



# Supporting Youth Who are Vulnerable and Historically Underserved

Investing in evidence-based, system-level changes ensures all youth can thrive.

## Enhancing Programming for Youth Who Are Historically Underserved

Keeping families together and reducing the use of out-of-home care is critical for strengthening the underlying fabric of Wisconsin's communities. The budget is providing historic investments to support families who are involved with the child welfare system to reduce trauma, maintain safety, and ensure kids stay connected with families. This includes investing **\$35 million** over the biennium to support an intensive evidence-based parenting skills program designed to safely prevent children from entering out-of-home care or to reunify them with family as quickly as possible. This program will serve children and families in both the child protection and youth justice systems. Increased funding of **\$4 million** across the biennium will allow for increased statewide runaway and homeless youth



service capacity and the expansion of the PATHS Program. Lastly, the budget provides the ability to increase the maximum age and expand eligibility for independent living services, allowing DCF to better support young

## Implementing Evidence-Based Youth Justice System Changes

Reshaping the youth justice system to align with best practice and research on adolescent brain development, and serving youth safely within their communities, are critical undertakings. The budget creates a Juvenile Justice Reform Committee to make recommendations to the Department of Corrections and the Department of Children and Families regarding certain areas of reform to the juvenile justice system. A critical investment of **\$10 million** over the biennium will return 17-year-olds to the youth justice system. This investment is a sum sufficient appropriation and not limited to \$10 million if actual reported costs are higher. Additionally, the budget supports key infrastructure and workforce investments, including funding to create a youth justice data and reporting system and funding to develop a training program for new youth justice workers and booster training for current workers on the Youth Assessment Screening Instrument.

## Streamlining Statutory Language and Appropriations

Young people need services focused on who they are as individuals, not just the box they check on an intake form. Providing flexibility and transparency for appropriations, updating and streamlining statutory language, and reducing the complexity of administering these funds is essential to meeting this need. Ensuring this funding reaches youth-serving programs in a timely and efficient manner is critical to improving systems and outcomes.

