



Wisconsin Department of Children and Families

Bureau of Youth Services Newsletter

MARCH 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
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Carlton Frost
Youth Justice Section
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Tess Brodsky
Strategic Initiatives
Coordinator

Youth Justice Team

Youth Justice Policy
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Kendra Schifffman
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Youth Services Team

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Youth Services Policy
Coordinators

Faith Price
Greta Munns
Tonisha Hora

Raise your voice! Over the next several months there is an important window of opportunity that won't come again for two years – the state budget process. This is the time when **legislators decide how much to spend on programs and services, including those that support our youth and families.** This newsletter includes a high-level summary of some of the many important proposals in the Governor's budget, but legislators may not know the impact they could have. **However, they listen to their constituents - YOU!** Please review the information provided, then reach out to your representatives, share your stories, and tell them what our child welfare professionals, service partners, and communities need.

Thank you for your continued commitment to Wisconsin's children, youth, and families.

Bureau Updates

Welcome to BYS!



Prior to joining BYS as a Youth Justice Policy Analyst, **Shane Arndt** was the Youth Justice Intake Supervisor for Sheboygan County for four years. In that role, he supervised eight workers, including four intake workers, three ongoing workers, and a truancy/teen court worker. Before working in Sheboygan County, he was a Social Worker for Fond du Lac County, primarily working as a YJ Intake worker, with some experience in ongoing CPS and YJ cases.

Outside of work, Shane enjoys spending time outdoors with his wife, hiking and kayaking. They have a one-year-old puppy and a wobbly cat, who was born with an undeveloped cerebellum, giving her a unique stride. They also have two nieces and a nephew who they adore and with whom they love to spend time.

Welcome to *BYS* continued...



Kendra Schiffman is also new to the *BYS* YJ team! She began her career in higher education as a sociology professor after pursuing graduate studies at Northwestern University. After teaching, she made a late career transition into public service. Prior to her current role as Youth Justice Policy Analyst, she was an analyst and senior analyst for the Rock County criminal legal system and Human Services Department. During her six years with Rock County, she had great experiences working on collaborative projects across criminal legal, behavioral health, child welfare, and youth justice systems. In her new role with DCF, Kendra looks forward to focusing on state-level YJ initiatives to improve services and life outcomes for system-involved youth. Even though Kendra admits she misses mentoring, teaching, and learning from students as they transition into adulthood, she is happy to be able to continue working in public service for the state of Wisconsin.

Kendra grew up in Utah, but she spent most of her adult life in the Midwest: she lived in the city (not the suburbs) of Chicago for 9 years while going to graduate school, then moved to Jackson, Michigan for a couple years for an academic position, and then came to Beloit, Wisconsin in 2013. She has two kids who keep her on my toes: her daughter is an incredibly talented writer and visual artist, and her son plays soccer, runs track, and plays saxophone and clarinet for the Beloit Memorial High School jazz ensemble. Kendra and her kids are all very creative, so many of their activities together involve art projects, visiting art museums/art festivals, listening to live music, enjoying live theater, and reading great books. In addition, Kendra also enjoys exploring Milwaukee and Chicago, being outdoors (especially hiking and biking), and trying all kinds of food.

Department News

Governor's SFY2025-2027 Budget

On February 18, 2025, Governor Evers presented his Biennial Budget recommendations to the Wisconsin public and the state legislature. His budget proposals include many provisions to support DCF's efforts to better support the state's vulnerable children, youth, and families. The full text of the Governor's budget is available at [2025-27 Budget in Brief](#).

DCF staff summarized key aspects of the DCF budget provisions in [DCF DSP Budget 25-27](#), and we invite you to check it out! There, you can learn more about the Governor's proposed investments in many of DCF's services and programs. These include several proposals to better support older youth, including:

- Expanding eligibility and funding for independent living services by \$10.5 million allows DCF to better support young people for an extended period after they leave out-of-home care.
- Investing \$7.5 million for programs that support runaway and homeless youth helps ensure that the state's most vulnerable young people stay safe.
- Extending kinship care and subsidized guardianship to include youth involved with the youth justice system lets more young people achieve permanency by keeping them with people who know and love them – including relatives and like-kin.

- Providing \$10 million over the biennium to return 17-year-olds to the youth justice system and creating a Juvenile Justice Reform Review Committee to make recommendations to DCF and the Department of Corrections regarding certain areas of reform to the juvenile justice system are foundational to achieving this goal
- \$66 million investment over the biennium to support services for crime victims statewide and help critical victim service providers stay afloat after significant recent federal funding cuts. The Governor's investment will help ensure that domestic violence agencies across the state have the resources they need to serve families in crisis.

You can find out more about opportunities to provide feedback on any of the budget proposals to the legislature's Joint Committee on Finance (JCF) by visiting the [Joint Finance](#) webpage.

Child Welfare in the Courts Conference

Save the date for [Child Welfare in the Courts Conference](#)! It will take place from September 24-26, 2025, at the Kalahari Resort in Wisconsin Dells. Registration will open in June 2025.

Preserving Connections to *family* CULTURE *community*

Presentation Topics Include:

Connecting with Families in the Courtroom

Supporting Youth in Care

Attorney Ethics Workshops

Strategies for Interrupting Bias

This is a multi-disciplinary event

Youth Services Updates

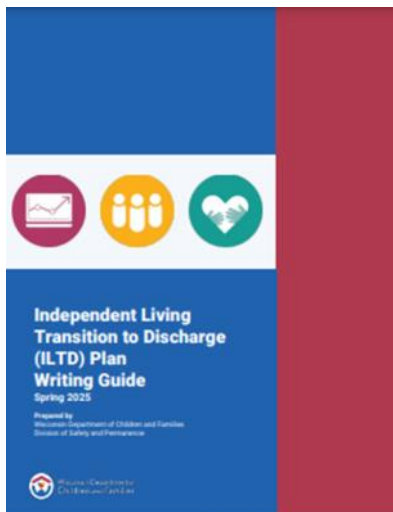
Independent Living Updates

The February 2025 eWiSACWIS release included several independent living (IL) enhancements. These were heavily informed by feedback from child welfare agency (CWA) partners, Transition Resource Agency (TRA) partners, and youth partners. These enhancements are not changes to Standards or IL requirements. Rather, they relate to existing IL requirements and practices, with the underlying goal to enhance eWiS features in ways that:

- Streamline IL processes by increasing IL visibility and accessibility;
- Support and facilitate more robust IL documentation; and
- In the case of changes made to the Independent Living Transition to Discharge (ILTD) Plan, elevate youth participation as the main driver of Plan development.

Key IL enhancements in this release include:

- Streamlining how the workforce accesses a youth's IL page by adding a new IL tile on the Cases tab
- Creating an IL case note type to allow the workforce to more easily and completely document IL supports, services, contacts, and other work done with IL-eligible youth in care; these case notes should be entered in combination with information logged on the youth's IL page
- Adding more structure to IL assessment/plan tab on IL page by creating more space and functionality to record details about youth's IL assessments and plans throughout IL eligibility rather than just once or twice
- Adjusting the existing IL assessment/plan task reminder to prompt the child welfare professional to review, and as relevant, revise a youth's IL assessment and plan with the youth on a regular basis rather than just once when the youth is initial eligible
- Allowing image uploads to IL notes to allow IL partners (primarily TRA service providers) to supplement an IL note with a visual like a screenshot or other document
- Updating the ILTD Plan to make it more youth-focused and youth-friendly, accommodate and emphasize the important iterative nature of ILTD plan development, and allow for more personalization and customization according to youth wants, needs, goals, challenges, and circumstances
 - To support child welfare professionals' work with the revised ILTD Plan, DCF developed two documents – [ILTD Writing Guide](#) and the accompanying [ILTD Desk Guide](#).



Don't forget!

Last spring, DCF IL staff started IL Office Hours. This takes place via Teams from 12-1pm on the third Tuesday of the month and is an opportunity for child welfare professionals doing independent living work to connect with each other and with DCF staff.

Sometimes there is a specific topic for discussion; in April, DCF staff will focus on the recent eWiSACWIS IL enhancements, which will include a walkthrough of changes made. If you are interested in the April or any future DCF IL Office Hours, you can request the calendar invite by emailing

DCFILCoordinator@wi.gov.

Anti-Human Trafficking Updates

We are excited to share multiple AHT learning and training opportunities.

Please join the DCF Region 3 Anti-Trafficking Program and Rethink Resources for their next series of Conversations about Sex Trafficking. Conversations will take place virtually via [Zoom](#) on the first Wednesday of the month and no registration is necessary.

Also, Sowers Education Group will return to Wisconsin to offer four additional rounds of the [Ending the Game Supporter Training](#). This full-day training provides an overview of best practices to support survivors of sex trafficking and highlight strategies to foster coercion resiliency.

County partners with a PDS Online account staff may register after [logging in](#).

For interested partners who do not have a PDS Online account, please refer to the link below to [create a Self-Registration Account](#).

Please reach out to DCFAHT@Wisconsin.gov with any questions.



CONVERSATIONS ABOUT SEX TRAFFICKING

a First Wednesday of the month virtual exploration of topics and questions related to all things CSEC, DMST, exploitation, high risk, and any other way you refer to 'sex trafficking.'

Hear from guest partners, share your ideas, encounter resources and enhance your skill set.

Your Voice, Their Future: Safe Harbor and Beyond
with Joli Guenther, Wisconsin Association for Homeless and Runaway Services
Wednesday, March 5, 2025 from Noon to 1 PM

Meeting Youth Where They Are (Literally): A Safety Planning Refresher with Briarpatch
with Jen Ripp, Briarpatch Youth Services
Wednesday, April 2, 2025 from Noon to 1 PM

Forced Criminality: What rights and options do youth have
with Katie York, Wisconsin State Public Defenders Office
Wednesday, May 7, 2025 from Noon to 1 PM

Supporting Transition Age Youth
with Crystal Meier, Workforce Resource
Wednesday, June 4, 2025 from Noon to 1 PM

Zoom link for every meeting: <https://chwi.zoom.us/j/293265015287>
Meeting ID: 932 6501 5287

If you'd like to be added to our email list to receive a calendar invite with the Zoom link, please email [Rebekah Dettmann at rdettmann@childrenswi.org](mailto:rdettmann@childrenswi.org)

Sponsored by the DCF WI Region 3 Anti-Human Trafficking Hub & Rethink Resources with hosts Rebekah Dettmann & Claudine O'Leary



NEW - Ending the Game Supporter Training
Learn best practices to support sex trafficking victims and strategies to foster coercion resiliency.

2025 Sessions:

in-Person

Date: March 27
Time: 9:00 am-3:45 pm
Location:
The Ingleside Hotel
2810 Golf Road
Pewaukee, WI

Date: May 21
Time: 9:00 am-3:45 pm
Location:
Holiday Inn South 4751
Owen Ayres Court Eau
Claire, WI

Date: July 17
Time: 9:00 am-3:45 pm
Location:
Holiday Inn
1565 N. Casaloma Drive
Appleton, WI

Date: October 8
Time: 9 am-3:45 pm
Location:
Marriott West-Madison
1313 John Q Hammons
Middleton, WI

Register Now

Topics covered include:

- Domestic sex trafficking facts and statistics
- "The game" (trafficking subculture)
- The breaking process and psychological coercion
- Dual identity, recidivism, and language sensitivity
- How to support a survivor's true self

By the end of this training, you will be able to:

- Define "sex trafficking" in accordance with federal laws and definitions
- Understand seven risk factors that lead to sex trafficking and how these risk factors may be present in the youth and communities' participants serve: Survival, Trafficker, Recruiter, Environment, Abuse, Media, Solicitation
- Define "coercion" in accordance with psychology and mental health definitions
- Describe the common coercion process in trafficking: Bend, Break, Build, Lock
- Identify signs of dual identity within trafficking victims
- Learn about the wide variety of needs a victim has and identify/build resources to meet them
- Explore best practices for speaking to a survivor's true self
- Practice motivational communication skills tailored for interactions with victims of sex trafficking

The target audience for this training is Child Welfare Professionals, Youth Justice, Tribal Organizations, and Youth Service Providers.

IMPORTANT:
Please note that the prework for this training are the web-based modules, "Understanding Child Sex Trafficking in Wisconsin." Here is the link to access the prework: <https://wcwpds.wisc.edu/web-based-courses/understanding-child-sex-trafficking/>



Youth Justice Updates

2023 YJ Referral and Intake Report Now Available Online!

The Youth Justice (YJ) Referrals and Intake Report provides information on youth referred to the YJ system, YJ referral details, and YJ intake decisions logged in eWiSACWIS during one calendar year (CY). In CY 2023, county human service agencies logged 13,796 YJ referrals for 8,630 unique youth into eWiSACWIS. While there was a slight decrease in youth referred and referrals received in 2023, many statewide trends were like those observed in 2022.

Read the 2023 report here: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/publications/pdf/5549.pdf> . If this year's report raises questions about your own county, remember, BYS has resources to support counties in analyzing YJ referral data! These materials 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 Justice Training: Youth Justice Philosophy and Case Process

Youth Justice Philosophy and Case Process (YJPCP) kicked off with the very 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, WCWPDS will provide opportunities for supervisors to join WCWPDS for a short overview of the training, including ways supervisors can support your team as they prepare and complete this course.

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

- March 17, 3pm-4pm <https://zoom.us/j/4868041595>
- April 4, 12pm-1pm <https://uwmadison.zoom.us/j/9646086317>
- April 18, 9am-10am <https://uwmadison.zoom.us/j/9646086317>
- June 3, 2pm-3pm <https://uwmadison.zoom.us/j/9646086317>
- August 14, 2pm-3pm <https://uwmadison.zoom.us/j/9646086317>
- October 15, 10am-11am <https://uwmadison.zoom.us/j/9646086317>
- December 10, 12pm-1pm <https://uwmadison.zoom.us/j/9646086317>

2026 Youth Justice Innovation Grant Applications Available in Late Spring!



YJ Innovation Grants are a competitive opportunity for county human service agencies (counties) to implement new evidence-informed practices or programs with short-term start-up funding from the Department of Children and Families (DCF). Only Wisconsin county human service agencies are eligible to apply for this grant opportunity. Counties may apply in partnership with other counties or tribes – all participating partners should be listed on the application. Contracts are tentatively anticipated to begin on January 1, 2026.

BYS encourages counties to start thinking about the application process and program areas their county could benefit from. If counties are looking for inspiration or a “place to start”, please attend the Innovation Grant Q2 meeting. Hear from your county YJ peers how they utilized the funding, challenges, and solutions they have created through the grant period.

Come one, come all! Please join us on April 23, 2025, via Zoom. Contact DCFYJ@wisconsin.gov for more information.

Innovation Grant Q2 Zoom Meeting Invite:

<https://dcfwi.zoom.us/j/85424943598?pwd=6WhMyqCbM40aHxM3O550tmOQl7p8Vn.1>

Meeting ID: 854 2494 3598

Passcode: 739014

Interested in past Innovation grant projects? A complete Innovation Grant library can be found on the [DCF YJ webpage](#) (Innovative practice tab).

Youth Voice Updates

Youth Leadership Team

The Youth Leadership Team (YLT) met on January 29, 2025. An amazing 42 youth from across the state attended this virtual meeting! YLT members discussed advocacy and how to use their lived experience to influence change.

The YLT will convene again virtually on April 3, 2025, from 5:00-6:30pm. Meeting and registration information to come.

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 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/ys/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.



Youth Voice Updates continued...

Youth Advisory Council

The February Youth Advisory Council (YAC) served as the state's first hub-model YAC meeting, with a whopping 36 youth joining from centralized sites in 6 of the 7 regions across Wisconsin. Youth heard from DCF's Legislative Liaison and Budget Director regarding the legislative process, where they can find information on past budget proposals, and how bills become laws. Additionally, each region worked on digging deep and identifying policy and practice changes they would like to prioritize. The input of additional youth who have not previously engaged in state YAC brought fresh new ideas and stressed the importance of creating low-barrier opportunities for diverse representation to current YAC Officers and the Department. The policy and practice priorities brainstormed in February will be voted on by the Statewide YAC prior to their May Legislative Day.



What We're Reading

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

- Toolkit, [Older Youth Advocacy Toolkit](#), Pennsylvania CASA Association
- Article, [What Happened When America Emptied Its Youth Prisons](#), James Forman Jr. for New York Times Magazine
- Book, [The Rage of Innocence: How America Criminalizes Black Youth](#), Kristin Henning
- Article, [How Trauma Affects Kids in School](#), Child Mind Institute

Youth Arts and Achievements Corner

New this year, BYS'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.

We are *thrilled* to include our first Corner piece, created by Detailus Davis and submitted by their CWA adult supporter, Julie. Julie says, "Detailus has made so much progress since I met him six years ago. He is getting ready to graduate high school, has been staying out of trouble, and has made positive friends and supports in the community. He enjoys drawing and this is one of his drawings." Great job, Detailus, on all your hard work and positive influences, and thank you for sharing your art 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-newsletter-youth-corner> to learn more about this opportunity and to submit content.



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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!](#)