



JULY 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

TBD
Youth Justice Section
Manager

Nikki Weiss
Strategic Initiatives
Coordinator

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 Summer! I am honored to write my first message as the new Bureau of Youth Services Director. This newsletter provides updates about our Bureau’s ongoing work and highlights grantees who work tirelessly to ensure that every young person in Wisconsin has access to the resources and opportunities they need to thrive. Thank you for your continued support and commitment to DCF’s mission. Together, we can make significant difference in the lives of young people, helping them build a brighter future. I look forward to working alongside you and sharing our progress and success with you.

- Evelyn Joy Coker

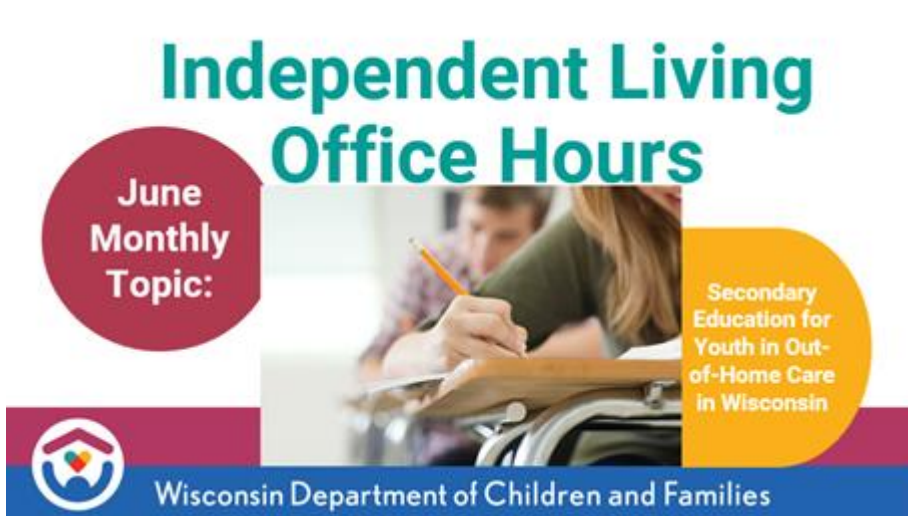
Brief Reflection on YS Conference



The principles of Family First were alive at the DCF Youth Services Conference! Child welfare professionals and service providers came together to learn, collaborate, and innovate practice. From the different lived experience panels and sessions to DCF sharing more than 200 copies of its newly-released [Guide for Youth in Out-of-Home Care](#), participants learned about and received new tools to better center child welfare practice on youth and families. DCF hopes to build upon the success of the Youth Services Conference and the personal and professional connections at the core of it to further “connect the dots” at DCF’s Public Child Welfare Conference. Taking place in the Wisconsin Dells in September 2024, more information is to come. Keep an eye out for a save the date and we look forward to seeing you again!

Youth Services Updates

Independent Living Updates



In May, the BYS independent living staff held their first monthly Independent Living Office Hours. Office Hours are geared towards child welfare professionals providing case management to adolescents in out-of-home care. Independent Living is a required part of case management for adolescents who have been in care for at least six months on or after age 14. This is a great learning opportunity, chance for resource sharing or updates, time to ask questions and to connect with peers in the work, and chance to liaison directly with DCF staff. DCF's Independent Living office hours is not intended to replace other IL groups happening regionally or statewide but rather complement existing opportunities for connection and learning.

The first two sessions were well-attended, with participants joining from throughout the state and offering a great mix of experience. May's session focused on DCF's new [Guide for Youth in Out-of-Home Care](#). In June, the topic was secondary education for youth in out-of-home care. The goal is for each month's meeting to have at least one primary topic, informed by what participants request – and also potentially based on what they themselves want to share! In addition to focusing on that topic, attendees can receive updates directly from DCF, and share best practices and troubleshoot challenges with their peers.

DCF's Independent Living Office Hours will take place from 12-1pm on the third Tuesday of every month. You can request the calendar invitation by emailing DCFILcoordinator@wisconsin.gov.

Youth Justice Updates

Innovation Grants

The 2025 Innovation Grant Application is live! Please check out the [DCF Youth Justice webpage](#) (Innovative practice tab) to review the [Innovation Grant Administrative Guide](#) and [2025 application](#). The administrative guide provides insight about grant requirements and provides resources about how to apply for a grant. The application deadline is **July 18 at 11:59pm**. Please contact the DCF YJ team at DCFYJ@wisconsin.gov if you have any questions about the application.

Interested in past Innovation grant projects? Please check out our [2024 project summaries](#) and [2019-2021 Innovation Grant Final Report](#). A complete Innovation Grant library can be found on the DCF YJ webpage (Innovative practice tab).

Youth Justice Philosophy and Case Process Pilot

In late July, WCWPDS will conduct a 1-day pilot session on a new Youth Justice training course geared toward new YJ professionals. Entitled *Youth Justice Philosophy and Case Process*, this introductory course is intended to provide foundational knowledge of the “why” behind YJ duties and responsibilities in order to build a holistic understanding of how YJ professionals and their work impact families.

Pilot sessions provide great opportunities for DCF to evaluate learner engagement, content, timing, and activities with a target audience. The pilot includes statewide representation of YJ professional learners, including a mix of new and veteran professionals. We are excited to hear feedback from our workforce and look forward to sharing more details on this exciting new training opportunity to come in 2025!

Plan-Do-Study-Act Collaborative on Improving Professional Collaboration

Based on the steps of the scientific method, Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) is a four-stage problem-solving model used for improving a process or carrying out a change. The [PDSA Collaborative](#) encourages organizational change in small, testable cycles: teams **define their goal**, systematically **plan a change**, **evaluate outcomes** using qualitative and/or quantitative metrics, **examine implementation lessons**, and then **advance positive changes**.

A new topic is identified every two years. WCWPDS’s website contains information about previous topics including:

- Executive summary reports on previous topics:
 - [2020-2021 – Quality Worker Visits](#)
 - [2022-2023 – Identifying and Engaging Non-Custodial Parents](#)
- Wisconsin and national resources for each topic area
 - [Quality Worker Visits](#)
 - [Identifying and Engaging Non-Custodial Parents](#)
- Descriptions of [successful changes and tools made by agencies](#)

The **focus of the 2024-2025 PDSA Collaborative is Improving Professional Collaboration**. The goal for this area of focus is that by increasing their collaboration with each other and those they serve, child welfare and human services/behavioral health professionals better understand the needs of children, youth, and families and can therefore prioritize services that are family-centered, strengths-based, streamlined, supportive, and flexible. Eight agencies are participating in Cohort 1 of this effort – seven of which include YJ staff!

If you’d like to learn more or be part of the PDSA efforts, do one or all of the following!:

- Review the [Change Package](#) (national and state resources/tools used to test practice changes). These are strategies you can use even if your agency does not participate in this PDSA!
- Apply to participate! [Applications for Cohort 3](#) are due midnight, October 31, 2024.
- Send any questions about PDSA to [Jenny Fahy](#) at WCWPDS.

Youth Voice Updates

Youth Leadership Team Updates

The Youth Leadership Team (YLT) includes young people, ages 14-21, with lived experience in the Youth Justice system. The most recent YLT meeting was on May 2, 2024 via Zoom. During that meeting, BYS's Youth Services Policy Coordinator, Greta Munns, co-facilitated a Strategic Sharing training with a YLT youth member. Strategic Sharing teaches young people how to share their lived experience stories in strategic ways so that their sharing is impactful, emotionally safe, and a value-added experience for everyone, most of all the young person!

DCF staff are currently planning for the 2024-2025 academic year's YLT meetings. Meetings will be offered via a hybrid format (both in-person and virtual attendance options), take place after school during a weekday, and occur in the following months: October, January, March, and May. More information to come.

If a youth you know would like to get involved in the YLT, please contact dcfyj@wisconsin.gov.

Youth Advisory Council

May meeting and Legislative Day

The Youth Advisory Council (YAC) includes young people, ages 16-26, with lived experience in the Child Welfare system. On Tuesday, May 14, the YAC convened a meeting at the Madison Concourse Hotel to plan and organize themselves for their second annual Legislative Day scheduled for the following day. YAC members voted on their initiatives, discussed challenges that they experience in the child welfare system and after aging out of care, and worked on their elevator speeches to prepare for Legislative Day.

On Wednesday, May 15, Governor Evers, Secretary Amundson, and other DCF staff members welcomed the YAC to DCF's main office in downtown Madison, to get them excited to and help them prepare for meetings with legislators at the state capitol.

The YAC was greeted with an inspirational conversation with the Governor about initiatives that are important to them and other youth with lived experience in Wisconsin's Child Welfare System. DCF staff led an educational session on legislators, background information and key talking points. After meeting with the Governor, members learned more about the Wisconsin Legislature, tailored their messages for meeting with legislators, and enjoyed lunch together.

After lunch, the group walked over to the capitol to speak with legislators on a variety of topics impacting youth with out-of-home care experience ages 16 to 23. Some of the topics they discussed included, but were not limited to, state funding for youth aging out of care, tuition waivers, a transportation assistance program, and increasing funding for kinship care providers.

Not only did YAC members display professionalism and knowledge, but they also exhibited strong self-confidence, communication, and problem-solving skills. Youth talked about many personal experiences, including their experiences aging out of the system and how they want the system to be better for the youth that come after them. And, members expressed gratitude for the opportunity to collaborate with DCF. One YAC member stated, "I walked away from this opportunity feeling empowered and heard by not only legislators, but by the Governor and DCF staff."

Together, DCF and YAC had a successful day of communicating with legislators and using their voice to hopefully influence important policy issues.



Photos from Legislative Day



Future meeting

The next YAC meeting will take place on Friday, July 12, 2024 in Wisconsin Dells, WI. YAC members and advisors will spend the morning at an escape room and then will enjoy lunch together at a nearby lake. This is an opportunity for new and existing YAC members to build rapport with one another by participating in a fun team building activity. The YAC will convene another meeting again in September 2024.

If a youth you know would like to get involved in the YAC at the local and/or state level, please contact your local YAC advisor for more information:

<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/youthservices/pdf/yac-advisors.pdf>.

To learn more about the YAC and/or YLT, visit <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/ys/leadership>.

Youth Services Grantees Highlights

Celebrating Foster Care Awareness Month

To help raise awareness that May is National Foster Care Month, [Youth Services Region 5's](#) Youth Advisory Council (YAC) located in Rock County prepared a display case at the Dr. Hale Williams Job Center in Rock County. This was a shared effort by both the YAC's young adult members and their advisors. The YAC members filled the display with a tree full of beautiful blue and white butterflies on its branches.



All of the butterflies in the display have words or quotes from the youth about how foster care has impacted them. They chose the butterfly because it is a symbol associated with National Foster Care Month. Great job, everyone! It looks awesome!

YAC members and advisors, left to right: Manolito Hernandez-Zamora, YAC member; Mike Winterland, YAC member; Jodi Rich, YAC advisor; Gabriella Griswold, YAC member; and Miranda Addison, YAC advisor.

Creating Community and Sharing their Voices

In late May 2024, members from [Youth Services Region 3's](#) YAC participated in a panel to share their experience being in foster care, as well as their involvement with the YAC and independent living programming. Their stories were powerful and profound, rooted in strength, resilience, and incredible insight. As one panelist shared, "When you age out of foster care, it's definitely eye opening. You realize that you need people who care about you. I was lucky enough to have people who did that weren't family. No person should have to go through that experience alone, but so many do. I believe that's the reason we see so many problems in our community, because they are the people who are ignored. The people who are ignored become people who hurt other people. They are never given the resources to heal and then they reenact this behavior. Or maybe they turn to substances because they get a temporary feeling of goodness. They're searching for something that should have been given to them but never was."

Excellent job, everyone! Thanks for bravely sharing your experiences.

You can read more about the panel event and what participants shared at:

<https://wellpointcare.org/media-and-events/blog-stories/their-voices-former-foster-care-youth-share-stories-of-strength-and-resilience>.

"I'd always felt like there wasn't really a home that I could come to and be embraced by people for who I am, but this environment gave me that."

YTA MEMBER MICHAEL KROSER

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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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