

Well-being and experiences in foster care: Youth survey

Guide for case managers

Survey purpose

The Minnesota Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) is partnering with Wilder Research (Wilder) to conduct a web survey to **better understand the experiences and needs of youth in foster care** in Minnesota. Specifically, we are interested in the wellbeing of foster youth, areas that are going well, areas youth need more support, and ways DCYF can better support youth. The survey asks about:

- Basic information about youth (e.g., age, race)
- Feelings of physical and emotional safety
- Relationships with important people in the youth's life
- Mental and physical health
- Wellbeing
- Areas that are going well
- Areas youth need more support
- Ways DCYF could better support youth

Survey closing date

The survey will be open from **February 1, 2026 until May 31, 2026**.

Eligibility

Any youth ages 12 to 21 currently in foster care.

Your role as a case manager

Inviting youth to participate

- **Share the opportunity** with the youth you work with.
- The survey will be open from **February 1, 2026 until May 31, 2026**.
- **Most youth will complete the survey using their case manager's laptop or their own device** during a scheduled session.

- **If youth prefer to complete the survey on their own time**, youth can also use their own device.
- To prevent bot and other “false” responses, **do not post the link publicly or share the link** with anyone other than youth participants.
- We will provide an informational flyer for caregivers that you can distribute. **We encourage you to notify the caregivers** of the youth who are invited to participate about the study and the incentive.

Introducing the survey

For all youth interested in participating (either during a scheduled session or on their own time), **state the following directly to them** during a session in real-time:

- The survey is completely **voluntary**. You do not need to answer any question you do not wish to answer.
- There are **no right or wrong answers**.
- Participation **will not affect any services** you receive from any agency/organization.
- **No one will see your individual responses** except the Wilder staff working on this project.
- The survey is **confidential**. No identifying information will be reported. Wilder **may use quotes** in our reporting, but anything identifying will be redacted.
- Some questions may be **sensitive or cause distress**. There are **resources available** to you on the back page of the flyer. The flyer is for you to keep.
- It will take about **15-30 minutes**, depending on how much you have to share. The survey will **time out after 1 hour of inactivity**.
- **You will receive a \$50 gift card** to a store of your choice if you complete the survey.

Flyer (link + ID)

- Wilder will mail your agency a **set of flyers** with information for survey participants. Other materials will be emailed.
- Each flyer has a **unique ID number** and the **survey link** (with the survey link URL and corresponding QR code).
- **IDs are unique** and cannot be reused.
- Each survey response should correspond to one flyer, one ID, and one survey participant.

**One survey response = one flyer = one
ID = one participant**

- **In case a youth starts the survey but is unable to finish the survey at that time, provide them with a new flyer and** email melissa.adolfson@wilder.org or call 651-280-2763 with the first pin so we can remove the first case from the dataset. IDs can only be accessed once.
- If a youth starts the survey but **wishes to withdraw participation**, email melissa.adolfson@wilder.org or call 651-280-2763 with the pin from the youth's flyer so we can remove their case from the dataset.

Completing the survey during a scheduled session

- **If using an agency device, navigate to the survey URL** before the youth starts.
- Provide **one flyer** to each youth and **enter the ID** on the survey landing page.
- Provide a **private space and at least 30 minutes** for the youth to complete the survey.
- While the survey will be programmed in a way that should allow different youth to access a “clean” version of the survey unconnected to previous responses, **youth should complete the survey using “private” or “incognito”** mode as an extra precaution.

This mode does not show up in the browser's history and does not save anything in the browsing history, cookies, site data, or information entered in forms.

Keyboard shortcut combinations to open a private/incognito window

Windows

- Chrome: Ctrl-Shift-N
- Edge: Ctrl-Shift-N
- Firefox: Ctrl-Shift-P

Mac/Apple

- Chrome: Command-Shift-N
- Edge: Command-Shift-N
- Firefox: Command-Shift-P
- Safari: Command-Shift-N

Completing the survey on the youth's own time

- **If youth prefer to complete the survey on their own time**, youth will need to use their own device.
- **Provide one flyer** to the youth.
- **Tell them** they will need to **enter the ID from the flyer** on the survey landing page.
- **Remind them** of the last day they would be able to complete the survey (**May 31, 2026**).
- **Remind youth they can keep the flyer** to reference the informed consent information or access the resources on the back page.

Addressing distress or crises

The survey asks about topics that may be sensitive or cause youth to experience distress or other negative emotions. In these situations, youth may share their concerns with you. Follow your agency's guidelines appropriately. Additionally, the survey includes links and contact information for the following resources:

Crisis Text Line

- Allows text and chat options
- <https://www.crisistextline.org/>
- Text HOME to 741741

The Trevor Project (provides support specifically for LGBTQIA2S+ youth)

- Allows call, text, and chat options
- <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/get-help>
- Text START to 678-678

Office of the Foster Youth Ombudsperson (OOFY)

- Youth are encouraged to contact OOFY if they have a question or problem in foster care and aren't sure about talking to their case worker, Guardian ad Litem, or attorney.
- info.oofy@state.mn.us
- 651-946-2940
- <https://mn.gov/oofy/>

Study materials

All study materials are hosted on a web page you can access anytime. This includes:

- This guide
- The slide deck from the case manager training
- Youth survey respondent recruitment flyer (without an ID number)
- Caregiver informational flyer
- The list of resources (also included in the youth flyer)
- The survey itself, including introduction and informed consent language and all survey items

Link to the study materials web page: wilder.org/foster-survey

Incentive

Youth who complete the survey will receive a **\$50 gift card to a store of their choice**. Youth can choose between an electronic gift card and a physical gift card mailed to them.

The youth will be asked to provide an email address through a separate link at the end of the survey if they wish to receive a gift card. If youth do not have access to an email address, youth may provide their case manager's email address. The case manager can work with the youth to ensure they receive the gift card.

Gift cards are not emailed immediately. Youth should receive the email within 1-2 weeks. If youth still have not received their gift card within 2 weeks, notify Wilder Research at sophak.mom@wilder.org or 651-280-2769.

Wilder's gift card vendor, Tango, will send respondents an email with a link to redeem their gift card.

Reporting

All responses will be confidential, and no identifying information will be reported. Responses from all youth will be combined during reporting.

Results from the study will be summarized and shared with DCYF, county and tribal agencies and other key partners.

Additionally, **each agency will receive aggregate findings specific to their agency** (i.e., data for all other agencies will be removed), as sample sizes allow.

Questions

Questions from case managers and agencies about the survey, including technical issues, can be directed to Melissa Adolfson at melissa.adolfson@wilder.org or 651-280-2763. Staff will respond as quickly as possible.

Questions from youth and caregivers about the survey, including technical issues, can be directed to Sophie Mom at sophak.mom@wilder.org or 651-280-2769. Staff will respond as quickly as possible.

Questions about DCYF's efforts to support foster youth, contact dcyf.csp.foster.youth.transitions@state.mn.us or 651-431-4707.