

Parents and Youth in Crisis Need More Time

Increase Formal Parental Consent Window for Homeless Youth Services

Why are homeless children being forced to leave shelters in Wisconsin?

Wisconsin runaway and homeless youth shelters and homes must currently gain formal parental consent for services within 12 hours or release youth from their care, often to the street.

Returning to the street is dangerous. Nationally, 20% of Runaway and Homeless Youth report being trafficked and 1 in 3 will be lured into exploitive sex within 48 hours of leaving home (National Sexual Violence Resource Center).

Family members experiencing homelessness and crises are often separated from each other, have limited resources, and are fearful of systems involvement. Increasing the window for formal parental consent provides parents, children, and voluntary community resources a more realistic timeframe to address immediate needs and avoid systems involvement.

Federal Legislation requires parental consent within 72 hours, providing families a longer window to avoid systems involvement and the dangers of the street.

Agencies work with parents by requiring, no later than six hours after the child arrives, the home or shelter to notify the parent, guardian, or legal custodian of the child's presence. If parent, guardian, or custodian cannot be reached for the purpose of this notification, the home or shelter must continue making attempts at least every six hours until successful.



What can we do? Legislation proposed in 2021, SB 331/AB 284, would have aligned Wisconsin's notification and consent requirements with the Federal Runaway and Homeless Youth Act, requiring parental consent within 72 hours while working in the child's best interest. Reintroducing this legislation will save lives and reduce crime by helping young people and families access voluntary community resources to prevent homelessness.

The Wisconsin Association for Homeless and Runaway Services: Through a membership of community-based organizations and statewide partnerships, WAHRS supports family reunification, provides safe and stable housing and shelter options, and supports youth well-being, education, employment, and permanent connections to address and solve the underlying causes of youth homelessness. Strong **partnerships** with Department of Justice, Department of Children and Family Services, HUD Continuum of Care, Department of Public Instruction, Serve Wisconsin (AmeriCorps), and others ensure diverse, innovative, and cross-systems approaches to addressing the problems of homelessness among young people. Learn more at www.wahrs.org

*Wisconsin Association for Homeless and Runaway Services
Growing Stronger Together: 1982-2022*

40 Years of Collective Advocacy and Services: Improving the Lives of Wisconsin Youth and Families