

# Well-being and experiences in foster care youth survey

## Guidance for case managers



Wilder Research



## Why this survey matters

- **Youth voices deserve to be heard:** This survey creates space for young people in foster care to share their experiences.
- **Youth are experts in their own lives:** This survey centers the perspectives of young people who are typically left out of decision-making, despite being most affected by the system.

# What we will cover today

- Purpose of the Youth Well-Being and Experiences Survey
- Who is eligible
- Your role as case managers
- How the survey, flyers, and access codes work
- Addressing distress and crises
- Incentives for completing the survey
- How Wilder will report the results
- Where to find materials & who to contact

# Survey purpose

- Partnership between the Minnesota Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) and Wilder Research
- Better understand the **experiences** and **needs** of youth in foster care
  - Basic information about youth (e.g., age, race)
  - Feelings of safety
  - Relationships with important people in their lives
  - Mental and physical health
  - Wellbeing
  - Areas that are going well
  - Areas youth need more support
  - Ways DCYF could better support youth

# Eligibility

- Any youth ages 12 to 21 currently in foster care

# Overview of the survey process



**Inviting youth  
to participate**



**Introducing the  
survey**  
“informed consent”



**Using the flyer**  
access code +  
survey link



**Completing the  
survey**



**Receiving the  
incentive**

# Your role as case managers: Inviting youth to participate

- 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**, they will need to **use their own device**.
- We will provide a 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.

# Your role as case managers: Introducing the survey

For all interested youth, **directly state the following points** during a session in real-time:

- The survey is **voluntary**, and youth do not need to answer any question they do not want to.
- There are **no right or wrong answers**.
- Participation **will not affect any services** the youth receives.
- **No one will see their responses** except the Wilder staff working on this project. **No identifying information will be reported**. Wilder **may use quotes** from open-ended responses in our reporting, but anything identifying **will be redacted**.
- Some questions **may be sensitive or cause distress**. There are resources available on the back page of the youth flyer and in the survey link.
- It will take about **15-30 minutes**, depending on how much youth share. The survey will **time out after 1 hour of inactivity**.
- Youth will receive a **\$50 gift card** to a store of their choice.

# Your role as case managers: Flyer (link + access Code)

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

**One survey response = one flyer = one access code = one participant**

# Your role as case managers: Flyer (link + access code)

- If a youth starts the survey but **is unable to finish at that time**, provide them with a new flyer and email [melissa.adolfson@wilder.org](mailto:melissa.adolfson@wilder.org) or call 651-280-2763 with the first pin so we can remove the first case from the dataset.
- If a youth starts the survey but **wishes to withdraw participation**, email [melissa.adolfson@wilder.org](mailto: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.

**One survey response = one flyer = one access code = one participant**

# Your role as case managers: Completing during the session

- **Navigate to the survey URL** before the youth starts.
- Provide **one flyer** to each youth and **enter the ID** on the landing page.
- Provide a **private space** and **15-30 minutes**.
- The survey will be programmed in a way that will allow different youth to access a “clean” version of the survey unconnected to previous responses.
  - However, **youth should access the survey in “private” or “incognito” mode** as an extra precaution. Keyboard shortcuts are included in the written guide.
- **Remind youth they can keep the flyer** in case they wish to reference the informed consent information or access the resources on the back page.

# Your role as case managers: Completing on their own time

- For youth who prefer to **complete the survey on their own time**, they will need to **use their own device**.
- **Provide one flyer** (includes link + ID) 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 date to complete the survey (**5/31/2026**).
- **Tell them to keep the flyer** after completing the survey so they have access to the helplines and resources.

# Your role as case managers: Ensuring data quality

To prevent bot and other “false” responses:

- **Only share the survey link with youth who are completing the survey on their own time.**
  - Ask these youth to refrain from sharing the link with others.
- **Do not post or otherwise share the link publicly.**

# Your role as case managers: Addressing distress or crises

- The survey asks about topics that **may be sensitive**, and youth **may experience distress** taking the survey.
- **Youth are encouraged to let you know if they need support.**
- **Follow your agency's guidelines for offering support.**
- The survey will also have **links and contact information** for the Crisis Text Line, The Trevor Project, DCYF, and the Office of the Foster Youth Ombudsperson (OOFY).



# Incentive

- **\$50 gift card** to a store of the **youth's choice** (distributed by Wilder's incentives vendor, Tango).
- Youth will **need to provide an email address** 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 use your email address. Work with the youth to ensure they receive the gift card.
- Tango will **send an email to the youth with a link to redeem** the gift card.
  - This will not be sent immediately. Youth should receive the email within 1-2 weeks. If youth do not receive the email within two weeks of completing the survey, let us know.
- Choice between an **electronic gift card** and a mailed, **physical gift card**.

# Reporting

- All responses will be **confidential**.
- **No identifying information** will be reported.
- **Responses from all youth will be combined** during reporting.
- **We may use quotes** from open-ended items in our reporting, but we will **redact any identifying information**.
- Results from the study will be **summarized and shared** with DCYF, county and tribal agencies, and other key partners.
- Agencies will receive **aggregate findings specific to their agency**, as sample sizes allow.

# Study materials

- All study materials are hosted on a web page that can be accessed any time:
  - This slide deck
  - The case manager guide
  - Youth survey respondent recruitment flyer (without an ID)
  - Caregiver informational flyer
  - List of resources
  - The survey itself

# Recap of the survey process



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# Next steps and questions

- **Mailed flyers:** Wilder will send printed flyers to your agency in the coming days.
- **Access training + materials:** This training deck and all supporting materials will be available in the shared Dropbox folder.
- **FAQ:** A Frequently Asked Questions document will also be in the Dropbox. We will update it regularly as new questions come in.

# Thank you!!!

For questions about the survey, contact Melissa Adolfson at [melissa.adolfson@wilder.org](mailto:melissa.adolfson@wilder.org) or 651-280-2763.

For questions about DCYF's efforts to support foster youth, contact [dcyf.csp.foster.youth.transitions@state.mn.us](mailto:dcyf.csp.foster.youth.transitions@state.mn.us) or 651-431-4707

