



Celebrating Our 100,000th Referral

A Letter to Our Community Champions

Today, we celebrate the 100,000th referral made in IRIS. As of September 2024, there are 36 communities and 2,305 organizations across 6 different states using IRIS. With the current total of referrals made through IRIS now in the 100,000s, we've connected more than 60,000 families to needed services. The number of organizations, referrals, and families receiving services reflects how you've turned your hopes for a better referral process into the very efforts that built IRIS. Instead of tripping over the same stones again and again with multiple referral processes, you've helped to create a referral system that embodies the culture of care and deep consideration you exercise daily for your communities. Today, we celebrate you.

The seed of IRIS—recognizing and being responsive to communities' experiences with making and receiving referrals—remains the impetus that has guided our growth. IRIS is a success because **community-based organizations** like yours were motivated to turn frustrations into action. Without your voices and galvanized participation, contending with the dismaying pattern of referrals never actualizing into appointments would lead to unsubstantial or unsound efforts.

"Before joining IRIS families were connected to resources by word of mouth or at a local providers office or schools. Lists of options were given to families to access care on their own. Whether in person, via email, or over the phone, families would simply be provided resource information, phone numbers or website information. Providers were sharing that nine out of ten times, if a family needed additional supports or services and they were not helped in office, then families would leave with the information provided and not access care or give up after contacting multiple organizations or dealing with wait lists or organizations not accepting their insurance or not being eligible for services from the information provided" —Hillary Cali and Ashley Hughes, DeKalb County Regional Office of Education

Thanks to you, we've been able to assess how service providers prefer to connect and be contacted to better align and coordinate services with other providers, the best practices in communicating with clients, and ultimately, how to cultivate the proper landscape that supports both providers and clients reaching completed referrals.

"You have to have a vision and a plan for your community. You have to be organized and tenacious. You have to celebrate the successes and use the barriers you face to make you stronger and look for solutions. Many of the families we serve are in crisis. They face barriers such as language, literacy, low economic status, high levels of trauma and discrimination. If using IRIS to eliminate even one or two of those barriers makes the client feel valued and their needs get met, this is success" —Mandi LaRue, social worker at Johnson County Department of Health and Environment

For nearly ten years, you've shared with us the specific and nuanced challenges that make it difficult or easy for families to receive services after being referred, as well as your vision for a better referral system. We needed a system that understood how families navigate their daily lives, one that could both safeguard and share client information to expedite a referral's progress, and support multiple communication and tracking options, so referral information was bi-directional, accessible, and

convenient. We needed a system that could accomplish completed referrals consistently and reliably so families could optimize their well-being and health.

"Families are trying to manage their lives, work, live and be experts in what they do. We are experts in case management and referrals; families have to trust us with getting them connected to life-changing and saving services. Experts become experts by failing, learning, and growing. The quicker we recover and make changes, the better"—Cecelia Bailey, executive director of QCON-Hub

"A streamlined process makes it easier to connect families with resources in a more effective and efficient manner, therefore giving them more faith in the system. When we encounter a family that is willing to be vulnerable and ask for help, then we need to make that happen as quickly as possible and in a manner that leaves them with their dignity"—Mary Peterson, community relations crime prevention manager of Peoria Police Department

The same challenges that prompted the creation of IRIS still linger for so many families seeking services. As IRIS continues to grow, we know that our solutions—no matter how innovative—would not be possible without your work, knowledge, expertise, and the continued demonstration of your commitment to families seeking care. You have been both the architect and engineer of the vision that drives IRIS, and the 100,000th referral serves as a reminder of your profound capacity to serve your communities. Thank you again for your dedication to your communities and thank you for growing with us.

IRIS Team