



2024 Youth Justice Innovation Grants

Project Summaries

The Youth Justice (YJ) Innovation Grants are an opportunity for county human service agencies to implement new, creative, evidence-informed practices or programs with short-term start-up funding from DCF. All projects must serve the overall purpose of improving community-based juvenile delinquency-related services and meet the requirements of one of the following topic areas: reducing YJ referrals, pre-court diversion and post-dispositional services.

In 2023, 25 grants were awarded: 11 initial grants to start or enhance a program or practice and 15 continuation grants to continue implementation of a program or practice started in 2021 or 2022.

Types of Grants

Reducing Youth Justice Referrals (RYJR)

This project area is focused on collaborating with community stakeholder(s) to reduce the number of youth unnecessarily referred to the YJ system. Any services provided would be before the point of a YJ referral and delivered outside of the YJ system, although YJ staff should be involved in the collaborative efforts underpinning the project.

Pre-Court Diversion (PCD)

This project area is focused on collaborating with community stakeholder(s) to offer services/programming to divert referred youth away from formal court involvement. These are services that will be provided to youth after a youth is referred to YJ, but before they are formally petitioned to court.

Post-Dispositional Services (PDS)

This project area is focused on improving community-based services delivery for youth on supervision. Projects should implement programming that can be added to a county's YASI service matrix for medium- and high-risk youth. Proposed services should be rooted in positive youth development and should not include an electronic monitoring component.

Reducing Youth Justice Referrals (RYJR)	Pre-Court Diversion (PCD)	Post-Dispositional Services (PDS)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Barron Door La Crosse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kenosha Monroe Waupaca 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Douglas Dunn Juneau Price Sheboygan

Initial Grantees

Barron (RYJR)

Objective: Implement a tiered system of intervention by providing support and opportunity to "low risk" youth.

Target Population: Primary population is youth ages 10-17. Any youth can participate in the mental health school clubs. Youth will be identified for pre-truancy or pre-delinquency conferences through their schools due to disruptive behavior or lack of school attendance.

Key Features:

- Implement National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) clubs in Barron County schools to provide pro-social activities.
- Utilize school/home/community social behavioral scales at pre-delinquency or pre-truancy conferences. Once screened, BITS, Carey Guides or youth Moral Reconciliation Therapy (MRT) interventions will be used.

Primary Contact: [Laura Doebereiner](#)

Door (RYJR)

Objective: Offer an alternative program focused on proactively meeting mental health needs and student well-being to avoid over-serving youth who are referred to YJ intake.

Target Population: Primary population is youth ages 10-14.

Key Features:

- Alternative program administered by the school district in Sturgeon Bay and Boys and Girls Club.
- All staff associated with alternative program will be trained in the following programs: Well-being for All, Non-violent Crisis Intervention, restorative practices, positive action social-emotional learning curriculum, and PATHS.

Primary Contact: [Beth Chisholm](#)

La Crosse (RYJR)

Objective: Reduce the number of YJ referrals and civil ordinance citations by diverting youth ages 12-18 who are engaged in four focus act behaviors in the City of La Crosse.

Target Population: Primary population is youth ages 12-18.

Key Features:

- Four focus act behavior areas include DC, misdemeanor battery, misdemeanor theft, and misdemeanor property damage.
- Expansion of La Crosse Police Department to expand "lightest touch" policy by increasing diversion options and alternative response to continue La Crosse's efforts to reduce racial disparities.

Primary Contact: [Tonya Van Tol](#)

Kenosha (PCD)

Objective: Provide services to support regular school attendance and youth at risk of having their Deferred Prosecution Agreement (DPA) revoked or being referred to the Youth Justice system for truancy.

Target Population: Youth who are 10 years and older identified as "truant" in Kenosha.

Key Features:

- Provide services to support attendance: strengthen communication between school and home, including daily attendance checks.
- Middle and high school students will participate in Botvin LifeSkills training groups.

Primary Contact: [Donna Rhodes](#)

Monroe (PCD)

Objective: To reduce truancy petitions and formal dispositions through a multi-system collaboration and serve youth through informal services.

Target Population: Middle and high school youth (ages 10-17) and their families.

Key Features:

- Create an additional path of students who have been referred for truancy after municipal court citation but prior to county circuit court proceedings.
- Provide community services to reduce absenteeism.

Primary Contact: [Wendy Davey](#)

Waupaca (PCD)

Objective: Expand pre-court diversion services to better serve youth diverted from formal court proceedings.

Target Population: Primary population is youth between the ages 10 and 17.

Key Features:

- Positive Action (evidence-based program) training offered to YJ staff; staff provide service to youth one on one or in groups.
- Staff will attend Moral Reconciliation Therapy (MRT) training and run juvenile groups as part of a short term DPA or formal order.

Primary Contact: [Lauren Gardner](#)

Douglas (PDS)

Objective: Expand access to community based AODA services to youth and their families.

Target Population: Douglas County youth aged 10-17 and are identified as "moderate" or "high risk" on a YASI pre-screen. Offer services to youth with an identified domain of "alcohol and drugs" on the full YASI assessment.

Key Features:

- Train YJ supervisors and workers in Adolescent Community Reinforcement.
- Youth will attend weekly AODA individual or group sessions. The length of time would be based on therapeutic recommendation.

Primary Contact: [Brooke Fitzgerald](#)

Dunn (PDS)

Objective: Provide services to youth and families with complex needs to promote positive community engagement, improve mental health, and increase family functioning.

Target Population: Youth ages 10-17 years old who scored moderate to high risk on the YASI who are on a DPA, consent decree or formal supervision.

Key Features:

- Connect youth with mentors through "CC We Adapt", Positive Alternatives, Milkweed Connections or other mentoring organizations who have lived experience.
- Offer youth opportunities to engage in prosocial activities by use of incentives.

Primary Contact: [Lori Radcliffe](#)

Juneau (PDS)

Objective: To provide currently unavailable services to moderate or high-risk youth to decrease need for crisis intervention, meet basic needs for all community youth and increase community support.

Target Population: Youth ages 10-17 years old who are placed on a DPA, consent decree or dispositional order.

Key Features:

- Implement specific skill building groups for youth and families around life skills including employment and education.
- Recruit community partners to be part of skill building efforts including mentoring.

Primary Contact: [Kelly Firlus](#)

Price (PDS)

Objective: Price County and WJCIA will train eight individuals to be trainers in Aggression Replacement Training (ART) to provide statewide trainings at a reasonable cost to the counties.

Target Population: Youth ages 10 and over will benefit from the ART curriculum.

Key Features:

- ART is an evidence-based curriculum designed to benefit moderate and high-risk youth; it is meant to address the "aggression and violence", "skills" and "attitudes" domains.
- The training process includes an online self-paced training and a one-day virtual guided practice.

Primary Contact: [Sarah Reese-Socha](#)

Sheboygan (PDS)

Objective: Reduce recidivism by offering evidence-based programming at a reporting center to system involved youth who live in City of Sheboygan.

Target Population: Youth aged 10-17 who have YASI risk scores of medium to high and protective factors of low to medium on delinquency orders.

Key Features:

- Provide structured programming to help youth develop independent living and career skills.
- Youth can choose to participate in reporting center services voluntarily through a YASI case plan or as informal graduated response to a violation, stayed condition of disposition or order through a sanction.

Primary Contact: [Jessica Bitter](#)

Continuation Grantees

Green County

Objective: Implement a targeted mentoring program to promote positive activities, build skills, and increase informal supports while also providing support to prevent repeated delinquency referrals, out of home placements, and formal system involvement for youth with complex needs at high risk of entering the YJ system.

Target population(s): Youth in need of independent living skills or with complex needs including mental health, trauma, alcohol/drug use, cognitive, or other disabilities and/or a combination of those issues.

Key Features:

- Mentoring program specifically tailored to youth interests as well as cultural, emotional, and behavioral needs.
- Subcontract with Southwest Wisconsin Workforce Development Board and Orion Family Services.

Primary Contact: [Dee Jaye Miles](#)

Jefferson County

Objective: Ensure available community services are comprehensive and well-matched to family needs by addressing identified gaps in Jefferson's YASI Service Matrix.

Target population(s): Youth served on truancy orders as well as moderate and high-risk youth on supervision and their parents.

Key Features:

- Expand resources to staff including ART and e-Carey Guides to address volume of YJ involved youth with high needs.
- Expand Family Centered Treatment (FCT) and available parent education services through Connect.

Primary Contact: [Jessica Godek](#)

Marathon County

Objective: Provide an alternative (Youth Opportunity Center) to formal shelter care placements for youth in need of additional supervision and supports.

Target population(s): Youth ages 12-17 who score moderate risk or above via YASI.

Key Features:

- Provide mentorship and skill development concentrating on areas related to youth needs identified from the YASI.
- Provide pro-social, educational, recreational and community service project opportunities to youth who attend the center.

Primary Contact: [Becky Bogen-Marek](#)

Oconto County

Objective: Reduce recidivism by matching services to criminogenic needs.

Target population(s): Youth identified as moderate or high risk on the YASI who are on a DPA, consent decree or formal supervision.

Key Features:

- Provide mentors or support paraprofessionals to build relationships with youth and work towards individualized goals to address areas of criminogenic needs as identified by the YASI.
- Connect families with the Parent Project which has a twelve-week session parenting course able to work with our YJ involved families.

Primary Contact: [Carrie Kleinschmidt](#)

Oneida County

Objective: Expand county service array to match evidence-based programming to the needs of youth as identified through YASI assessment.

Target population(s): Youth referred to YJ between ages 10 and 17 and youth identified as at risk of future delinquent behavior.

Key Features:

- Subcontract with New Horizons Family Services, LLC to provide interventions from Botvin Life Skills and TruThought.
- Collaborate with Oneida County School districts to identify youth who may also benefit from these programs and offer in educational settings.

Primary Contact: [Brenda Lee](#)

Ashland County

Objective: Expand Ashland's community-based offerings to include more intensive, restorative, and healing-focused services for youth and their families, which support transformative shifts in thinking, attitudes, and actions.

Target population(s): Ashland County youth ages 10-17 involved with the YJ system.

Key Features:

- Implementation and expansion of evidence informed interventions that best fit the needs of local youth and families and capacity of county staff – current interventions of interest include credible messengers and Functional Family Therapy (FFT).
- Approach guided by the philosophy of Homeboy Industries, one of the largest gang rehabilitation programs in the world that is focused on healing and transformation.

Primary Contact: [Scott Griffiths](#)

Crawford County

Objective: Increase prevention efforts and reduce youth recidivism by expanding evidence-informed community-based youth justice related services available.

Target population(s): Youth ages 10-17 who have been referred to the YJ system and youth identified by community partners as at risk of future YJ system involvement.

Key Features:

- Enhance the mentor/mentee program, while continuing to explore options for additional pro-social activities and partnership opportunities to support this programming and outcomes.
- Expand outreach and build partnerships with other service providers to expand service array and timely access to programming such as FFT, Equine Therapy, and other evidence-informed assessments and treatment.

Primary Contact: [Jada Hrubes](#)

Dane County

Objective: Expand access to restorative services for youth in Dane County to divert youth away from the formal court system, provide interventions geared toward reducing disproportionate minority contact, and assist youth in problem-solving around encountered barriers and building positive community ties.

Target population(s): Youth referred to the Dane County DHS court diversion unit or the formal YJ intake unit for at least the following five misdemeanor offenses: battery, resisting/obstructing, disorderly conduct, criminal damage to property, and theft.

Key Features:

- Subcontract with Briarpatch Youth Services to provide Victim Respondent Conferences (VRC) and Restorative Justice Circles (RJC) to youth referred on state charges as close to their home as possible.

Primary Contact: [Andre Johnson](#)

Jackson County

Objective: Enhance current programming and develop additional programming based on risk, needs, and responsibility factors of the youth and families served in Jackson County.

Target population(s):

- Youth working with Jackson County Department of Health and Human Services due to a law enforcement, school, or parent referral resulting in a DPA, consent decree, or court order.
- Siblings of youth referred to Jackson County Department of Health and Human Services who are identified as at risk by the social worker.
- Youth who the school or other service providers identify as at risk prior to referring to the youth justice system.

Key Features:

- Collaboration with Children's Wisconsin to continue to fund a youth navigator who is trained in Mobility Mentoring, and a mental health consultant who will offer evidence-based treatment approaches to assist youth in developing emotional regulation and problem-solving skills.
- Increase a youth's access to services directly address their YASI identified needs to increase their strengths thus reducing the likelihood for recidivism.

Primary Contact: [Jenny Dormady](#)

Pierce County

Objective: Provide community-based, intensive in-home services to youth and their families to keep families intact and facilitate a return home for youth placed in out-of-home care.

Target population(s): Youth ages 10-17 and their families who have been identified as medium to high risk, in need of in-home therapy.

Key Features:

- Continue implementation and model adherence to program fidelity of FCT
- Develop a family satisfaction survey and key stakeholder survey to assist in gathering of qualitative data.

Primary Contact: [Joy Lynn George](#)

Washington County

Objective: Fully implement and sustain FCT to address needs within the family system to reduce the number of youth entering out-of-home care, support reunifications, and reduce recidivism.

Target population(s): Youth aged 11 through 17 years old and their families who are on a DPA, consent decree or formal supervision. Youth can also be referred by Comprehensive Community Services (CCS), school-based services, and private clinics.

Key Features:

- Sustain an intensive, in-home therapeutic system of care utilizing an evidence-based treatment modality to address complex trauma and family system needs.
- FCT is embedded within the county's Behavioral Health Division Youth Services Team which oversees children enrolled in multiple service delivery systems.

Primary Contact: [Coral Kline](#)

Eau Claire County

Objective: To decrease racial and ethnic disparity in Youth Justice by analyzing data, gathering stakeholder feedback, offering professional development, and expanding opportunities to youth of color.

Target population(s): Youth aged 10-17 living in Eau Claire County receiving a formal referral to YJ system. Youth aged 10-17 admitted to the Northwest Regional Juvenile Detention Center (NWRJDC).

Key Features:

- Continue rigorous data analysis to inform practice.
- Collaborate with the Power of Perception to develop unique in-person mentoring opportunities for youth and create a Youth Advisory Council to enhance practice within ECC's YJ system.
- Gather stakeholder feedback through consumer interviews and a monthly stakeholder committee meeting.
- Professional development for staff and service providers.

Primary Contact: [Melissa Christopherson](#)

Walworth County

Objective: Enhance and strengthen relationships between Walworth County Department of Health and Human Services (WCDHHS), school districts within Walworth County, and school resource officers to reduce formal referrals to the youth justice system.

Target population(s): Youth at risk of habitual truancy and delinquency referrals who are between the ages of 10 and 17 years and attend the Elkhorn Area School District (EASD).

Key Features:

- Social worker will work directly with Elkhorn Area School District pupil services staff to focus on needs of students with patterns of poor school attendance and concerning behavioral issues.
- Collaboration between WCDHHS and EASD to develop approaches to school-related misbehavior and/or truancy that provide alternative to exclusionary discipline and law enforcement referrals.

Primary Contact: [Renee Peck](#)

Waushara County

Objective: Collaborate with multiple stakeholders to develop county-wide stakeholders to bridge gaps, increase prevention efforts to reduce referrals, reduce recidivism, and maintain youth in their homes.

Target population: Youth referred to YJ are between the ages 8-17. Referrals primarily focus on children ages 10 years and older through middle school aged youth groups. Groups participating in school wide activities and events are 8-9 years old.

Key Features:

- Prepare youth to positively impact their peers via youth wellness events and activities.
- Administer youth wellness groups to youth referred by stakeholders such as truancy and vaping curriculum.

Primary Contact: [Jenna Holland](#)

Outagamie County

Objective: Reduce the number of youth referred to the YJ system for truancy through a community coordinated effort. For youth referred for truancy, decrease the number of youth referred on for formal court action.

Target population(s): Middle and high school students referred for truancy from school districts in Outagamie County

Key Features, Activities, and Elements

- Monitor interventions being used by Appleton School district including Check and Connect and gift card incentives.
- Create a truancy network between Outagamie County and all school districts in the county by sharing data, findings from interventions used and general information about evidence-based attendance interventions.
- Improved communication and teaming of cases with schools.

Primary Contact: [Scott Kornish](#)