



WISCONSIN COUNCIL ON

**children
& families**

Raising Voices to Make Every Kid Count

555 West Washington Ave, Suite 200

Madison, WI 53703

www.wccf.org

☎ 608-284-0580

✉ 608-284-0583

To: Members of the Joint Committee on Finance
From: Charity Eleson, Executive Director
Date: May 2, 2007
Re: Budget Paper # 245
Youth Aids Allocation

The current Youth Aids funding formula was initially developed in 1979 to give counties a fiscal incentive to provide services in the community. The formula has been somewhat updated over the years, but the underlying fiscal incentive remains. By allocating Youth Aids funds to counties and allowing them to use the funds for community services and correctional placements as needed, the state continues to encourage counties to provide services for the vast number of kids in the community.

Unfortunately, allocations of Youth Aids dollars have not kept pace with community needs. Youth Aids allocations have scarcely been increased in the past decade. Governor Doyle's 2007-2009 biennial budget proposal disproportionately awards new dollars to counties who have higher rates of juvenile corrections placements. As an alternative, WCCF recommends a modification that would result in all counties getting an increase in their youth aids funding, with the highest increases going to the counties who utilize correctional placements on a more regular basis. While the increase is vital to ensure counties can continue to pay for correctional placements, it is equally important that counties who provide all or most of their services in the community continue to have the funding to provide the services kids need.

WCCF recommends a new alternative for dispersing a 10 percent annual increase in Youth Aids funding. Under this new alternative, the increase would be dispersed as follows:

- **5 Percent increase over Initial 2007 Allocations for all counties each year of the biennium**
- **5 Percent increase based on the Governor's proposed allocations (based on juvenile correctional populations) each year of the biennium.**

This method of allocating funds will serve two purposes - it will increase the overall ability of all counties to continue to provide services to youth in the justice system while also enabling those counties with a higher historical level of institutional placements to be able to utilize those placements when necessary. The details of this funding proposal are attached.

We would like to emphasize the importance of Youth Aids funding because of it provides resources for essential services for kids who are involved in the juvenile justice and child welfare systems. The vast majority of kids who come into contact with the court system are provided services in the community, due in part to the Youth Aids funding formula which provides a monetary incentive to keep kids in the community and minimize the utilization of more costly institutional care.