



JUNE 2025

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

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Youth Justice Team

Youth Justice Policy Coordinators

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[Tonisha Hora](#)

As we finally welcome the warmth of summer, I would like to take a moment to reflect on the incredible work happening across the Bureau of Youth Services. From advancing leadership opportunities for young people with lived experience, to preparing for enhancements in our Quality Case Planning project and preparing for the next round of Youth Justice Innovation Grants, BYS is moving forward with intention and heart. It's a season of transitions, too, as we say farewell to two team members who will be deeply missed. There's a lot happening over the next few months that I'm excited for you to learn more about in this newsletter. Before you start reading our BYS updates and information about future events, I'd like to thank you for the dedication and care you bring to this work every day. Your efforts matter and they're making a real impact in the lives of young people and families across Wisconsin. I hope you have a

Bureau Updates

Thank you!

With mixed emotions, we share that **Asia Jackson**, our Anti-Human Trafficking Coordinator since 2019, has been accepted to Marquette University Law School and will be departing BYS on June 27. Asia has always centered the needs of our young people and the strengths of our communities in her work. She has developed best practice guidance, connected partners with resources, ensured grantee success, presented important facts, data, and insights to policymakers, and more recently has helped revitalize our Youth Leadership Team. She is a constant source of positive energy and will be greatly missed. We wish her the greatest success in her next adventure!

When Asia departs, her AHT contract management and YLT duties will be taken on by Tonisha Hora, who has already made an impact in BYS supporting the Youth Advisory Councils. More information on the transition will be forthcoming as we prepare for June 27.

BYS staff would also like to extend recognition and gratitude to **Amy Liu**, an MSW/PhD student from UW Madison, who completed her MSW internship with BYS on June 13. Amy spent the first half of her internship building out a database of YJ Innovation Grant programming, which she later used (along with input from several YJ supervisors and feedback from the DCF YJ team) to develop forthcoming materials related to evidence-based services in the YJ system. Amy's thoughtfulness, curiosity, and enthusiasm for learning made her an asset to our team. We are wishing her the best of luck as she continues in her PhD program!

Division News

Upcoming Info Sessions: First Placement Project

The First Placement Project is an upcoming statewide initiative to explore innovative, supportive child welfare practices aimed at increasing initial placements with relative and like-kin when children enter out-of-home care. Rooted in Wisconsin’s ongoing policy shifts, this project will invite local agencies interested in participating to select and try out new strategies for prioritizing relatives and like-kin at the point of first placement. With preparation starting this fall and a full year of implementation in 2026, this is an opportunity to further align practice with what we know truly matters: relationships, belonging, and family. Participating agencies will be connected to a statewide cohort and supported by DSP, working together to evaluate and refine what works.

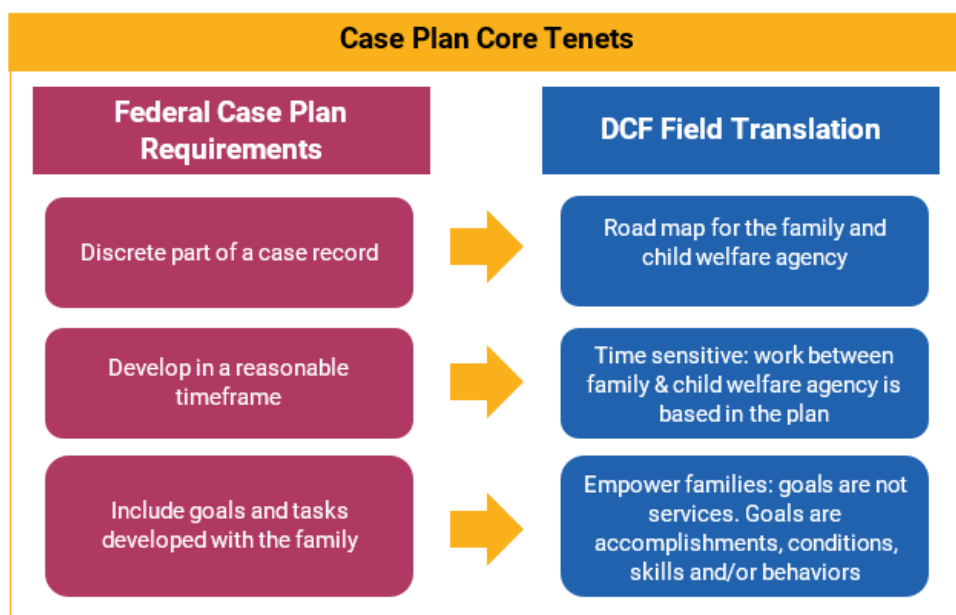
Interested in learning more? Join us for an informational session this summer (no registration required): July 30 @ 3-3:45pm ([link to join](#)) or August 14 @ 10-10:45am ([link to join](#)).

Please direct questions to DSP project lead, [Kayla DuBois](#).

Improving Child Welfare: Quality Case Planning Updates

Quality Case Planning (QCP) is part of the Division of Safety and Permanence’s [Improving Child Welfare package](#) – four initiatives aimed at better supporting youth, families, and the child welfare workforce. The QCP project exists to clarify and standardize child welfare case planning in Wisconsin, so youth and families are involved in the development and completion of the Family Case Plan.

This spring, the QCP workgroup (which includes members from BYS) has been preparing for enhancements to the Family Case Plan (expected as part of the Feb. 2026 eWiSACWIS release). Essential components of the case plan include federal case plan requirements that can be challenging for families to understand and follow. The workgroup has been discussing the “why” of a case plan, identifying DCF Field Translations for core federal requirements. Future eWiSACWIS updates will re-focus the Family Case Plan on core tenets and organize the document, so it is easier for youth and families to access and understand.



Youth Services Updates

Independent Living Updates

BYS recently updated its Roadmap to Independent Living (IL). This resource is a visual guide of requirements and best practices relevant to key IL domains throughout a youth's IL eligibility and features recommendations from youth with lived experience. Take a closer look at the roadmap [here](#).

BYS also recently developed a new IL question and answer resource to guide work while youth and young adults are served by a child welfare agency. This document was shared during May's IL Office Hours and was also sent to those identified as their county's [IL Point of Contact](#). Copies of the Q&A document can also be requested by email from DCFILCoordinator@wisconsin.gov.

Roadmap to Independent Living

13-year-olds

If youth spend even one day in court-ordered out-of-home (OHC) after the age of 13, they are eligible for independent student status on the FAFSA. This means if they go on to postsecondary, they will not have to claim anyone else's income but their own when applying for financial aid.

Youth in care after the age of 13 should receive an allowance and hands-on opportunities to practice money management.

KEY

- Education
- Finances
- Employment
- Permanent Connections
- Cooking
- Housing
- Health
- Transportation
- Case Management
- Requirements for Workers
- Considerations for Workers
- Youth Recommendations

14 to 18-year-olds

An independent living (IL) plan is required for youth ages 14 and older who have spent 6 months or more in court-ordered OHC and also for youth who are age 17.5 or older and in OHC. The IL plan shall be youth-driven and equally informed by the results of the youth's IL assessment and the youth's input about their goals, interests, needs, and challenges. The plan should inform which services and supports are provided to the youth; services shall be documented on the youth's IL page in eWISACWIS. IL is a subset of the youth's Permanency Plan, with IL eligibility, service, and other information populating into the Permanency Plan.

The agency must provide the youth with their credit report annually. Workers will receive notification of credit reports via e-mail, and any reports found for the youth will be updated to eWISACWIS. If there are hits on the youth's credit report, the agency must make efforts to correct those.

14-year-olds

Talk to all youth about the importance of building a strong credit history.

Start the youth out with some easy meals if they don't know any already (i.e. grilled cheese, mac and cheese, stuff that uses a microwave to cook).

16-year-olds

Did you know that if a youth is employed at age 16, they are much more likely to work as adults? Have the youth decide if they are ready to work or not. If they decide they are not ready, don't worry! Ask what additional supports they need to feel prepared for employment and follow up by making the appropriate referrals.

Talk about **Foster Club's Permanency Pact**. Explain the importance of having an informal support network. Permanency Pacts can help guide/begin the conversation about who can and will offer support to the youth after they leave OHC.

Work with youth on budgeting. Regularly creating and updating a budget can help them avoid financial emergencies.

Upgrade to helping cook meat; help the youth understand when it's done and not done and what's safe and not safe in the kitchen setting. Talk about seasonings they like.

17-year-olds

Speak to the youth about a savings account and look at savings options from different banks. Talk to them about opening an account so they can more easily receive checks or direct deposit from employers.

If a youth is looking for a car, show them how to look for inexpensive options on the internet (i.e. CarGurus, Facebook Marketplace, Craigslist). Talk to them about interest rates, the importance of insurance, and the expense of car upkeep and maintenance.

Youth who are eligible for BadgerCare+ due to being in care qualify up to age 26.

Work alongside the youth to fill out the application. Have them consider things like making appointments, refilling prescriptions, calling healthcare providers with questions or problems, making insurance claims, and carrying an insurance card. Discuss emotional ups and downs with the youth, including depression. Let the youth know where they can go to receive help.

Couponing saves money! If the youth plans on living on their own when they turn 18, they should know how to save money on groceries and other household items.

18-year-olds

At the Independent Living Transition to Discharge (ILT-D) meetings, discuss with the youth whether extended care is in the youth's long-term best interest if they qualify (have an IEP and are not expected to graduate from high school by 19).

Reminder: Adult adoptions are possible and can provide some youth who "age out" a sense of permanency. These adoptions do not impact IL eligibility.

Help the youth know how to apply for health insurance each year. Also, tell them that it is a good idea for them to keep their medical history, medication, and doctor visit records, and a list of their doctors' and dentist's contact information and locations.

15-year-olds

Start talking about jobs. See if the youth would be interested in a mock interview to see how it goes. Give them an idea of what to bring to their first interview. Show them how to create a resume! If they have one, look it over and give them tips and tricks to make it better. Make sure the youth knows how important a resume will be growing up. Make sure they know to save it and update it regularly.

Remember, there are additional supports for foster youth through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). Contact your local job center for more information.

Talk about healthy relationships. Help the youth understand the difference between bad and good ones. Do not tell the youth what to do in their relationships. Just show them the difference with examples.

Consider enrolling youth in driver's education.

17 to 18-year-olds

ILT-D meetings should begin at 17.5 and be completed no later than 90 days before the youth's 18th birthday. These meetings should be initiated by the Child Welfare Agency, and include (at a minimum) the youth, their adult supporters, and a representative from the Transition Resource Agency.

If a youth has been in court-ordered OHC for 6 months or more and reaches the age of majority while in court-ordered OHC, their agency must ensure the child is in possession of the following: certified copy of their birth certificate, Social Security card, information on maintaining health care coverage, and either a driver's license or state-issued identification. Document the provision of these documents on the youth's IL page in eWISACWIS. This information populates into the Permanency Plan.

17 to 18-year-olds

The agency must provide youth a copy of their healthcare records 90 days before their 18th birthday.

Youth who "aged out" become ineligible for IL and Brighter Star; provide them with information about and/or referrals to other services or benefits for which they qualify beyond age 23.

Youth who "aged out" become ineligible for BadgerCare+ at age 26, unless deemed eligible for another reason.

17 to 18-year-olds

The agency must provide youth a copy of their healthcare records 90 days before their 18th birthday.

Youth who age out are eligible for postsecondary supports through Brighter Star. These funds can be used at technical colleges, 4-year universities, and other training or certification programs if the program/institution is accredited or pre-accredited.



If you were in out-of-home care and want to help "build the roadmap" & serve as a guide for others transitioning to adulthood, consider joining a Youth Advisory Council. Get more info here: [Youth Leadership Opportunities in Wisconsin](#)

19 to 21-year-olds

If the youth is in a post-secondary school (technical college or four-year university) talk to them about housing options.

If a youth remains in OHC after age 18, the agency must continue to collect the youth's healthcare records and provide them to the youth 90 days prior to the termination of court order or Voluntary Transition to Independent Living Agreement (VTILA) and document this on the youth's IL page in eWISACWIS.

Youth who completed the NYTD survey at 17 will be asked to participate again at 19 and 21.

22 to 26-year-olds

Once the youth reaches age 23, they no longer qualify for IL or Brighter Star supports and funds.

Before youth become ineligible for BadgerCare+, talk to them about different ways of getting insurance (i.e. through employer, Marketplace, Medicaid).

"I want to see more youth go to school. I want more youth to achieve greatness, and I want them to know they are not alone in any battle."
- [ShawnaRae](#)

The Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF) originally developed the Roadmap to Independent Living in collaboration with Wisconsin's FosterClub All-Stars, with revisions made in 2025. Intended to serve as a visual guide for the overall independent living continuum, the Roadmap shows how the needs youth identify intersect with DCF's independent living requirements. We encourage those working with youth to use this as a conversation starter regarding their needs, dreams, and plans for the future.

The Department of Children and Families is an equal opportunity employer and service provider. If you have a disability and need to access services, receive information in an alternate format, or need information translated to another language, please call the Division of Safety and Permanence at (608) 264-8787. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind or speech disabled can use the free Wisconsin Relay Service (WRS) - 711 to contact the department.

Youth Justice Updates

Innovation Grants – Applications open through July 10!



YJ Innovation Grants are a competitive opportunity for county human service agencies to implement new evidence-informed practices or programs with short-term start-up funding from the Department of Children and Families. DCF is excited to announce 2 types of YJ Innovation Grant opportunities in 2025: **YJ - Project Area Grants** and **YJ - Micro Grant Lived Experience**.

This year marks a slight departure from previous Innovation Grant cycles. Key details to note:

- Only county human service agencies are eligible to apply for YJ Innovation Grants, but counties still may apply in collaboration with other counties, tribes, or community agencies.
- County agencies awarded an Innovation Grant in 2024 (initial or continuation) are not eligible to apply for a YJ – Project Area grant this year. However, those counties are eligible for the YJ – Micro Grant Lived Experience.
- Counties applying for a Project Area Grant may only apply for grant funding for one of the available project areas: Reducing YJ Referrals, Pre-Court Diversion, or Post-Dispositional Services.
- All contracts have an anticipated start date of January 1, 2026.

Applications for the YJ Innovation Grants are now open and must be submitted electronically to DCFYJ@wisconsin.gov no later than 11:59pm CST, July 10, 2025.

Case Information Page (CIP) Redesign

We will be offering a demo and office hours to support the release of the new CIP that will be released with the June eWiSACWIS release.

- **Live Demo - June 20 from 1-4pm:** Youth Justice supervisors and staff are invited to view a live demo of the new CIP. Join the demo with this [meeting link](#).
- **Office Hours:** We encourage you to drop in to office hours with any additional questions you may have about the new page.
 - ◇ Tuesday, June 24, 10-11:30am: [meeting link](#)
 - ◇ Thursday, June 26, 1-2:30pm: [meeting link](#)

New YJ dashboard featuring data from secure detention registry coming

BYS is preparing for the release of our first YJ dashboard – the **Juvenile Secure Detention Registry (JSDR) dashboard**. At the time of publication, the dashboard is wrapping QA testing ahead of an expected release in late June 2025. Because this data tool contains youth-level data, it will not be public facing and will only be available via eWReports. Once the dashboard is available, you can ask a county security delegate or the [CWRA team](#) for access.

Screenshot of JS DR Dashboard

Juvenile Secure Detention Registry (JSDR) Dashboard

Wisconsin Department of Children and Families

Juvenile Detention Facilities (JDFs) are secure holding facilities, primarily intended to serve youth on short-term stays. **The JSDR tracks all admissions to JDFs in Wisconsin.**

Purpose of JSDR Dashboard

This dashboard is designed to provide basic information about admissions and youth held in JDFs within a selected reporting period.

Included Data

- Admissions to the 11 JDFs operating outside of Milwaukee County.
- Any admission entered in the JSDR by JDF staff dating back to 2019.
- Data is refreshed once per day in the morning.

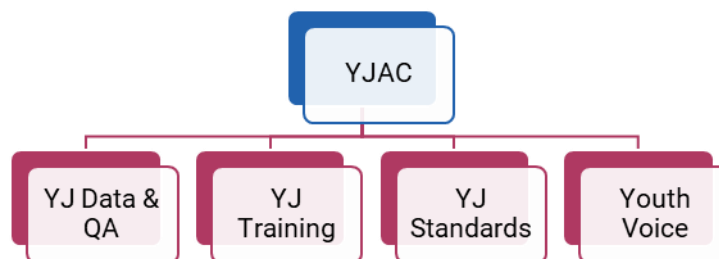
Use this Dashboard to Explore Questions Like:

- How does use of secure detention compare across the state?
- Which counties are sending youth to detention?
- How many youth were admitted to detention at least once last year?
- What are the demographic characteristics of youth admitted to a JDF?
- How do annual admission trends compare year over year?
- How does Average Daily Population compare across facilities?
- What is the median length of stay in a JDF?

Youth Justice Advisory Committee

We have some exciting news! In June 2025, two existing BYS committees (the YJ Statewide Training Committee and the YASI Steering Committee) merged to form the **Youth Justice Advisory Committee (YJAC)**.

Joining these 2 committees is part of our transition from YASI implementation into ongoing maintenance of the community-based YJ system. We aim to simplify efforts in consulting with external YJ partners, streamline processes, and eliminate redundancy in policy and practice consultations with committee members. Most topics previously covered in the YASI Steering and YJ Training committees will continue to be discussed within YJAC, with the addition of information on current and future BYS YJ topics. More information about this committee can be found in this flier.



Youth Justice Updates continued...

Youth Justice Training

Youth Justice Philosophy and Case Process (YJPCP) kicked off its first session on February 25, 2025! We are very excited to be adding this training to the professional development opportunities for Youth Justice professionals in our state.

Knowing many YJ supervisors may not have the time to observe a full one-day training, Wisconsin Child Welfare Professional Development System (WCWPDS) will provide opportunities for supervisors to join WCWPDS for a short overview of the training, including ways supervisors can support teams as they prepare and complete this course.

Below are the 2025 dates and times the supervisor overview will be offered. No need to register or RSVP...just click the link below and show up!



- [August 14, 2pm-3pm](#)
- [October 15, 10am-11am](#)
- [December 10, 12pm-1pm](#)

We are excited to announce a training program for new youth justice professionals!

The WiLearn Youth Justice Program will begin to address some of the identified training gaps and is part of a longer-term strategy to build up YJ infrastructure. WiLearn YJ provides a fundamental grounding in trauma-informed, culturally responsible child welfare practice that supports all children and youth entering the child welfare system, regardless of which “door” they enter. This cohort-based program fosters collaborative learning, experience-sharing, and networking among new professionals.

WiLearn YJ Cohorts launch quarterly, and the training package will include:

- Pre-Service and eWiSACWIS web-based modules
- Four Foundational Elements
- Case Practice with American Indian Tribes: Understanding WICWA training



How to enroll: Learners must have a primary role of YJ professional in PDS Online. The Wisconsin Child Welfare Professional Development System (PDS) will enroll those who meet eligibility criteria into the WiLearn Youth Justice Program. Enrollment will begin July 1 for the first Cohort that will launch on October 1. Enrollment will be confirmed with the supervisor and is strongly encouraged for all new YJ professionals hired or transferred after 7/1/2025 but is not required.

For more information, see this [flyer](#) and frequently-asked-questions [document](#).

Now Recruiting: Coaches for YASI Coach Cohort 4!

BYS also partners with WCWPDS to train and support YASI coaches – YJ professionals who receive additional training to serve as local YASI experts. Coaches play an important role in their county: modeling practices in the field, providing on-the-spot technical assistance and feedback, and supporting accuracy and timely completion of YASI assessments and case plans. Coaches do not act as supervisors, unless they already hold this role within their department.

Wisconsin currently has 31 trained YASI coaches in 19 counties, and we are looking to expand further!

Key details about YASI Coaching:

- Coaches complete an additional 33 hours of specialized training on top of the already required 30 hours of initial training (CCW1, CCW2, Booster 1, Booster 2).
- WCWPDS coach training and certification for county applicants is FREE.
- Coaches participate in quarterly YASI Coach calls with PDS and DCF to share frequently asked questions, technical issues, and local training needs.
- Coaches are prepared to facilitate quality assurance exercises such as study groups and independent case reviews.
- Coaches participate in an annual in-person networking event to build skills and collaborate with other county coaches, training, and policy staff.

Wisconsin YASI Coach Application Checklist

- Required qualifications:**
 - Current YJ professional or YJ supervisor.
 - Completed CCW1, CCW2, Booster 1 and Booster 2 trainings.
- Desired qualifications:**
 - Experience administering the YASI assessment and case plans, or supervising others with these responsibilities.
 - Experience in a lead worker or supervisory role.
 - Willingness to share and teach skills.
 - Ability to recognize areas YJ professionals might need improvement.
 - Experience with providing constructive feedback.
 - Demonstrated ability to work collaboratively with others.
 - Training in evidence-based practices, such as Motivational Interviewing, Cognitive Behavioral Intervention, or Trauma Informed Care and possesses the ability to apply these skills consistently when coaching colleagues and working with YJ clients.
 - Demonstrates the following:
 - Empathetic, respectful.
 - Strong communication and interpersonal skills.
 - Strong interest and desire to be a leader.
 - Optimistic, adaptive, creative, flexible.
 - Enjoys new challenges.
- Completed YASI Coach Application Face Sheet.**
- Cover letter that outlines required and desired qualifications of applicant.**
- Letter of support from direct manager/supervisor.**

WCWPDS/BYS are accepting applications for YASI coach training until July 18, 2025. Contact [Lindsay Ebben](#) or [Jenna Dunlap](#) with questions or to turn in completed application materials.

Youth Voice Updates

Youth Leadership Team



The Youth Leadership Team (YLT) is a group for **youth ages 14-21 with Youth Justice system experience** who are interested in partnering with the Department of Children and Families (DCF) staff to impact state policy and practice.

Our last Youth Leadership Team meeting took place on April 3rd and over 60 youth attended! We were joined by Tess Brodsky and Shane Arndt who discussed the topic of case plans. Youth provided feedback on if they were involved in making a case plan and how that felt, how long they think a case plan should be and how many goals should be included, examples of goals that were helpful for them, and additional items they would like to see in their case plan. We appreciate all the feedback offered by this great group of young people and plan to use this information to guide ongoing Quality Case Planning work.

Youth Advisory Council



May was a busy month for the Youth Advisory Council (YAC) with a state advisory council meeting and Legislative Advocacy Day held in Madison in the same week! 20 members attended the May YAC meeting, and each region of the state had a representative in attendance. During the meeting, members celebrated personal achievements, learned strategic sharing strategies, connected personal stories with policy areas of interest, and participated in mock meetings with legislators to prepare for Legislative Advocacy Day.

The annual Legislative Advocacy Day – a day to celebrate Foster Care Awareness Month organized by the YAC – was held the day after the May YAC meeting. The day opened with a meeting between YAC members and Division of Safety and Permanence Administrator, John Elliott, and Department of Children and Families Secretary, Jeff Pertl. Members shared their policy priorities, highlighting the impact of Independent Living services and supports, their desire to see additional housing programs for youth and young adults within their communities, and the importance of supporting kin and like-kin caregivers so they can support children.

The event continued at the Wisconsin State Capitol, where teams of 3-4 YAC members had the opportunity to meet with representatives from at least 3 legislative offices. Members did a wonderful job offering concrete suggestions for change and growth, as well as offering perspective about what makes a difference “on the ground.” While some staffers remembered YAC members from previous year, many of this year’s legislative participants were new. This engaging advocacy from YAC members provided an excellent opportunity for legislators to learn of the important work youth with lived experience are doing with support from DCF.

This year’s Legislative Advocacy Day was a highly successful, collaborative event thanks to the hard work of YAC members, members of the Secretary’s Office, and the Bureau of Youth Services. BYS appreciates facilitating this great opportunity to connect those in positions of influence with the opportunity to learn and hear directly from young people.



Secretary Jeff Pertl sits with members of the Wisconsin State Youth Advisory Council on the steps of the Wisconsin State Capitol.

DCF and Governor's office to recognize youth with child welfare experience at graduation event!

The Department of Children and Families (DCF) will host its 13th annual Youth Achievements Ceremony (formerly called the Foster Youth Graduation Event) at the Governor's Executive Residence on **Tuesday, July 29, 2025, from 5:30pm to 7:00pm**. The event will include speeches from special guests, information about resources available to young people who are leaving out-of-home care, food, and recognition of graduates!

DCF needs *your* help identifying youth to participate so we can invite them to this graduation event!

Without referrals from service providers like you, DCF is unable to identify youth eligible to attend. Please share this opportunity to others in your agency who may also be aware of graduates.

(continued on next page)

Youth Voice Updates continued...

DCF and Governor's office to recognize youth with child welfare experience at graduation event!

To qualify to participate, a young person must meet both of the following requirements:

- Be **IL and/or ETV eligible**, meaning they are currently in out-of-home care, "aged out" of out-of-home care, or were adopted or entered Chapter 48.977 guardianship after age 16.
- **Graduated after the last celebration on July 22, 2024, or be expected to graduate by the time of the celebration on July 29, 2025**; graduation may be from high school (or equivalent) – or higher.

To successfully plan for the event (e.g. get security clearance for participants, distribute gift cards and materials, plan for food, etc.) sign up for the event is a two-step process: initial nomination by a direct service provider and a youth RSVP:

1. Nomination from direct service provider (due June 30, 2025 at 5:00pm): Please use this [JotForm](#) for each youth you would like to nominate to participate in the ceremony. Important notes:

- If multiple agencies serve or are aware of the same graduate eligible to attend this event, please work together to coordinate *one submission per graduate*.
- The contact information included in your nomination form will be used to send out an RSVP form to youth. Please be sure the email address included is current, correct, and connected to the graduate and/or another individual in frequent contact with the graduate who can help them RSVP for this event.

2. Youth RSVP: DCF will use the [Jotform](#) submissions to send out a second email (with the nominator cc'd) with an RSVP link for the identified graduate to confirm participation in the event. Important notes:

One final step for direct service providers – please work collaboratively with the graduate and their support system to arrange transportation for them to and from the event at the Governor's Executive Residence!

Nominate a Champion of Change

During the Graduation Celebration, DCF recognizes two graduates who have been a Champions of Change in their efforts to improve youth-serving systems. This year, we are soliciting nominations directly from you! Any youth nominated for this award **must be eligible to attend the Foster Youth Graduation Event AND plan to attend**. Use [this form](#) to nominate a graduate for a Champion of Change award until 5pm on Friday, July 11, 2025.

If you have any questions, contact dcfoys@wisconsin.gov. We look forward to celebrating with you!

What We're Reading

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

- Toolkit, [A practice framework for creating supportive work environments for older youth and young adults who have experienced foster care](#), Mainspring Consulting
- Fact Sheet, [Understanding boys' mental health](#), Wisconsin Office of Children's Mental Health
- Blog Post, [Claiming your spot at the breakfast table - family privilege and foster care](#), Marianne K. Ozmun-Wells
- Issue Brief, [Working with LGBTQ+ youth and families in child welfare](#), Wisconsin Department of Children and Families

Youth Arts and Achievements Corner

New this year, BY's Youth Arts and Achievements Corner is dedicated to elevating the voices and successes of the youth our team serves. This part of the newsletter is an opportunity for us to highlight young adults' original artwork and/or shout-outs that others share about them.

This month, we are proud to highlight the work from two artists. The first submission is a photograph by Jordan Craige, who describes his photo as "the product of one of my new interests which is night photography." This [picture](#) was taken on Barkers Island in Superior, Wisconsin.

(continued on next page)



The second submission is a poem written to express the love the author received from their foster mom.

*In a house where shadows linger, A little girl danced with demons,
Wrapped in the chaos of her childhood, Where screams colored the air,
memories dripped like paint on crumbling walls, she started to learn that
love sometimes wore a mask, and peace was just the ghost of the place she
longed to belong.*

*She was in her most vulnerable state, then entered a woman, fierce as the
sun, with eyes that promised futures uncharted, a hand reaching through
the darkness, pulling her from ruins.*

*"Come, I will show you life beyond the hurt." Whisking her away to a world
where laughter wasn't an echo but a promise, where dreams grew wild in
sunlit gardens.*

*But whispers turned to howls, Blades of anger slicing through smoke, "Who is
she? A thief in disguise!" they cried,*

*The family gnashing teeth at kindness, As if love were a crime, unforgivable.
Truth drowned out by beasts of jealousy. But what did they know in their pit
of darkness? That woman gave her wings when the little girl was taught to
drown.*

*She offered more than safety; she gifted maturity, The chance to taste
freedom on her lips,*

*Yet faced resentment like a storm. She stands tall now roots growing bold
and strong, In the garden made by another's hands. No longer just an echo in
the halls of pain. Now a symphony rising from ashes and scars.*

*She holds that love like armor against the past. So let them cast stones. let
them howl in the night. Amidst anger and confusion lies truth shining*

*Abandonment once wrapped around the child's heart so tight, Now it's relief
that lingers with love from a light.*

Thank you to both of this issue's artists for sharing your work with us!

Whether you are a young person aged 14-23 who would like to submit a piece of art or an adult supporter who either wants to submit on a young person's behalf or give a shout-out to celebrate a young person, please visit <https://form.jotform.com/DCFBYS/wi-dcf-bys-newsletteryouth-corner> to learn more about this opportunity and to submit content.

JUNE 2025

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
Kendra Schiffman
Sarina Wiesner
Shane Arndt

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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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