

Region Activities

Region 1:

In 2019 we had an item drive and created a second YAC in Wisconsin Rapids/ Wood County. We also completed the strategic sharing trainings and our youth were solicited for feedback on policies in Wood County.

Region 2:

Region 2 we had a local president be selected as a FosterClub All Star and completed her internship in Seaside, Oregon. We had two members present at the Hands Around the Capitol event on Resources on Homelessness and the stigma of Foster Care. Two local members represented YAC at the National CRP. We hand wrote cards to each county represented in our region for Social Work Appreciation. What's to come is planning stages to provide FYI binders to each county within our region. Planning stages for creating care packages/ duffle bags for youth aging out of care/ aging out. Creating YAC binders and more volunteer efforts within our communities.

Region 3:

We sponsored two organization Robyn's Nest and Carenet. We donated baby items to Carenet and cleaning and personal items to Robyn's Nest. We had our Funky Fresh Start-up event and gave away 50 kits in the Community for youth aging out of care for their first apartments. We are having another one on November 7th at United Way from 1pm-3:30pm. We had our monthly events Financial literacy, Workgroup program started by Jameelah that was a two-week group and 5 YTA youth placed in jobs. YAC will be going to visit 3 group homes to do an Ice Cream Social and talk about YAC and YTA program (Youth transitioning to Adulthood) and the community, Tours of post-secondary colleges MATC, UWM-Milwaukee and Marquette. We are doing Story telling in November and our Holiday Party is in December to close out the year.

Region 4:

Over this past summer region 4 YAC has held 3 different fundraisers to buy a new pair of athletic shoes for elementary school ages children who are in need from the Lincoln Park community. Our council youth identified that growing up, new clothing and shoes were something that was not always available. They thought providing kids something like school shoes would help with self-esteem and may even prevent bullying kids may have to endure from going without. The youth managed to raise \$600 and were able to purchase 22 pairs of brand-new shoes for kids at Brass Elementary through a California based organization called "shoes that fit" **

Region 5:

Region 5 in South Central, we're just starting to really grow and get consistent members. We have chosen a Local Lead (we don't feel the YAC is big enough to have a president and different positions that the State YAC does), which is Malea White, who also attends State YAC. A big part of this year was having the youth be a part of strategic sharing training, and now they are very interested in doing panels. We had a woman come in from Dane County Foster Care

that spoke in YAC about different opportunities the members could have. She will be having 2 local YAC members speaking at an event in January 2020 where they will talk to potential foster parents about why they should consider fostering teens, and what they felt they needed as a teen in care. The youth will be making holiday cards at our meeting this week that will be sent to younger youth still in care.

For WOW's YAC, Maddie and Kayla lead the meetings and come up with topics. This YAC has made cards for service men and women and are interested in talking more about general health - specifically thinking about self-help and healthy relationships.

In South West's YAC, they have had some guest speakers, which is a highlight for the YAC members there. They've had speakers come discuss nutrition and healthy meal making, along with speakers that could get them involved with mentoring. They enjoy giving back to the community and rang bells for Salvation army. They're currently discussing doing a drive of some sort next year for teens.

All 3 of our Region 5 YACs meet monthly, and this upcoming year we will be finding a way to incorporate the 3 more, whether it's an in-person activity, or more virtual interactions over video chat so Region 5 can get more connected as a whole.

Region 6:

In YAC for region 6 we have been working on independent living skills and networking with our peers that have aged out. Last meeting, we did a mock panel discussion with DCF and had a total of ten new youth participate. Then, the local transit system took youth on a bus ride around the city to familiarize with them with the public transit. Each youth that attended received a free bus pass.

Region 7:

Jan- Voted on and had two reps for state YAC meetings that were consistent.

Feb- recruitment of new members.

April- Worked on Hands Around the Capital items and establishing an item for the pinwheel table.

May- Career Day youth were able to check out over 85 employers. Did mock job interviews

June-Started getting foundation of what a mentorship program for foster/former foster youth would look like.

August: Continued work on what youth want out of a mentor and how this would be established.

July- Hosted a Budgeting Workshop day: Bremer Bank played a game of life, UW Extension talked about extending their food budget, and housing authority came to talk about making good choices.

November- Received a grant funds for 2020 that will aid in supplies for the meeting, trauma informed training for mentors, background checks for mentors, and for transition binders for 21 youth.

December- Worked with Tribal TRAs for recruitment created a sub-group for IL Tribal Youth. Hosted meeting about how to revamp for 2020. We will be having 4 meetings: Ashland, Burnett, Medford, Rice Lake will be the central area. Ashland meeting will be starting Feb with the changeover. Also have met with NW Passage to see about starting a campus YAC still waiting to hear more on this.

Survey Analysis

Those who responded were from the counties of Marathon, Forrest, Vilas, Oneida, Sawyer, Racine and Kenosha. There were many counties not represented. There were responses from a Foster Care Coordinator, an Independent Living & Kinship Care Coordinator, two Supervisors (One for CPS), IA Worker, a Social Worker and a Juvenile Crisis Program Manager. Several fields and departments are not represented.

4. Length of time working in the child welfare or being a foster parent (when applicable)?

Three who answered this survey have worked with youth at least 5 years or less. Four of those who answered have worked over 18 years but no more than 30 years.

5. What are the signs of abuse and neglect?

Out of the many options indicators most said were poor hygiene, food security, lack of boundaries, unexpected bruising, sexual abuse or the child is hyper sexual, child may be wearing unseasonal clothing, and injury were commonly answered from those who were more acknowledge with foster care through school. A woman disclosed that she knows there are many signs that a social worker looks for but she herself looks for anything that is “off” or if the child discloses any information about home life that is abnormal. A CPS Supervisor had also disclosed that Wi State Chapter 48.02 and Standards defines this question as well.

6. How do you decide if a home is a safe and stable environment?

A juvenile Crisis Program Manager disclosed that there are many variables that come into play but what’s mainly considered is the child’s age versus the looks of the inside of the house. If the house is messy and a 16 year old child lives there; that may be overlooked. Whereas if a toddler were to live in a messy house that child may be taken away due to the possibilities of harm.

Most if not all had answered if there was drug paraphernalia, no food or no shelter was given to the child that child would be deemed not in a safe environment.

If the child has food, clothes and shelter with no drugs in the vicinity; that would be defined as a safe and stable environment most workers had agreed upon.

7. Have you witnessed a child in a safe and stable environment? What does that look like?

Everyone agreed that they have witnessed a child in a safe environment. A Social Worker said that if the child is well rested and is well fed that would be a sign that the child is in a safe and stable environment. Another Social Worker wanted to share that all homes and situations may look different and would not may be how you may live or raise your children, but at the end of the day making sure that all needs are met are important. Making sure that personal values or beliefs are not imposed on the families is important to also note.

8. If any, what are the safety tools or assessments used by your agency or the state when determining if a home is safe and stable?

Some answers discussed for this was that the Wisconsin state law and standards would be a tool to use. For a placement setting specifically there would be a Confirming Safe Environment protocol and for a licensed foster home they would use SAFE home study curriculum. Using the standards from the Department of Children and Families was also a popular answer

9. What prevention or safety methods should be in place to create a safe home environment?

The main methods needed to be included are separation, servision, ministering, concrete resources, crisis management, social connection and emotional support, basic parenting and home management, medical/mental health evaluation

10. How do you, your staff or the state of Wisconsin ensure a child/youth's safety even after they are placed in out-of-home care?

Youth safety is addressed in various ways across the state. One step is assigning an ongoing DCF worker who is responsible for placing the child in a level of appropriate care that meets the behavioral, emotional and physical needs. A third party may be used to be a community resource. They will assist with assessing and managing the case of the youth in care and maintain contact on a regular basis with the home. DCF is also responsible for completing different assessments such as CANS, safety, background checks and more in a timely manner. Supervision of the Out of Home care placement caregiver is implemented as well. This includes seeing the placement and ensuring the home is currently licensed. Agencies have found it beneficial to ask the foster parents a series of questions which include inquiring about their knowledge related to children who have experienced trauma. Other agencies are tasked with having one face-to-face contact with the child in placement each month. A safe environment check is done every 6 months as well. Lastly, communicating on a regular basis with everyone involved on the team has proven to be crucial in ensuring the safety of a youth in out-of-home care.

11. In what way(s) do you promote consistency in the care of a child/youth no matter what home a child/youth is placed in? How do you ensure that it's a stable placement?

Consistency in care and stability starts with completing a federal and state background check in any home. The main goal is to keep a child in their home for the purpose of stability. If a child must be removed, then a second-best option would be finding a family member to take the child as an alternative placement. Consistent monitoring is key in ensuring the placement is implementing responsible and prudent parenting for the child as well. It is believed that watching

for a strong character a being can assist as a predictor of outcomes. Understanding what the communication skills are like on the team can help the consistency and stability of the child as well. Is the placement one that is involved in the community and do they conduct open communication with those involved. A team approach overall will provide a robust amount of support and security that a youth in care needs.

12. How do you deal with a child with attachment disorders?

A variety of approaches are needed when helping a child struggling with attachment disorders. Crisis employees partake in training on a regular basis reviewing practices around trauma informed care. Staff are trained to implement the trainings of the Family Model in their practices too. Everyone on the team is to remain aware of the past and present trauma that youth may still be affected by today. Those working with the youth must act empathetic in all interactions and apply a gentle approach filled with understanding. Honest and age appropriate explanations to explain situations as best as they can is helpful in communicating with a youth who is struggling with attachment disorders. A youth may need simple space and time to assist in any situation that may arise. Maintaining strong boundaries is also helpful to help a youth learn healthy attachment styles. Providing a sense of predictability and stability is key. Always be accessible for the youth while earning their trust. Family support and referrals for services is important to ensure there is enough support and help for the youth in out-of-home care to help create the best possible outcome and future.

13. How do you provide a healthy support system to: Parents, Relatives, Foster Parents

Maintaining as much honesty possible with parents and caregivers is important in establishing trust and communication in all healthy support systems. Make sure all interactions are non-judgmental. Remain aware of your body language and apply empathy in your approach. Continuous support workers for foster parents who have children placed in their care can help foster a healthy support system as well. All communications and expectations need to be clear when addressing situations of concern and frustrations need to be met with an understanding of frustrations that may be present amongst the support system. By checking in, providing services, and positive based interactions as a primary step; a healthy support system can grow. Each support system is unique and comes with an individualized set of needs, so the ideas ultimately come down to the person and situation at hand.

14. Do you think out-of-home care providers have the experience and knowledge to meet the needs of children? How so?

The overall impression on the experiences and knowledge meeting the children's needs is mixed. Some say not at all while others say somewhat. Some people are trained for foster care placements, but most are believed to not be ready for the level of needs of the children who are now entering the homes. Placements, especially unlicensed relatives, do not have the ability to care for children with an array of mental illnesses and trauma which children are being placed into care with. Placements are not ready or willing to take on certain youth who present with more trying behaviors. The foundations training is helpful but social workers have been found to lack knowledge on the curriculum. Knowing the curriculum and guiding the foster parents in transferring this knowledge to the children and birth families is believed to be beneficial in meeting the needs. It is also believed that foster parents who have been trained often do as they

have been trained to do. The unlicensed providers have been believed to lack the experience and knowledge needed to meet the needs of the children.

15. Do foster parents have a support plan to provide permanent placement?

Foster parents have workers assigned in some agencies where they have a check-in weekly. The goal is to provide permanency by a certain time. Most meet the goal of permanency through DCF as well as the foster parent licensure agency. The consensus is that support is provided sometimes. Support plans are often put in place when a need is identified, if a need is identified.

16. Is the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) assessment useful in placing a child/youth in relative or foster care? Is it accurate? How often is a child/youth placed in the setting recommended by the CANS?

Some workers do not utilize the CANS assessment such as crisis workers. CANS is said to be done resulting in a child being placed at the recommended level 90% of the time. Many variables come into play. If done correctly, CANS is believed to be a good reference about how a youth is doing but it is not recommended to utilize this assessment as the only source of reference. Other info should be used when considering an appropriate level of placement.

17. What type of placements do you wish could be more supported?

The main placements identified in needing more support include kinship care, relative placement, and sibling placements with children who have higher mental health needs.