

## National Youth in Transition Database FAQs

This documentation includes a collection of valuable questions and answers related to the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) survey process. These are compiled from a combination of official NYTD documents and stakeholders' common questions or concerns. If you have a question related to NYTD that is not answered in the following pages, please reach out to one of the individuals listed in the Contact Information section on page 11 of this document.

### Background

#### What is NYTD, how is it run, and who completes it?

As part of the Foster Care Independence Act (FCIA) of 1999, the Administration for Children, Young person and Families (ACYF) developed and implemented a data collection system called the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD). Under this federal reporting requirement, states are required to track the provision of independent living (IL) services and to obtain data on specific outcome measures for the purpose of measuring states' success in preparing young people for their transition to adulthood. States must obtain outcomes information by directly surveying young people who are or were in out-of-home care (OHC) and qualify as follows. Wisconsin began administering the NYTD survey to 17-year-olds in October 2010.

#### ➤ **17-year-olds:**

Young people in out-of-home care at the time they turn 17 years of age, or in OHC within 45 days of their 17<sup>th</sup> birthday, should take the 17-year-old baseline survey. They need to take it within 45 days of their 17<sup>th</sup> birthday and while they are in OHC. A 17-year-old survey is considered non-compliant if the survey is not taken within the 45-day timeframe after the 17<sup>th</sup> birthday. Review the rest of this document for more details about the timeframe for survey completion, and eligibility requirement details.

#### ➤ **19-year-old and 21-year-olds:**

Young people who compliantly participated in the NYTD survey at age 17 should take the follow-up NYTD survey twice more. They must complete the survey within the federal reporting period in which their 19<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> birthday falls. See more details about when they need to complete the follow-up surveys below under "What is the timeframe in which a young person needs to complete the survey?" on page 4. Regardless of whether a young person completed the 19-year-old survey, they remain eligible for the 21-year-old survey and should complete it.

To best capture a full range of young people's experiences via the survey, the federal government requires states to achieve an overall 60% compliance rate when administering the follow-up surveys. (This includes 80% of 19-year-olds and 21-year-olds still in care at the time of their follow-up survey; these youth account for very little of the follow up cohorts in Wisconsin.) Because many of our 19- and 21-year-olds are disengaged from formal systems, reaching this compliance rate can be a challenge. To improve participation rates, Wisconsin DCF contracts with the University of Wisconsin Survey Center (UWSC) to administer the surveys for all three age groups.

The UWSC is a unit of the University of Wisconsin – Madison and has significant experience administering surveys to specialized populations. UWSC staff have the expertise and capacity to conduct all forms of survey research, including telephone, mail, and web surveys. The UWSC has a track record of achieving consistently high response rates across all types of survey methodologies. Its proximity to DCF enables strong communication between the two organizations for collaboration and quality assurance purposes.

## Eligibility

**It says that NYTD is for “young people who are transitioning out of foster care,” and this young person was not in foster care. They are in a different out-of-home care placement (e.g. residential care center (RCC), group home). Should they still complete this survey?**

Yes. If a young person’s worker received a NYTD survey link from UWSC, the young person should complete the survey.

Wisconsin uses foster care as an umbrella term to include lots of out-of-home care placement types - one of which is actually foster care in a foster home. The federal definition of foster care states: “Foster care means 24-hour substitute care for children placed away from their parents or guardians and for whom the title IV-E agency has placement and care responsibility. This includes, but is not limited to, placements in foster family homes, foster homes of relatives, group homes, emergency shelters, residential facilities, childcare institutions, and pre-adoptive homes.” Therefore, placements like those in RCCs and group homes would fall under this definition of foster care, as would foster homes.

Furthermore, the NYTD eligibility is not affected by *why* a young person is in a placement setting (e.g. due to their own behaviors rather than a child welfare case), but rather that they are in a qualifying placement time during the required timeframe that corresponds with their birthday.

**What if I work with a young person who was only recently taken into care and therefore do not think they are an appropriate candidate for the NYTD survey?**

The survey is required for any young person who is in care on their 17<sup>th</sup> birthday or comes into care within 45 days after their 17<sup>th</sup> birthday. Their length of time in care does not impact NYTD eligibility. This requirement is part of the federal regulations for the NYTD survey. The survey must still be completed within 45 days after their birthday. Depending on if the young person enters care within 45 days of turning 17, their survey window can fluctuate. For example, a young person who enters care 20 days after turning 17 has 25 days in which to complete their survey.

**What if the case is closed, this young person is not (or never has been) on my caseload, the order was dismissed, and/or they are no longer in care?**

➤ **For 17-year-olds, the federal regulations specify the following:**

1. Young people that are in care on their 17<sup>th</sup> birthday, or any time during the 45 days following their 17<sup>th</sup> birthday, are eligible for the 17-year-old NYTD survey.

**IMPLICATION:** If the young person left care prior to their 17<sup>th</sup> birthday and did not re-enter care at any time during the 45 days after their birthday, then they are not eligible for NYTD and they do not need to complete the survey.

2. Young people should take the survey while they are still in care and within 45 days following their 17<sup>th</sup> birthday.

**IMPLICATION:** If the young person was in care on their 17<sup>th</sup> birthday or within 45 days of turning 17, they were eligible to complete the survey and should have done so before leaving care. However, once they leave care, it is too late for them to complete the survey and be part of the baseline population, so they no longer need to do it. Again, the type of care has to be to an eligible foster care setting.

➤ **For 19- and 21-year-olds:**

DCF and UWSC work to consistently refine outreach efforts to young people to best connect with and provide NYTD information to workers and collateral contacts with whom the young person has worked or has a personal relationship. However, we recognize that sometimes this means that outreach is made to individuals even when they once knew the young person but have since disconnected from them. Still, given the importance of this survey for DCF's data collection and federal compliance purposes – in addition to valuable young person input on how to improve service provision – DCF and UWSC try to leverage all points of contact that may be able to connect us to a young person eligible to complete the process.

### Are NYTD eligibility requirements the same as independent living (IL) eligibility requirements?

No. The eligibility requirements for NYTD and IL are not the same. There is some overlap in the NYTD-eligible population and the IL-eligible population, but some young people are eligible for only one or the other. We understand that not all NYTD-eligible youth will be on a worker's list of IL-eligible young people.

Visit resources available on <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cwportal/ys/nytd> for more information on NYTD eligibility.

Visit <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/cwportal/il/pdf/il-eligibility.pdf> for guidance on IL eligibility.

### What if I work with a young person who I think should be eligible for NYTD, but I haven't gotten a link from UWSC for them?

Unfortunately, neither DCF, UWSC, nor any of their partners can choose the young people who should take a survey. The survey is required for any young person who is in care on their 17<sup>th</sup> birthday or comes into care within 45 days after their 17<sup>th</sup> birthday. Young people who are in detention or a subsidized guardianship at age 17 and for all 45 days following their 17<sup>th</sup> birthday are not eligible.

If, after reviewing this FAQ document, and its eligibility section in particular, you think a young person with whom you work is eligible, but you did not receive a survey link to provide to them, please contact the UWSC using the contact information provided on page 11 of this document.

### Important considerations for survey completion

#### How does a young person complete the survey?

NYTD is a web survey, so the young person can complete it online. They may also complete it over the phone with a UWSC interviewer.

In a letter, UWSC will invite the young person to participate. That letter will contain a web link to the survey and a password created specifically for that young person. UWSC will also email caseworkers, IL coordinators, and/or regional contacts with the unique web link for the young person.

If the young person does not have internet access, they can call the UWSC hotline at 1-800-291-8624 and complete the interview over the phone with one of the agency's interviewers. When conducting outreach for a follow-up (19- and 21-year-old) survey, UWSC may also try to contact the collateral contact people the young person listed as part of their baseline 17-year-old survey (see more details about collateral contacts on pages 7-8).

### Can the young person complete the survey on paper?

They may only do so as part of the follow-up (19- and 21-year-old) cohorts. Due to the short window in which the baseline population must complete the 17-year-old survey, there is no paper option for 17-year-olds. If the young person does not have internet access, they can call the UWSC hotline at 1-800-291-8624 and complete the survey over the phone with one of the UWSC interviewers. The UWSC does phone interviews for various studies, so young people need to ask to do the "NYTD" survey or ask for extension 9991.

For 19- and 21-year-olds, UWSC sends a paper version of the survey in the mail if they have not been able to reach the young person after several months of trying. The paper survey includes an ID that is unique to that young person. This is so UWSC can link the survey to the young person without asking extra identifying information. **Only the young person that was sent the survey should complete that survey and the young person should only complete the survey using their assigned link.** That is, copies of the paper survey should not be made to use with other young people.

There is no generic copy of the survey available on paper or to download. If a young person, worker or coordinator needs the survey link sent or re-sent to them, they can contact the UWSC to have it emailed to them. See the Contact Information section in this document.

### If I can't locate the young person, or they can't or don't want to do the survey, should I complete the survey for them?

**NO.** No one should complete the survey on behalf of any young person. Federal regulations state that someone can *assist* a young person (see pages 9-10), but that only the young person should select their responses to the survey. No one can supply responses to the survey questions from any source other than the young person themselves.

### Whose contact information should be included at the end of the survey?

At the end of the survey, where it asks for young person's mailing address, email, and phone numbers, caseworkers, IL coordinators, caregivers should not list their own contact information. This mailing address is used to send the young person the \$20 when they complete the survey. Additionally, this contact information will be used to re-contact the young person at ages 19 and 21 when the same young person is required to complete follow-up surveys. In particular, the email address should not be a worker's email address. If the young person does not have an email address, consider encouraging them to set up an email address and record it in the eWiSACWIS contact information section so UWSC can get in touch with them when required.

This will assist DCF and UWSC's efforts to survey young people according to federal regulations and meet the mandated follow-up survey compliance rate.

### What if the due date for the survey has passed?

To comply with federal guidelines, the young person must complete the survey before the due date. DCF and UWSC will no longer try to reach young person to complete a survey once this date has passed.

For the 17-year-olds, the federal government will not accept the survey if the young person completed it after the due date.

For the 19- and 21-year-old follow-up surveys, the federal government will occasionally accept a survey completed very soon after the due date, particularly if DCF and UWSC are very close to meeting the required response rate (60%). All efforts should be made to encourage young people to participate by the due date, but if the due date has recently passed and a young person wants to complete the survey, it is okay for them to do so.

In the event UWSC receives a paper survey after the due date, that is okay. While every effort should be made for young person to complete *and* return their survey within the specified timeframe, we understand sometimes responses arrive soon after the end of the cohort time period. It is important for the young person to include the date on which they completed the survey in the date field on the form so UWSC and DCF can easily verify that the young person completed the survey within the required timeframe (available starting with the October 1, 2020 cohort).

## Outreach efforts

### I am receiving emails from the UW Survey Center. What are they about?

#### ➤ For 17-year-olds:

UWSC will send workers up to three emails for young people who are eligible for the NYTD survey. The first email, with subject line: "The National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) Survey needs your help!" is to inform you that a young person on your caseload is being contacted to complete the NYTD survey, the due date of the survey, and the young person's unique web link for the survey.

If the young person has not completed the survey after a few weeks, UWSC will send you a second email, with subject line: "Difficulty Reaching 17-year-old for NYTD Survey." This email asks for any updated contact information that you may have for the young person. If you are aware of updated contact information of the young person, please record the updated contact information in eWiSACWIS and provide the updated contact information to the UWSC via email reply. It is important that you do both! If you do not have updated information, you do not need to respond to this second email.

Finally, if the young person has not completed the survey about a week before the due date, UWSC will send you a third email, with subject line: "Unable to reach 17-year-old for NYTD Survey." This email lets you know that UWSC has not reached the young person in time and asks that you mark a reason for non-completion on the young person's Independent Living page in eWiSACWIS before the due date. If you are not sure, leave it blank. DCF staff will do any necessary additional data clean-up.

➤ **For 19- and 21-year-olds:**

UWSC will send workers up to three emails for young people who are eligible for the NYTD survey and are associated with your county (county IL Coordinator or point of contact), or a county within your region (TRA IL Coordinator).

The first email, with subject line: "The National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) Survey needs your help!" is to provide you a list of the young people from your county or region who need to take the NYTD follow-up survey in the current reporting period, the due date of the survey, and the young person(s) unique web link for the survey.

If the young person has not completed the survey after a couple months, UWSC will send a second email, with subject line: "Difficulty Reaching 19/21-year-old for NYTD Survey." This email is asking for any updated contact information that you may have for the young person(s). If you are aware of updated contact information for the young person, please record the updated contact information in eWiSACWIS and provide the updated contact information to the UWSC. If you do not have updated information, you do not need to respond to this second email.

Finally, if the young person has not completed the survey about a month before the due date, UWSC will send you a third email, with subject line: "Unable to reach 19/ 21-year-old for NYTD Survey." This email is letting you know that we have not reached the young person in time and asks that you mark a reason for non-completion on the young person's Independent Living page in eWiSACWIS before the due date. **If you are not sure, leave it blank.** DCF staff will do any necessary additional data clean-up.

### **Can I forward a young person's survey link to a foster parent, group home, or the young person?**

Yes! This is helpful. If you received an email with links for more than one individual, be sure to forward only the unique link for that specific young person.

### **Why does the survey ask for the names and contact information of other people? And who should be listed there?**

At the end of the 17-year-old and 19-year-old NYTD surveys, DCF and UWSC ask the young person to provide the contact information for two relatives or friends who may know where they (the young person) can be reached in two years. The agencies collect this information because young person that participate in the NYTD survey for 17-year-olds need to be surveyed twice more - when they are 19-years old, and when they are 21-years old. It is sometimes difficult to find these young people two years later.

If DCF and UWSC are not able to reach the young person for the 19- and 21-year-old surveys, the agencies try to reach the young person's alternate contact people to request updated phone, email, and/or mailing information for the young person. DCF and UWSC may try to contact these people via letter, email, or phone call. They only use the information the collateral contact provides to locate the young person and will not ask any of these people for any other information about themselves or the young person. DCF and UWSC will not share any of the young person's survey answers questions with any of their collateral contacts.

These collateral contacts should usually not be the worker/IL Coordinator unless they expect to keep in close contact with the young person until age 21.

Close family members or friends are often best. Many former foster parents tell us that they have lost touch with the young person, so biological family members may be a good option, and some information suggests that female relatives like a grandmother or close aunt are more likely to keep in touch with the young person in the future. Older siblings may also make sense. It's also helpful to choose people who, themselves, are likely to have the same contact information in two years. (For example, a younger sibling who may be leaving home in two years and doesn't have a permanent email address or phone number, may not be as useful as an aunt who has lived at the same address and had the same email address for the past 10 years).

DCF and UWSC are working on a process by which to also reach out to collateral contacts that workers and coordinators have listed for the young person in SACWIS.

### **If I update a NYTD-eligible young person's contact information in eWiSACWIS, do I still need to contact UWSC with the same contact information?**

Yes. UWSC only gets the contact information that was in eWiSACWIS when they received the list of young person that need to be contacted for NYTD.

For 17-year-olds, this may be more than a month prior to the young people's 17<sup>th</sup> birthdays. For example, in mid- to late January, UWSC gets the list of all the NYTD eligible young person with birthdays in February.

For the 19- and 21-year-old follow-up surveys, UWSC receives young person contact information at the beginning of the 6-month period. For the cohort beginning in October, UWSC gets information in mid-September; and for the cohort beginning in April, UWSC gets information in mid-March.

If young person's contact information is subsequently updated in eWiSACWIS, UWSC does not receive an automatic update. Caseworkers or IL coordinators should notify UWSC when they update contact information for young person eligible for the NYTD in eWiSACWIS.

## **Documentation in eWiSACWIS**

### **How do I mark a reason for non-completion for young people who do not complete the survey?**

Complete the following steps:

1. On the eWiSACWIS homepage, go to Maintain > Independent Living.
2. Hit search, enter the young person's Person ID.
3. Click on the empty circle to the left of person, then select continue.
4. This brings up the young person's Independent Living page
5. Go to the Outcomes tab (right most tab), check the "young person did not complete the survey" box, and select the reason why young person did not complete the survey for the applicable cohort.

Here are the possible reasons why a young person might not complete the survey and special considerations related to each:

➤ **The young person is AWOL or missing from care.**

This mainly pertains to 17-year-olds, as the older age groups are less likely to still be in care.

UWSC will continue outreach efforts until the due date. If the young person returns to their placement during the survey completion window, please remind them of the survey and the link provided and work with them to complete the survey by the due date. If the young person is not located or does not return prior to the last 10 days of the survey period, please indicate “Runaway/Missing” as the reason for non-completion on the young person’s IL page/Outcomes tab in eWiSACWIS.

➤ **The young person is incarcerated.**

For the 17-year-old baseline survey, 17-year-olds in detention are not eligible to take the survey while they are in detention. If they are in OHC at some point during the 45 days after their 17<sup>th</sup> birthday, then they should take the survey during the time they are in OHC and within the required timeframe.

For the 19- and 21-year-old follow-up surveys, incarceration does not affect eligibility. Please notify UWSC that the young person is incarcerated and, if known, also notify them of the facility where the young person is currently located. UWSC will mail a paper survey to the facility. If the person completes it and mails it back, UWSC will send \$20 to whatever address the young person specified in the survey or their commissary account (if permitted by facility). If the young person still does not complete the survey, UWSC will send the third email to the worker, asking them to select a reason for why the young person has not participated. Please indicate “Incarcerated” as the reason for non-completion on the young person’s IL page/Outcomes tab in eWiSACWIS.

➤ **The young person is incapacitated or mentally/physically unable to complete the survey.**

DCF is interested in outcomes information for all young person. If possible, workers, IL coordinators, or caregivers should make accommodations to assist the young person in completing the survey. For example, a helper can read the questions slowly and in full, explain terms, enter text into the computer to record youth response, help the young person complete the survey in more than one sitting, etc. However, the young person must be able to choose their own answers with such assistance. The helper should record whatever answer the young person selects, and not edit or correct their responses. At no time should a caseworker, IL coordinator, caregiver, or anyone else select the responses *for* the young person.

If the young person cannot answer the questions even with assistance, the worker or IL Coordinator should mark “Incapacitated” as the reason for non-completion on the young person’s IL page/Outcomes tab in eWiSACWIS. They shall also contact UWSC by phone or email so that UWSC can discontinue outreach efforts.



➤ **The young person is deceased.**

Notify UWSC as soon as possible so that they can discontinue outreach efforts. Continued outreach could be upsetting to those who knew the young person. In eWiSACWIS, update the date of death in the young person's record and select "Death" as the reason for non-completion on the young person's IL page/Outcomes tab.

**What should I do if an Outcomes tab does not exist for a young person, but I am asked to reach out to them and/or document something related to NYTD in eWiSACWIS?**

If an Outcomes tab does not exist on a young person's IL page, it's because they are not eligible for NYTD. Still, you may sometimes receive NYTD outreach about a youth who does not have an Outcomes tab. This issue can occur because, in order to begin outreach to youth as soon as possible after their 17<sup>th</sup> birthday, UWSC sets up surveys for youth as much as three or four weeks before their birthdays. On occasion, a youth is expected to be eligible for NYTD on their 17<sup>th</sup> birthday based on their placement, but then moves to an ineligible placement setting – or returns home – which makes them no longer eligible. As a result, they should not complete the NYTD survey and the Outcomes tab on their IL page in eWiSACWIS disappears. Because the UWSC pulls youth eligibility information a few weeks before a youth's birthday and is not aware of changes in youth placements or when a young person's Outcomes tab is no longer available, their outreach will continue unless they are informed of the youth's change. Be sure to clearly explain the youth's change in status to UWSC staff so they can mark the individual ineligible and discontinue outreach about that youth.

**What if a young person completed the survey, but results do not show up in eWiSACWIS?**

When a young person completes a NYTD survey, the system will automatically update to record their participation for the given cohort. Additionally, if the young person gives permission (via a checkbox at the end of their survey) for their results to be shared, their survey responses are available in eWiSACWIS about two business days after they complete the survey. Occasionally, there is a delay in this process. UWSC routinely checks to make sure all surveys are properly imported into the eWiSACWIS system. However, if you notice a survey is not showing up as participated, you can contact UWSC.

**Compensation**

**Are young people compensated for completing the survey?**

Yes. UWSC provides \$5 in the mail to all young people who are eligible for the survey as part of its initial outreach. It then provides an additional \$20 to every young person who completes the survey. A young person can therefore receive up to \$25 each time they complete the survey (at age 17, 19, and again at 21).

**What if the young person did not receive the \$20 for completing the survey?**

UWSC sends out thank you letters with a \$20 bill to all young people who complete the survey. This is sent to whatever address the young person provided for themselves at the end of the survey. UWSC typically mails these out to young people within two weeks of when the survey was completed; it may take up to three weeks to receive this mailing. If, after three weeks, the young person has still not received the cash, they can inform UWSC (see Contact Information section below) and UWSC can try sending the money out one more time.

When requesting a resend of the \$20, provide the best, most accurate, and most secure mailing address to UWSC. If the young person is not known as a resident to the USPS and/or postal carrier, it may be helpful to ask UWSC to address the letter “c/o” (care of) a trusted resident of the address who is known to the USPS. UWSC will make only two attempts to send cash.

## Contact information

### If you have additional questions, please contact:

- University of Wisconsin-Survey Center staff: [nytd@uwsc.wisc.edu](mailto:nytd@uwsc.wisc.edu)

Garrett Wartenweiler  
UWSC Project Director  
[gwartenw@ssc.wisc.edu](mailto:gwartenw@ssc.wisc.edu)  
(608) 263-3139

Margarete Wichmann  
UWSC Project Director  
[mwichmann@ssc.wisc.edu](mailto:mwichmann@ssc.wisc.edu)  
(608) 890-2452

- Wisconsin Department of Children and Families staff  
DCF Independent Living Coordinator  
[DCFILCoordinator@wisconsin.gov](mailto:DCFILCoordinator@wisconsin.gov)  
(608) 422-6990