



Advice From Youth for Youth Justice Service Providers

During the 2020-2021 academic year, the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF) virtually convened a statewide Youth Leadership Team to provide young people with lived experience in the Youth Justice system an opportunity to share their input and expertise with service providers about how to best and most successfully engage with the young people they serve. The information and quotes below come directly from the youth and do not reflect the opinion of DCF.

What are effective strategies for engaging youth?

- Get to know me more by spending time with me
- Being honest up-front is important, whether getting straight to the point or taking time to explain
- Be a friend, not a foe
 - Lawyer once said, "I'm not your boss; you're my boss," that was empowering
 - Advocate for and on behalf of me
 - Within what's legal, be an open book. Share stuff you did as a teenager
- Share information
 - Even quantifying things, sharing the numbers
 - Very helpful to know and have a deep understanding of what options a worker has to work with
- Doesn't always feel like there's space to have a conversation
 - It can feel like a worker is "just checking boxes"
 - Be direct – clearly communication expectations
 - Also, clearly communicate what is going on (i.e., my hands are tied, here's why)
- Give me the opportunity and space to make decisions for myself
 - When this isn't possible – be clear about why



What are your suggestions for how workers can keep youth motivated to keep working on the goals of their case plan?

- My mom motivates me, and I would want her to be involved in the process
- Worker listens to me and understands
- Incentives, doing things youth enjoy (volunteering, baking, cars, etc.)
- Working with youth in similar situations
- Working with friends/family
- Taking youth out of facilities to lunch or even just a car ride
- Focus on the positives when in court
- Helping youth feel comfortable

My mom motivates me, and I would want her to be involved in the process

What are effective ways to get a youth's buy-in for the case planning process?

- Get information directly from me so that I can tell my own story
- Use my own words when writing the case plan
- Be more specific, something youth can do and look back on and be proud of
- Quantify goals to make it easier to measure accomplishments
- Take me out to do things in the community (fishing, golf, video games, cooking) shows us that life is good and not everything is bad

Show us that life is good and not everything is bad





What are effective ways to get a youth's buy-in for the case planning process?

- Give me opportunities to connect with my worker as "person" first
- Working on one or two things/goals at a time
- Write the goals so they make sense to me and are achievable
- Learn about my personality, likes and dislikes
- Don't judge me based on my paperwork or case file

What can workers do to make sure a youth's strengths are a focus of the case planning process?

- Create an environment for me to feel safe to be myself
- Draw on interests in creating a case plan
- Spend more time building a meaningful relationship with me
- Communicate with me regularly and build on my strengths (i.e., cook with me if I enjoy cooking)
- Really learning who I am as a person, what I like to do
- Learning about my hobbies and what it is about my hobbies that I like
- Include a goal to explore my strengths and talk about them

Spend more time building a meaningful relationship with me