



Division of Safety and Permanence
July 28, 2023

DSP Numbered Memo Series 2023-16

To: DCF/DMCPS Administrator
DCF Area Administrators
Child Placing Agency Directors
Child Welfare Agency Directors
County Departments of Community Programs Directors
County Departments of Human Services Directors
County Departments of Social Services Directors
Private Child Placing Agencies
Residential Care Center Providers
Shelter Care Providers
Tribal Chairpersons

From: Wendy Henderson
Administrator

Re: Youth Justice Standards Updates

PURPOSE

The purpose of this memo is to establish and communicate the Youth Justice *Youth Assessment Screening Instrument* (YASI) Standards. It will describe which areas of practice are affected and provide an overview of the new requirements, effective on October 1, 2023.

BACKGROUND

The vision for Wisconsin’s Youth Justice (YJ) System incorporates a focus on prevention and diversion with the provision of accountability and services to youth and families to prepare them to thrive. The YJ system in Wisconsin is community based, designed to serve the greatest number of youth through local prevention and diversion services and reduce the number served out-of-home.

Because Wisconsin’s YJ system is state supervised and county administered, counties determine and maintain the structure of their courts and the human services agencies providing YJ services. In 2016, DCF assumed responsibility for fiscal and programmatic oversight of Wisconsin’s community-based youth justice (YJ) system. These responsibilities include training, maintaining data systems, development of standards, and capacity building through technical assistance. DCF has developed these standards in accordance with statutory authority under section 48.526(10), Wis. Stats. Chapter 938 of Wisconsin Statutes governs administration of the YJ system, including requirements that both courts and local human/social services agencies must follow. Standards do not include all statutory requirements.





Between 2018-2022, DCF managed a four-phase implementation of the YASI with all 72 counties. The YASI measures a youth’s level of risk, needs, responsivity factors, and strengths to guide early decision-making and assignment of case resources, as well as assist in the development of targeted case plans. The YASI looks to identify both the dynamic (changeable) and static (unchangeable) risk factors of youth to help professionals manage their caseloads and better structure and target services to youth with higher needs.

The YASI is an instrument specifically designed for youth and assesses across ten domains. Research suggests these 10 domains are correlated with an increased likelihood of future reoffending behavior of the same offense. YASI focuses on the factors that are most critical to promoting positive outcomes for youth. The information collected during assessment guides the creation of a case plan tailored to an individual’s identified needs and strengths. The entire assessment and case planning process is informed by motivational interviewing and is designed to engage youth, provide them a sense of ownership over their case plan, and match supervision and intervention strategies with the youth’s levels of risk and motivation.

POLICY AND PROCEDURE REQUIREMENTS

Previously introduced Section 1 (I-V) of YJ standards are requirements related to case processing and documentation.

A draft YASI policy was developed at the beginning of YASI implementation and was used throughout the four phases of implementation. During that time, counties and the YASI Steering Committee have provided ongoing feedback and revisions made periodically. This draft YASI policy is now being incorporated into YJ Standards.

Accordingly, Section 2 (VI-XII) of YJ Standards now includes requirements related to YASI, the risk assessment tool. These standards specify the processes for all the following:

- VI. Administration of the YASI Pre-Screen
- VII. Serving Youth Identified as Low Risk to Reoffend
- VIII. Administration of the YASI Full Assessment
- IX. YASI Case Planning
- X. YASI Reassessment
- XI. YASI Training Requirements
- XII. YASI Duties of the Supervisor

This marks a significant milestone in our collective efforts to live in our vision of a community-based youth justice system that focuses on prevention and diversion, with the provision of accountability and services to youth and families to prepare them to thrive. By having a common, baseline of standard practice for assessment and case planning, youth justice professionals, system stakeholders, families, and youth can most effectively collaborate to improve outcomes for families and communities.



REQUIRED ACTION

All counties are expected to review their current YASI policy and update it to reflect new DCF standards. While the standards are largely the same as the most recent version of the draft policy used by counties in developing their local policies and procedures, the following changes should be noted (emphasis added to changed/added text):

VI. Administration of the YASI Pre-Screen

- (1) The YASI pre-screen must be administered **for delinquency referrals**, post-referral, pre-petition for consenting youth who appear at the intake conference.
 - (a) No questions regarding the offense may be asked during the administration of the pre-screen if a youth is denying the charges. **In this scenario, the YJ professional would answer offense-related assessment items neutrally and proceed with the remaining assessment items.**
- (2) **No portion of the YASI pre-screen may be administered in the following cases:**
 - (a) **The pre-screen should not be administered for youth under the age of 10.**
 - (b) **The pre-screen should not be administered if the youth's capacity to complete it is in question. The reason for the exception shall be documented.**
- (3) If the referral is for a youth who has previously been on supervision, the most recent closing reassessment should be copied, carried forward, a new interview with the youth shall be conducted and **the a new initial assessment shall be updated completed.**

VII. Serving Youth Identified as Low Risk for Re-referral

- (1) Youth identified as low risk for re-referral who are placed on a deferred prosecution agreement should not receive the full YASI **assessment, unless the DPA is cancelled and a petition is filed. Then policy VII.(3) applies.**
- (3) Youth at low risk for re-referral, who are petitioned, who have low protective scores and have not received another specialized assessment (e.g., mental health, sex offender, substance use disorder) shall receive the YASI full assessment **to inform dispositional recommendations and case planning.**

VIII. Administration of the YASI Full Assessment.

- (1) The full assessment must be administered pre-disposition for all consenting court **delinquency** referred youth determined to be at medium or high risk of reoffending. **If court proceedings do not allow for the full assessment to be completed prior to disposition, the full assessment should be completed as soon as possible post-disposition to inform the case plan.**



- (c) If a consent decree will be recommended by the prosecutor or defense counsel, **prior to entering into the consent decree, a full assessment should be administered if there will be services recommended. If court proceedings do not allow for the full assessment to be completed prior to the consent decree being entered, the full assessment should be completed as soon as possible thereafter to inform the case plan, if a case plan is determined appropriate in the youth’s case.**
- (4) The youth’s priority need areas, protective factors and services recommended must be incorporated into the court report to aid in making recommendations. **If court proceedings do not allow for the these to be incorporated in the court report prior to disposition, they must be used to inform and develop the case plan with youth and family post disposition.**

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

YJ standards now includes a new section with *Youth Justice Related Concepts*, a list of common terms in Wisconsin’s YJ system. Terms were derived from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP). Please reference Wisconsin Statutes 48 and 938 for specific Wisconsin definitions.

ACTION SUMMARY

All county agencies are expected to update their current YASI procedures to ensure they align with DCF Standards language by October 1, 2023.

These standards entail no new changes in eWiSACWIS.

- CENTRAL OFFICE CONTACT: Youth Justice Policy Coordinator
Bureau of Youth Services
DCFYJ@wisconsin.gov
- MEMO WEB SITE: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cwportal/policy>
- ATTACHMENTS: [Youth Justice Standards](#)