



2025 Youth Justice Innovation Grants

Project Summaries

The Youth Justice (YJ) Innovation Grants are an opportunity for county human service agencies to implement new, creative, evidence-informed practices or programs with short-term start-up funding from DCF. All projects must serve the overall purpose of improving community-based delinquency-related services. Initial grantees meet the requirements of one of the following topic areas: Reducing Youth Justice Referrals, Pre-Court Diversion and Post- Dispositional Services.

In 2024, 26 grants were awarded: 10 initial grants to start or enhance a program or practice and 16 continuation grants to continue implementation of a program or practice started in 2022, 2023 or 2024.

Types of Grants

Reducing Youth Justice Referrals (RYJR)

This project area is focused on collaborating with community stakeholder(s) to reduce the number of youth 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 (PCD)

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 (PDS)

This project area is focused on improving community-based services delivery for youth on supervision. Projects should implement programming that can be added to a county's YASI service matrix for medium- and high-risk youth. Proposed services should be rooted in positive youth development and should not include an electronic monitoring component.

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Initial Grantees

Chippewa (RYJR)

Objective: To reduce YJ school-based incident referrals by using a universal approach to triage cases with youth who made a threat (verbal, written, physical).

Target Population: Youth ages 10-17 will be referred to the program who made a verbal, written, or physical threat.

Primary Contact: Kyra Secraw

Clark (RYJR)

Objective: Offer pre-delinquency conferences to youth and their family to match their needs with community services to reduce unnecessary referrals to YJ, mental health suspensions and school expulsions.

Target Population: Youth ages 13-17 alleged to have committed a misdemeanor offense on school grounds (disorderly conduct, possession, property damage, battery) which would typically result in a formal youth justice system referral.

Primary Contact: Shauna O'Keefe

Sawyer (RYJR)

Objective: Divert truancy referred youth from formal system involvement into community-supported alternatives.

Target Population: Primary population serves youth ages 10-16 years old.

Primary Contact: Sarah Inczauskis

Kewaunee (PCD)

Objective: To expand pre-court diversion services to youth diverted from formal court proceedings including mentoring, restorative justice, and family connection services.

Target Population: Youth ages 13-17 who could be placed on a Deferred Prosecution Agreement. Youth who have had multiple referrals over the past 12 months will have the highest priority. Youth who also have an identified need through the YASI pre-screen in the "Family" and/or "Skills" domains will also have high priority.

Primary Contact: Chad LaLuzerne

Taylor (PCD)

Objective: Refer youth to a five-week course with weekly meetings covering life skills and information about the consequences of their risky behaviors in efforts to avoid court involvement.

Target Population: Youth (13-17 year olds) will enter into a Deferred Prosecution Agreement. The qualifying criteria for the group would be that they agree to the classes, have a DPA, and original incident is appropriate to address within the youth diversion group.

Primary Contact: Kala Thompson

Forest (PDS)

Objective: Connect youth with New Horizons for mentoring or to Forest County Family Services for skills programming, intensive supervision, and any other needed supports.

Target Population: Youth ages 10-17 years old who scored moderate to high risk on the YASI.

Primary Contact: Tracy Schumacher

Ozaukee (PDS)

Objective: Expand service array by providing intensive in-home program for youth under supervision as well as their families targeting familial relationships using Functional Family Therapy.

Target Population: Youth ages 10-17 years old who scored moderate to high risk on the YASI.

Primary Contact: Kim Falkner

Racine (PDS)

Objective: Expand service matrix for youth to a family mentorship program and then transition to working with a clinician focusing on specific skill development.

Target Population: Youth ages 10-17 years old who scored moderate to high risk on the YASI.

Primary Contact: Tiffany McWhorter

Winnebago (PDS)

Objective: Expand county service array to include mentoring and skill building services highlighting service providers with lived experience to reduce recidivism.

Target Population: Youth ages 10-17 years old who scored moderate to high risk on the YASI.

Primary Contact: Kari Kraft

Wood (PDS)

Objective: To expand flexible and easily accessible mental health services to increase protective factors while decreasing the number of youth with moderate to high risk in the skills domain, number of youth placed in out of home care and re-referrals.

Target Population: Youth ages 10-17 years old who scored moderate to high risk on the YASI in the skills domain.

Primary Contact: Katie Miloch

Youth Leadership Team Connection

"Even if I mess up, continue to help me build confidence and character."

- WI DCF Youth Leadership Team Member
2017-2018

In 2024, DCF provided additional Innovation Grant funds to second- and third-year innovation grantees to recruit or facilitate youth to attend DCF YLT (hybrid meetings) in 2025. DCF recommended a regional model to include other counties who did not receive innovation grant funding to maximize the number of youth who can attend. DCF hopes this alleviates barriers for youth to attend including transportation, food, and gift card incentives.

Continuation Grantees

Barron

Objective: Implement a tiered system of intervention by providing support and opportunity to "low risk" youth.

Target Population: Primary population is youth ages 10-17. Any youth can participate in the mental health school clubs. Youth will be identified for pre-truancy or pre-delinquency conferences through their schools due to disruptive behavior or lack of school attendance.

Primary Contact: Laura Doeberiner

Douglas

Objective: Expand access to community based AODA services to youth and their families.

Target Population: Douglas County youth aged 10-17 and are identified as "moderate" or "high risk" on a YASI pre-screen. Offer services to youth with an identified domain of "alcohol and drugs" on the full YASI assessment.

Primary Contact: Brooke Fitzgerald

Dunn

Objective: Provide services to youth and families with complex needs to promote positive community engagement, improve mental health, and increase family functioning.

Target Population: Youth ages 10-17 years old who scored moderate to high risk on the YASI who are on a DPA, consent decree or formal supervision.

Primary Contact: Carrie Nehring

Green County

Objective: Implement a targeted mentoring program to promote positive activities, build skills, and increase informal supports while also providing support to prevent repeated delinquency referrals, out of home placements, and formal system involvement for youth with complex needs at high risk of entering the YJ system.

Target population(s): Youth in need of independent living skills or with complex needs including mental health, trauma, alcohol/drug use, cognitive, or other disabilities and/or a combination of those issues.

Primary Contact: Dee Jaye Miles

Jefferson County

Objective: Ensure available community services are comprehensive, accessible, and well-matched to family needs by addressing identified gaps in Jefferson's YASI Services Domain Matrix.

Target population(s): Youth served on JIPS- truancy orders as well as moderate and high-risk youth on supervision and their parents.

Primary Contact: Jessica Godek

Juneau

Objective: To provide currently unavailable services to moderate or high-risk youth to decrease need for crisis intervention, meet basic needs for all community youth and increase community support.

Target Population: Youth ages 10-17 years old who are placed on a DPA, consent decree or dispositional order.

Primary Contact: Kelly Firlus

Kenosha

Objective: Provide services to support regular school attendance and youth at-risk of having their Deferred Prosecution Agreement (DPA) revoked.

Target Population: Youth who are 10 years and older identified as "truant" in Kenosha.

Primary Contact: Donna Rhodes

La Crosse

Objective: Reduce the number of Youth Justice referrals and civil ordinance citations by diverting youth engaged in four focus act behaviors in the City of La Crosse.

Target Population: Primary population is youth ages 12-18.

Primary Contact: Tonya Van Tol

Marathon County

Objective: Provide an alternative (Youth Opportunity Center) to formal shelter care placements for youth in need of additional supervision and supports.

Target population(s): Youth ages 12-17 who score moderate risk or above via YASI.

Primary Contact: Becky Bogen-Marek

Monroe

Objective: To reduce truancy petitions and formal dispositions through a multi-system collaboration and serve youth through informal services.

Target Population: Middle and high school youth (ages 10-17) and their families.

Primary Contact: Wendy Davey

Oconto County

Objective: Reduce recidivism by matching services (Parent Project and mentoring programs) to criminogenic needs.

Target population(s): Youth identified as moderate or high risk on the YASI who are on a DPA, Consent Decree or formal supervision.

Primary Contact: Carrie Kleinschmidt

Oneida County

Objective: Expand County service array to match evidence-based programming to the needs of youth as identified through YASI Assessment.

Target population(s): Youth referred to YJ between ages 10 and 17 and youth identified as at risk of future delinquent behavior.

Primary Contact: Brenda Lee

Price

Objective: Price County and WJCIA will train 8 individuals to be trainers in Carey Guides and BITS booster trainings and continue to offer multiple trainings (Aggression Replacement Training, Carey Guides and BITS) to provide statewide trainings at a reasonable cost to the counties.

Target Population: Youth ages 10 and over will benefit from the ART, Carey Guides and BITS curriculums.

Primary Contact: Sarah Reese-Socha

Sheboygan

Objective: Reduce recidivism by offering evidence-based programming at a reporting center to system involved youth who live in City of Sheboygan.

Target Population: Youth aged 10-17 who have YASI risk scores of medium to high and protective factors of low to medium on delinquency orders.

Primary Contact: Jessica Bitter

Walworth County

Objective: Enhance and strengthen relationships between Walworth County Department of Health and Human Services (WCDHHS), school districts within Walworth County, and School Resource Officers to reduce formal referrals to the youth justice system.

Target population(s): Youth at risk of habitual truancy and delinquency referrals who are between the ages of 10 and 17 years and attend the Elkhorn Area School District (EASD)

Primary Contact: Renee Peck

Waushara County

Objective: Partnering with all county school districts and local law enforcement to offer restorative and diversion programming for municipal offenses that occur on school grounds and in the community. Partner with multiple agencies to develop a county-wide stakeholder committee to bridge gaps, increase prevention efforts to reduce referrals, recidivism, and maintain youth in their homes.

Target population: All youth in middle and high school and youth referred to YJ diversion programming ages 10-17.

Primary Contact: Jenna Holland