

FOCAL POINT



Welcome to 'Focal Point'

At Iowa Focus, we have a lot of stories to tell. Much is shared at monthly team meetings. Updates and activities are posted weekly on our Facebook page. Now in 2025, we're beginning a Quarterly Newsletter to highlight successes, celebrate the team, and make important announcements.

'Focal Point' will be issued each January, April, July, and October. Included will be program reports, member and staff features, and discussions of our shared goals. We hope you find it helpful and fun, and thanks for taking a look!

If there's something you'd like to see included, let us know. Email the editor at derek@iowafocus.com.

* Creston CONNECT members at an Iowa Cubs game

2024 Report

 — Derek Laney

It was a big year for Iowa Focus.

In 2024 we enhanced our HOST HOME Residential Program to better support direct-care Hosts. Communication between Hosts and oversight Coordinators was improved. Directors of the Host program successfully completed a review with IDHS and Iowa Medicaid to ensure safety. And attention to Host documentation for accuracy was doubled. The result was a Hosting network that grew in number and quality.

More individuals participated in the Iowa Focus CONNECT Day Habilitation Program in 2024 than ever. On any given day, as many as thirty(!) members enjoyed activities of their own choosing throughout the year. Examples can be seen on pages 3-4.

One of the earliest community-based services in the state — the Iowa Focus COMMUNITY INTEGRATED Residential Program — remained a model of 'inclusion done right' through 2024. Members were supported to live in their own homes, in inclusive settings, across southwest Iowa. Our commitment to inclusion will be addressed more thoroughly in next quarter's newsletter.

We hope our team of staff and co-workers had a great year, too. None of this is possible without their dedication, creativity, and hard work. Thanks to all for sharing the journey!

Focus Forward to 2025



— Derek Laney

Hi everyone.

The Iowa Focus team concluded 2024 with much success. We ended the year with a bigger team, stronger community involvement, and a lot of excitement for the coming year. I'd like to take a moment to share some plans with you.

We begin 2025 with three goals in mind.

First, having transitioned the shift-entry system to Therap, we intend to move scheduling and timecard systems to an online platform. The planning has begun and various models are being considered. The choice of platform will be based on ease of use for staff and accuracy of accounting. We want the e-scheduling experience to make everyone's life easier and more convenient.

Second, we want to expand staffing capacity by 5%, to improve shift flexibility and reduce the stress of overtime now carried by many of our most committed staff. To meet this goal, we will grow our advertising and outreach efforts as well as continue our referral and new hire bonuses.

Third, we will grow our CONNECT Day Programs with larger activity space, even more community involvement, and potential growth into more counties. We already have the most community-active Day Programs in Iowa. We will build on that success so more members can experience the CONNECT difference.

There are more plans for 2025. You can read about a new health-and-wellness initiative in this newsletter. We will also offer more training options and new service locations. There is always something 'in the works'.

Thank you for taking a moment to read this. I'm very proud of the Iowa Focus team. What you do is important and nobody does it better. Please share thoughts or recommendations you have with me at derek@iowafocus.com. I look forward to hearing from you.

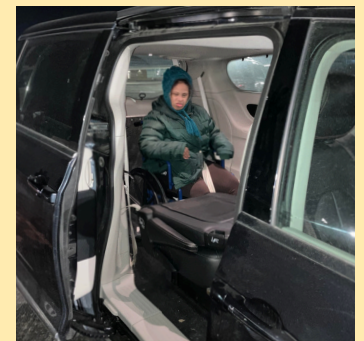
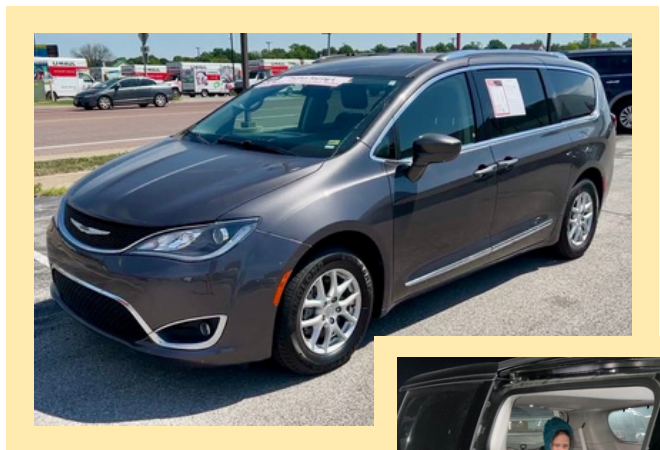
Accessibility in Action

Iowa Focus was recently awarded a private grant to purchase an Accessible Vehicle to better support our members!

The van was temporarily assigned to a Host Home for medical transport and is now allocated to a residential site in Creston for ongoing community integration.

Kindrea Smolk (DSP), when using the van to accompany members to a College Basketball game, said, "It really helps! Outings are much easier and we are getting out more into the community."

Iowa Focus is grateful and proud to have been awarded the grant, and we are equally proud our team put the vehicle to good use helping members access their communities!



Conversations with CONNECT!

Creston Connect Highlight



- Kaitlin Rosenbeck

This Fall saw a lot of activity for our CONNECT members in Creston! We are always in the community doing fun things such as taking trips and/or volunteering. The members have visited different parks in their community and other towns, crafted at Karen's Crafty Corner, watched movies at the Grand Theater in Greenfield, ate lunch at local restaurants, went bowling at the Family Fun Center, volunteer cleaning, and picking up donations for our local food pantry, and joined the walking club held by the Gibson Memorial Library.

In October, members visited Grampaw's Punkin Patch in Stanton where we met up with Council Bluffs Connect members to look at the variety of pumpkins, apples, and plants. The members got to pick a pumpkin out of their choice! After the patch, both Council Bluffs and Creston members met at Vikings Lake for a group picnic. Creston Connect got the chance to visit the Fire Department Museum in Des Moines. Connect member Karen Inman said, "It was neat seeing the old firetruck."

In November, Connect attended the Iowa Wild Game at the Wells Fargo Arena in Des Moines. They enjoyed the game and even got to take a picture with the Iowa Wild mascot Crash!* Connect had the opportunity to feed donkeys and goats at Briggs Farm in Clearfield, IA.

In December, it was a busy month for Creston Connect members being involved in the community. The Crisis Intervention & Advocacy puts on the Festival of Trees and Connect members got to be a part of it. Members voted on the theme of the Christmas tree, and they picked Nightmare Before Christmas. Connect staff assisted the members with decorating the tree and taking it to the American Home and Design Center to set it up.

Stalker's Chevrolet in Creston held Santa's Silverado Sleigh toy drive and members were able to donate toys for kids in need. Connect had 5 members bring in new toys and staff took the members to Santa's Silverado Sleigh to donate. Connect member Monica Belew said she, "feel[s] good being able to help kids in need get some presents."

* Featured cover photo, page 1.



Council Bluffs Connect Highlight



- Hollie Parks

With the colder seasons upon us, the members at CONNECT did not let that slow them down! Our members are very active in the community and have built some strong relationships while doing so. Members at Iowa Focus Connect voted to give back in many different ways, to many different roles in our community.

In October, our members supported local businesses within our community and stopped at local perennial homesteads, farm stands, and plant stands. Also, in October, our members got together with our Creston location to support a local pumpkin patch and enjoy lunch in the park.

In November, our members picked back up on their yearly contribution to The Salvation Army and dedicated their time weekly to bell ringing, collecting over \$100 in donations! Members were proud to hear a number behind their efforts and, most of all, enjoyed socializing with members of the community during their time bell ringing.

In December, our members participated in a door competition with our Creston location. Our members shared a bunch of laughs seeing their efforts come together in the comedic theme they had chosen for their door. Also, in December, our members made their yearly contribution to the Council Bluffs' Fire Department (CBFD) and donated snacks for the holiday season. The CBFD was happy to accept, pointing out that they still remembered the previous year's donations and appreciated always being thought of.

In January, members chose to continue giving thanks to those who serve. Members chose to celebrate National Police Officer day by donating on-the-go hand sanitizers to the Council Bluffs' Police Department.



New Year, New Calendars!

Members at Council Bluffs' CONNECT are excited to offer a 2025 calendar showcasing photos from their travels and adventures in 2024! To get your copy, contact Hollie at the CB office, or by email at hollie@iowafocus.com.

2025 Wellness Initiative



- Marlena Laney

We are excited to focus on Health and Wellness in 2025! Each issue of **'Focal Point'** will include a highlight from our Wellness Specialist to help promote health and wellness in our community.



When we think about wellness, most people think about physical health. There are 8 dimensions of wellness that include finances, environment, occupations, social, emotional, spiritual, intellectual as well as physical health.

Why is wellness important?

People who practice wellness habits report a higher life satisfaction. They tend to have a higher quality of life and live longer in better condition. People who practice wellness in multiple areas of their life have fewer illnesses so they spend less on healthcare costs and more on lifestyle choices. Less stress means better sleep quality, better mental health and a growth mindset. Wellness is more than just going to the gym. It is about living a life that brings you fulfillment, joy and opportunity.

Soon you will have a chance to tell us what wellness means to you in an email survey. We hope you participate and respond! We are looking for ideas that may help our team, our members, and our communities.

Therap[®] Tips & Tricks



- Erin Spencer

Scoring ISP Data entries doesn't have to be difficult!

Iowa Focus has created our own method of scoring to explain just what kinds of supports are being provided for our members. In this issue of **'Focal Point'** we're focusing on the Supervision score.

Supervision occurs when staff is providing protective oversight or witnesses a member complete a goal on their own. During an evening shift, staff may only need to provide Supervision in their on-going supports category. When a member completes a goal with no prompting, encouraging, or staffs' physical assistance, it can be documented and scored 'Supervision' as well. Remember to reach out to your coordinator or SComm our Therap specialist Erin at erin@iowafocus.com if you have any questions.

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

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

 [Facebook.com/iowaFocus](https://www.facebook.com/iowaFocus)
 [Instagram.com/iowaFocus](https://www.instagram.com/iowaFocus)
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