



## AUGUST 2023

The Bureau of Youth Services is a unit within Wisconsin's DCF that is dedicated to being more responsive to the needs of older youth in and at risk of being involved in the child welfare or youth justice system. If you have questions or ideas, please contact us!

### Leadership

**Shelby McCulley**  
Director

**Evelyn Joy Coker**  
Youth Justice Section  
Manager

### Youth Justice Team

Youth Justice Policy  
Coordinators

**Alana Peck**  
**Carlton Frost**  
**Jenna Dunlap**  
**Sarina Wiesner**  
**Tess Brodsky**

### Youth Services Team

**Asia Jackson**  
Anti-Human Trafficking  
Coordinator

**Faith Price**  
Youth Services  
Policy Coordinator

**Greta Munns**  
Youth Services  
Policy Coordinator

**Kelsey Hill**  
Independent Living  
Coordinator

Happy August everyone! Summer is my favorite season in Wisconsin, and it's hard to believe it's winding down already. As you'll see in this newsletter, this summer has been a time for new beginnings in Youth Services! We are thrilled to welcome three new members to our team. We also had the opportunity to celebrate new beginnings with young people at the annual Foster Youth Graduation Event – a big thank you to everyone who helped make it a success. Enjoy the rest of summer and start to fall!

## September is Kinship Care Month!

In Wisconsin, we believe in supporting relative caregivers by making sure they are connected to the resources they need to support the children and youth in their care. If young person can't remain safely in their home, we know that relatives and like-kin are crucial to maintaining family relationships and cultural connections. These connections are particularly important for young people who are transitioning to adulthood.

To be able to do this, relative caregivers need supports that alleviate stresses and allow them to focus on the care and well-being of the young person. This support can come from communities wrapping around families to provide resources and services. Or it can look like connecting families to programs like Wisconsin's Kinship Care program, which provides financial support to relatives who are supporting a young person in their home.

Next month (September) is Kinship Care Month. Because we know kids do best when they are with their families, we know how crucial kinship care is to thriving families and homes. This Kinship Care Month, we're recognizing the role relatives and kin caregivers play in providing care and stability for children and youth across the state. Visit <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/kinship> to learn more.

## Putting Families First Communication Updates



Since 2018, Wisconsin has worked toward transitioning the child welfare system to become more in-home, family-focused, and collaborative. This transformation will impact all child welfare system partners and stakeholders, as well as the general public. If you haven't looked at our [communication resources](#) recently, please take a look and share with your system partners!

In particular, the [Putting Families First Playbook](#) is a new, online resource designed for agency leaders to use in conversations, presentations, and collaborations with system stakeholders as they collectively work to advance the work of Putting Families First in their communities.

## Welcome to BYS!



Tess Brodsky

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Sarina Wiesner

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Evelyn Joy Coker

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BYS recently welcomed three new members to the team! In May, **Sarina Wiesner and Tess Brodsky started in their roles as Youth Justice Policy Coordinators.** In mid-July, **Evelyn Joy Coker started in the position of Youth Justice Section Manager.** All together, they bring the BYS Youth Justice team to full strength!

Tess worked at Dane County Human Services CPS for 11 years. She earned her Master of Social Work (MSW) degree from UW-Madison through the Title IV-E Child Welfare Program. Tess enjoys running—both in community races and, as a mother of two, after her kids.

Sarina earned her Bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice from Lakeland University and her Master's in Criminal Justice from UW Platteville. She previously worked at the Department of Corrections in the Division of Juvenile Corrections as a Probation and Parole Agent, and most recently at the Department of Revenue in Property Assessment Practices and Education. In her free time, you will usually see her doing something outside with her family, which includes her partner, Chad, plus 3 kids, 2 dogs, a cat, and a guinea pig. Originally from the Fox Valley area, Sarina recently bought a home in Dane County.

Evelyn is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker with a Master's in Social Work and a Master's in Business Administration. She has extensive experience providing direct services and administering programs in the areas of mental health, youth justice, and social services. Evelyn is currently a fourth-year social welfare Ph.D. student at UW-Madison and will start her dissertation this fall about system-involved Black girls. She is passionate about driving change and creating a positive impact on the juvenile legal system. In her free time, Evelyn loves to spend time with her family — especially watching Disney movies and musicals.

# Youth Voice Updates



## Youth Advisory Council – Legislative Day

On Wednesday, May 17, 2023, Secretary Emilie Amundson, DCF Legislative Advisor Ragen Shapiro, and BYS staff Faith Price, Kelsey Hill, and Greta Munns welcomed the state Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) to DCF's office in Madison, WI to prepare for meetings with legislators at the capitol.

The YAC were greeted warmly with energizing team introductions and an inspirational story from Secretary Amundson. Ragen led an educational session on legislators, background information and key talking points.

After lunch, the group walked over to the capitol to speak with legislators on a variety of topics impacting youth that age out of the child welfare system. Topics discussed included, but were not limited to, homelessness, college funding ages, aging out of care, financial assistance programs, and feedback on programs and lived experience.

Not only did this group of youth display professionalism and knowledge, but they also demonstrated strong self-confidence, communication, and problem-solving skills. The YAC expressed gratitude for the opportunity to collaborate with DCF. The YAC stated about DCF's independent living coordinators, "It's nice to know there is someone there for you when you are stuck, because we literally have no one to fall back on once we age out."

Youth talked about many personal experiences, including aging out of the system, and experiencing homelessness.

Together, DCF and YAC had a successful day of communicating with legislators to impact policy changes by using their voice.

# Youth Voice Updates

## Annual Graduation Celebration



The 11<sup>th</sup> annual Foster Youth Graduation Celebration took place on July 19, 2023 at the Executive Residence to honor a special group of Wisconsin students. Governor Tony Evers and First Lady Kathy Evers joined DCF Secretary Emilie Amundson in recognizing foster youth who recently graduated from high school, completed milestones in post-secondary education, or attained other educational achievements.

“Every year, Kathy and I look forward to this ceremony and the opportunity to celebrate the accomplishments of these young people, all they have overcome, and the support systems they have built to get to where they are today,” said Gov. Evers. “They are resilient and dedicated, and I know that these students—with the help of their family, friends, and mentors—will continue to do wonderful things.”

Nationally, approximately 50% of foster youth will graduate from high school and less than 5% graduate from a four-year college and 2 to 6% will complete two-year degree. Most foster youth face stability challenges from losing their biological family, moving, and changes in caseworkers, friends, and schools.

“The youth honored today are truly inspirational. They’ve pursued their educational goals while overcoming some very tough challenges,” said DCF Secretary Emilie Amundson. “Their strength and determination to move forward academically deserves to be celebrated. I have no doubt that they will continue to do great things in this next chapter.”

The 35 graduates who were able to attend the celebration represented youth in foster care throughout Wisconsin who reached commencement in the 2022-2023 academic year.

Former Wisconsin foster youth Chaya Milchtein, founder and creator of Mechanic Shop Femme, spoke and inspired graduates. Chaya is an automotive educator, influencer, and journalist who studied at the University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee. She spoke to the graduates about her brave journey towards academic and career successes.

# Youth Voice Updates

## Youth Leadership Team updates

The Youth Leadership Team (YLT) is open to young people ages 14-21 who have personal experience in the youth justice system. Direct service providers, please help us in keeping this a youth-centric space by coordinating the attendance of at least one eligible young person to attend with you!

BYS is excited to share that YLT will convene again in the 2023-2024 academic year! The first of the four meetings during the year will take place on **October 26, 2023 from 4:30PM – 6:00PM**. The other three meetings in the series will take place in January, March, and May 2024; details for each will be shared out a later date. Each YLT meeting will be offered as a hybrid meeting, meaning an eligible young person and their adult supporter may join in-person or virtually.



Below is more information regarding the October YLT meeting, the city where the in-person option will take place, the Zoom link for those eligible young people who choose to attend virtually, and the Jot Form Link to RSVP.

- **October in-person meeting location:**  
Briarpatch Youth Services  
2720 Rimrock Rd.  
Madison, WI 53713
- **October Zoom meeting link:** <https://dcfwi.zoom.us/j/83462871196?pwd=K3UvVGZLK1ljS1dyL2hIZVVnSE5HZz09>
- **Jot Form Link to RSVP:** <https://form.jotform.com/DCFBYS/ylt-meeting-rsvp-october-26-2023>
  - ◇ RSVP due by 5pm on Friday, October 20, 2023.
  - ◇ Adult supporters, please assist youth in completing their RSVP or complete it on their behalf, if needed.

Below are answers to a few frequently asked questions about YLT.

- **Who is eligible to attend?** Young people ages 14-21 with personal experience in the youth justice system. This includes, but not limited to, youth on delinquency supervision, and Juveniles in Need of Protection or Services (JIPS).
- **Are youth compensated for their time?** Yes, they'll receive a \$25 stipend for their active participation in the meeting.
- **Do youth and adult supporters need to RSVP?** RSVP is encouraged, especially if you plan to attend in-person, but not required.

As always, you can visit <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/youthservices/leadership> for more information regarding the Youth Leadership Team. If you have any questions or are unable to make the meeting but would like to be added to the contact list to receive additional information regarding future YLT meetings, e-mail us at [dcfyj@wisconsin.gov](mailto:dcfyj@wisconsin.gov).

# Youth Justice Updates

**Case Processing and Documentation Standards** were released earlier this year and we'd like to call attention to the new instruction for processing referrals that need to be sent to another county. Please see *Documentation of Referral and Intake Information 1(b)*.

*"If a referral is transferred from one county to another during the intake process, the county that originally received the referral shall reassign it in eWiSACWIS within 3 business days of the decision to transfer. The agency conducting the intake inquiry under 938.24 shall then document further case management."*

Important to note that at this time the 40-day intake timeline for a juvenile law enforcement referral does not reset when sent to another county, it is important to connect with the receiving county as soon as possible to determine who will be assigned the referral.

**YASI standards** were recently published and will become effective October 1, 2023. Please see the YJ standards [Memo](#) for the list of changes with practice implications. The new YASI standards were drafted from the familiar YASI policy document used during statewide implementation, as well as county input and suggestions over the last four years. All counties are asked to review the new YASI standards and update local YASI procedures accordingly. Counties should send their updated copy to [DCFYJ@wisconsin.gov](mailto:DCFYJ@wisconsin.gov) by October 1, 2023 with the subject line "(County Name) Updated YASI procedures".

County staff can reference all YJ standards here: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/cwportal/policy/pdf/yj-standards.pdf>

CaseWorks, YASI assessment and case planning software, received a big upgrade late July. This upgrade required all staff to reset their password, please email [Orbis Support](#), if you are still unable to log into CaseWorks.

**REMINDER:** Please send new YJ hire information to [DCFYJ@wisconsin.gov](mailto:DCFYJ@wisconsin.gov). Include name, title and start date. New hires will be added to the YASI distribution lists on a monthly basis.

# Youth Services Updates

**BYS welcomes four new Anti-Human Trafficking Grantees!**

Region	Grantee	Program Description
1	<b>CW Solutions</b>	This program seeks to serve young people up to age 21 who have experienced sex trafficking while under 18. The goal is to ensure all eligible youth are provided navigation of services and case management to support their goals. Core services will include a warmline, navigation of services, mentorship and case management, and support in advocacy and accompaniment.
2	<b>House of Hope Green Bay</b>	House of Hope will serve young people up to and youth up to age 21 who experienced sex trafficking while under the age of 18, and their caregivers in Brown County. Services offered will include intensive case management, coordination of services across multiple systems and sectors, safety planning, mental health services, physical health services, education support, job training, advocacy, and other services as requested by the youth.
3	<b>Grateful Girls</b>	The EmpowerME Family programming strives to bridge the gaps between youth and caregivers and create connections between teens and caregivers who can provide support. This program also aims to provide support for the larger community via outreach conversations. EmpowerME Family plans to subcontract with local agencies to assist in offering individual and group support.
3	<b>Lad Lake</b>	Lad Lake intends to serve families of youth who have experienced trafficking in Milwaukee County. They plan to work with the families of youth in their care to provide additional support during their time in treatment and to families in the community through education and support groups. A family engagement specialist will provide these services as well as subcontract with a local agency to provide additional groups and support.



# Wisconsin Department of Children and Families

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***May every youth in, at risk of, or aged out of  
the child welfare/youth justice system  
transition to a successful adulthood.***

The goal of the Bureau of Youth Services is to improve outcomes for youth in the child welfare and youth justice systems and other vulnerable youth. Specifically, the Bureau supports service delivery systems that move youth towards academic success, safe and stable housing, employment, permanent connections with supportive adults, and healthy lifestyle behaviors. Youth aged 12-21 in or at risk of entering the child welfare and a youth justice system present unique and complex challenges. The Bureau brings a more coordinated program and policy focus to youth in the child welfare system and other vulnerable youth.

**Sign up for our newsletter [here!](#)**