

# The Impact Of COVID-19 on Youth Justice in Wisconsin: What Does it Tell Us About the Future of the System?

January 2021

PRESENTED BY  
**Kids Forward**

PREPARED BY  
Ann McCullough  
and Erica Nelson



# Table of Contents

Acknowledgments .....	3
Executive Summary .....	4
Introduction .....	5
Project Description .....	6
Qualitative Data Summary.....	7–8
Quantitative Data Summary .....	9–10
Disparities.....	11–12
Key Insights.....	13
Recommendations.....	14–15
Conclusion.....	16
Appendix A: Wisconsin Model for Juvenile Justice.....	17
Appendix B: COVID-19 Impact on Youth Justice Survey .....	18
Appendix C: Quantitative Data Tables .....	19



The biggest obstacle was the perception that kids committing certain offenses need to be held in secure custody, consistent with prior practice... I think, almost invariably, the system has come to realize that we need not incarcerate as many youth, even temporarily, as we have historically.”

– Attorney

# Acknowledgments

It cannot be said too often: we are living through unprecedented times. The confluence of social, health and environmental crisis threatens the wellbeing of too many. We remain committed to pursuing advocacy through the lens of antiracism in ways that result in tangible and meaningful change in communities across Wisconsin. We hope that this project serves as a means to that end.

Thanks to the **Governor's Juvenile Justice Commission** for their support and thank you to all the individuals who participated. We are especially grateful for our partnership with **Youth Justice Milwaukee** through which we envision a statewide voice called **Youth Justice Wisconsin**.

– **Erica Nelson**, Kids Forward Advocacy Director

## Special thanks to the following organizations for their cooperation:

Governor's Juvenile Justice Commission and SubCommittees

Wisconsin State Courts Association

Wisconsin Children's Court Improvement Program

Department of Justice—State Prosecutor Education & Training Program

State Office of the Public Defender

Wisconsin Juvenile Court Intake Workers Association

Wisconsin Counties Human Service Workers Association

Wisconsin Counties Association

Wisconsin Department of Children and Families

Wisconsin Department of Corrections and Division of Juvenile Corrections

Indian Child Welfare Directors

Tribal Judges Association

Center for Urban Research, Teaching & Outreach, Marquette University

Center for Budget Policies and Priorities

Columbia University Justice Lab—Youth Correctional Leaders for Justice

Urban Institute

Center for Juvenile and Criminal Justice

The Sentencing Project

Annie E. Casey Foundation Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI)



This project was supported by Grant #2017-JF-FX-0026 awarded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department of Justice.

# Executive Summary



COVID-19 has created a shortage of funds which would make it difficult to redirect resources. Collaboration and innovation needs to focus on if detention was not an option, what would be an option for immediate placement needs for youth with significant behaviors [?] How do you find and train staff to manage these significant behaviors and what [is a] time [when] a facility is needed...?"

– Youth Justice Manager

The COVID-19 pandemic has created an urgent need for safety planning within secure facilities due to a unique set of risks and vulnerabilities for youth who are in custody.<sup>1</sup> In comparison to other states, Wisconsin has demonstrated a strong commitment to preserving the health and safety of all by implementing Coronavirus emergency guidelines across the juvenile justice system.<sup>2</sup> This report examines the implications of those shifts in relation to the current state of youth justice and the future based on the Wisconsin Model of Juvenile Justice (Appendix A).

These emergency protocols have focused on safely reducing the number of youth in secure custody across the state, in order to decrease the risk of infection. They have been successful as the data indicate that the number of referrals to counties for youth justice intakes fell by almost half once the pandemic started. We need a deeper understanding of how this has been achieved in order to replicate them in ways that improve child well-being for all youth.

While not without challenges, the majority of partners see the reduction of youth in custody as a silver lining within a crisis, with positive implications for the future. In a matter of months, jurisdictions have overcome hurdles that typically stymie efforts to decrease the use of confinement. Most stakeholders seem to want that to continue.

The baseline data in this report tells the story of the systemic problems, solutions, and a high level of commitment to succeed at making necessary changes in response to a health crisis.

Data analysis and review of current literature leads to these conclusions: it is possible to use alternative approaches to safely and significantly reduce the use of secure custody; there is a desire to do so; and, the strategies needed are within reach.

It is urgent that we take swift action to create lasting change based on lessons learned, current research, and our own Wisconsin Model of Juvenile Justice. Such action will help us progress towards equity, well-being, and safety for all youth, in all communities.

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://yclj.org/covid19statement>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.sentencingproject.org/publications/covid-19-in-juvenile-facilities/>

# Introduction



We released roughly half of our population at the onset of COVID-19. We have not gotten requests to place any of these kids back in [Juvenile Detention Center].”

## – Detention Leader

Children and youth in congregate care settings are more vulnerable to COVID-19 infection, creating an urgent need for prevention protocols in youth prisons and detention facilities. In addition to following public health prevention guidelines for quarantine and social distancing, the protocols recommend reducing the number of youth in custody and limiting in person contact as primary strategies to prevent transmission.<sup>3</sup>

The easiest way to keep the number of youth in custody as low as possible during the pandemic, is to restrict the criteria for admission to only those youth who pose a serious and imminent threat to public safety. Broadly speaking, many youth are typically detained to manage acute behavior related to a mental health crisis, and/or to sanction a technical violation of probation. These youth are now being denied admission to secure facilities and diverted to alternative placements or stabilized with additional community services.

Wisconsin has seen a dramatic decrease in the number of youth justice intake referrals since the start of the pandemic. This reduction may indicate system diversion that was facilitated by law enforcement. This set of data was unavailable for this study, so for the purposes of this report, it remains unexplored. However, an analysis of calls for service and referrals for intake would likely tell us something about front end diversion. It could offer guidance to make long term changes based on these short term conditions.

The diversion process is not without challenges around access to services, funding constraints, lack of training and a confluence of differing mindsets. And yet, system partners, youth and families, across Wisconsin, are responding to this challenge and succeeding in most cases. These outcomes mirror national trends.<sup>4</sup>

The underpinnings of COVID-19 restrictions are not new ideas. Years of research and reform show that restricting the use of secure custody based on serious risk is a best practice reform, because all confinement is damaging to children and adolescents.<sup>5</sup> Wisconsin has been moving down this path for decades. We can accelerate that progress by working in partnership with state agencies, based on this pandemic response.

At this point in our efforts to reform the juvenile justice system, we need to be diligent about eliminating the racial and ethnic disparities that currently exist. The overall number of youth who are incarcerated in Wisconsin is going down.<sup>6</sup> However, the disparities of incarceration rates between groups of marginalized youth and their white peers are going up.<sup>7</sup> This means that previous reforms have not had equitable results.

This is the time to activate the Wisconsin Model’s integrity as a mechanism to address the policies and practices that increase detainment rates for some youth. The findings of this study offer ways to act upon this imperative.

---

<sup>3</sup> <https://yclj.org/covid19statement>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.aecf.org/blog/how-two-jdai-sites-are-accelerating-youth-justice-reforms-during-the-pandem/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/articles/2020/05/05/lessons-from-juvenile-justice-reforms-could-help-reduce-pandemics-impact-on-confined-youth>

<sup>6</sup> <https://doc.wi.gov/Documents/AboutDOC/JuvenileCorrections/DJCPopulationReport.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> <https://kidsforward.net/assets/The-Complex-Maze-of-the-Juvenile-Justice-System.pdf>

# Project Description

“

The biggest obstacle was the perception that kids committing certain offenses need to be held in secure custody, consistent with prior practice... I think, almost invariably, the system has come to realize that we need not incarcerate as many youth, even temporarily, as we have historically.”

– Attorney

By May of 2020, local anecdotes of COVID-19 safety plans having a positive impact on efforts to reduce the number of youth in secure custody were confirmed by national surveys.<sup>8</sup> This project was developed in response to these reports, in order to explore if these successes could inform the next phase of youth justice reform in Wisconsin.

## METHOD

Networking with national groups informed the project scope. The Youth Correctional Leaders for Justice safety protocol guidelines framed the qualitative survey developed for this project. The Annie E. Casey Foundation pandemic response study informed the range of data collected. The Sentencing Project advocacy report highlights the ongoing toll that the pandemic is taking in states that continue to rely on incarceration, thereby creating a context for comparison of action taking place within Wisconsin.

A brief survey was used to collect qualitative data about implementing safety protocols and is included in this report as Appendix B. Survey distribution occurred through an interdisciplinary group of networks (noted on p.2), and participation was voluntary. Figure A reflects what areas of the state responded to the survey.

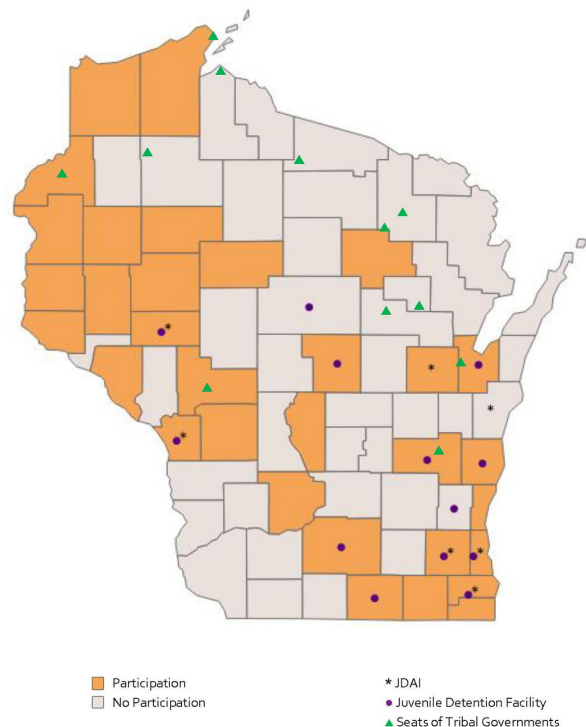
“

[positive feedback is that] keeping youth at home with their parents keeps them safe during a pandemic- parents concerned if youth detained they may get [COVID-19].”

– Youth Justice Administrator

Specific findings from the qualitative data are incorporated into this report as direct quotes, to reflect a variety of themes and perspectives. Notably, there were more positive or neutral responses than negative ones. The results were analyzed alongside the high level quantitative data provided by the Department of Children and Families (DCF) and Department of Corrections (DOC).

COVID-19 Impact on Youth Justice: Project Participation



Tribal communities tribal communities were engaged through Indian Child Welfare Liaisons. See <https://wisconsinfirstnations.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Current-Tribal-Lands-Map-Only.JPG.jpg> and <https://wisconsinfirstnations.org/map/> for more information and maps of Tribal Lands.

Figure A

Silver Lynx Consulting, LLC

# Qualitative Data Summary

“

The limitation of secure custody, as well as non-secure (placement) has caused some issues in regards to managing some individual behavior issues. Staff has redoubled their efforts to support their clients in making better decisions and behavioral changes, as well as utilizing non placement related tools.”

– Youth Justice Supervisor

Thirty counties participated in the project and tribal liaisons were engaged through the DCF Tribal liaisons. The survey data confirms that all 30 of these counties implemented many of the guidelines for preventing the spread of COVID-19 within secure facilities. Over 50 survey responses and additional stakeholder interviews represented a diverse cross section of professionals within the juvenile justice system who were also impacted.(Figure B)

All stakeholders answered the same set of questions, so the data reflected a variety of perspectives. As a result, the data provides insight into key areas where transformative change could emerge from these emergency circumstances.

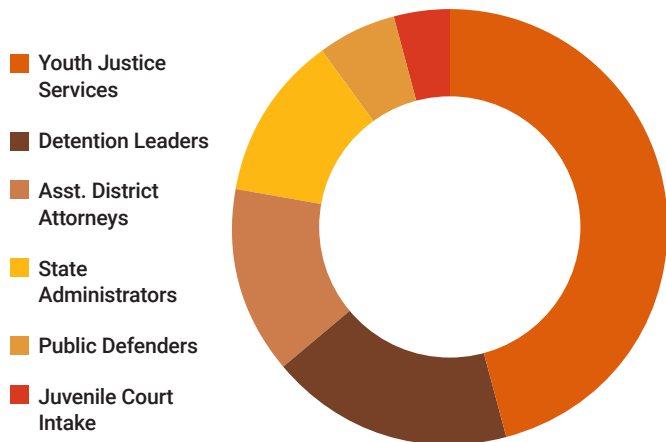
“

We had a youth with serious cognitive and mental health issues that was a serious challenge to get released from secure detention due to some violent things he had done to family members. We even sent him home for a couple of days on a safety plan, but it failed miserably and the youth returned to secure detention. We have since found more intensive services for this youth that have made him successful in his family environment.”

– Youth Justice Supervisor

## 50 Survey Responses from 30 Counties and 6 State Entities

Figure B



# Qualitative Data Summary *continued*

## **IMMEDIATE CHANGE**

Despite these real challenges, 74% of respondents believe that it is possible to permanently restrict the overall use of secure custody, using a variety of strategies. The findings indicate that the power for change is tangible and exists in the day to day. Youth justice staff nimbly adjusted to the restrictions on secure custody and in-person contact, where possible, by increasing collaboration, communication, and innovation.

## **GETTING “ON THE SAME PAGE”**

In order to change our youth justice system for the long term, system partners have to align around a more culturally responsive, developmentally appropriate, and trauma informed approach to addressing youth and family needs that is far less punitive. The data identifies the need for dedicated effort in this area—especially with regards to responding to youth from other cultures.

The data indicated that an unexpected benefit of reducing the number of youth in facilities and replacing in-person contact with phone and video conferencing was a more positive atmosphere for youth and staff.

Two areas of concern that were central: the scarcity of alternative placements and services in some parts of the state; and the expectation that secure custody continue to be used as a sanction during the pandemic.

There was overall agreement that reducing the number of youth in facilities by increasing diversion, increasing collaboration, and being more innovative with placements are positive outcomes of the health crisis.

“

More coordination with the court systems around appropriate response to youth(.)... separating behavior that places the community at risk from behavior that is simply a technical violation. [We need to] train them in the importance of alternatives instead of knee-jerk anger because they didn't bend to their authority. [Rules of probation set] unrealistic expectations for some kids.”

– Youth Justice Supervisor

“

Parents and youth [are] happy for diverse ways to visit and communicate.”

– Detention Superintendent

“

Parents have become frustrated at the lack of resources available for consequences.”

– Youth Justice Coordinator



# Quantitative Data Summary



While the use of secure custody did decrease, our Department has found it to be a huge struggle to keep some of the youth safe as they did not meet the criteria to be held in secure [custody]... It appears that limited options for residential care centers throughout this has also been a great struggle as this would have been the first choice for placement, however, none were available.”

## – Youth Justice Supervisor

Statewide data from the Department of Children and Families (DCF) and the Department of Corrections (DOC) offer a high-level picture of trends. This comparison of referrals for county youth justice intake and facility population reporting for April-June of 2019 and 2020 include the following data points:

- The number of youth referred for county youth justice intake;
- The number of youth in custody at the four state correctional facilities which include: Copper Lake School (Girls only), Lincoln Hills School (Boys only), GROW Academy (Boys only), and Mendota Juvenile Treatment Center (Boys only);
- And the total number of youth in secure custody at the 13 county detention facilities in Wisconsin.

This data counts the number of youth referred for intake and the number in secure custody. It does not capture the number of youth denied admission due to COVID-19 restrictions or diverted at point of police contact.

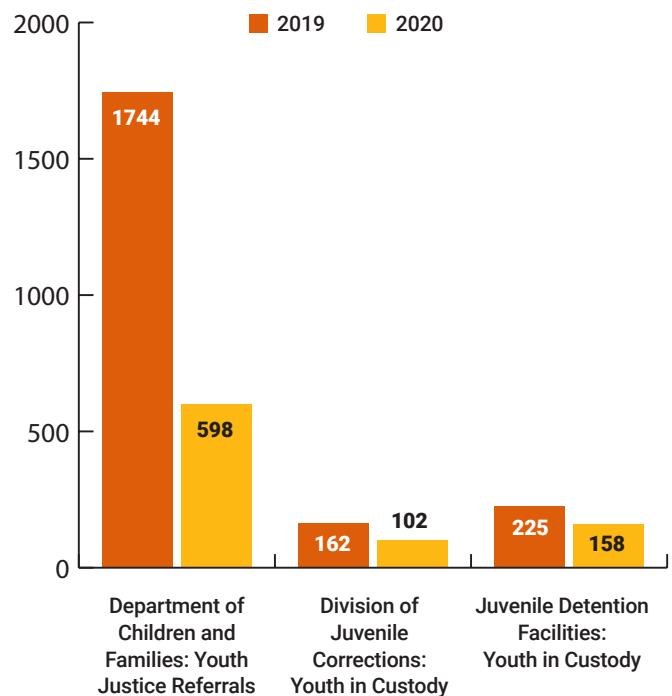
The data collected shows a decline across all data points. (Appendix C) Figure C illustrates this decline isolating the month of May for ease of comparison.

The drop in the number of youth in secure custody between 2019 and 2020 is much larger than the rate of decline in the previous several years.<sup>9</sup> The decline in population counts at county detention facilities could be related to stricter criteria for admission as well as

a decline in referrals at the point of police contact. Decreased populations at Lincoln Hills and Copper Lake facilities coincide with ongoing operational improvements that facilitate a more pro-active transition to community services.

**Number of Youth May 2019 vs. May 2020**

Figure C



<sup>9</sup> Division Juvenile Corrections Population Report, previously cited

## Quantitative Data Summary *continued*

The statewide reduction in referrals for county youth justice intakes is especially striking- they fell by more than half. More study is needed to explore possible reasons for this trend. Other notable findings from the youth justice intake referral data include:

- The number of truancy referrals shrank to nearly zero.
- Referrals for youth skewed substantially older.
- The proportion of referrals for female youth decreased slightly.
- The proportions of youth by primary race and Hispanic ethnicity did not change significantly.

“

One (county) board member expressed concern—during our recent budget presentation—about youth being diverted from secure (detention). I assured him that we were monitoring youth and none of the youth on electronic monitoring violated their conditions.”

– **Youth Justice Supervisor**

# Disparities

“

Always minority kids and families. That hasn't changed...”

– **Youth Justice Supervisor**

National data shows that youth from under-served and overlooked communities continue to be over-represented in secure facilities and disproportionately assigned to community supervision with electronic monitoring.<sup>10</sup> These disparities continue to grow for youth in Wisconsin and eliminating them requires action and ongoing commitment. And it needs to happen.

The quantitative data reviewed for this study did not show a significant change in the racial disparities among youth in secure custody during the first 3 months of the pandemic protocols. However, the qualitative findings show awareness that these disparities predate COVID-19.

“

Although reduction in numbers not a deduction in percentages (of youth of color in secure custody)”

– **Detention Leader**

These findings underscore the need to be ambitious in our efforts to reduce disparities by addressing root causes and making access to responsive services more equitable. It is also necessary to review the use of electronic monitoring during COVID-19 to determine whether racial and ethnic disparities are present in that data.

“

100% of the clients I have had detained during the last few months have been children of color.”

– **Attorney**

Recently released national data shows that after an initial, pandemic driven, rapid release rate for youth in secure facilities- that was seeming to be uniform across different demographic groups- the release rate is slowing.<sup>11</sup> Of particular concern is that this data indicates that youth of color are being impacted disproportionately by this dynamic. They are seemingly stuck in secure custody.

---

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.nokidsinprison.org/explore/wisconsin/?section=race-interactive>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.aecf.org/blog/youth-detention-admissions-remain-low-but-releases-stall-despite-covid-19/>

## Disparities *continued*

Another finding indicated that the rate of detention decreased slightly for girls. Girls are over-represented in the juvenile justice system. The involvement typically starts with low level offenses that result in probation but translate into falling deeper into the system due to a variety of factors.<sup>12</sup>

If pandemic protocols have decreased contact with law enforcement for girls, we need to gain a deeper understanding of how to make it uniform once the pandemic is over.

“

It is impossible to determine the cause, but since we have implemented our COVID-19 response, the number of female placements has declined.”

– **Detention Manager**

Qualitative data collected for this study, indicate that youth who are in secure custody are likely to stay there longer than is necessary because there isn't anywhere for them to go. Non-secure placements are more scarce due to COVID-19, but that scarcity seems ever-present. Another issue is the lack of local funding for “wraparound” services that give high-need youth the support they need to be at home or in a less restrictive setting.

The data collected for this study doesn't specifically capture the racial, ethnic or gender of youth who are staying in secure custody longer than needed. However, the demographics of who is typically detained reflects youth with a lower economic status. It seems likely that the current group of youth who are stuck reflects a disparity between families with adequate services and those without.

“

For small rural communities that don't have many options for youth that are in crisis, we sometimes depend on detention facilities to house these youth until a permanent option is available.”

– **Youth Justice Manager**

---

<sup>12</sup> <https://nationalcrittenton.org/resource/spotlight-on-girls-in-the-juvenile-justice-system/>

# Key Insights



[We need} more coordination with the court systems around appropriate response to youth {to reduce confinement.} ... separating behavior that places the community at risk, from behavior that is simply a technical violation.

[We need to} train them in the importance of alternatives, instead of knee-jerk anger because they didn't bend to their authority. [Rules of probation set] unrealistic expectations for some kids."

– Youth Justice Supervisor

A collective effort to achieve a uniform reduction in the use of detention across all counties and communities—using lessons learned from the pandemic—seems possible with the right amount of investment. Laser-focused efforts to replicate the success, and immediately access more resources to support youth whose families are disproportionately impacted by historical disparities. Specifically, the following take-aways offer a basis for immediate action with long term implications.

- 1. Wisconsin has the opportunity to consolidate the gains of the past six months and quickly work to embed this progress into system reform that represents meaningful and significant change.** This needs to be combined with support for targeted funding for services that prevent out-of-home placement and facilitate a smooth return when placement is unavoidable. Prioritizing this action will actually circumvent the concerns around scarcity of non secure settings.
- 2. Cross-system collaboration is essential to responding to high-need youth- but so is access to resources.** The scarcity of alternative placements and behavioral health services—especially in rural areas— is a driver for detaining youth that are experiencing a crisis and prolonging confinement

(or expanding use of electronic monitoring). Many of the programs and models that can divert youth from the system already exist, they need to be funded at a level that matches the need.<sup>13</sup>

- 3. Unlimited access to phone and video conferencing is good for youth, families, and system partners—where available.** It is an effective tool for overcoming barriers to family and service engagement due to geography or economic status. Making this technology accessible for all families needs to be a priority.
- 4. Coordination and communication are effective tools for diverting youth from secure custody.** Review of practice may indicate areas where decreasing reliance on in-person contacts can result in more individualized coordination and virtual contact with youth, families and community partners, to prevent and de-escalate crisis, and, thus, avoid detention.
- 5. Stakeholders need further data analysis to better understand the dramatic decrease in referrals for youth justice intakes and detention.** Does it mean that youth have been over-referred in the past? Findings could focus efforts for immediate “no cost/ low cost” system change.

<sup>13</sup> <https://wisfamilyimpact.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/FIS38.pdf>

# Recommendations

## CONTINUE TO PROTECT YOUTH IN CUSTODY

It is important to continue to restrict entry into secure facilities, release youth who are doing well, and maintain safety precautions for youth who remain in custody. Special care should be taken to mitigate the harm caused by extended periods of isolation due to quarantine protocols—and increase testing capacity as it becomes available.

## BUILD ON “CANDID” CONVERSATIONS

Stakeholder buy-in is essential to shifting the paradigm.<sup>14</sup> Strategies to accelerate progress towards this objective should include:

- Acknowledging that there will be “stalemates” across system branches. Don’t give up.
- Using input from youth, families and community leaders to increase the use of informal support for prevention and harm reduction .
- Creating a cross-system collaborative teams to Implement trauma informed youth justice protocols.

## RETHINK FACILITIES

All state agencies, county and impacted community stakeholders need to reconvene around this issue—including Mendota Juvenile Treatment Center. Counties are taking the lead on this already. Dane County recently withdrew its request for state funds to build a Secure Care Center for Children and Youth (SRCCCY).<sup>15</sup> Brown and Milwaukee counties have deferred their requests.<sup>16</sup> Let’s make sure we pay for what youth really need.

“

[We need] Increased, mobile, as-needed testing for ASYMPTOMATIC people would be helpful. This would decrease the amount of time youth are isolated and it would reduce staff anxiety.”

– Youth Manager

“

Children are being kept in solitary confinement to quarantine when they are newly brought to DT. Solitary confinement is incredibly impactful on young people and very negative.”

– Attorney

“

The Collaboration was fairly easy. Agencies and social workers have been working to keep youth out of facilities.”

– Detention Superintendent

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.aecf.org/resources/keeping-youth-out-of-the-deep-end-of-the-juvenile-justice-system/>

<sup>15</sup> [https://madison.com/ct/news/local/govt-and-politics/wisconsin-plan-to-close-youth-prisons-hits-more-snags-as-some-counties-pull-back/article\\_92af1d9b-3bdc-5e89-a841-2c0c724e6e2f.html](https://madison.com/ct/news/local/govt-and-politics/wisconsin-plan-to-close-youth-prisons-hits-more-snags-as-some-counties-pull-back/article_92af1d9b-3bdc-5e89-a841-2c0c724e6e2f.html)

<sup>16</sup> <https://fairandjustprosecution.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/FJPBrief.TraumaPractices.9.25.pdf>

# Recommendations *continued*

## CONSIDER THE FUTURE NOW

In 2021, Wisconsin should take action in the following ways. The action must be reflective of input from youth, families, community, stakeholders, and contemporaneous data.

- Collect and analyze data to understand the significant drop in youth justice intake referrals, diversion outcomes, and detention rates for technical violations of probation.
- Form a bipartisan, interdisciplinary, inter-agency, study committee to rewrite WI Chapter 938—the juvenile justice code—using racial equity and trauma informed frameworks.<sup>16</sup>
- Form a bipartisan, interdisciplinary, intergovernmental committee to utilize equitable funding strategies that ensure community based social services for all youth.<sup>17</sup>

“

[Redirect] funds from placement costs to wrap around services at home so that youth [are] able to discharge from residential care.”

– Youth Justice Supervisor

---

<sup>16</sup> <https://fairandjustprosecution.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/FJPBrief.TraumaPractices.9.25.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> [https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/2019/03/26/tool\\_-\\_new\\_direction\\_for\\_youth\\_justice\\_final.pdf](https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/2019/03/26/tool_-_new_direction_for_youth_justice_final.pdf)

# Conclusion

## CHALLENGES, SOLUTIONS, HOPE

The pandemic remains and so do the protocols. Youth with complex needs exist and these needs most often stem from historical disparities. Secure custody cannot be used as a shelter for youth who have complex needs. It would be better for Wisconsin to support resources that prevent and de-escalate high risk situations- in all communities. We can also adopt agreements to stop the use of detention as a sanction for technical violations—and hopefully, codify that in the near future.

Alongside efforts to respond to these immediate needs, we need to explore the questions raised in this report. Why did youth justice referrals decrease so significantly? What are outcomes of diversion from secure custody and who has the ability to track them? What do we do to accelerate the release of youth in custody when the risk has been mitigated?

Studying these issues will provide a deeper understanding of where we must collaborate to implement “low and no cost” changes that support youth, family and community well-being. That might be as simple as working across lines of culture and professional discipline to develop individualized safety plans for high-need youth and families, or providing a Wifi “hot spot” to make virtual visits available. In addition, further study is needed to focus on comprehensive next steps to ensure all communities and tribal nations receive sufficient.

This unimaginable crisis has shown that Wisconsin has statewide leadership, both inside and outside the youth justice system, to bring public safety, accountability and public health into alignment. There are local experts and like-minded champions across the state who believe in the potential for a better, more compassionate and youth- centered system. Empowering these champions now will help us improve child well-being for all youth, decrease reliance on costly facilities statewide, and maintain public safety for all communities in the future.

“

The biggest need is funding to support/ expand services to provide community supervision. Unfortunately, we just defunded one of our community programs due to a reduction in Youth Aids.”

– Youth Justice Supervisor

“

Our Juvenile Court Supervisor has commented on the reduced use of secure detention, with the hopes of continuing some procedures going forward.”

– Youth Justice Manager

“

Collaboration and innovation (are solutions), but changing a well established county system is a challenge.”

– Youth Justice Supervisor



# Appendix A

## Considerations for a Wisconsin Model of juvenile justice

*2017 WI Act 185, Section 110(4)(e) "The juvenile corrections grant committee shall develop a statewide plan that recommends which grant applications to approve, based on an overall view toward a Wisconsin model of juvenile justice."*

This Wisconsin model should:

1. Be developed in an inclusive manner that incorporates input from youth and families, community stakeholders, mental health and physical health practitioners, experts in juvenile justice and trauma-informed care, and all others who wish to come to contribute to the goal of juvenile justice in Wisconsin.
2. Focus on prevention and diversion, and provide accountability and services to youth and families in the system that prepares them to thrive ("DCF Youth Justice Vision and Strategic Plan").
3. Recognize that the post-dispositional secure custody of youth (Type 1, MJTC, SRCCCYs) is one component of the broader youth justice system and should only serve youth who require correctional placement.
4. Promote a collaborative system where the state agencies, county and local providers work together to enhance program effectiveness and minimize duplication of services.
5. Prioritize evidence-based practices that have proven outcomes that serve youth in smaller, regional facilities that are closer to their communities and foster engagement with their families to promote a successful transition home.
6. Promote youth and family voice and involvement with a strengths-based, culturally responsive approach that builds toward self-sufficiency through wraparound services.
7. Value community engagement and community safety, both in the short term and in the long term.
8. Ensure healthy, safe, and fair environments for the youth in secure custody and the staff who serve them, including the elimination of racial and ethnic disparities.
9. Require that all youth in secure custody receive evidence-based, trauma-informed, and developmentally appropriate programming and services designed to meet their assessed risks and needs.
10. Integrate best practices to collect, maintain, and analyze data to assess performance and improve outcomes for youth and families.
11. Prioritize the successful and sustained transition for youth from the system immediately upon their reentry to prevent and reduce recidivism based on objective data.
12. Promote community supervision that is evidence-based, trauma-informed and considers the needs of the youth and their families.
13. Enable those in care and their families to provide feedback as they exit the system to ensure future data-based decision making.

# Appendix B

## COVID-19 Impact on Youth Justice Survey

1. Which County or State Agency are you representing for this survey?
2. Which best describes your role?
3. Which of these COVID-19 prevention guidelines have been implemented in your jurisdiction or agency?
4. Are you aware of challenges implementing any of these guidelines? Please list.
5. Are you aware of solutions to these challenges (i.e. collaboration, innovation, redirecting funds/resources)? Please describe.
6. Are there any guidelines you would still like to see implemented? Please list.
  - Reducing number of youth in custody
  - Increasing diversion from secure custody
  - Increased collaboration with partners and providers
  - Better service coordination
  - More innovation with placements and services
  - More positive experience for youth and staff in facilities
7. Were there any negative outcomes that caused concerns? Please describe.
8. In your experience, did these precautions impact or highlight any racial or gender disparities?
9. Are there particular needs that posed unique challenges? Please describe
10. Have you gotten feedback from families and youth, staff, community, system partners about reducing the use of secure custody? Please describe.
11. Do you believe it is possible to permanently reduce the use of secure custody based on these guidelines?
12. What would you need to use these guidelines to permanently reduce the use of secure custody?
  - Policy Changes
  - Funding
  - Alternate staffing model
  - Training for Administrators, Staff and/or System Partners
  - A Staff Position to Implement Changes
  - System Partner Support
  - Community Input and Participation
  - Technical Assistance with Planning
  - Support of Elected Officials
13. Would you like to collaborate on this project with further discussion?
14. What questions are missing in this survey?

# Appendix C

## Quantitative Data Tables

Comparison data regarding number of referrals to county youth justice intake and number of youth in custody.

**Table A: Total Monthly Referrals to County Youth Justice Intake in Wisconsin**

Month	2019 TOTAL	Male	Female	Unknown	2020 TOTAL	Male	Female	Unknown
April	1560	1031	501	28	679	492	172	15
May	1744	1142	574	28	598	417	176	5
June	1236	844	372	20	621	442	174	5

Source: Wisconsin Department of Children and Families, 2020

**Table B: Division of Juvenile Corrections Data: Combined Monthly Populations of Lincoln Hills, Copper Lake, Mendota Juvenile Treatment Center and GROW Academy**

Month	2019 TOTAL	Male	Female	2020 TOTAL	Male	Female
April	168	156	12	118	104	14
May	162	148	14	102	90	12
June	166	150	16	112	101	11

Source: Wisconsin Department of Corrections, 2020

**Table C: Juvenile Detention Centers: Total Combined Monthly Average Daily Population for All 13 Facilities**

Month	2019 TOTAL	Male	Female	2020 TOTAL	Male	Female
April	212	171	41	168	141	27
May	225	181	41	158	136	22
June	211	174	37	161	136	25

Source: Wisconsin Department of Corrections, 2020