



Wisconsin Department of Children and Families

Bureau of Youth Services Newsletter

OCTOBER 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 Policy
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As summer begins to wind down, it feels like the perfect time to pause and reflect on what we've accomplished together. This summer, we honored young people at our Youth Achievement Ceremony, launched the Youth Justice Advisory Committee, hosted our annual YASI Coaching Event, announced our 2026 Youth Justice Innovation Grants, and released our very first youth justice data dashboard! None of this would be possible without the hard work of the BYS team and the dedication of our youth justice workforce across the state. Thank you for showing up every day for children, youth, and families. I hope you're able to enjoy these last days of summer and carry that energy with you into the fall!

Division News

New Appendix Offers Guidance about Engaging with Tribal Nations

DSP has released a new appendix to [the Child Protective Services \(CPS\) Access and Initial Assessment Standards: Appendix 13 on CPS Agencies' Responsibility to Engage with Tribal Nations](#). This new appendix provides specific guidance on best practices for staff, supervisors, and local CPS agency leaders to engage tribal nations in a way that is meaningful and respectful and to meet the statutory requirements established by ICWA and WICWA to protect Indian children and preserve Indian families. Additionally, the appendix includes guidance on the following topics:

- Understanding each person's role in supporting Indian children and their families,
- Practicing cultural responsibility,
- Building a strong partnership with tribal child welfare professionals and leaders, and
- Implementing shared decision making and collaboration strategies to support compliance with active efforts, placement preferences, and other ICWA and WICWA requirements.

To support the roll out of this new appendix, DSP will be hosting post-launch support sessions on October 16 at noon and October 30 at 9 am to introduce the appendix, review key concepts covered in the appendix, and provide a space for questions and discussion. The sessions will be hosted by DSP Policy Analysts, the DSP Tribal Liaison Affairs Specialist, and representatives from tribal child welfare agencies.

Please direct questions to project leads [Alli Williams](#) and [Erica Campbell](#).

Division News

New Youth Justice Training

Youth Justice Philosophy and Case Process (YJPCP), a training that addresses the “why” behind the duties of YJ professionals, kicked off in February 2025.

A new, exciting feature in 2026 includes YJPCP becoming a prerequisite to Collaborative Case Work 2 (CCW2). Youth justice professionals will continue to be auto enrolled into Youth Justice Philosophy and Case Process (YJPCP) and Basic Intake at the same time.

YJPCP is designed to provide YJ professionals with a more holistic understanding of how the Wisconsin YJ system can impact families. Learners will be introduced to legislation, standards, adultification, and case flow as part of this foundational course. Learners will also learn more about common language used in the YJ system, uplifting lived experiences, adolescent brain development and evidence-based practices and philosophies consistent with [Putting Families First](#). Additional information about the course can be found on [PDS's website](#).

Youth Justice Training Project Goals:

1. Create a Youth Justice foundations training sequence from a new worker perspective.
2. Recognize that justice-involved youth need to be supported in the context of their families & communities to build strengths and support positive outcomes.
3. Support the YJ workforce by building YJ infrastructure in the areas of standards, training, and technical assistance.

Youth Justice Updates

Youth Justice Advisory Committee

Newly launched in July, the Youth Justice Advisory Committee (YJAC) is comprised of county professionals from various YJ practice areas with the purpose of informing BYS's decisions and policies regarding Wisconsin's Youth Justice programs.

Previously, BYS had two YJ focused committees: the YJ Statewide Training Committee and the YASI Steering committee. By merging the former committees, we aim to simplify efforts in consulting with external YJ partners, streamline processes, and eliminate redundancy in policy and practice consultations with the committee members.

Objectives of YJAC include:

- Educate and provide consultation to BYS and partnering agencies on current practices and serve as champions for YJ practice and training in Wisconsin.
- Assist in the development and review of YJ standards.
- Disseminate DCF YJ- related materials with appropriate county networks and provide guidance to BYS.
- Serve as active sources of Youth Justice information, provide subject matter expertise and county perspective.
- Assist in continuous review and feedback on county practice with the risk assessment tool, YASI.
- Assist BYS with the development of statewide strategies for targeting youth in highest need of rehabilitation and recidivism risk management, including statewide Youth Voice initiatives, lived expert committees and related programs.

July 2025 meeting agenda topics included:

- Review of YJAC charter
- Updates from the following projects:
 - * Quality Case Planning Workgroup project and related upcoming standards (JIPS and DPA case plans)
 - * YASI Interrater Reliability Pilot Project
 - * YJ Philosophy and Case Planning Training
 - * YASI 3-year Advanced Training Workgroup
 - * YASI Coaching
 - * YJ reports & YASI eWiSACWIS
 - * YJ regional TA meetings

Upcoming meetings in October 2025, February 2026 and April 2026.

If you are interested in serving on this committee in 2026 or want a summary of the most recent committee meeting, please email us at dcfyj@wisconsin.gov with the subject title YJAC.



Current YJAC membership includes **representatives from 18 counties** from all regions of the state. Members have a **combined 235 years of Child Welfare experience**.

YASI Coach Event Recap

The second annual YASI Coach Networking and Celebration event was held on August 8, 2025 in Wisconsin Dells. YASI Coaches from all three cohorts gathered to practice coaching, network and receive updates on DCF Youth Justice projects. YASI coaches are crucial to our statewide quality assurance efforts. These professionals are local YASI experts and help maintain a high level of YASI assessment practice across the state.

New YASI coaches typically begin training in the fall, but 2025 coach training courses have been postponed to 2026. A new training date will be released soon – stay tuned! If you are interested in becoming a YASI Coach, please email us at dcfyj@wisconsin.gov with the subject title YASI Coaching.



Youth Justice Updates

YJ Innovation Grants

We are pleased to announce our 2026 Youth Justice Innovation Grant recipients! 6 counties were awarded Initial Grants, 18 counties were awarded Continuation Grants (5 of which were also awarded a Micro Grant), and 1 county received a Micro Grant.

2026 YJ Innovation Grant Recipients

 Reducing YJ Referrals	 Pre-Court Diversion	 Post-Dispositional Services	 Continuation	 Micro-Grant
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Waukesha Waupaca 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Iron 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eau Claire Portage Lincoln 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Barron Chippewa Clark Douglas Dunn Forest Juneau Kenosha Kewaunee La Crosse Monroe Ozaukee Racine Sawyer Sheboygan Taylor Winnebago Wood 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jefferson

There are three main project areas this year and one micro grant.

- Reducing YJ Referrals:** This project area is focused on collaborating with community stakeholder(s) to reduce the number of youths unnecessarily referred to the YJ system. Any services provided would be before the point of a YJ referral and delivered outside of the YJ system, although YJ staff should be involved in the collaborative efforts underpinning the project.
- Pre-Court Diversion:** This project area is focused on collaborating with community stakeholder(s) to offer services/programming to divert referred youth away from formal court involvement. These are services that will be provided to youth after a youth is referred to YJ, but before they are formally petitioned to court.
- Post-Dispositional Services:** This project area is focused on collaborating with community stakeholder(s) to offer services/programming to divert referred youth away from formal court involvement. These are services that will be provided to youth after a youth is referred to YJ, but before they are formally petitioned to court.
- Mico Grant:** This grant is specifically to recruit or facilitate youth attending DCF’s Youth Leadership Team or an equivalent county-led youth lived experience group.

YJ Data & Reporting Updates

The Juvenile Secure Detention Registry (JSDR) dashboard (our first YJ data dashboard) was released in July 2025! This dashboard provides basic information about admissions and youth held in Juvenile Detention Facilities (JDFs) within a selected reporting period.

This data tool can only be accessed inside of eWiSACWIS by individuals with detention-related responsibilities (like YJ professionals, YJ supervisors, and JDF staff). Staff with access can use this dashboard to answer questions like:

- ⇒ **How does use of secure detention compare across the state?**
- ⇒ **What is the median length of stay in a JDF?**
- ⇒ **How many youth were admitted to detention at least once last year?**

County staff can request access to the dashboard from their eWiSACWIS security delegate. JDF staff can email DCFOWRA@wisconsin.gov for access.



Juvenile Secure Detention Registry (JSDR) Dashboard Quick Reference Guide

Purpose
The JSDR dashboard provides basic information about admissions and youth held in Juvenile Detention Facilities (JDFs) within a selected reporting period.

Division of Safety & Permanence data dashboards are intended to prompt questions, encourage reflection, and provide information to assist with data driven decision making.

Included data

- Admissions to the 12 JDFs outside of Milwaukee County – Brown Co., Dane Co., Fond du Lac Co., La Crosse Co., Marathon Co., Northwest Regional (in Eau Claire Co.), Portage Co., Racine Co., (Jonathan Delgrave Youth Development and Care Center), Rock Co., Sheboygan Co., Washington Co., and Waukesha Co – will appear in the JSDR dashboard.
- Any admission entered into the "Maintain Secure Detention Registry" page in eWiSACWIS dating back to January 1, 2019 will be included in the JSDR dashboard.

Data considerations

- Every JDF has their own facility software used to track youth in their care. The JSDR serves as a secondary record for DOJ auditing purposes. Previously, DOJ & DCF did not require JDFs to enter admissions into the JSDR within a specific timeframe. **As of May 2025, JDFs have been instructed to enter admissions by the 15th of each month.**
- The dashboard will refresh every morning at 8:30am CST. However, because the JSDR serves as a secondary record, JDFs may choose how immediately to record new admissions into eWiSACWIS. Depending on facility practice, this may mean it could take a few weeks to capture new admissions in the daily dashboard refresh. This dashboard will likely not be a helpful tool for day-to-day case practice work.

To support use of both the JSDR dashboard and the YJ views included in the Child Welfare Implementation Support Metrics dashboard, we've created Quick Reference Guides! Each guide includes key information about a dashboard – like its purpose, included data, and key considerations for each view in the dashboard. Check them out!

- [JSDR Dashboard Quick Reference Guide](#)
- [Child Welfare Implementation Support Metrics Quick Reference Guide](#)

Youth Voice Updates

Youth Leadership Team

The Youth Leadership Team met on July 16, 2025. Over 35 youth attended virtually for a training on Art and Advocacy led by Greta Munns! The group participated in the [Virtual Workshop](#) from [I Am Why](#) to identify qualities, strengths, and things that are important to them that could be channeled into advocacy efforts. Youth created their own art pieces to go along with their I Am Why statements.

The next YLT meeting is scheduled for October 16, 2025 from 5-6:30pm on Zoom. We will be looking at YJ data included in the annual [YJ Referral and Intake Report](#). We would like to incorporate input and experiences from youth in the report to help our readers better understand the impact of Wisconsin's YJ system on young people. Interested youth should RSVP with [this form](#) by October 15, 2025.

YLT is open to all youth ages 14 – 21 with personal experience in the YJ system. This includes youth on delinquency supervision and/or Juveniles in Need of Protection or Services (JIPS).

Youth Advisory Council

The Statewide Youth Advisory Council had a great meeting at Land of Natura in Wisconsin Dells on August 15, 2025. Attendees paddle boarded, swam, beaded, and played games – all while connecting with others with lived experience in out-of-home care from around the state. They even built their own summer playlist! The next Statewide Youth Advisory Council meeting will be a 2-day meeting including officer elections, held October 3-4, 2025. For more information on how to get involved in the Statewide Youth Advisory Council, please visit [Youth Leadership Opportunities in Wisconsin](#).

Youth Achievements Ceremony

The 13th annual Youth Achievements Ceremony (formerly known as the Foster Youth Graduation) was held on July 29, 2025 at the Executive Residence to honor an admirable group of Wisconsin students. Governor Tony Evers and First Lady Kathy Evers joined DCF Secretary-designee Jeff Pertl in recognizing youth with experience in out-of-home care who recently graduated from high school, completed milestones in post-secondary education, or who attained other educational achievements.



“This graduation is more than a ceremony,” said DCF Secretary Jeff Pertl. “It’s a celebration of all the hard work and determination that brought these incredible young people here and all of the exciting things that lay ahead.” The 32 graduates who were able to attend the celebration represented the 95 identified young adults throughout Wisconsin who are known to have reached commencement in the 2024-2025 academic year.

Ms. Bregetta Wilson, a founding member of the Youth Advisory Council and foster care alum, spoke and inspired guests. Bregetta is the president and CEO of YWCA Southeast Wisconsin where she oversees current initiatives and advocacy efforts. Prior to joining the YWCA, Bregetta worked at DCF as the Lived Experience Coordinator where she helped lift the voices of individuals to ensure their input was included in policies and legislative changes. She is a graduate of Cardinal Stritch University and Alverno College.

Congratulations to the 2024 – 2025 graduates!

2025 National Unity Conference

In June of 2025, DCF coordinated with partners from across 5 Indian Child Welfare agencies to support [Independent Living eligible youth](#) in attending the [National Unity Conference](#). In total, DCF supported 10 youth with out-of-home care experience, 7 Tribal Independent Living adult supporters, 1 DCF Staff, and 1 Public Knowledge Staff in attending the National Unity Conference in San Diego, California. This year’s conference was attended by over 3,000 youth who identify as part of a tribal community.

Held annually with the mission to foster the development of American Indian and Alaska Native youth and build a unified Native America, the conference had themed days such as “traditional shirts and skirts day”, and offered meaningful workshops aligned with culturally-informed Positive Youth Development for both youth and adult supporters.

For more information about DCF-supported Tribal Independent Living programs, you can reach out to DCFILCoordinator@wisconsin.gov.

“It was really cool to see a new place because me and my sister never really travel anywhere but I’ll forever be grateful for being able to go on this trip, I got to meet lots new people and I actually made friends like real friends its super nice also my friends I met could speak their native language and we were introducing ourselves to each other in our languages and I really hope to see my friends on the powwow trail or somewhere down the road!!!”

“Culture night stood out the most to me it was super fun to watch and join in on the social dances and to get to know about other tribes and how they do their dances and also it stood out to me how certain tribes sang it was super cool!!”

What We're Reading

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

- **Resource List**, [Supporting the educational needs of children and youth: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction resource list for child welfare professionals](#), Wisconsin DPI.
- **Issue Brief**, [Risk-based services, reoffending, and rethinking service approaches for justice-involved youth](#), Jennifer Skeem, Gina Vincent, Josh Weber, Luyi Jian, Jennifer Pendleton, & Kayla Carew.
- **Guide**, [Module 5: Resource guide for mental health professionals working with youth involved in the juvenile justice system](#), Carly Baetz, Julian D. Ford, Adjoa Aboagye, Center for Trauma Recovery and Juvenile Justice, & National Child Traumatic Stress Network.
- **Issue Brief**, [Developmental reform in juvenile justice: Translating the science of adolescent development to sustainable best practice](#), John A. Tuell, Jessica Heldman, & Kari Harp.

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.

This month, we are proud to highlight the work from four young artists!



The first submission is a drawing by L.M. who shares, "Owls are tied to many concepts, but I especially love how they represent transformation and change. Often seen as a token to new beginnings and endings."



The second submission is a painting by T.S. who explains, "I created this painting while I was living in shelter care before going to residential treatment when I was 17. Art was the only thing that kept me distracted while my life felt like it was on pause... I never named this painting but it kept me from spiraling when I was at my lowest because I could put all my time into it."



The third submission is a drawing by W.H. titled, "Red Dragon Watching the Full Moon."

The final submission is a vulnerable poem from a young person about her feelings towards her biological mother. While this poem is heavy, it is a good reminder of the weight of trauma the most vulnerable among us may carry.

A mother wrapped in smoke and mirrors, Promises laced with
poison, Her love a siren song pulling me into darkness, Each
whisper a needle, each smile an alibi. "Why don't you want
me?" echoes raw and stale

As if every bruise I wore was just a phase. But I'm a product of
your longing trauma, Adulthood crept in with fists clenched, I
learned to wade through waters ready to drown. Your demons
still linger with me. Meth soaked memories strangle the bond
we never had. I stand alone on the edge of this fragile peace,
"Forgive her," they say... but how can I hug infinity when it
hurts like hell? Yet I extended my arms, shaking like branches
in a storm. Longing for some resemblance of light amid the
confusion, But what glimmers is just the ghost of who you
could be. Disappointment drips like rain on brittle leaves, You
spin tales that twist tighter than your habit's grip. Why do I
still search for warmth in that cold embrace? Frustration
blooms in muddy puddles beneath my feet. I pull away, yet
guilt pulls harder. A yoyo between anger and relief, a
conflicted soul. Can I really bloom where this chaos resides?
Or should I let go and breathe? Unweave these chains? Tell me
again "You shouldn't hate your mother." As if love could wash
all sins away But love isn't an amulet it's a grenade and here
I stand beneath its silent weight.

Thank you to all 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 [use this form](#) 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!](#)