

# Youth Justice Innovation Grant Administrative Guide

DSP

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Wisconsin Department of  
Children and Families

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## **Acknowledgement**

This guide is dedicated to the WI child welfare workforce continuously striving to improve the lives of our youth and families through individual and structural change.

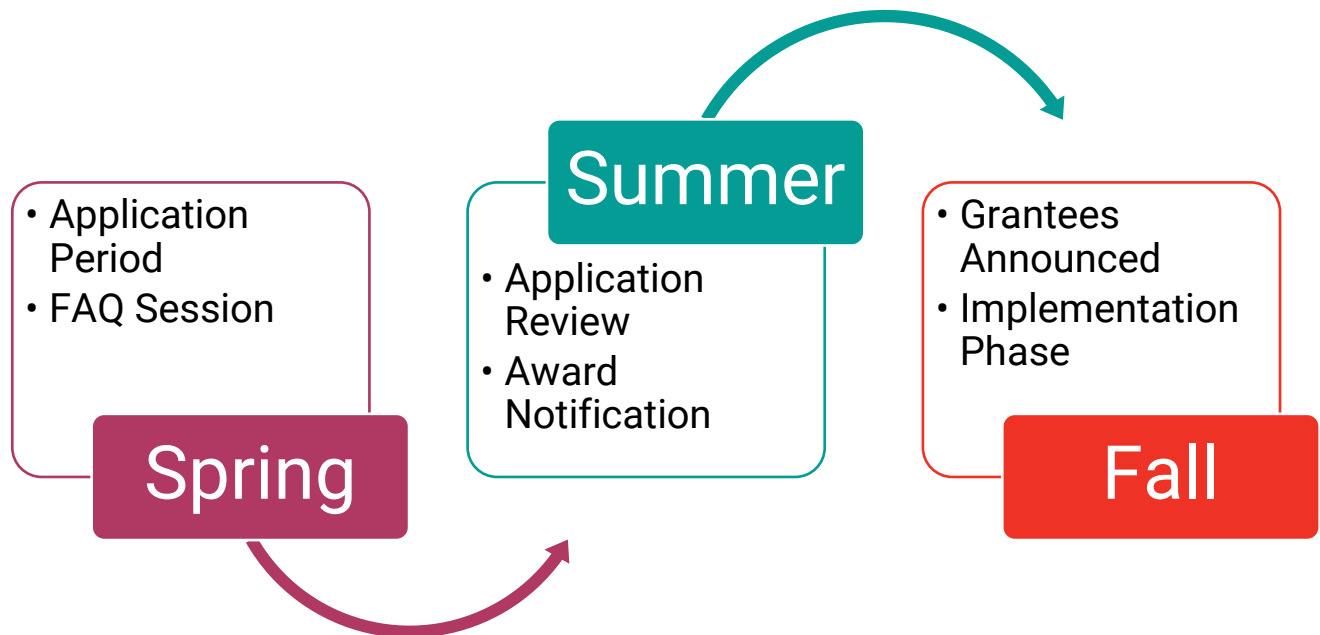
## **Goal of Guide**

DCF Youth Justice has prepared this guide to provide recipients with basic information that will facilitate the efficient administration of the Innovation Grant program at the county level. DCF Youth Justice strives to implement evidence-informed programming which will have a positive impact on youth and families served by these programs. Please note this guide is not meant to be all-inclusive.



# Before you Apply

## I. Overview



Youth Justice (YJ) Innovation Grants are a competitive opportunity for county human service agencies (counties) to implement new evidence-informed practices or programs with short-term start-up funding from the Department of Children and Families (DCF). All proposed projects must serve the overall purpose of improving community-based youth justice (delinquency-related) services and should meet requirements of one of the following topic areas: **reducing YJ referrals, pre-court diversion, or post-dispositional services.**

### A. Eligibility

All proposed projects must satisfy the following requirements:

1. Will provide improving community-based youth justice (delinquency-related) services within the scope of services allowable under [Youth Aids](#).
2. Will not contribute to “net widening” or expanding YJ system involvement of youth whose primary needs would be best addressed in another system.
3. Will serve a target population age 10 and over.
4. Innovation funds will be used to initiate or significantly expand an evidence-informed program or practice (YJ Innovation Grants should not be used to fund existing programs or initiatives).
5. Since the grant is repurposed Youth Aids funds, only Wisconsin county human service agencies are eligible to apply for this grant opportunity. However, counties may apply in partnership with other counties or tribes – all participating partners should be listed on the application. Counties may only apply for one YJ Innovation Grant every year.
6. **Initial grants** are reserved for counties starting a new evidence-informed practice or program. Counties awarded a grant (initial or continuation) in the

previous year are not eligible to apply for an initial grant for the current application period.

7. **Continuation grants** are for counties who have received a YJ Innovation Grant within the past 2 years. These counties' grants may be renewed (with funding stepped down) for up to two additional years, subject to satisfactory performance and the continued availability of funds.

## **B. Application Period**

1. The annual application is announced in May of each year.
2. Review it carefully to learn the specific requirements of the grant for which you want to apply.
3. Eligible applicants will have from May until mid-July to complete the application and submit it via email to [DCFYJ@wisconsin.gov](mailto:DCFYJ@wisconsin.gov). The application due date is listed on the application.
4. Incomplete applications should not be submitted and will be omitted from funding consideration.
5. DCF Youth Justice staff will be unavailable to assist with application questions after the close of the due date. An email will be sent out the following business day after the due date confirming receipt of application.

## **C. Review Process**

When the application period has ended, the grant review process begins.

1. Applications will be reviewed by an evaluation committee and scored using the criteria outlined in the application. Contract awards will be granted to the highest scoring applications, regardless of project area or funding amount requested.
2. DCF's evaluation committee will consist of members who have been selected because of their special expertise and knowledge of the service(s) and/or product(s) that are the subject of this application. Applicants may not contact members of the evaluation committee.
3. Applicants selected for funding will receive intent to award letters. Those not selected will be notified by email. Once the review process ends, grantees are announced, and the post award period begins.

## **D. Grant Award**

Award documents contain:

1. County approved project period and award amount.
2. Invitation to a Zoom meeting to learn about general grant conditions.
3. Instructions on documents that will need to be submitted to start the contracting process.
4. Grantees are announced in the fall. Funds are released when the contract period starts in January of the next calendar year.

## II. Strategic Planning

### A. Create a Strategic Plan

YJ Innovation Grants are time intensive projects for counties. Counties need to operationalize and implement a new program within a year. Projects require organization at every level of the agency to maintain efficiency and monitor priorities. A strategic plan may be helpful to develop philosophical alignment, generate buy-in and sustain the project. The planning phase is critical to start prior to applying for a grant and continue through the implementation phase before the award is provided.

### B. Strategic Planning Phases

Strategic planning is more than writing a document. Rather, it is a series of discussions and decisions to clarify goals and strategies, identify how to achieve them, and develop the processes to track and measure them so the program area can work toward what is important to their future.

1. Strategic planning phases:
  - a. Prepare: establish the team, set expectations, and engage key partners.
  - b. Assess: review mission, vision, ways of working (i.e. core values) and determine timeline.
  - c. Strategize: set goals, set priority outcomes, and identify strategies.
  - d. Define: identify metrics to measure progress with your project's objective.
  - e. Implement: write strategic plan, develop work plan, and launch.
  - f. Manage: determine review frequency, review progress and update plan.
2. Strategic Plan Alignment Example
  - a. Counties should organize a team with key county partners to develop the project. It is critical for the group to develop alignment which will help in identifying priorities of the project.
  - b. The project team should ask alignment questions at the development of goals, outcomes, and metrics checkpoints.
  - c. Examples of questions could include:
    - i. Do our goals show a duplication of efforts that could be made more efficient?
    - ii. Do our outcomes and strategies offer opportunities for collaboration?
    - iii. Are there already efforts in place within other areas of the reorganization to collect the data needed for our metrics?
  - d. Feel free to contact DCF for additional resources about how to start the strategic planning process at your county.

### C. First Steps

Some counties may find it difficult to know where to start. Here are some options to consider while getting started:

1. Gather a multi-disciplinary team and develop philosophical alignment.

2. Develop a system map or logic model to brainstorm and create a strategic plan.
  - a. National Institute of Correction provides insight on each model: [System Map](#) and [Building Logic Models](#).
  - b. [UW-Madison Extension](#) also has resources about logic models.
  - c. Wisconsin Child Welfare Professional Development System ([WCWPDS](#)) provides materials to understand collaborating partners' values and principles to identify issues and design effective solutions.
3. The group could also create a mission statement. WCWPDS provides an [exercise](#) in how to do this.
4. [UW Extension](#) provides tips to improve stakeholder conversations.
5. [UW Madison](#) also outlines key steps to consider when developing a program.
6. Is your agency ready for change? [WCWPDS](#) provides questions to assess for organization readiness.

### III. Ideas for Programming

#### A. Past Innovation Grant Publications

Please refer to [DCF Youth Justice webpage](#) to review past YJ Innovation Grant publications (annual summaries and final reports). Counties are encouraged to use the information in these reports as a source of ideas, to make connections with counties pursuing similar programs, to advance the Youth Justice Vision and Strategic Plan in their own communities.

#### B. Evidence-informed Strategies

It is recommended for counties to utilize evidence-based or evidence-informed strategies. Please refer to the catalog of evidence-based strategies for youth like the [Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse](#), [OJJDP Model Programs Guide](#), or [NIJ Crime Solutions](#).

### IV. Grant Writing Resources and Tips

#### A. Grant Writing Resources

1. [WI DOA Tips for Effective Grant Writing](#)
2. [UW-Madison](#) Grant Writing Tips
3. [UW-Madison: How to find Grants](#)
4. [WI DOJ Grant Administrative Guide](#) (pg.11)
5. [Purdue University](#)

#### B. Tips

1. **Complete all sections of the application packet.** Before submitting your application, make sure you have completed all the components of the application packet (i.e. application form, budget info page, and attached all relevant questions).
2. **Make sure you have answered all questions.** Double check your responses to ensure you have clearly and concisely answered all required questions.
3. **Don't assume the scoring team is familiar with your program/practice.** If you are referencing a particular program or practice, please describe what it is and *briefly*



- describe any supporting evidence.
4. **Give yourself sufficient time to complete application.** Read the grant requirements and make sure you are eligible well before the application submission deadline. Email [DCFYJ@wisconsin.gov](mailto:DCFYJ@wisconsin.gov) if you have questions or need clarification.
  5. **Become familiar with the [Allowable Cost Manual](#) before creating the budget.** Review reporting requirements to make sure your county can meet all the grant requirements.

## Application

### I. Application Overview

#### A. Application Mandatory Requirements

1. Use of the DCF application form.
2. Complete all sections and answer each question.
3. Sign the application.
4. Attach responses to the appropriate project area.

#### B. Project Areas

Based on eligibility status, counties may apply for grant funding for one of the following project areas:

Project Areas	Project Objective
<b>Reducing YJ Referrals</b>	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.
<b>Pre-Court Diversion</b>	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.
<b>Post-Dispositional Services</b>	This project area is focused on improving community-based service 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.

#### C. County Disparity and Disproportionality Assessment

1. All applicants will need to assess how their proposal will potentially impact different individuals and groups of people in terms of disparities and disproportionality.
2. Impact level may be based on the number of people, frequency of impact, duration of the impact and variety of potential impacts. Applicants are

encouraged to provide examples to further highlight the impact selection made.

#### **D. Budget**

1. [Wis. Stat. § 48.526\(2\)\(c\)](#) specifies that Youth Aids funding granted to counties shall be used to purchase or provide community-based youth justice (delinquency-related) services.
2. Initial YJ Innovation Grant funds will be available the following January after the application period and must be used within one year. Funding cannot be carried forward into the following year.
3. Counties may apply for funding equal to one of the following amounts:
  - a. \$50,000
  - b. \$100,000
4. Counties shall include a budget to explain how grant funds will be used. Counties are expected to clearly explain in their application how they intend to sustain their project beyond the life of the grant.

#### **E. Data**

1. Each project area will require a data analysis as part of the application. The data questions will provide future grantees a preview to future performance monitoring requirements.
2. The selected referral type will need to be tracked via eWiSACWIS eWReports.

#### **F. Project Specific Questions**

1. Responses should not exceed four pages.
2. Each question is required. Answer all sub questions succinctly.
3. All project-specific questions need to be answered in a separate document. To ensure your application is accurately scored, label responses with the corresponding question number.

#### **G. Collaboration**

1. The application requires a letter of support to make sure there has been a discussion between system partners prior to applying for the grant.
2. The discussion should include how agencies will work together, understand the scope, and support the new programming.

## **Post Award**

### **I. Acceptance**

#### **A. Intent to Award Letters**

1. Counties will receive an intent to award letter for those who are chosen to be a grantee.
2. Two to three weeks after the award letter, counties must identify a primary county contact for the grant and send a copy of the grant budget. Counties are required to email this information to the Innovation Grant contract administrator to proceed with the contract process.

3. The contract administrator will host a pre-award meeting with all new grantees to provide information about the contract process, performance monitoring requirements and cost reporting requirements. The meeting will be held before contracts are sent to the counties to sign.

## **II. Contracts**

### **A. Standard DCF Contract**

1. Grantees will be expected to sign a contract prior to the start of the contract period (i.e. January of the next calendar year). Most will be signing the DCF Standard Contract. For situations where the Standard Contract is not required, the DOA Standard Terms and Conditions will apply. Some awarded applicants may be asked to establish their financial stability.
2. Samples of all can be found on our [DCF Grant Opportunities Page](#).
3. Please read the entire grant award carefully, contact DCF YJ with any questions, and obtain all necessary signatures for the contract. Contracts should be signed as soon as possible.

### **B. Using DocuSign**

1. To increase efficiency, DCF uses DocuSign to route and sign contracts electronically.
2. DCF created a [guide](#) about how to use DocuSign which includes a video about the signing process.
3. Counties should identify who have been classified as required to “sign off” on the contract. The county contacts should also check the DocuSign notification email did not go to a Spam folder.

### **C. Performance Monitoring Requirements**

1. Attend all quarterly grantee conference calls. There are a total of four to five quarterly conference calls depending on the number of grantees. Each county will present once per year.
2. Site visits are requested for third year grantees if possible.
3. Regularly collect program data and report out on outcomes. Counties will be asked to review and track specific measures related to racial and ethnic disparities using data from eWiSACWIS.
4. To submit semi-annual evaluations to SPARC, counties need to access the SPARC performance portal. If you have not done so, please complete this [form](#) in order to use the portal.
5. SPARC Performance Portal Form FAQ
  - a. Request type: New or change (depending on if they already have financial access)
  - b. Environment – Production
  - c. User Type: Portal Performance

### **D. Reporting Periods**

1. Semi-annual program reporting periods are listed below. Semi-annual evaluations are distributed to counties after the reporting period ends. The

contract administrator provides counties four to six weeks to complete. Evaluations must be completed and submitted to SPARC Performance Portal by the due date. The reporting instructions and templates will be provided to the contracted agency by the Bureau of Youth Services.

Evaluation	Reporting Period
Mid-Year Evaluation	January 1 - May 15
Final Evaluation	May 16 - December 31

## Financial

### I. Cost Reporting

#### A. DCF Subrecipient Payment and Report on Contracts (SPARC)

1. [SPARC Access Instructions](#)
2. SPARC Codes
  - a. Initial Grantees: Use SPARC Line 3407B
  - b. Continuation Grantees: Use SPARC Line 3407C

#### B. Allowable Costs

1. [Wis. Stat. § 48.526\(2\)\(c\)](#) specifies that Youth Aids funding granted to counties shall be used to purchase or provide community-based youth justice (delinquency-related) services. Additional details of allowable costs can be found in [Wis. Stat. § 48.526\(2\)\(c\)](#) and the [DCF Allowable Cost Manual](#).

#### C. Unallowable Costs

1. Youth Aids (the funding source for the YJ Innovation Grants) dollars cannot be used “for purposes of land purchase, building construction, or maintenance of buildings pursuant to Wis. Stat. § [46.17](#), [46.175](#), or [301.37](#)” ([Wis. Stat. § 48.526\(2\)\(c\)](#)).

#### D. Budget Modifications

1. During the project period, counties can request budget modifications. Please submit the modified budget to the contract administrator and highlight the noted changes.
2. The contract administrator will inform the county if the new budget has been approved and if a contract amendment is required. All changes to your amended budget require prior approval.

#### E. Other Financial Inquiries

1. Please refer to the [DCF Allowable Cost Manual](#) for questions regarding procurement, sub-contracting, documentation of costs, conflict of interest, fiscal reviews, and general guidelines for allowability. Prior to contracting DCF, please check in with the county accountant to understand county guidance.

## F. Audit

1. Wisconsin Stat. § 49.34 establishes the [audit requirements](#) for the Department of Children and Families.
2. Effective, January 1, 2018, providers who receive funds in excess of \$100,000 from the Department of Children and Families (DCF), either directly or passed through another agency, for the purchase of care and services, need to have an audit that meet department standards, [unless the audit is waived](#) by the department.

## DCF Resources

[Doing Business with DCF](#)

## National Youth Justice Resources

[Casey Foundation](#)

[UCLA Health: Gap Analysis](#)

[OJJDP](#)

[National Center for Juvenile Justice](#)

[Washington State Institute for Public Policy](#)

[Georgetown University: Center for Reducing Racial and Ethnic Disparities](#)

## Frequently Asked Questions

### I. Application Questions

#### A. *What is the purpose of the county summary description question?*

This question is an opportunity for counties to provide an overview of the area they serve and about the needs of their communities. Members of the scoring committee are past YJ Innovation Grant recipients who may not be familiar with the details of your county and might need additional context to evaluate the proposed programming.

#### B. *Please describe what should be included in the letter of support from a collaborative partner.*

The intent of the letter is to make sure there has been a discussion between agencies prior to applying for the grant. The discussion should include how the two agencies plan to work together and understand the scope of the grant. The funding is only for one year and agencies will need to “hit the ground running” after contracts are signed.

#### C. *For the Post Dispositional Services project, counties should implement programming that can be added to a YASI Service Matrix. What is a good strategy to identify services that could be added to the matrix? What if we know there are multiple YASI domains that would benefit from additional services?*

Proposed programming should target medium and/or high-risk youth in dynamic

(changeable) YASI domains. Consulting your county's service matrix to see where available services are missing or scarce could be a good place to start.

If you notice that there are multiple domains that would benefit from additional services, it is not required to address every gap with this grant. While there are counties that have implemented several new programs/services with YJ Innovation Grants, there are others that have just focused on implementing one new program or practice for the duration of their contract.

**D.** *Can you provide examples of what "net widening" means?*

Net widening happens when a youth whose need would be best met by another system are brought into the Youth Justice system to address those needs. For example, youth with mental health concerns who are labeled as "at risk" of future delinquent behavior but have not yet received a YJ referral should not be sent to the YJ system to access mental health services. Additional discussion of net widening can be found on [page 4 of this literature review for the Baltimore City Youth Diversion Committee](#).

**E.** *When defining our "objective," is this a short answer, or a full description of the project?*

Your objective should be a short description of what you hope to accomplish with your YJ Innovation Grant (ex. reduce the number of justice-involved youth placed in out of home care).

**F.** *I only see two check box options for the budget. Can I request a specific amount?*

Of the two funding options, please select the one that will be sufficient for your program. We are not offering counties the option to request a specific amount.

## **II. Allowable Costs**

**A.** *Can a YJ Innovation Grant be used for building costs?*

Unfortunately, no. Youth Aids (the funding source for the YJ Innovation Grants) dollars cannot be used "for purposes of land purchase, building construction, or maintenance of buildings under [46.17](#), [46.175](#), or [301.37](#)" ([Wis. Stats. 48.526\(2\)\(c\)](#)).

**B.** *Can I use an Innovation Grant to fund a position?*

Yes, but there are some caveats. First, it is important to consider that YJ Innovation funds cannot be used to supplant or replace existing funding sources. Second, this is intended to be a short-term, start-up grant. YJ Innovation funding is only available for a maximum of 36 months, so it will be important to identify a viable long-term funding source as soon as possible.

**C.** *Can I use an Innovation Grant to purchase incentives?*

Yes.

### III. Miscellaneous

- A.** *How competitive is this grant and how many counties will be awarded funds?*

The YJ Innovation Grants are competitive, so applying is not a guarantee that a county will be awarded funds. It is unknown how many awards will be given as that depends on how many counties applied and the amount of underspending available via Youth Aids. We will award grants to the highest scoring, eligible counties until we run out of funding.

- B.** *What happens if I do not use the full award amount during the contract period?*

Whatever funds are not utilized during the contract period cannot be carried forward into the next calendar year. In other words, that funding will disappear at the end of the grant period (12/31/2024). While there is no penalty for counties who do not spend all their YJ Innovation Grant dollars, we do strongly encourage counties to apply for the funding amount that best aligns with what they feel they could reasonably spend.

- C.** *Will DCF partially fund our request, or award less than we have applied for?*

No.

- D.** *Is there a match requirement for the YJ Innovation Grants?*

No.

## Glossary

Term	Definition
<b><i>Strategic Planning</i></b>	
Activity	Specific action taken as part of an initiative meant to reach a desired outcome. A general term to describe all work done as part of programs, projects, initiatives.
Core Values/Ways of Working	An organization’s guiding principles: what they believe in, the ideals, principles, and philosophy at the center of the organization.
Goals	Broad statement of what the organization or program area want to achieve.
Initiative	A project or program initiated to contribute to the achievement of an outcome.
Mission	The purpose of the organization.
Outcome	The desired result of strategies that help achieve goals. Includes short-term, intermediate, and long-term outcomes.
Output	The direct product of an activity. Sometimes called a deliverable.
Partner	Subset of stakeholders critical to implementing strategies to achieve goals.
Philosophical Alignment	A continuous process of establishing and reinforcing shared beliefs among key community partners, learning from the unique insights of partners with diverse job roles and backgrounds.
Program	A long-term set of policies, resources, procedures, etc.
Project	A temporary time-bound endeavor to create a unique product, service, or result.
Stakeholder	Individual or group with special interest in programming or outcomes.
Strategy	A plan of action describing how an organization or program area will reach their outcome.
Vision	An aspirational statement of the desired future of an organization. It answers questions like 'what are our hopes and dreams', 'what problems are we solving for the greater good', and 'who and what are we inspiring to change'.
<b><i>Measuring Progress</i></b>	
Benchmark	A federal, state, or program set level of achievement against which organizations can measure their progress.



<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Key Performance Indicator (KPI)	Metric that is most aligned with an organization or program area’s goals. They make the greatest impact on progress towards achieving outcomes and are regularly reviewed as a part of performance management.
Measure	Number or value that can be summed and/or averaged. A unit or data point to express the size, amount, or degree of something.
Metric	Quantifiable measure used to gauge performance or progress. Also called indicator.
Performance Goal	A statement of the level of performance to be accomplished within a timeframe, expressed as a tangible, measurable aim or as a quantitative, standard, value, or rate.
Target	A desired number or level related to a metric; they are what the organization is striving to reach.
<b><i>Processes</i></b>	
Performance Management	The ongoing monitoring and reporting of a program’s accomplishments and progress, particularly towards its pre-established goals.
Program Evaluation	Systematic method for collecting, analyzing, and using information to determine effectiveness and efficiency about policies, and programs.
Vision	An aspirational statement of the desired future of an organization. It answers questions like 'what are our hopes and dreams', 'what problems are we solving for the greater good', and 'who and what are we inspiring to change'.
<b><i>Innovation Grant Application</i></b>	
<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Ability	The quality or state of being able to have or having the power to perform tasks physically, mentally, or legally.
Age	The time of life at which some qualification, power, or capacity arises or rests.
Bias	Prejudice toward one group and its member relative to another group.
Culture	The languages, customs, beliefs, rules, arts, knowledge, and collective identities
Disproportionality	The overrepresentation or underrepresentation of a racial or ethnic group compared with its percentage in the total population.
Disparity	The unequal outcomes of one racial or ethnic group compared with outcomes for another racial or ethnic group.

Term	Definition
Ethnicity	Belonging to or deriving from the cultural, racial, religious, language or beliefs of a particular group of people or country.
Gender	Culturally and socially constructed relationships between men and women.
LGBTQ+	An acronym for “lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer”. The plus (+) is inclusive of all other expressions of gender identity and sexual orientation.



# Wisconsin Department of Children and Families

The Department of Children and Families is an equal opportunity employer and service provider. If you have a disability and need to access services, receive information in an alternate format, or need information translated to another language, please call the Division of Safety and Permanence at (608) 266-8787. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind or speech disabled can use the free Wisconsin Relay Service (WRS) – 711 to contact the department.