


To: 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  
Group Home Providers  
Tribal Social Service/Indian Child Welfare Directors  
Private Child Placing Agencies  
Residential Care Center Providers  
Shelter Care Providers  
Tribal Chairpersons

From: Fredi-Ellen Bove   
Administrator

Re: National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) Outcomes Survey at age 19

## PURPOSE

This numbered memo provides direction regarding the federal Chafee Act National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) survey requirement that each child who participated in the NYTD survey at age 17 again participates in the survey when they turn 19 years of age.

## BACKGROUND

In 1999, Congress established the John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Act requiring states to assist youth in transitioning from out-of-home care to self-sufficiency. The law also required the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) to develop a data collection system to track the independent living (IL) services provided to youth and to develop an outcomes data collection process that measures states' success in preparing youth for the transition to independence. To meet this requirement, ACF created the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD).

Wisconsin began reporting on IL services data for all independent living program eligible youth and outcomes data for 17 olds in October 2010. Services information is obtained through documentation in eWiSACWIS for every eligible youth receiving services ages 15 and older. Outcomes information is obtained by directly surveying youth who are or were in out-of-home care (OHC) within 45 days following their 17<sup>th</sup> birthday. Each youth who completed at least one question on the NYTD Outcomes Survey at age 17 is a participant in the "NYTD Baseline Population". At ages 19 and 21 baseline participants become follow-up participants and are required to complete the NYTD Outcomes Survey at age 19, and again at age 21. Those who participated in the data collection at age 17 (baseline population), but not 19 (follow-up population) for a reason other than being deceased, remain part of the follow-up population at age 21.

The survey results will offer ACF, DCF and other state and local agencies the opportunity to obtain important information on how Wisconsin youth fare once they leave OHC. The survey asks youth questions about their financial self-sufficiency, experience with homelessness, educational attainment, positive adult connections, high-risk behavior and access to health care.

To efficiently manage youth participation, DCF has engaged the services of FosterClub (FC), a nationally recognized virtual support and networking site for children and alumni of foster care. The site is the point of connection for youth as well as the place where they access the Wisconsin NYTD survey at age 17 and beyond.

FC will assist agencies in conducting outreach to 19 and 21 year olds who remain members of FC. FC has a record of each youth's birth date and electronic contact information, enabling them to send emails and instant messages encouraging participation in the NYTD survey at age 19 and 21, as long as youth remain members on the FC Website.

Beyond FC, youth participation in the follow-up survey is greatly enhanced when youth have ongoing contact with their child welfare (CW) agency's independent living program once they leave OHC, through continued outreach efforts by the CW agency and engagement in services.

Youth who complete the survey at ages 19 and 21 are automatically entered in a monthly drawing to receive an incentive for their participation in the survey.

## POLICY AND PROCEDURE REQUIREMENTS

Beginning October 1, 2012, the NYTD at Age 19 Survey for the follow-up population must be completed within the federal reporting time-frame in which a youth's 19<sup>th</sup> birth date falls. Therefore, in order to be compliant with the requirement, a youth who participated in the baseline survey whose 19<sup>th</sup> birthday falls between the reporting period of October 1 through March 31<sup>st</sup>, must complete the survey anytime within that reporting period. Likewise, a youth whose 19<sup>th</sup> birthday falls between April 1<sup>st</sup> through September 31<sup>st</sup>, must complete the survey within the corresponding reporting period. Youth who complete the survey outside of the reporting period in which their birthday falls, will be considered a non-compliant participant.

Example: First NYTD 19 Reporting Year

<b>Birthdate Month</b>	<b>Survey submission timeframe</b>	
	<b>Anytime Between: October 1 2012 and March 31, 2013</b>	<b>Anytime Between: April 1, 2013 and September 30, 2013</b>
October 2012	X	
November 2012	X	
December 2012	X	
January 2013	X	
February 2013	X	
March 2013	X	
April 2013		X
May 2013		X
June 2013		X
July 2013		X
August 2013		X
September 2013		X

FosterClub will provide primary outreach annually to youth during the months of October and November and in April and May for the youth whose birthdays fall within the respective submission period.

Child Welfare agencies are responsible for providing outreach to youth who have not yet completed the survey over the course of the last four months of the respective submission period.

FC will begin initial outreach to those turning 19, who have maintained membership on their website, on the first date of the reporting period (October 1 and April 1) annually. If a youth has not completed the NYTD at Age 19 Follow-up Survey on their own within two months of the start of the report period (December or July), CW agencies must begin their own outreach efforts to facilitate each youth's completion of the survey prior to the end of the reporting period. CW agencies have the option to begin their outreach efforts in conjunction with FC at the beginning of the reporting period (October 1 and April 1).

In order to avoid any data bias associated with low participation rates, CW agencies are responsible for maintaining an 80% survey participation rate for youth in OHC placements and 60% compliance rate for youth no longer in OHC. To achieve this CW agencies should use every feasible method of communication to reach and assist youth in completing the survey within the reporting period. These methods include but

are not limited to phone, email, texting, Facebook, Twitter, postal service, home visits, and collateral contacts. Attachment A provides additional methods for locating and engaging youth who are no longer in contact with CW agencies.

Upon completion of the survey, youth will be provided a link to the Wisconsin IL Contact List and will be directed to contact their IL Coordinator should they need assistance with services. Best practice suggests that CW agencies review the survey results of their youth once downloaded into eWiSACWIS and initiate outreach to those who may need services based on their responses to the survey.

Participants in the NYTD at Age 19 Survey will be eligible for a Gift Card drawing at the end of each month of their reporting period. Therefore, the sooner a youth completes the survey, the more chances they will have to win. DCF will notify winners directly. To ensure that winners receive their gift cards, cards will be forwarded to the IL Coordinator in the county where the youth resides. Youth no longer residing in Wisconsin will have their gift cards forwarded directly to them.

## **eWiSACWIS DOCUMENTATION**

eWiSACWIS report SM08X112 is available to CW agencies enabling them to identify follow-up population youth whose birth date falls within a given reporting period, identify if a youth completed the survey and receive the most recently documented contact information. The contacts tab on the youth's IL page in eWiSACWIS will be of assistance to agencies in locating the whereabouts of follow-up population youth, provided that the information has been regularly updated. As with the NYTD survey at age 17, survey results, when authorized by the youth, will be downloaded onto the youth's IL page in eWiSACWIS.

## **ACTION SUMMARY**

Beginning October 1, 2012 federal reporting requirements for the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) will require Wisconsin Child Welfare agencies to collect outcomes survey information on 19 year old youths who participated in the baseline survey at age 17.

The NYTD at 19 webcast, further outlining the requirements of the NYTD Survey for CW workers, supervisors, managers and IL Coordinators has been archived for review on the eWiSACWIS KnowledgeWeb.

REGIONAL OFFICE CONTACT: DCF Area Administrator

CENTRAL OFFICE CONTACT: Youth Services Section Manager  
Division of Safety and Permanence  
Bureau of Youth Services  
608-422-6993  
[DCFBYS@wisconsin.gov](mailto:DCFBYS@wisconsin.gov)

MEMO WEB SITE: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cwportal/policy>

Attachments:

Follow-up Engagement and Outreach

Caseworker Talking Points

Wisconsin NYTD at 19 Tip Sheet

National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) Survey for Wisconsin Youth Age 19, DCF-F-2829  
<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/forms>

## **NYTD Follow-up Population Engagement and Outreach**

A multi-prong approach to engaging youth will be the most successful way to ensure participation of follow-up populations in the NYTD survey for youth at ages 19 and 21

### **Early and ongoing engagement**

1. while still in care is essential to providing ongoing independent living services and support as well as participation in the NYTD survey;
2. is a key to obtaining “youth voice”, as youth are eager to tell their story and to be heard;
3. provides an opportunity for youth to provide feedback regarding key survey items; and
4. allows CW agencies to establish a positive relationship with the youth, which boosts future response rates and participation in services.

### **Support youth engagement by**

1. providing helpful and meaningful transition services prior to and after they age out of care;
2. minimizing agency staff turnover;
3. obtaining the most recent contact information;
4. connecting with youth through social media;
5. providing various methods for youth to contact you once they are no longer in care;
6. providing cell phones with texting capacity;
7. contacting youth at different times of day and weekends;
8. utilize reminder prompts to youth to complete the survey;
9. assisting youth in completing the survey;
10. utilizing inexpensive incentives such as movie passes, phone minutes, packages of microwave popcorn, pens, ear phones, etc. can be helpful in receiving responses;
11. providing youth with information regarding what has been learned from NYTD data; and
12. showing respect for their views and keeping them engaged.

### **Gather information prior to exit from care by**

1. establishing rapport before young persons exit from care;
2. guiding them to think about where they might go and who they might stay in touch with;
3. by requesting names and contact information of biological parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, siblings, friends prior to exiting care;
  - a. Combine with permanency or transition planning.
  - b. Florida found 101 youth through contacts youth provided at exit interview.
4. keeping in touch with youth through mailings (newsletters, birthday cards), e-mail, Face book, website; and
5. requesting contact information updates.
  - a. Provide multiple means for youth to keep in touch.
  - b. Provide and inform youth of incentives that make them want to update their information with you.

### **Locate youth once they have exited care through**

1. use of information in case files and court records since youth stay in touch with relatives;
  - a. Reach out to parents, siblings, other relatives, former caregivers and friends.
  - b. After leaving care 40% of youth are found to be living with relatives at 19 years of age.
  - c. Statistics show that 60 % of youth have contact with biological mothers at least once a month while 32% have contact with biological fathers at least once a month. Other rates of contact include: grandparents 49%; other relatives 62% and siblings at 47%.
2. postal address and phone searches (internet)
  - a. Use of commercial/paid database searches (can be inexpensive however typically yield small returns). For example:
    - i. SWITCHBOARD.COM: [www.switchboard.com](http://www.switchboard.com)
    - ii. GOOGLE-SEARCH: [www.google.com](http://www.google.com)
3. public benefits systems searches and
  - a. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

- b. Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC)
  - c. Special Needs Adoption Program (SNAP)
  - d. Badger Care Plus for Youth Exiting Out of Home Care
  - e. Public housing/Section 08 records
4. C-CAP

### Practical Strategies for Tracking and Locating Youth

1. **Gather and maintain good location information.** One of the best ways to ensure that youth can be located is to have good information on how to contact them. Obtaining this information prior to the youth's transition from foster care increases the chances of their participation in future surveys. This can be done through the Independent Living Transition to Discharge Plan or by conducting an exit interview at the time they leave care.
2. **Other identifying information.** This information includes but is not limited to; all e-mail addresses, nicknames, aliases, driver's license or other identification number, public assistance ID, names and addresses of individuals the youth is close to etc., can be helpful in finding youth once they have left care.
3. **Social Networking.** User name for MySpace or Face book
4. **Places the youth frequents.** Community centers, churches, schools, gyms, other "hang outs" (restaurants, coffee shops, pool halls, video arcades, etc.).
5. **Update locating information.** When youth contact you for services (e.g. applying for ETV or Scholarship funds, referrals, etc.) make sure to get their latest contact information.
6. **Formulate agency procedures for updating youth information.** This can be helpful when agencies have high turnover of staff, making following up with youth difficult.
7. **Continue direct contact with youth.** Suggested ways to engage youth and maintain contact include:
  - a. Send youth a reminder postcard or other special mailing (e.g. birthday cards, holiday cards) and specify "Return Service Requested" so that undelivered mail will be returned to the agency so it can note that the address is no longer current. Inserting a self-addressed postage-paid envelope and change of address form can also be effective.
  - b. Consider holding a lottery for those youth that respond to mailings.
  - c. Send a newsletter that provides independent living tips and reminds them of NYTD follow-up surveys.
8. **Engage youth and others before the youth leaves foster care.** To ensure youth's participation down the road educate them and significant adults about the purpose and the importance of NYTD. This can be done during their Independent Living Transition to Discharge planning.
9. **Make multiple attempts to locate youth.** Use different contact modes during different times of the day and days of the week.

## Talking Points on NYTD for Case Managers to Use When Communicating to Youth

- So, how **are you** doing? **Really**, how are you doing?
- Do you remember taking the NYTD Survey when you were 17? We are **asking all foster youth alumni who took the survey at age 17 to take it again** to update your information regarding some important areas, like school, employment, your support system, etc.
- The survey results become part of a **nation-wide information gathering project called National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) for all youth who were in foster care**. Across the country, information from young people is being gathered to see how child welfare can improve services.
- Also, the Department of Children and Families wants to ensure that young people received independent living services. The surveys will tell us if we need to do more and what we need to do to make our services better.
- The survey **does not ask about your parents or your family**. It doesn't ask why you went into foster care. It will ask about employment, school housing, and finances.
- The information is confidential and will be combined with the answers from other young people around the country and looked at as a whole. Your personal information will not be studied separately.
- I will work with you to register for the survey and complete it if you need help. You'll take the survey by connecting to the **FosterClub** web site. Do you remember your log-in information? If not, we'll set you up with a new account to take the survey and to receive information from them.
- FosterClub will contact you **again when you are 21 through emails, instant messaging or the site itself** to ask you to fill out another survey. These surveys are to get an idea of how young people are doing once they have left the system.
- I'd also like to update our contact information for you, so we know how to reach you regarding independent living services you might be eligible for and to keep you up to date on the results of Wisconsin's surveys.
- One last thing – when you take the survey at age 19 and 21, your name is entered into a drawing for a chance to win a gift card.

*“NYTD is giving us a chance to communicate our experiences and to be viewed as experts. It is critical that foster youth are engaged in all decisions being made regarding our lives; ‘No decisions about us, without us’. The NYTD Survey allows me to use my experience in foster care to make things better for future foster youth. Current and former foster youth deserve the chance for our input to be valued and acknowledged. NYTD encourages current and former foster youth work together and take the survey to positively change foster care.”*

– JT, Former Foster Youth

## Wisconsin NYTD at 19 Tip Sheet

### ***Preparing for NYTD***

1. Participants in the NYTD at 19 Survey include only those youth who participated in the NYTD at 17 Survey. They are referenced as the “NYTD follow-up population”.
2. Surveys must be completed within the reporting period that the youth’s 19th birth date falls, which is either between October 1 – March 31 or April 1 – September 30.
3. NYTD is not just data collection! Rather, NYTD serves as an opportunity to make sure every youth has what he or she needs to succeed as they transition to adulthood. Consider NYTD as an opportunity to stay connected with youth so no one falls through the cracks!
4. Build Partnerships for the data collection effort. Partners include:
  - a. Youth
  - b. Child welfare agency workers/supervisors
  - c. Foster parents, kin and other associates
3. Preparing partners:
  - a. Develop and disseminate information about NYTD
  - b. Present the information at meetings
  - c. Send a birthday card and brochure to youth 2 weeks before youth’s birthday explaining NYTD and the importance of their participation
  - d. Notify caseworkers in advance to give them a heads up about the start of the data collection and provide talking points
4. Use of Data
  - a. Think about how your agency will use the data collected. For example, share the findings with all stakeholders in the form of presentations and brief reports to strengthen programs.
  - b. Identify cross-system implications and encourage collaboration with relevant agencies (e.g. mental health system, workforce development agency, etc.)

### ***Administering the Survey***

1. Plan on using a variety of methods to administer the survey
  - a. NYTD questions must be communicated verbatim as they appear on the survey. However the methodology can vary depending on what is most appropriate for the youth being surveyed. It is likely that accommodations for youth with special needs will be necessary.
    - Online survey
    - Phone interviews
    - In-person interviews at small gatherings
    - Be prepared to accommodate the specific needs of youth
2. Surveying incarcerated youth
  - a. To the extent possible, agencies will need to make arrangements with correctional facilities to survey youth ages 19 and 21 who participated in the NYTD baseline survey at age 17.

3. Surveying youth with special needs. Some youth may have difficulty participating in the survey because of a disability. Youth with special needs include:
  - Youth with visual impairments,
  - Youth with learning disabilities,
  - Youth with cognitive disabilities,
  - Youth with hearing impairments,
  - Youth with speech impairments, and
  - Youth with physical disabilities that preclude writing and computer use.
  - a. **Youth with limited vision** may need copies of the survey in large print. Youth who cannot read even large print may need to have the survey administered by an interviewer or caseworker who can record their verbal answers.
  - b. **Youth with learning disabilities** may have difficulty completing the NYTD survey, due to reading problems; however caseworkers can read the question, and have the youth complete the responses on his or her copy of the survey form. Most youth will be able to identify and check “yes” and “no” responses as the interviewer reads them aloud.
  - c. **Youth with severe cognitive disabilities** may be unable to complete the survey but those with mild cognitive delay’s should be able to answer the questions successfully with assistance from the interviewer; explaining questions when needed.
  - d. **Youth with hearing impairments** may be able to complete the survey as a self-administered web or paper survey. Text Telephones (TTY) could also be a resource. To call a youth who is hard of hearing or deaf, the interviewer dials 711 to call the Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS). The TRS operator will type the interviewer’s questions which will appear on the youth’s TTY device. The TRS operator will then read the youth’s typed responses to the interviewer. TRS operators are legally and professionally bound to keep all information confidential.
  - e. **Youth with speech impairments** may be able to self-administer the survey via web or paper surveys. If administering the survey directly, the interviewer should feel comfortable asking the youth to repeat what he or she said or asking for clarification. E.g. “I’m sorry, I didn’t understand. Can you please repeat that?”
  
4. Quick Tips for surveying youth with special needs:
  - a. Determining whether a youth can read the questions can be a simple matter. One widely used approach is to tell the youth, “We often read these questions to youth taking the survey. Would you like me to read them to you or would you prefer to read them to yourself? I am going to have you mark your answers on this sheet.” This approach avoids asking the youth directly if she or he cannot read; which can be viewed as patronizing or stigmatizing.
  - b. Modifications to keep the youth’s interest and attention may include:
    - Keeping the survey environment free of distractions (e.g. turning off the TV or conducting the interview in a room free of other activities).
    - Repeating the youth’s name often.
    - Attentiveness to behaviors that suggest the youth needs a break (agitated or becoming distracted).



- Youth with short attention spans or become fatigued may need to have breaks or have interviews scheduled at a time when they are most alert and not, for example, at the end of a long school day.
  - Give encouragement probes such as saying “Your answers are very helpful for this study” or “Take your time”.
  - Youth who are physically limited in their ability to use a computer or a pen will need to have a caseworker administer the survey and record the youth’s verbal answers as the youth watches to see that his or her responses are being recorded accurately.
5. Surveying youth with limited English proficiency:
- a. Youth with limited English proficiency often face discrimination based on misperceptions about their capabilities and interests. Providing appropriate accommodations allows these youth to participate in the youth outcome survey as fully as their peers.
  - b. Use of an interpreter or someone fluent in the language should be considered if necessary.

### ***Maximizing Response Rates/Understanding Motivators for Youth Participation***

1. Research on survey participation demonstrates that people are motivated to respond to surveys for three primary reasons:
  - a. Altruism: Wanting to be helpful to the researcher or others who may benefit from the survey results;
  - b. Survey Related Reasons: Interest in the topic, liking the interviewer or organization sponsoring the survey; and
  - c. Egoistic: Likes completing surveys, is motivated by money.
2. Many 19-year-old former foster youth may be willing to participate in NYTD out of interest in seeing the survey help other foster youth and/or because they have an interest in hearing about the obstacles and successes of other youth from foster care. To the extent that agencies can communicate the importance of the NYTD survey in helping other youth and make the survey sound interesting, youth will be more likely to participate in baseline and follow-up surveys.

*“NYTD is giving us a chance to communicate our experiences through the survey and to be viewed as experts. It is critical that foster youth are engaged in all decisions being made regarding our lives; ‘No decisions about us, without us’. The NYTD Survey allows me to use my experience in foster care to make things better for future foster youth. Current and former foster youth deserve the chance for our input to be valued and acknowledged. NYTD encourages current and former foster youth work together and take the survey to establish ownership while positively changing foster care.”*

– JT, Former Foster Youth