



# Youth Advisory Council Reflections on the COVID-19 Pandemic

In May 2020, the Wisconsin Youth Advisory Council convened a virtual statewide meeting. At that meeting young people with lived experience in the child welfare system expressed their concerns and needs related to the COVID-19 health crisis. The information below details their responses and highlights the youth's most pronounced needs and concerns at the time and do not reflect the opinion of the Department of Children and Families (DCF).

## My top need or concern as a result of COVID-19 is:

- Food, housing, jobs, and human contact
- A nap
- Childcare
- Healthy family members
- Planning for my future with so much uncertainty
- Homelessness during and after this pandemic
- Job security, since I've lost my job
- Being over 21 and there is nothing I can utilize through Independent Living
- Becoming infected and potentially infecting my family and/or coworkers
- Trying to stay in touch with the people I trust and to not give up hope
- Relationships with friends
- Not seeing my family as much
- Continuing relationships, and mental health
- Having my hours cut
- Severe withdrawals from not seeing my family
- The longer this goes on, the more mental health will be impacted negatively
- My top need is financial stability
- Funds
- When can I get back to work
- Being able to see my family



## I think the best steps to take to help keep kids with their families during COVID-10 are:

- Providing financial support to families
- Educating parents on how to care for and keep their children safe during the pandemic
- To make sure to keep providing maximum support and access to resources
- Determine what is best for the kids and their families. Once that is known, using resources and services available to keep them together
- Access to counseling services via video
- Education on COVID-19 and how to stay safe
- Offer rehabilitation services to parents that are in need
- Work with families on preventative measures to take to help with stress
- Offer resources in the area and continue to be available at a distance for support emotionally
- Provide access to internet and phone (many families are disconnected because of income and resources)

## I think the best ways to help children/youth who are in care during COVID-10 are:

- Loosening restrictions on technology, so youth can stay in contact with friends and family
- Provide family visit via video chat access
- Checking in on mental health, giving them the option to video call/Zoom their siblings
- Offer opportunities to debrief and share their concerns
- Best way would be to check up on them. Some foster homes may be unsafe and during this time check-ups are extremely important since they won't expect it
- Talk with them about their concerns about COVID-19 and maintain communication with their support system
- More funding for resources to meet basic needs
- Being emotionally supportive and giving accurate information as it changes
- Connectivity and bonding activities. This time could really be used to push out and work through underlying issues
- Staying in touch with those who you trust and not giving up on home
- Being there for them and supporting them



## I think the best ways to help young alumni of foster care during COVID-19 are:

- Increased housing assistance
- Providing them with free counseling
- Check in to see how they are doing, answering their questions and concerns, provide resources to make sure their needs are being met (housing, basic needs, etc.)
- Providing resources to help meet basic needs
- Creating a support network virtually and in person that they can depend on
- Reaching out to individuals who may have been disconnected
- Being persistent in connecting with youth
- Check in on their mental health
- Acknowledging and normalizing their concerns and fears
- Identifying what their biggest struggle is currently, identifying the resources available to them and their situation, and facilitating the youth obtaining this resource with ease
- Assistance with paying bills
- Frequent calls, even if unscheduled, to check in
- Reaching out and trying to help in every way you can
- Being there for them and having a support system in place for them, assistance that is available

## I think the top thing members of the foster care community need reassurance on during COVID-19 is:

- You are not alone
- Do not ever give up
- You have a support system and resources available
- This will end
- Everything will be ok
- Stay positive
- This will pass
- Connection is important

