
- Do you know where to go with questions or concerns?

If you would like to talk with one of the survey team members or want to learn more about CARF International, please let one of our staff members know.

Integrated Settings



— Derek Laney

Serving consumers in fully integrated settings is the foundational commitment of Iowa FOCUS.

We have pursued that goal from our beginning in 2002 by helping members acquire residential housing throughout their communities, in any neighborhood, and in any arrangement – alone, with roommates, with family, or with Hosting Staff. The people we serve select their own homes from any available in their chosen communities, and they have their names on their leases, rental agreements, or mortgages.

This summer, Iowa FOCUS is proud to host a state review of our progress toward this goal of integration. The Home & Community Based survey will review our mission to help individuals build lives of meaning and worth in the communities. Iowa FOCUS currently holds their highest level of certification. We are proud to have been part of a movement that ended decades of segregation.

If you have thoughts or recommendations how to further this mission in general or with a specific member, please contact Program Director Desiri Wilwerding at desiri@iowafocus.com.

Overtime Reminder



— Derek Laney

This is a reminder that Overtime will list differently on your paystub beginning the July 20 paycheck.

Iowa FOCUS is modernizing our payroll system to match new federal tax law.

Currently, if you worked 10 hours of overtime at Site A and 10 hours of overtime at Site B, your paystub shows it like this: **Overtime – 20**

Notice that the sites where you worked those hours are not identified.

Soon, this will display differently to identify the Sites where you worked and earned regular pay, and extra pay for overtime will be listed separately.

- This will not affect your pay.
- You'll be paid exactly the same amount. Any time greater than 40 hours in a work week will earn time-and-a-half.
- Most importantly, this will ensure your Overtime is not taxed!

2026 Wellness Initiative



– Marlena Laney

Welcome Summer!

As we enjoy the warmer weather and longer days of summer, it's important to remember that seasonal conditions can affect people differently. We want to take advantage of nice weather and at the same time, remember some important tips to keeping everyone safe.

Higher temperatures, increased outdoor activities, and changes in routine can present additional challenges for some individuals. Consider how heat, humidity, and prolonged sun exposure may impact those with mobility limitations, chronic health conditions, sensory sensitivities, or other physical differences. We can ensure inclusion by providing access to shaded or air-conditioned areas during outdoor events like the zoo or baseball games. We can allow flexibility for individuals who are more susceptible to heat related illnesses. We can watch for signs that someone may need to take a break from the sun by applying first aid precautions. This may include behavioral changes such as irritation, lethargy or disengagement. Taking early morning walks instead of walks during the 10:00–2:00 hours will help reduce heat exposure. A supportive environment helps everyone participate safely and comfortably.

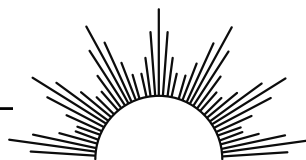
Be informed on medications that consumers take to identify sun-sensitivity issues. Many commonly prescribed and over-the-counter medications can increase the skin's sensitivity to sunlight, making sunburns and heat-related complications more likely. These medications may include certain antibiotics, antihistamines, anti-inflammatory drugs, acne treatments, and blood pressure medications. If consumers are on medication regularly, consider reviewing the warning labels or speaking to a healthcare provider or pharmacist to determine whether extra sun protection is recommended.

If you are going to be at an outdoor event, it is wise to apply a broad-spectrum sunscreen with a higher SPF. Hats, sunglasses, and protective clothing will also help reduce risks. Keeping a bottle of water or a thermos even for short trips may help individuals stay hydrated throughout the day. While water is preferred and best practice, other drinks may help if water is refused.

Take advantage of free programs, concerts, and events. People with disabilities often feel marginalized. Public events such as farmers markets, concerts, and library programs give those with disabilities a chance to participate more fully in their community.

Summer should be a time to enjoy the season safely. By remaining aware of disability-related considerations and the potential effects of sun-sensitive medications, we can help create a healthier, more inclusive workplace for everyone.

Thank you for helping make our workplace safe, respectful, and supportive all year long!



Therap[®] Corner Updates



— Erin Spencer

Earlier this year we surveyed your experience with the Therap process. Your feedback helped us identify steps to make entries more convenient and informative.

These improvements have all been implemented.

1. Login time limit was extended
2. Earlier logins and periodic entries were introduced
3. Speech to Text was expanded for designated users
4. Administrative review of entries was greatly increased
5. Training and retraining was provided to all team 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 October issue of '**Focal Point**', connect with us via Facebook, Instagram, or by visiting our website.



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