

# Bureau of Youth Services Newsletter

MAY 2026

## Director's Message

As we move into a season of growth, I am proud of the important work happening across the Bureau of Youth Services. This issue provides information about BYS staffing updates, grant opportunities, statewide initiatives, and beautiful examples of the dedication that drives our mission forward. Spring reminds us that meaningful progress isn't always quick and often begins with steady, intentional steps – and that the seeds we plant today help shape stronger outcomes tomorrow. Thank you for the care, commitment, and excellence you bring to Wisconsin's youth and families. Happy Spring!

*Evelyn J. Coker*

## Department News

### Year of the Neighbor

Governor Tony Evers declared 2026 the year of the Neighbor during his final State of the State address. As he explained, doing so highlights the importance of celebrating neighbors who make Wisconsin great, from first responders to farmers to veterans. This also includes our child welfare professionals, services providers, and families! It is critical for DCF and other agencies to create a network of support for professionals, partners, families, and young adults. Doing so will strengthen communities, support the workforce, and create opportunities for young people now and into the future. Thank you all for the work you do every day serving WI youth.



Photo of hand drawn "Year of the Neighbor" display, located in the DCF's Secretary's Office.

## 2026 Youth Services Conference

The 2026 Youth Services Conference was a powerful opportunity to connect, learn, and recommit ourselves to serving youth and families across Wisconsin. Together, we shared innovative practices, strengthened and built new relationships with partners, and centered the voices and experiences of young people. The energy at the conference reflected a shared belief that when we collaborate across systems and communities, meaningful change is possible. We are grateful to everyone who helped plan, present, and participate in this year's conference. The momentum from this gathering will certainly continue to shape our work in the months and years ahead. See you in 2028!

## Procurement and Grant Opportunities

If you're interested in contract or grant opportunities related to youth service and youth justice initiatives, it can't hurt to bookmark the following resource pages:

- The Wisconsin Department of Justice (WI DOJ)'s competitive grant opportunities can be found at [WI DOJ Grants Opportunities page](#) or contact Kiley Komro at [Kiley.Komro@wisdoj.gov](mailto:Kiley.Komro@wisdoj.gov) for additional information.
- DCF's [Anticipated Procurement Opportunities page](#) lists forthcoming procurements, including for youth services contract opportunities.

## Bureau Updates

Hello from us to you! The BYS team recently got together for a Bureau Retreat, which included a welcome balance of fun teambuilding and collaborative thought work.



Front row (L-R): Alana Peck, Alisha Brown, Sarina Brummund, Kelsey Hill

Back row (L-R): Evelyn Coker, Tonisha Hora, Greta Munns, Shane Arndt, Jada Hrubes, Faith Price, Kendra Schiffman

## Welcome, Jada!

Hello! I'm excited to introduce myself as the Bureau's new Youth Justice Section Manager. I bring more than 15 years of experience in Child Welfare. I began my career at Vernon County Human Services, where I developed a strong foundation in direct practice and a passion for supporting youth and families. I later served for nearly a decade as the Family & Children's Unit Supervisor in Crawford County, providing support and oversight across Child Protective Services, Out-of-Home Care, Coordinated Services Teams, and Youth Justice.

I also contributed to statewide efforts as a contracted Safety Trainer with the Wisconsin Child Welfare Professional Development System (WCWPDS) and for several years served as an Act 78 Wisconsin Reviewer with DCF. Throughout my career, I have focused on advancing prevention and diversion strategies, promoting trauma-informed and family-centered practices, supporting the workforce, and building strong partnerships to enhance meaningful outcomes for youth and families. I look forward to bringing my experience and perspective to further strengthen youth-serving systems and Youth Justice practices across Wisconsin.



## Thank you, Tess!

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to Tess Brodsky for her many contributions to BYJ since 2023, first as a YJ Program and Policy Analyst and later serving in her current role as Strategic Initiatives Coordinator beginning in 2024. Tess has a deep commitment to supporting her colleagues, partners, and the young people we serve. She brings a thoughtful, solutions-focused approach to our complex work and is always willing to step in when needed. Her dedication has made a lasting impact on Innovation Grants, new YJ training efforts, Youth Voice, and many other BYJ program areas. We congratulate Tess on her transition to the Administrator's Office and know she will continue to shine as a champion for BYJ across the Division of Safety and Permanence.

## Youth Justice Updates

### Milwaukee's Children, Youth, and Family Services Unit's eWiSACWIS Integration

In Wisconsin, Milwaukee's Department of Health and Human Services – Children, Youth, and Family Services (CYFS) oversees county-based youth justice. DCF and CYFS have worked closely together for several years to transition CYFS into the state's case management system, eWiSACWIS. This project hit a major milestone in early April – Milwaukee CYFS is now using eWiSACWIS as their primary source for case management!

The transition project has involved many DCF and CYFS staff over the past few years. BYJ YJ staff would like to extend our gratitude to everyone who has supported this work! A special thanks to Stewart Parins and Ethan Moua with CGI, one of DCF's contracted partners, who helped to coordinate the technical pieces of this project and Rachael Specht, Wendy Moraza, and Janet Wegher with CYFS who have been close collaborators in this work. Thank you!!

### New Youth Justice Training Opportunity!

WCWPDS will host Youth Justice Philosophy and Case Process (YJPCP) orientation sessions on May 20, 2026 (11am-12pm) and October 16, 2026 (11am-12pm). Though designed for new youth justice professionals, youth justice supervisors are also invited to attend and learn more about this youth justice training. If interested, contact [office@wcwpds.wisc.edu](mailto:office@wcwpds.wisc.edu) for more information and session access.

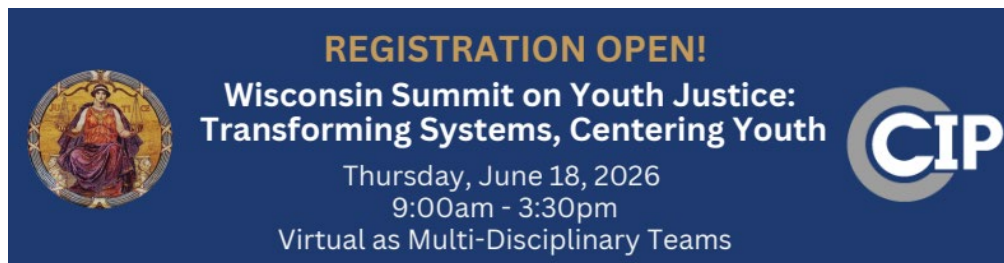
## Wisconsin Summit on Youth Justice: Transforming Systems, Centering Youth

**You're Invited!** In June, the Children's Court Improvement Program (CCIP) will host a free virtual summit focused on current research and effective practices in youth justice proceedings. The day will include presentations from Josh Weber of the Council of State Governments (CSG) and Dr. Kristin Henning of Georgetown Law.

The goal of this event is to bring youth justice decision-makers together for peer learning that is focused on common challenges and practical solutions. While the speakers will appear virtually, participants will be asked to gather with other participants from their community in a shared location.

This kick-off event will be followed by quarterly topic-based webinars, culminating in a statewide in-person summit in 2027. Continuing education credits will be offered for judicial officers, attorneys, and social workers. Reach out to [ccip@wicourts.gov](mailto:ccip@wicourts.gov) with any questions.

- Thursday, June 18, 2026, 9:00am – 3:30pm
  - **Registration deadline: June 1, 2026**
- Agenda and link to register: <https://www.wicciptraining.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/Wisconsin-Summit-on-Youth-Justice-Brochure-June-18-2026.pdf>.



## Youth Justice Advisory Committee

The Youth Justice Advisory Committee (YJAC) is comprised of county professionals from various YJ practice areas with the purpose of informing BYS's decisions and policies regarding Wisconsin's Youth Justice programs.

### Topics covered at the February and April 2026 meetings included:

- Introduction of our new YJ Section Manager, Jada Hrubes!
- Announcement that Alana Peck will step in as co-chair of YJAC.
  - Jenna Dunlap is still a very important part of BYS's YJ team but her job responsibilities have shifted. She will continue to attend these meetings as she is able!
- Reminder about the upcoming 2026 Youth Services Conference is April 29, April 30 and May 1 at the Wilderness Resort in the Wisconsin Dells.
- Update about the [Wisconsin Information and Support Portal \(WiSP\)](#) rolling out statewide on April 6 (see more information about WiSP on page 5 of this document).

### Project updates included:

- Quality Case Planning (QCP) updates, including discussion of associated YJ standards.
- Battery statute updates.
- Updates on Milwaukee County's transition to the eWisACWIS system starting April 6 and to the state CaseWorks server on May 1.
- YASI coaching program updates: after cohort 4 completes training, there will be 40 YASI Coaches in 22 counties!

- Feedback on the YJ Referral data dashboard, which is currently in the testing phase.
- Feedback on increasing interest in Innovation Grants.
- Feedback on recommendations for the statewide implementation of regular YASI Interrater Reliability (IRR) assessments.

The remaining 2026 YJAC meetings take place on July 22, 2026 and October 1, 2026, from 1-3pm.

If you are interested in serving on this committee in 2026 or want a summary of the most recent committee meeting, please email [dcfyj@wisconsin.gov](mailto:dcfyj@wisconsin.gov) with the subject title YJAC.

## Youth Services Updates

### Wisconsin Information and Support Portal (WiSP) Rollout!

**WiSP is live!** This youth-friendly web application provides youth with child welfare experience the opportunity to directly review, contribute to, update, and message about information related to their case and involvement in the child welfare system. Via WiSP, they can:

- Receive reminders and notifications about their information
- Directly submit responses to Independent Living Transition to Discharge (ILTD) planning
- Find information on helpful resources
- Update contact and demographic information
- Message with their support team

The child welfare professionals working with the youth continue to use eWiSACWIS, using the new WiSP Review Page to receive and review information the youth submits via WiSP, as well as send messages directly to the young person via the application. More information, including comprehensive guidance documents and videos, are available on the [DCF WiSP webpage](#).

## Independent Living Updates

### *NEW! Independent Living Assessment and Plan Desk Guide*

DCF IL staff recently completed an IL assessment and plan desk guide to help guide child welfare agency (CWA) partners' IL work with qualifying youth still in care. This easy-to-read resource details expectations and best practices related to the workforce's initial and ongoing assessment of IL-eligible youth's IL skills, needs, and goals, including assessment and plan options they may use. View the document [here](#).

### *Roadmap to Independent Living*

DCF IL staff recently revised the [Roadmap to Independent Living resource](#), which they originally developed in 2018 with two young adult consultants. Following the recent update, DCF made the resource available for free via the Department of Administration's Print on Demand service. We invite you to order copies for yourself and your clients or colleagues [here](#). Note that the Roadmap is sold in bundles of 10.

## Anti-Human Trafficking Updates

### *Ending the Game Training*

DCF, in partnership with Wisconsin Child Welfare Professional Development System (WCWPDS), continues to offer Ending the Game Supporter Training for partners who serve youth who currently experience or previously experienced human trafficking. The next opportunity is in-person on July 25, 2026 in Madison, WI. To attend, you must register via the [WCWPDS](#). The target audience is child welfare professionals (including those in youth justice), tribal child welfare partners, and youth service providers. The course includes prework, which you can learn more about [here](#). Reach out to WCWPDS with any questions.

## Human Trafficking Informational Webinar

Wisconsin's Anti-Human Trafficking Task Force is offering a webinar to educate the public about both sex and labor trafficking – including what they are, what trafficking can look like, and how to connect survivors to resources. The webinar will take place on July 8, 2026 from 1-3pm. You can register for it [here](#).

## Youth Voice Updates

### Youth Advisory Council

Wisconsin's Statewide Youth Advisory Council (YAC) is gearing up and excited for Foster Care Awareness Month in May. Highlights include:

- Statewide YAC members and alumni participated in the Bureau of Youth Services Conference April 29-May 1, 2026. They were engaged in everything from a youth art reception as part of a larger networking event to emceeding general sessions, serving on a compelling general session panel to co-facilitating multiple workshops. We're so grateful for the way you show up, YAC!
- Three Statewide YAC Officers will be traveling to the National Citizen Review Panel (CRP) Conference in San Diego, California in late May. We look forward to the insights, connections, and idea-sharing young leaders will return with to further this work with the Council.
- YAC Members will be doing a virtual panel for the Wisconsin CRPs on May 20, 2026.
- YAC brings back HAC (Hands Around the Capitol)! From 11am-1pm on May 28, 2026, YAC will host its first in-person HAC event since 2019 – this time in partnership with other DCF Division of Safety and Permanence (DSP) Lived Experience groups! In addition to YAC, the groups include parent leaders, kinship caregivers, and the Youth Leadership Teams.



The event will feature guest speakers, lived experience exhibitors, and publications co-designed by DCF staff and lived experience experts who DSP serves. Most importantly, this event will be an empowering and inspiring opportunity to close out Foster Care Awareness Month in community with those who know firsthand the importance of centering and supporting youth and families. Help us by showing up and spreading the word, and leaving the event committed to serving and elevating youth and families impacted by foster care well beyond May.

**Hands Around the Capitol**  
All Hands on Deck for Children, Youth and Families

Thursday, May 28th 2026

Capitol Rotunda

A Youth Advisory Council-driven, lived experience powered event

## Save the Date

👤 Tabling for Lived Experience groups begins at 11AM, guest speakers begin at 12PM, joining of hands takes place at 12:45PM

👤 State Capitol Building 2 E Main St, Madison, WI 53702

👤 Questions? E-mail [DCFILCoordinator@wisconsin.gov](mailto:DCFILCoordinator@wisconsin.gov)

Wisconsin Department of Children and Families

**May is Foster Care Awareness Month**

The graphic is a promotional poster for the "Hands Around the Capitol" event. It features a circular image of the Wisconsin State Capitol building. To the right of the image are four blue hexagons containing event details: the event name, date, location, and a description. Below the hexagons is the "Save the Date" text, followed by a list of logistical information including tabling times, address, and contact email. The Wisconsin Department of Children and Families logo is in the bottom right, and a banner at the bottom states "May is Foster Care Awareness Month".

## Youth Leadership Team

The Youth Leadership Team (YLT) met most recently on April 9, 2026. Youth participants learned and gave input on the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR), YASI Interrater Reliability Project, and the Wisconsin Information and Support Portal (WiSP). The group's next meeting will take place in July; more information to follow.



In addition to meeting regularly, YLT participants have the opportunity to participate in different advocacy and feedback opportunities. DCF was thrilled have two youth from YLT be part of a Youth Panel at the Youth Services Conference on April 30, 2026. It was their first time participating on a panel, and they did a fantastic job!

## Partner Highlight

A few of the local Youth Advisory Council members based in Southern Wisconsin teamed up with CASA of Rock County for their annual Pinwheels for Prevention event to raise awareness for Child Abuse Prevention Month. Each pinwheel represents a report of child abuse or neglect in Rock County in the past year - serving both as a visual reminder of the challenges some children face and a symbol of the safe, joyful childhood every child deserves. On Saturday April 4, 2026, YAC members and other volunteers planted approximately 3,000 pinwheels on the Rock County Courthouse front lawn, turning awareness into action and hope.



## What We're Reading (and Listening to and Watching!)

BYS staff recommend these learning opportunities and tools. Check them out!

- Report, [Cross Examination: A Comprehensive Review of Wisconsin's Criminal Justice System](#), Wisconsin Policy Forum, April 2026.
- Book, [Shattered Bonds: The Color of Child Welfare](#), Dorothy Roberts, 2001.
- Documentary, [Milwaukee 53206](#), which "chronicles the lives of those living in the ZIP code that incarcerates the highest percentage of black men in America."

## Youth Arts and Achievements Corner

BYS's Youth Arts and Achievements Corner is dedicated to elevating the voices and successes of the youth our team serves. This part of the newsletter is an opportunity for us to highlight young adults' original artwork and/or shout-outs that others share about them. BYS accepts [rolling submissions](#) of the following to include in future newsletters:

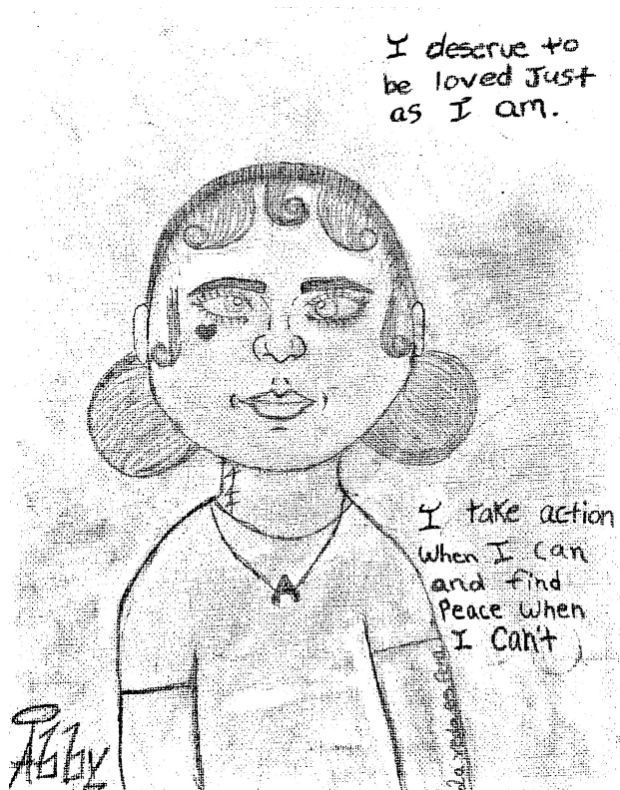
- **Youth's original artwork**, can be submitted by youth (ages 14-23) or their adult supporter (with youth awareness and permission).
- **Highlights/shout-outs that celebrate or otherwise recognize a youth** (ages 14-23), submitted by an adult supporter.

Thanks to everyone who has submitted art and highlights so far. This month, we are proud to share **four artists' work!**



*Drawing by Joelia S. from Brown County, titled "Raccoon Playing Banjo."*

*Joelia wants the viewer to have their own thoughts and feelings on the piece and spend their time navigating their own life choices, thoughts, and feelings through art.*



Left - Drawing by Abby R. from Waukesha County, titled "Self Portrait."  
Right - Drawing by Nara W. from Waukesha County, titled "Kaylah Steph."



Painting by J.S. from Milwaukee County, titled "Koi."

## ABOUT THE BUREAU OF YOUTH SERVICES

The Bureau of Youth Services is a unit within Wisconsin's DCF that is dedicated to being more responsive to the needs of older youth in and at risk of being involved in the child welfare or youth justice system.

If you have questions or ideas, please contact us!

[dcfoys@wisconsin.gov](mailto:dcfoys@wisconsin.gov)

### **Leadership**

Director

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Youth Justice Section Manager

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Sign up for our newsletter [here!](#)

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