

Polk County Mental Health & Disability Services Region
**2023 Knowledge Empowers Youth
(KEY) Program**
Outcomes Evaluation

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LAW, HEALTH POLICY & DISABILITY CENTER

Tessa Heeren, Research Manager

Christie Cellman, Graduate Research Assistant

University of Iowa College of Law

Iowa City, Iowa 52242

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KEY Evaluation Results Summary

This is a report on the findings of the independent evaluation of Community Support Advocates' (CSA's) Knowledge Empowers Youth (KEY) program from July 1, 2022, through June 30, 2023. KEY is a subsidiary integrated services program for young adults transitioning from the foster care system. The program officially began serving individuals as of January 1, 2006. The KEY program offers the same flexibility of services as the integrated services program. Services like assistance with career planning, financial management, benefits coordination (e.g., health insurance and rent assistance), education enrollment logistics, and miscellaneous supports (transportation, phones, school materials) have positive impacts on youth transitioning out of foster care because they face challenges in establishing stable and independent housing, employment, financial stability, and education (Rome and Raskin, 2019). Youth transitioning out of foster care experience employment and economic disparities, and about one-third to one-half of this population reports that their average annual incomes of \$8,000 are much lower compared to earnings of counterparts at \$18,300 (Scannapieco, Smith, & Blakeney-Strong, 2016). A range of 12% to 30% of this population reports using public assistance, and in a survey of youth in a program similar to KEY, 19% found information on resources to be valuable. Along with tangible supports, youth transitioning out of foster care particularly benefit from emotional supports (e.g., unconditional positive regard and empowerment) and connections to the community (Trejos-Castillo, Davis, and Hipps, 2015; Packard and Benuto, 2020). In a survey of participants in a program similar to KEY, the most beneficial service mentioned by nearly half of participants (48%) was empowerment activities like goal setting (Leathers et al, 2019). Youth transitioning out of foster care are at particular risk for incarceration, substance use, child birth, and—prominently—unstable housing (Liu, 2020; Rome and Raskin, 2019, Prince et al 2019). Specifically, youth transitioning out of foster care are vulnerable to involuntarily living with biological family or experiencing homelessness at rates reported between 11% to 46% (Liu, 2020; Rome and Raskin, 2019, Scannapieco, Smith, & Blakeney-Strong, 2016). KEY participants struggle to maintain and enjoy their independence from the foster care and, in some cases, the juvenile justice systems. The KEY program provides a unique source of support for these youth in transition. The KEY program remained stable from last fiscal year (N=43) at about XX individuals served per month.

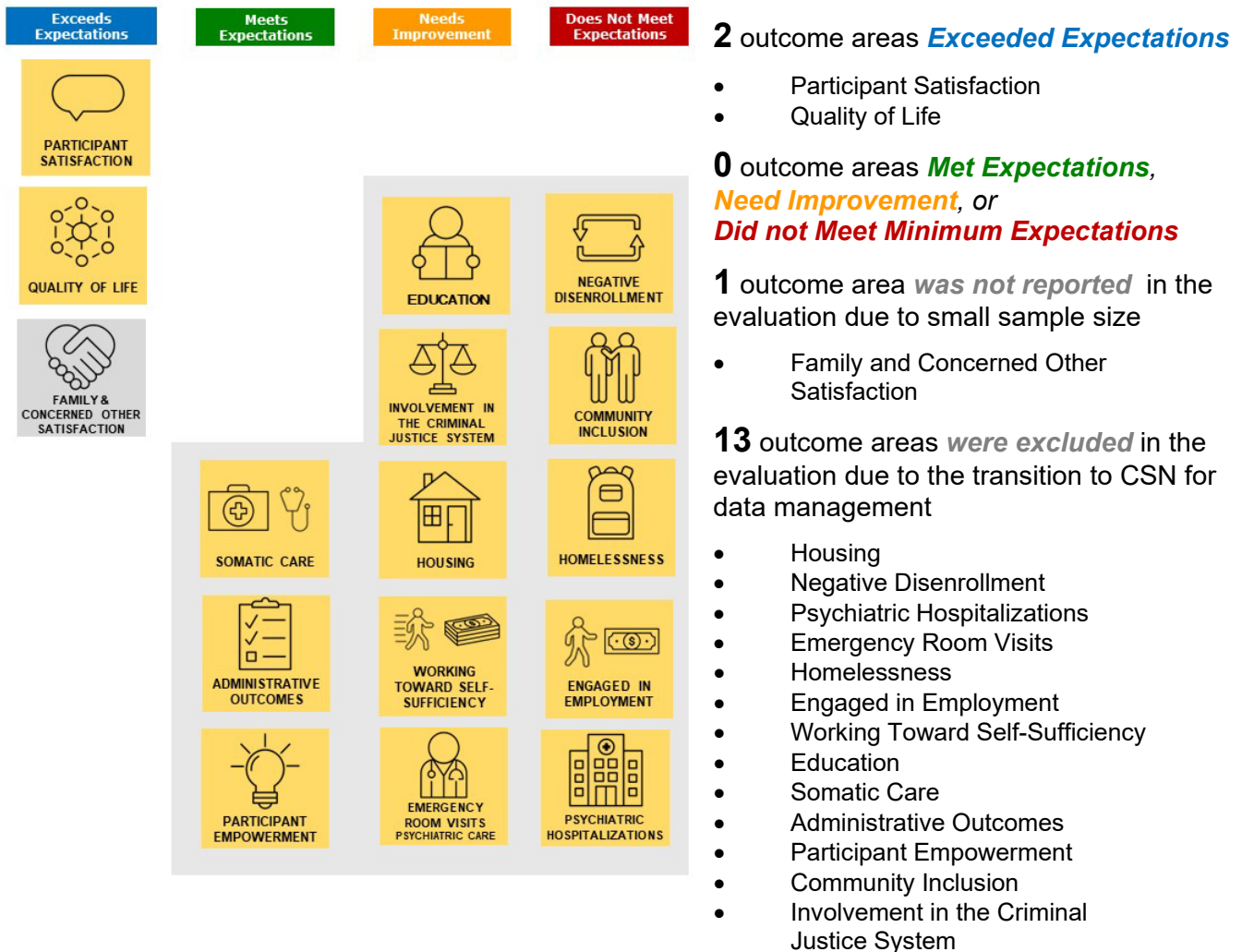
In this reporting period, outcome data is limited because of a transition in data management systems which track outcome reporting. Starting in July 2022, the state of Iowa required all Mental Health and Disability Service (MHDS) Regions to use the Community Services Network (CSN) data management system, hosted by the Iowa Association of Counties. In prior years, Polk County managed its own data system via PolkMIS. When PolkMIS was operational, Polk County providers entered outcome data for 16 areas. PolkMIS was discontinued in June 2022. Due to this transition, this report covers only 3 outcome areas, which are survey-based outcomes. Data reporting on all 16 outcome areas will resume for FY24. While CSN Outcome Reports are being edited for accuracy, KEY has a spreadsheet to accurately reflect the services delivered.

In 2023, the KEY Program scores were comprised of the two survey-based outcome areas. Of these two outcome areas, the KEY Program **Exceeded Expectations** in *Participant Satisfaction* and *Participant Quality of Life*. Performance for *Family and Concerned Other Satisfaction* was not reported due to a low sample size (N=6). Table 1 and Figure 1 shows each outcome area by performance.

Table 1. Summary Table of KEY Program Performance

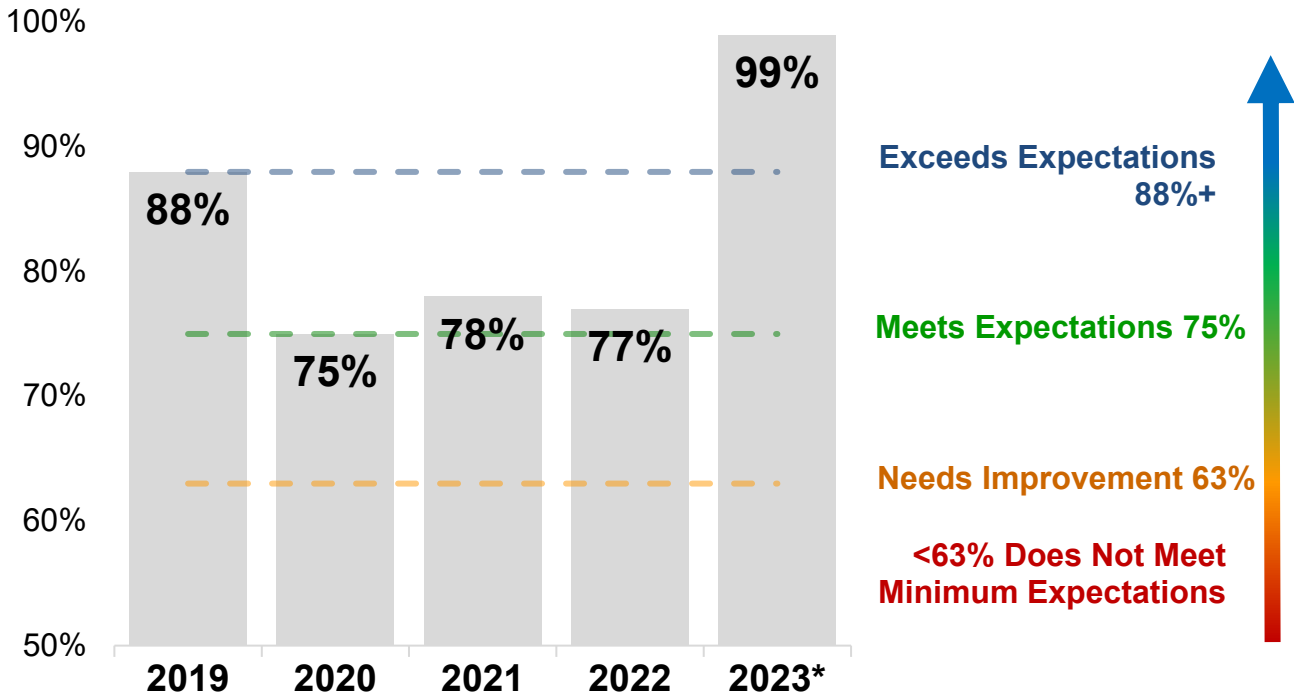
	N (# of Participant respondents)	Participant Satisfaction		Participant Quality of Life		N (# of Concerned Other respondents)	Family and Concerned Other Satisfaction		Agency Overall	
		Performance	Score	Performance	Score		Performance	Score	Performance	Score
KEY Program	15	100%	4	98%	4	6	NA	NA	99%	4

Figure 1. Outcome Areas by 2023 Performance KEY Program Averages



The KEY Program Evaluation shows that the program *Exceeded Expectations* in 2023, receiving the highest program average performance in the last 5 years. It should be noted that the overall program performance was based on the ratings for only two outcome areas.

Figure 2. KEY Program Performance 2019-2023¹



¹ * Overall performance calculations in 2023 were adjusted to accommodate a data management transition

KEY Program Outcomes

To evaluate agency performance, the Polk County MHDS Region typically uses 16 outcome areas to assess service delivery. In the 2022-2023 evaluation period, 13 outcome areas were *excluded* due to the Polk County MHDS Region transitioning from PolkMIS to CSN.²

1. Quality Services

1. Participant Satisfaction
2. Quality Of Life
3. Family And Concerned Others Satisfaction

Each outcome area has thresholds established that determine four performance ratings and corresponding point values, namely *Exceeds Expectations* (4), *Meets Expectations* (3), *Needs Improvement* (2), and *Does Not Meet Minimum Expectations* (1).

	Participant Satisfaction	Quality of Life	Family and Concerned Other Satisfaction	Agency Overall
Exceeds Expectations	95%+	95%+	95%+	88%+
Meets Expectations	90% - 94%	85% - 94%	90% - 94%	75-87%
Needs Improvement	85% - 89%	80% - 84%	85% - 89%	63-74%
Does Not Meet Minimum Expectations	< 85%	< 80%	< 85%	<63%

² Outcomes excluded in 2023: [Quality Services] Negative Disenrollment, Participant Empowerment, Administrative Outcomes; [Community Integration], Housing Engagement Toward Employment, Working Towards Self-Sufficiency, Education, Access To Somatic Care, Community Inclusion; [Healthy Days In The Community], Homelessness, Involvement In The Criminal Justice System , Psychiatric Hospitalizations, and Psychiatric Emergency Room Visits



PARTICIPANT SATISFACTION

Metric

The percentage of program participants who reported satisfaction with services, including questions in the areas of access to services, staff support, empowerment, impact of services, suggestions for improvement, and unmet needs

Intent

Program participants will report satisfaction³ with the services that they receive. Program participants are the best judge of how services and supports are meeting their needs. Increasing literature finds that involving participants in the delivery or re-design of health care can lead to improved quality of life and enhanced quality and accountability of health services (Bombard et al., 2018).

Rationale

When asked, many people who have struggled with brain health or addiction voice that the most important part of their recovery was finding a support plan that worked with them as an individual and not just as part of a system. Strengths-based programs that are person-centered allow individuals to work toward recovery at their own pace and utilize resources that will help them improve (NAMI).

One key measure of service programs is satisfaction.

- Assessing the perceptions of individuals is an essential part of evaluating and planning services and an important component of respect for self-direction and autonomy. (Copeland, Luckasson &Shauger 2014)
- Eliciting satisfaction from participants yields beneficial information for service providers. (Copeland, Luckasson &Shauger 2014)
- Clients have a wealth of information regarding the functioning of social service programs, and client satisfaction surveys provide the client perspective on those aspects of the service that are important to them. (Spiro, Dekel & Peled, 2009)
- Client satisfaction surveys empower clients by giving them a voice in the evaluation and, indirectly, in the management of services.(Spiro, Dekel & Peled, 2009)

Performance Ratings	Exceeds Expectations	Meets Expectations	Needs Improvement	Does Not Meet Minimum Expectations
	4 95%+	3 90% - 94%	2 85% - 89%	1 < 85%

³ Satisfaction is determined by the independent evaluator interviewing a 10% sample of program participants. Via a survey asking program participants questions regarding access, empowerment, and service satisfaction.

For the **Participant Satisfaction** outcome, the KEY Program averaged an **Exceeds Expectations** rating of 100%.

Compared to the last 5 years, the overall program performance for the **Participant Satisfaction** outcome maintained an **Exceeds Expectation** rating, ranging from 98%-100%.

Figure 3. Participant Satisfaction 2019-2023 System Average

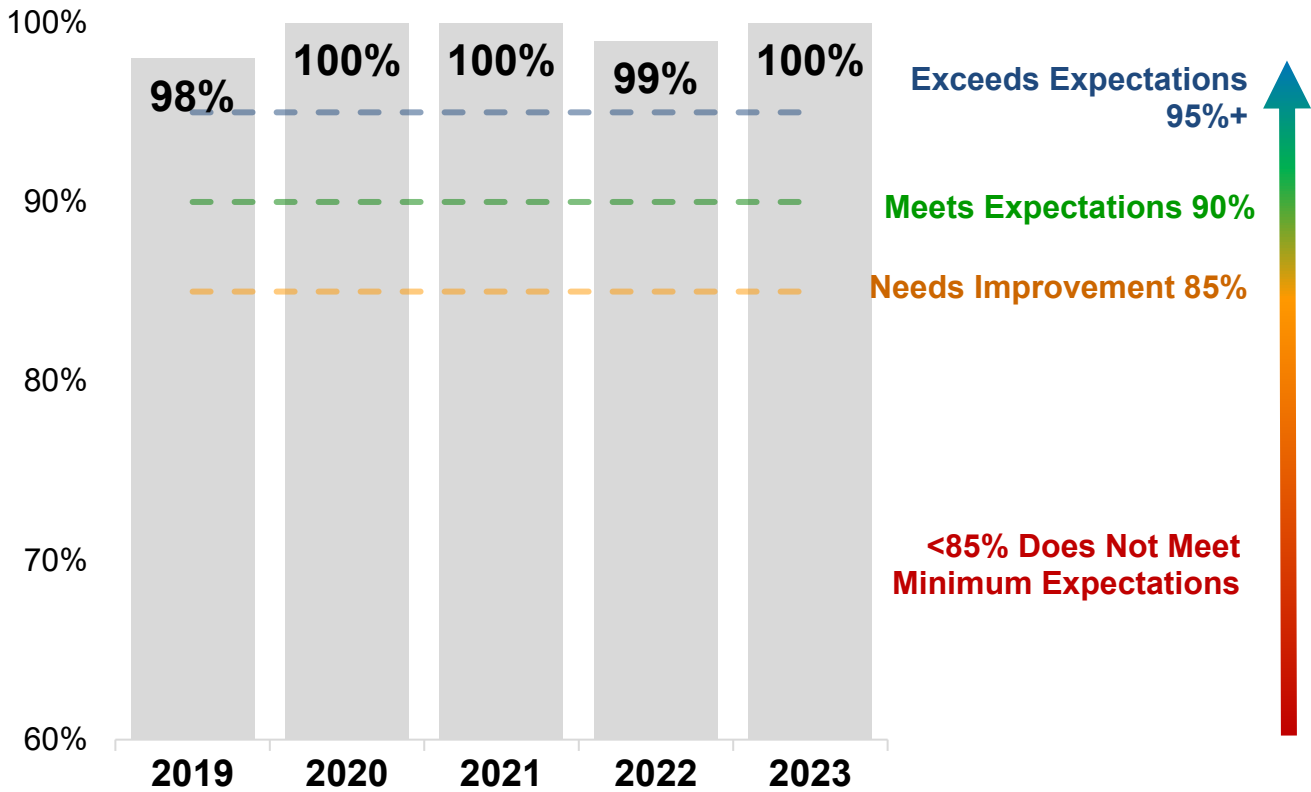
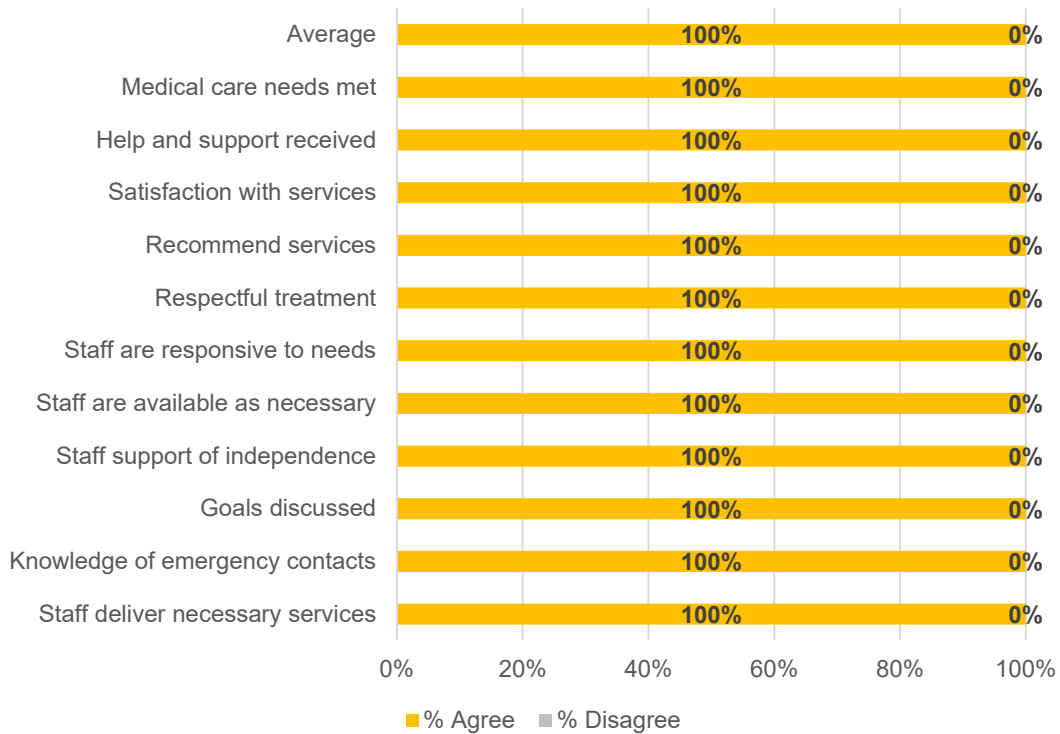


Figure 4 shows rates of agreement by item from the 2023 **Participant Satisfaction** outcome survey. Rates of satisfaction were high overall, and all respondents agreed with every item, including

- They were treated with respect (100%).
- Their medical care needs were met (100%).
- They would recommend services (100%).
- Staff helped them get the services they need (100%).

Figure 4. Participant Satisfaction System Average by item⁴



⁴ Full survey items listed in Appendix A

CSA KEY Participant Comments (N=15)

Services Delivered Effectively

[Staff] has done a lot for me. They helped me through my [health concern] and getting my Social Security card, and Medicaid card, and things that I couldn't otherwise get done. We have done a lot lately. I think since I was 19, [I knew [staff member]]. I have had a few workers and with [staff member] I have gotten more done than I got done with them. They have helped me with planning and budgeting, and food planning because I tend to go through food a lot quicker.

One main thing that definitely has been helpful that KEY has provided is the bus pass, because I don't have a car and don't have the funds for the bus pass.

[Staff member] definitely helps me out. They always ask me if I need help with practice driving, going to the grocery store, also help searching for jobs that I would be comfortable with.

With the [previous] workers, not much happened. But with [staff member], we set up doctors' appointments, I got and am working on keeping a job. I'm working on getting into DMACC for [education program]. We talked about budgeting and getting an apartment when we have a budget in place to work with.

Positive Relationships with Agency or Staff

I'm transitioning, and they're very nice about that, and use whatever pronouns.

She [staff member] is really empathetic and non-judgmental.

I feel closer opening up to them [staff member] even than my therapist sometimes. There are so many things they do that are not on paper. With [staff member], they're genuine and go out of their way because they want to see me flourish. And they are there. [They're someone] who really crosses the line from obligation to genuine.

They're very nice and polite. Understanding, casual, just an approachable way. They are pretty good.

Positive Impacts of Services

[I'm] making decisions on my own. More life skills, like going to the store. I used to go to the store and waste money, but now I have more life skills. And [I'm] using resources that can help me with stuff.

Before the KEY program, I have found myself annoyed with my family. I have been able to talk with [staff member]. We have shared stories about our families. [Staff member] does hear me out and they give me advice. When I talk about my family, they will say, "and how did that make you feel?" We tell funny family stories, and I do definitely think I am getting along better.

I was just talking with [staff member] outside. I told them I just got a promotion at work. I showed them a picture of my [work] station at the [place of employment], and all the sticky notes everywhere [for inspiration and recall]. And I'm studying. I wouldn't even know to do that without my time here. I'm setting myself up for success.

I have moved a few places since joining the program. I'm in a lot safer situation. I have a good roommate [who] I can trust. [That's] invaluable. And in a safe neighborhood. [Previously], I was essentially in a drug house. I don't know if I would be ready for a stable environment if it wasn't for [staff member] and the stability of the program.

Concerns

It wouldn't be about the KEY services. It would be about [staff member] leaving.

I have had three workers over six, maybe seven months.

[Staff member] is going to be getting a new job soon. My therapist is not working for me. It's going to be hard for me to lose someone I learned to trust in.

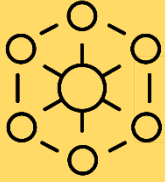
Suggestions

More pizza parties!

Maybe communicate better when something changes? They told me I would have a new worker, but maybe just not when that would happen. [So, just a little more information.]

I guess more communication between your staff person and you. [I see them weekly but would like to see them twice a week.]

I have very bad memory and they send text reminders three days in advance [of appointments]. I would like to get them three days and one day in advance.



QUALITY OF LIFE

Metric The Quality of Life outcome is based on participant interviews. To assess satisfaction with quality of life, the independent evaluator asks participants to rate their satisfaction in the areas of housing, employment, education, family relationships, and recreation and leisure activities.⁵

Intent Increase participant satisfaction with housing, employment, education, and recreation/leisure activities.

Performance Ratings	Exceeds Expectations	Meets Expectations	Needs Improvement	Does Not Meet Minimum Expectations
	4	3	2	1
	95%+	85% - 94%	80% - 84%	< 80%

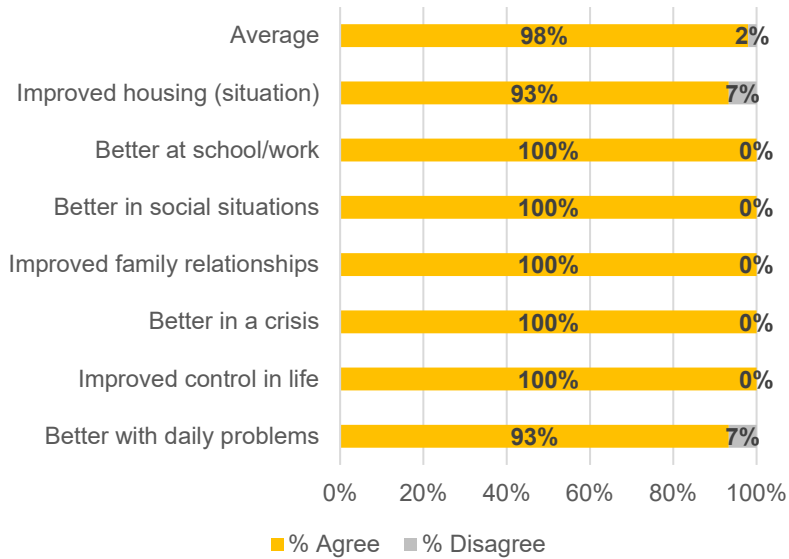
Participant **Quality of Life** measures received high ratings across items (Figure 5).

- 100% of participants agree that since entering the program, they are *better able to deal with crisis* and have *improved control in life*.
- Participant agreement was lower for measures related to their *housing situation* (93%) and *dealing better with daily problems* (93%).

⁵ Since I entered the program...

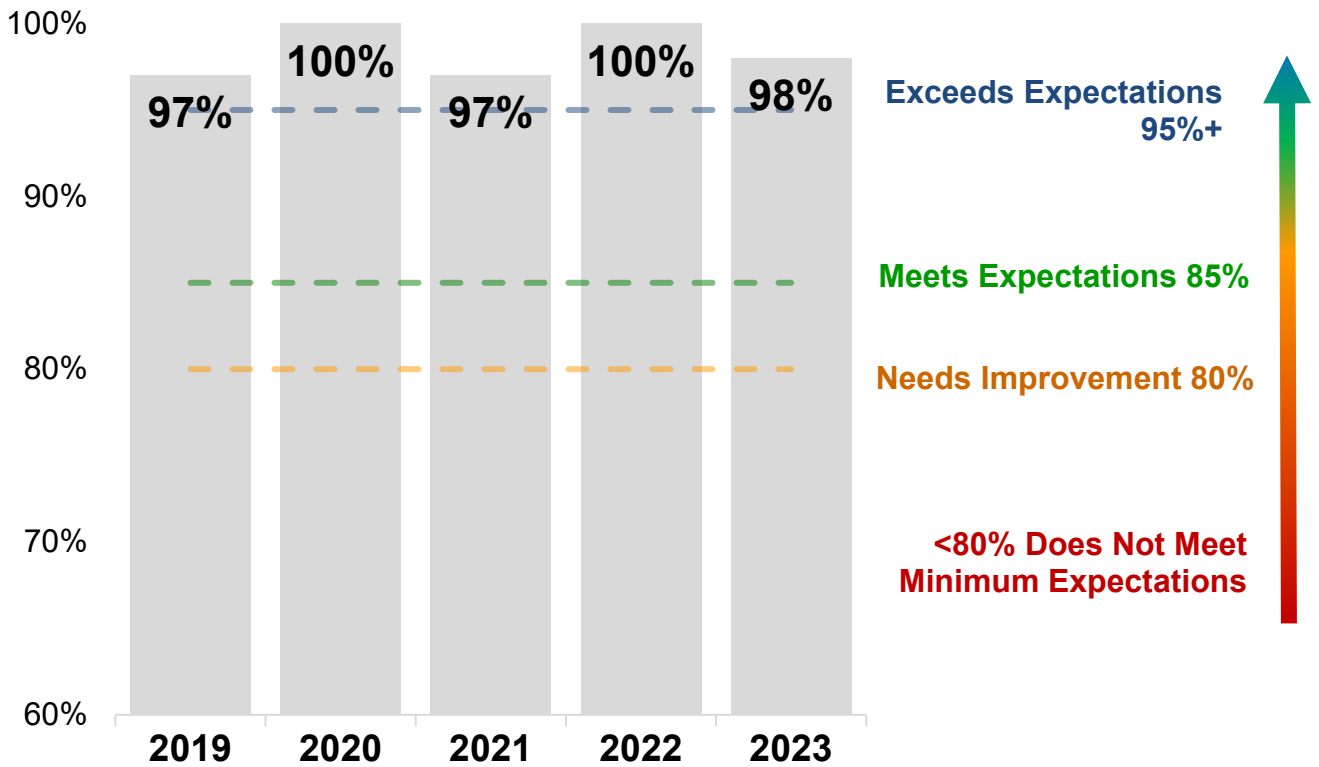
1. I deal more effectively with daily problems
2. I am better able to control my life
3. I am better able to deal with a crisis
4. I am getting along better with my family
5. I do better in social situations
6. I do better at school or work
7. My housing situation has improved

Figure 5. Quality of Life KEY Program Average by Item 2023



The **Quality of Life** outcome maintained an **Exceeds Expectations** rating with a program average of 98% in 2023.

Figure 6. Quality of Life System Average 2019-2023





FAMILY AND CONCERNED OTHERS SATISFACTION

Metric	Families/Concerned Others will report satisfaction with services.
Intent	The intent of this outcome is to know how the families feel about the supporting agency and to ensure the supporting agency is providing the individuals supported and his/her family member with the needed services and supports. Family/concerned others' satisfaction is based on interviews by the independent evaluator of family members of fifteen program participants from each agency's program. The Polk County Region's expectation is service excellence. They expect that the vast majority of family members will rate their agency's program services in the highest category.

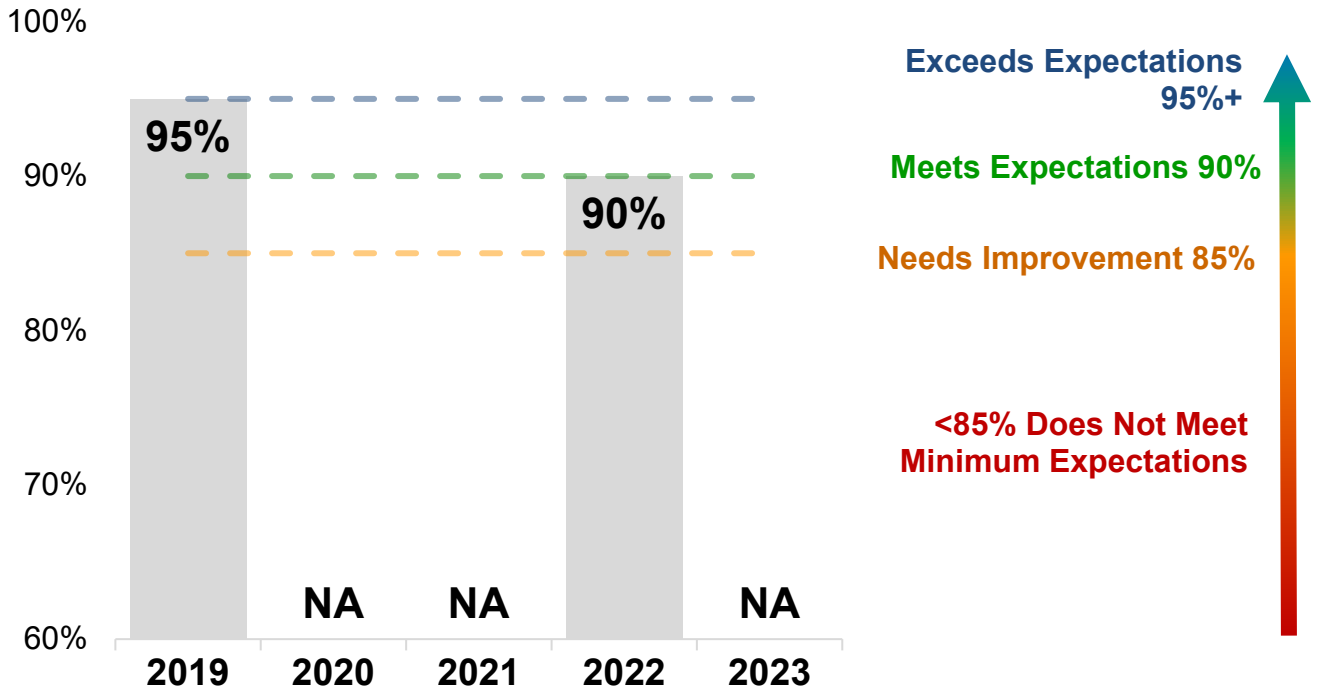
Performance Ratings	Exceeds Expectations	Meets Expectations	Needs Improvement	Does Not Meet Minimum Expectations
	4 95%+	3 90% - 94%	2 85% - 89%	1 < 85%

PROVIDER PERSPECTIVES

- TBD

Program performance in the **Family and Concerned Others Satisfaction** outcome was not reported in 2023, due to a small sample size (N=6). While average scores were not generated due to potential for skewing results with a small sample, open-ended comments of KEY Family and Concerned Other survey respondents are reported in the next section.

Figure 6. Family and Concerned Others Satisfaction System Average 2023⁶



Concerned Other Satisfaction by item is not reported due to low sample size.

⁶ NA = Results not reported due to insufficient sample size (<10)

CSA KEY Concerned Other Comments (N=6)

Services Delivered Effectively

Well, one thing I will say is that the KEY providers will get them out and be social, which is something they will not do on their own. My [family member] is an introvert, so getting them out and moving is really important to me ...whether it's going for walks or the farmers' market or the cat cafe. [My [family member] felt like he could rely on their previous staff, and I think it will be the same with the new staff given time.]

I mean, they reach out to them via text message. They check in on them and see how things are going. They push for appointments to check on them, and they encourage them to do things that they want to do and [that] makes [participant] feel good. If they can't get ahold of them, they reach out to me and that's been really helpful.

Yes. They have helped them get work training, fill out applications. They have someone that takes them out of the house and not always rely on us.

Positive Relationships with Agency or Staff

The cadence, and a friend to talk to every few weeks has been huge. [It] gets them out of a funk and raises their spirit. They always have great things to say.

I feel like they really care about my [family member].

Even if the staff is always different, every person always wants them to succeed.

Positive Impacts of Services

I just know that them having another support beside myself that they know is so good. [Staff member] tries to find things that they're interested in and set up activities and social things that they might not have known about if it wasn't for [staff member].

Sometimes I noticed that they will talk to me differently and it's good. And I assume that they have learned that from [staff].

Everything. They graduated from high school, got a job [and] moved into an apartment. Their original roommate got really weird with their family, and [participant] has gotten new friends and goes [out] and is more social. A lot has changed in the last year and a half.

Concerns

Adult services have been difficult to navigate and it's been difficult to find services that are a good fit for my adult child. I feel like the staff needs to be more consistent and there needs to be more money for these people so that they can be more consistent. My [family member] has been in and out of the hospital several times and I feel like [if] there was more support for in-the-home things, it could get better... have less visits to the emergency rooms and hospital stays for adults with mental health issues.

Suggestions

I would like to be contacted more and I could contact them I know, but I haven't. But hearing from them more may be helpful.

Just maybe for me as a family member, a little more communication.

KEY Performance by Outcome Summary Table

	2022		2023	
	Performance	Score	Performance	Score
Housing	91%	4	-	-
Engaged Toward Employment	27%	3	-	-
Working Toward Self-Sufficiency	15%	2	-	-
Education	24%	3	-	-
Access to Somatic Care	95%	3	-	-
Community Inclusion	75%	2	-	-
Participant Empowerment	87%	2	-	-
Negative Disenrollment	2.31%	4	-	-
Hospital Bed Days	1.94	4	-	-
Emergency Room Visits	0.14	2	-	-
Involvement in the Criminal Justice System	15.70	1	-	-
Homelessness	0.00	4	-	-
Participant Satisfaction	99%	4	100%	4
Quality of Life	100%	4	98%	4
Family and Concerned Other Satisfaction	90%	3	NA	NA
Administrative Outcomes	100%	4	-	-
Agency Overall Performance	77%	3	99%	4

Appendix A. Interview Scripts

Participant Interview Script

Full Survey item (<i>Participant Satisfaction</i>)	Abbreviated Survey item
My (staff) helps me get the services I need	Staff deliver necessary services
I know who to call in an emergency	Knowledge of emergency contacts
My staff talks with me about the goals I want to work on	Goals discussed
My staff supports my efforts to become more independent	Staff support of independence
My staff are willing to see me as often as I need	Staff are available as necessary
When I need something, my staff are responsive to my needs	Staff are responsive to needs
The staff treat me with respect	Respectful treatment
If a friend were in need of similar help, I would recommend my program to him or her	Recommend services
I am satisfied with my [program] services	Satisfaction with services
I am getting the help and support that I need from [staff] and [agency]	Help and support received
Do you have medical care if you need it?	Medical care needs met
Full Survey item (<i>Quality of Life</i>)	Abbreviated Survey item
Since I entered the program, I deal more effectively with daily problems	Better with daily problems
Since I entered the program, I am better able to control my life	Improved control in life
Since I entered the program, I am better able to deal with a crisis	Better in a crisis
Since I entered the program, I am getting along better with my family	Improved family relationships
Since I entered the program, I do better in social situations	Better in social situations
Since I entered the program, I do better at school or work	Better at school/work
Since I entered the program, my housing situation has improved	Improved housing (situation)

Family and Concerned Other Interview Script

Full Survey item (<i>Concerned Others Satisfaction</i>)	Abbreviated Survey item
I am confident that our[program] staff provides me with resources about programs and services that are beneficial to my family member and family	Staff provides resources
Staff helped us in obtaining access to the services he/she needed	Staff Help Access Services
Staff are available to assist me when issues or concerns with services arise	Staff are available to assist
Consumer's input into the service plan was well-received and his/her ideas were included in the plan	Consumer input included
The staff where my family member receives services treats him/her with dignity and respect	Consumer treated with dignity and respect
I am satisfied with my family member's worker	Satisfied with worker
If I knew someone in need of similar help, I would recommend the program that works with my family member	Would recommend program
My family member and I know his or her staff	Aware of Staff
My family member's staff contacts me, when appropriate, so I feel informed	Communicative Staff
My family member is getting the services she or he needs	Consumer receiving needed services
Did consumer's staffing team ask you what services and support he/she needed to stay healthy and safe at home [and work]?	Family input elicited

Appendix B. Data Sources

Procedures: The following outlines procedures for the FY23 evaluation. Information was obtained from two sources:

1. Meetings with program directors and staff members
2. Interviews with participants and family members

Not included in the 2023 evaluation due to data management system transition were two data sources:

1. File reviews
2. Analysis of data submitted to Polk Management Information System (Polk MIS)

Meetings

Phone consultations were conducted with each of the program directors in to review the file review results. Finally, exit interviews were held with PCMHDS and program staff in early August to review the complete report.

Interviews – Participant and Concerned Others

Participants and Concerned Others were interviewed as part of the evaluation process. A target of fifteen participants and fifteen concerned others were interviewed from each ISA program. Interviews were conducted by phone. The interview questions are included as Appendix A of the report. Agree/disagree responses to the questions make up the statistics used for the **Participant Satisfaction, Family and Concerned Other Satisfaction** and **Quality of Life** outcome scores. Comments from the interviews are included in this report. Although direct quotations are used, neither names of respondents nor staff members are included and gendered pronouns (e.g. he, she his, hers) of both respondents and staff members were replaced with they/them to de-identify comments.