



Wisconsin Department of Children and Families

Bureau of Youth Services Newsletter

DECEMBER 2024

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

Evelyn Joy Coker
Director

Carlton Frost
Youth Justice Section Manager

Tess Brodsky
Strategic Initiatives Coordinator

Youth Justice Team

Youth Justice Policy Coordinators

Alana Peck
Jenna Dunlap
Sarina Wiesner

Youth Services Team

Asia Jackson
Anti-Human Trafficking Coordinator

Youth Services Policy Coordinators

Faith Price
Greta Munns
Kelsey Hill
Tonisha Hora

As we approach the end of the year, I want to take a moment to reflect on the incredible journey BYS has experienced in 2024. This past year has been marked by transitions and significant growth within our bureau. We welcomed quite a few new faces, including two YJ interns, a YJ Program and Policy Analyst (PPA)-Limited Time Employee (LTE), a Youth Services PPA-LTE, and a BYS PPA-LTE, whose contributions have been invaluable in moving our work forward. I am proud to share that in addition to my transition from the YJ Section Manager to BYS Director, two members of our YJ team promoted to management positions. Even with the transitions in leadership, BYS has been bustling with activity! I hope the updates in this newsletter energize you as much as they do me.

Our BYS team has been fortunate to work alongside thoughtful and passionate professionals committed to enriching the lives of children and families across Wisconsin. The impact of our collective work is strong, even when change feels slow. I often reflect on this quote by Emma Watson, "Don't expect change to happen overnight. Even if it's not always visible, it's making more impact than you think." As we continue to strive for meaningful transformation in the child welfare system, remember that you and your work matter. During this season, I hop you take pride in your impact and use the time to rejuvenate and recharge.

Here's to an exciting year ahead!

- Evelyn Joy Coker

Bureau Updates

New Faces in BYS



Tonisha Hora (she/her/hers) recently joined BYS as a Youth Services Program and Policy Coordinator. Tonisha has her undergraduate degree from UW-Stout in Human Development and Family Studies with a focus in Social Work, and she is currently an MSW student at UW-Milwaukee. Married for almost 10 years, she is a Mom to three sweet little kids. Tonisha is passionate about helping vulnerable populations and particularly enjoys advocating for youth who have aged out of foster care, as well as working on anti-human trafficking initiatives. Tonisha is an active person who enjoys kayaking in the summer and snowboarding in the winter. In fact, she is a part-time snowboard instructor on the weekends. Welcome to the team, Tonisha!

New Faces in BYS continued...



Amy Liu (she/her/hers) is a joint MSW/PhD student at the School of Social Work, UW-Madison. She works in BYS's Youth Justice Section as an MSW intern and is supporting a few projects focused on understanding and promoting the use of evidence-based programs and practices for youth in Wisconsin. Through her internship with DCF, Amy looks forward to opportunities to explore the challenges and opportunities with implementing evidence-based programs and practices at the county level in Wisconsin. She is particularly interested in understanding the differences in service provision between rural and urban communities. New to Wisconsin, Amy enjoys making weekly trips to the farmer's market. She also became a big root beer fan in the past year. Welcome to the team, Amy!

Thank you!

BYS staff would like to extend heartfelt recognition and thanks to **Isabel Hoffman**, a UW-Madison student who spent the past semester as a short-term Policy Coordinator intern with the Bureau. Isabel played a pivotal role in the successful transition of roles and responsibilities during the Bureau's restructuring in 2024. She meticulously organized our sections and summarized duties, ensuring a smooth transition. Additionally, Isabel developed marketing materials to attract other students to BYS for future internships, enhancing the team's outreach efforts.

Isabel's contributions to the Youth Justice (YJ) Innovation Grant Program are invaluable. She reviewed and summarized contracted programs, which helps our team maintain high standards. Her efforts have also kept our Bureau abreast of the latest adolescent development research, evidence-based programming, and national YJ news.

One of Isabel's standout achievements was the many hours she dedicated to organizing, evaluating, and summarizing county service matrices collected as part of Wisconsin's YASI implementation. Her work on these matrices will be instrumental in providing technical assistance to counties and YJ professionals in 2025.

Isabel's intelligence, dedication, and positive presence made her a delight to work with. We believe she has a bright future ahead. She graduates in May 2025 with degrees in Psychology (Legal Studies), Public Policy, and Criminal Justice. She is currently applying to law schools. All of us at BYS wish Isabel every success in her future endeavors! Thank you, Isabel!

Youth Services Updates

Independent Living Updates

As of October 1, 2024, DCF provides funding and support to [seven tribal independent living \(IL\) programs](#) in the state. This year, Oneida Tribe of Wisconsin joined six other tribal child welfare agencies throughout the state with preexisting IL programs to implement its own IL program for qualifying youth in its care. The other six tribes are Bad River, Ho Chunk, Lac Courte Oreilles, Menominee, St. Croix, and Red Cliff. All tribal IL partners work closely with DCF staff and the Transition Resource Agency (TRA) in their area to serve IL-eligible young people.

In summer 2024, DCF release a Request for Proposal (RFP) for IL programs in Youth Services [Regions 1, 5, and 7](#). As a result of this RFP process, there was no change in providers; all three existing TRA partners will continue their work to serve IL-eligible youth discharged from care in those regions. They are:

- ◆ Region 1 – Wood County and CW Solutions
- ◆ Region 5 – Workforce Development Board of South Central Wisconsin
- ◆ Region 7 – Workforce Resource, Inc.

See <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/cwportal/policy/pdf/memos/2024-17i.pdf>.

Youth Justice Updates

Quality Case Planning Project

“Listen to what we feel would help us best and put it into action.”

- WI DCF Youth Leadership Team Member 2017-18

The quality case planning (QCP) project is leaning into the principles of the Wisconsin Child Welfare Model for Practice and working towards the goal for all child welfare professionals to have access to tools, support, and training to ensure family-centered engagement while case planning with children, youth, and families. The case plan template in eWiSACWIS will undergo minor changes in February of 2025; these include person-centered language, adjustments to the template layout, and some streamlined functions to set foundational needs. These changes are the first step to address some of the issues and recommendations partners and users provided about eWiSACWIS. More comprehensive changes for a restructured Family Case Plan are in the planning stages, with a projected release in 2026. A goal of this redesign is for the Family Case Plan to incorporate the needs for dually-involved youth and youth justice case planning.

Youth Justice Philosophy and Case Process Training

BYS is excited to announce that DCF will introduce a new course called *Youth Justice Philosophy and Case Process* (YJPCP) starting in February 2025. This training is specifically for new youth justice (YJ) professionals. YJPCP will be offered year-round and is intended to be the first step in a youth justice professional development plan.

This 1-day *Youth Justice Philosophy and Case Process* training is an introductory course for YJ Professionals designed to talk about the “why” behind their duties, so they have a more holistic understanding of how the Wisconsin youth justice system can impact families. Learners will be introduced to legislation, standards, disparity statistics, and case flow as part of this foundational course. They will also learn about common language used in the YJ system, opportunities to and value of uplifting lived experiences, adolescent brain development, and evidence-based practices and philosophies consistent with DCF’s Putting Families First efforts.

When creating YJPCP, DCF sought specific feedback from Wisconsin's Youth Leadership Team members and Child Welfare Parent Leaders about how to teach child welfare and youth justice concepts based on their experiences being served in the child welfare system. Their input was crucial and helped create YJPCP's design and tone. .

Here are some quotes Youth Leadership Team members provided when they were asked to reflect on being involved in the process:

"I want to advocate more."

"You make me feel like I'm teaching so youth and workers can have a good experience in the system."

"For me, it feels like my voice is powerful. Helping elevate our voices to help others understand to be more helpful."

New support materials for YJ Referral eWReport

There is a lot of valuable information available in eWiSACWIS's eWReports, but it can take some practice to find what you're looking for. If you've wanted to dig into your county's YJ referral data, but you're not sure how to get started, we are here to help! The following guides (available now in DCF's [publications library](#)) were developed to support county staff who are new or unfamiliar with eWReports and/or Microsoft Excel:

- [Requesting an On Demand eWReport for YJ Referral Data](#)
- [Distinct Counts with the IF Formula & Filtering](#)
- [Pivot Table Basics](#)
- [Creating a Chart with Pivot Table Data](#)
- [Creating a Chart with Multiple Pivot Table Analyses](#)
- [Basic Excel Charts: When and How to Use Them](#)

For additional support navigating reports or YJ data, reach out to [Catie Carter](#), YJ Research Analyst, or [Alana Peck](#), YJ Policy Coordinator.

Youth Voice Updates

Youth Leadership Team Updates

The Youth Leadership Team (YLT) held its first hybrid meeting of the 2024-2025 school year on October 22, 2024 in Milwaukee. Both Alana Peck, Youth Justice Policy Coordinator, and Catie Carter, Youth Justice Research Analyst, joined the meeting to discuss data from the Wisconsin Youth Justice Referrals and Intake Report.

The next YLT meeting will be held virtually on January 29, 2025. A flyer will be distributed soon with registration information. To be informed about future YLT meetings, please contact dcfyj@wisconsin.gov. To learn more about the Youth Leadership Team, please visit <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/ys/leadership>.





Youth Advisory Council

The statewide Youth Advisory Council (YAC) met in Oshkosh on November 8 and 9, 2024. As the group's final gathering of the year, the meeting included annual officer elections as well as strategic planning with lived experience partner Public Knowledge. Looking ahead to the February 2025 meeting, state YAC will be virtual for the first time since the public health crisis, with each [Youth Services region](#) hosting a "hub" location and connecting with other regions' attendees virtually. The meeting will take place the first weekend in February; more details pending. At that meeting, the group will identify and define key policy priorities for 2025 and prepare and plan for its annual Legislative Day in May, Foster Care Awareness Month.

To learn more about YAC, reach out to the [regional YAC advisors](#). You can also follow the [statewide YAC on Facebook](#).

FosterClub All Star Internship

In 2025, DCF will once again sponsor two young people to participate in FosterClub's summer All Star Internship program. This means the internship comes at no cost to those young people. FosterClub's All Star internship includes youth from across the country who have lived experience in the foster care system. As a group, they receive leadership training, find and build community, and have the opportunity to participate in national conferences and events. The internship lasts from June 30-August 8, 2025; six of the eight weeks are virtual and two are in-person in the state of Oregon. Youth must be able and willing to commit to the whole eight weeks.

To learn more, visit <https://www.fosterclub.com/allstar-internship>. Please share this opportunity with young people in your network who may be interested. The application opens on January 1, 2025, and closes on February 17, 2025. For more information, contact youthservices@fosterclub.com.

What We're Reading

BYS staff recommend these new and interesting research, tools, and learning opportunities. Check them out!

- Blog Post: [The Future of Healing: Shifting from Trauma Informed Care to Healing Centered Engagement](#), Shawn Ginwright
- Resource Library: [Youth Justice Resource Library to Support System Transformation](#), curated by Coalition for Juvenile Justice
- Data Snapshot: [Young People Want to Feel Safe](#), UCLA Center for Scholars and Storytellers
- Webinar: [Prioritizing Access to Education and Supportive Services for Student Parents and Expectant Parents of Infants and Toddlers Experiencing Homelessness](#), SchoolHouse Connection

Youth Arts and Achievement Corner!

Coming soon!

In 2025, BYS will include a Youth Arts and Achievement Corner in its newsletter. This will include youth shout outs and highlights, original art, and more! BYS staff will be in touch with partners soon about how to spread the word with the young people they work with and/or how to submit content on behalf of or in collaboration with a young person. Check out more information and content for this feature in a future issue.

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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.

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