

2016-17

Founding Year



# INTRODUCTION

In the fall of 2016, the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF) launched four “Youth Leadership Teams,” covering all parts of the state, to involve young people in youth justice decision making and empower the next generation of young leaders. These teams provide an opportunity for young people who have had involvement with the justice system – part or present – to share their perspectives and give input.

The Youth Leadership Teams (YLTs) were designed based on (1) national research on youth leadership, development, and engagement, (2) input from Wisconsin experts such as the Youth Advisory Council, counties, founding partners, and consultants, and (3) information from other councils around the country (government, foundations, and non-profits).

For the first year, each team was supported by ‘founding partners’ – counties and youth serving organizations who committed to helping shape the teams and supporting youth in coming to the meetings. In all, 13 founding partners joined in this effort for 2016-17.

Youth participated in one of the four teams, depending on where they live (North East meets in Wausau, North West meets in Eau Claire, South meets in Madison, and Milwaukee meets in Milwaukee). Each team met four times: in November 2016, February, April, and June/July 2017. In all, 59 young people attended one or more of the meetings held in the first year.

Each meeting focuses on three core activities: (1) giving input to DCF, (2) developing and strengthening youth leadership skills, and (3) working on a project of the team’s choosing to help improve the youth justice system.

At the first three meetings, youth shared their input about the current status of the youth justice system and their vision for the future, and helped shape it into a report. The format used to gather input from the youth was the same DCF used to gather input from adult stakeholders during 2016.

We are deeply grateful to the founding partners and other adults who have supported the youth during this founding year, to the community partners who helped make these meetings productive and meaningful, and to the youth for their dedication and courage in sharing their insights for the purpose of helping to create a better youth justice system for all youth.

TOTAL NUMBER OF  
YOUTH WHO ATTENDED AT  
LEAST ONE MEETING:

59



# The Youth Participants



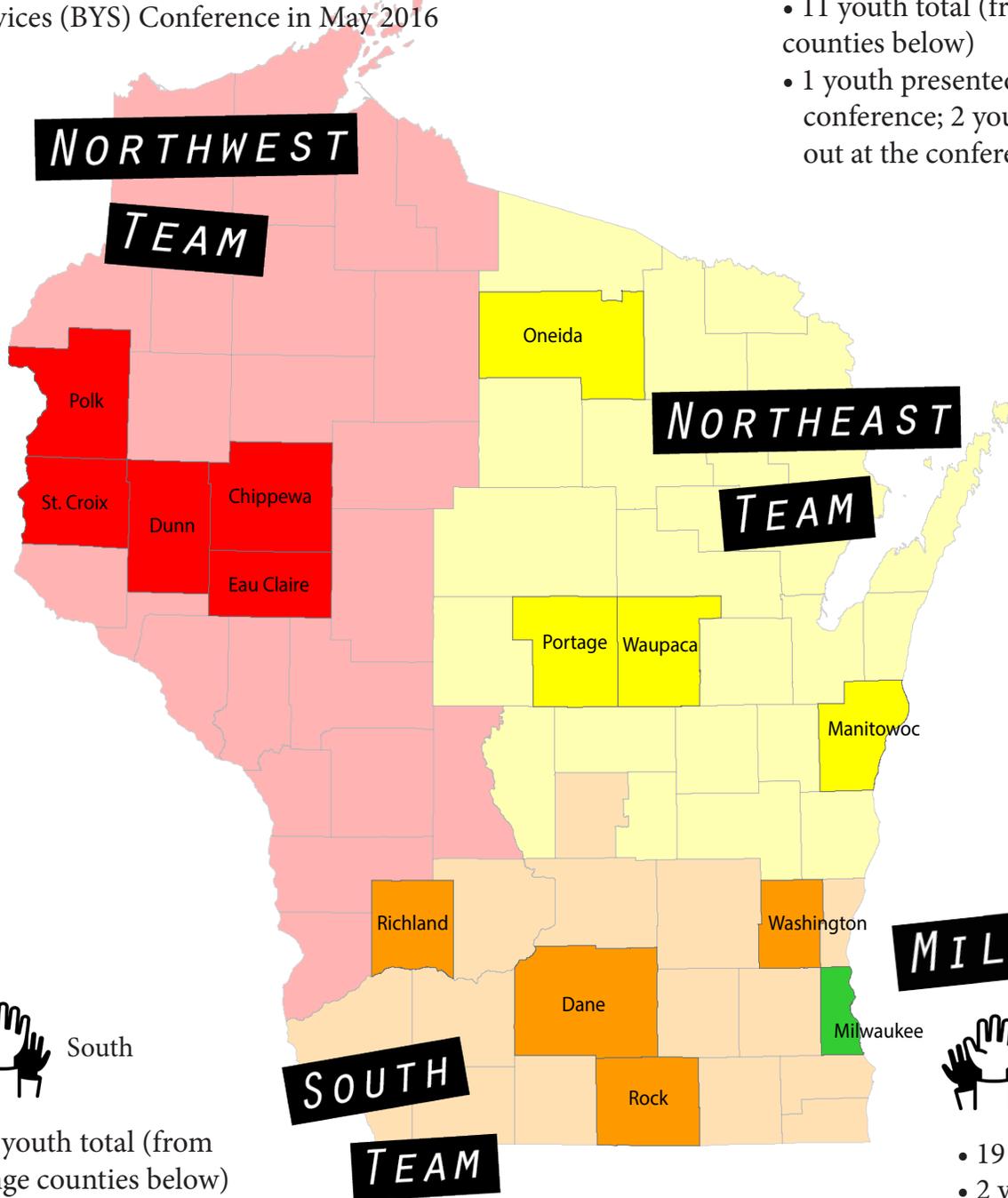
NorthWest

- 17 youth total (from red counties below)
- 2 youth presented at Bureau of Youth Services (BYS) Conference in May 2016



NorthEast

- 11 youth total (from yellow counties below)
- 1 youth presented at BYS conference; 2 youth helped out at the conference



South

- 12 youth total (from orange counties below)
- 3 youth presented at BYS conference



Milwaukee

- 19 youth total
- 2 youth presented at BYS conference

A sample of youth feedback on the meetings from the 1st year:

- “I liked being able to speak my voice and opinion. Feeling our voices matter.”
- “I liked how we all shared ideas and compromised. I feel like we accomplished a lot.”
- “I liked being able to hear everyone’s stories and come up with better solutions.”
- “I liked how open minded everyone was.”
- “I liked the easy organization and common interests, and the fact that everybody was included.”
- “I thought that my voice was heard!!”

# FOUNDING

# PARTNERS

Each team was supported by ‘founding partners’ – counties and youth serving organizations who committed to helping shape the teams and supporting youth in coming to the meetings. In all, 13 founding partners joined in this effort for 2016-17. Further, additional counties stepped up to support their youth in attending meetings, and the teams benefited from the advice and support of consultants.

**This effort would not have been possible without them, and we are deeply grateful for their dedication.**

## NORTHWEST

### TEAM

#### **Founding Partners:**

Eau Claire County, Northwest Passages

#### **Youth Support:**

Chippewa County, Dunn County, Polk County

## NORTHEAST

### TEAM

#### **Founding Partners:**

Manitowoc County, Oneida County,

Waupaca County

## SOUTH

### TEAM

#### **Founding Partners:**

Elevate, Pentecostal Tabernacle Church of God in Christ in Beloit, Washington County

**Consultant:** Mentoring Positives

**Youth Support:** Grow Academy, Richland County

## MILWAUKEE

#### **Founding Partners:**

Children’s Hospital Community Services, Community Advocates, Girls in Action, Lad Lake

**Consultant:** Urban Underground

# YLTs BENEFIT FROM ADDITIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

Many community partners stepped up to help with the first year of the teams in one way or another.

The following organizations *presented at or led* part of meetings:

- Foster Youth Advisory Council (Milwaukee)
- Mentoring Positives (South)
- MOD Media (South)
- Rise Together (South, Northwest, Northeast)
- Rogers InHealth (South, Milwaukee)
- Urban Underground (Milwaukee)
- UW Eau Claire - Blugold Beginnings (Northwest)
- UW Extension - Jackson County (Northwest)

The following groups provided *locations and support* for meetings:

- Eau Claire Sport Warehouse
- Eau Claire First Congregational United Church of Christ
- Madison Public Library
- MOD Media
- Urban Underground
- UW Extension
- UW Eau Claire - Blugold Beginnings
- Wausau Community Services

Finally, we want to extend our sincere gratitude to the many other individuals who gave input into the design of these teams, gave feedback throughout the year, and attended meetings to listen, offer opportunities to the youth, and/or gather input.

***Thank you all so very much!***

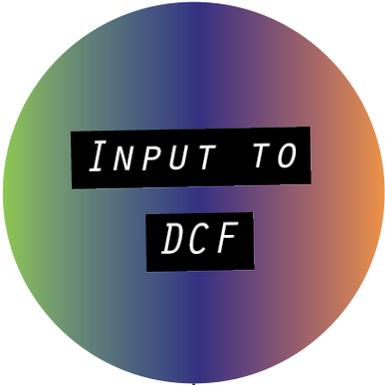
# TEAM ACTIONS

2016-17



Identifying leadership qualities and strengths

Telling your story for advocacy purposes



Input on current system and vision for future

Input about term “juvenile” -> change to “youth justice”

Input about group home training

Respond to questions from Secretary’s Advisory Council on Youth Justice

Input for judicial workgroup on court orders

# PROJECTS TO IMPROVE YJ SYSTEM

Report on current  
system and vision for  
future

Panel presentations  
at BYS Conference  
(audience of 130 people)

Video about youth  
perspective on YJ  
(South team)



## ***Highlight:***

### ***Panel on Youth Perspectives on the Youth Justice System***

- Eight youth, representing all four teams across the state, presented to an audience of approximately 130 people at the Bureau of Youth Services Conference in May 2017.
- At the end of the panel, we collected statements from the audience about what they were planning to do as a result of hearing the youths' perspectives and visions for the youth justice system.
- Here is a small sample of those statements:

*"I will get to know the youth I am working with. I will try to understand each story and life experience."*

*"Encourage staff to think and act with unconditional care to youth. 'I will never give up on you.' 'I believe in you.'"*

*"More fully consider the disconnect between good policy in an office compared to reality on the ground. Take the time to solicit input from those who will be most affected - and do so right from the beginning."*

*"Support youth - system partnerships to solve problems. Example: If a county is overusing detention as a sanction/punishment, support youth in helping find other local solutions."*

*"Bring more youth voice in the JJ process system. Prioritize learning about youth and who they are into our intake process and all aspects of our work. Value the youth voice as an expert on themselves and what they need."*

# I want to create a youth justice system that...

Gives everyone a fair chance and respect even if they're right or wrong | Provides help to the youth and helps keep people away from juvenile detention centers | Includes different branches according to the different and unique types of situations in order to know how to approach each one | The youth like. I hate hearing about kids who hate "the system" | Is fair and wants to help juveniles in the system | Actually helps out the youth and prevents them from making the same and more poor choices | Is inspiring, motivating | Helps the youth instead of hindering them | Gives youth more security and choices | Hears the voice behind the actions of the individuals themselves or those who jeopardized those individuals so that everyone can have the choice to live out their dreams | Listens, provides, and cares for the children of today | Shows sympathy to first timers, hears people out | Helps everyone, all ages and races, that treats everyone equal and tries their best to help anyone and everyone | Makes youth feel heard | Is dynamic | understands or understands as best as they can all three sides. The side of the youth, parents/family, and the law | Actually helps the kids when/before the problem becomes too hard to stop | Is stable for both adults and youth | Keeps siblings together | Gives teens more options when they get in trouble. More ways to help | Listens | Can make a change for the future of juvenile justice/foster youth | Empowers youth | Properly prosecutes juveniles and helps juveniles instead of pushing them to be criminals | Shows equality to all youth and treats them with respect and dignity | Helps all youth become more comfortable and educated about their future | understands the youth and what they really need | Is loving and helps families come together | Helps and not only punishes | Will help everyone be positive | Lets kids be heard | Actually helps the youth



Icons from [Noun Project](#), created by: Martyn Jasinski, Maxim Kulikov, Danielle Torres

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