

## CASE STUDY



# Using better data to find equity in Wisconsin's youth justice system

Inequity within the justice system is a major issue facing states and communities across the U.S. As leaders work to find ways to bring more integrity and fairness to the system, utilizing data can shed light on much needed areas of focus and help inform on demographics, trends and support predicative analysis for system improvements now and in the future.

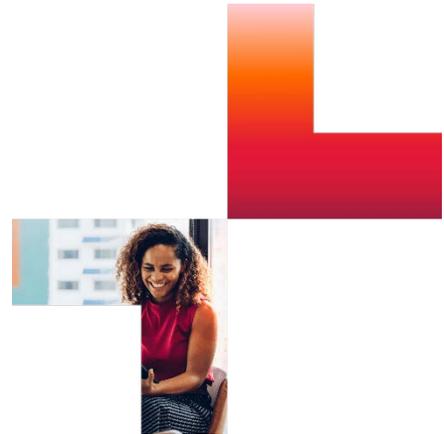
## The problem

The state of Wisconsin has recognized immense inequality among its youth, specifically within the youth justice system. From one county to another, a young person may be penalized differently within the system for the same offense. Reasons for this inequity will vary based on geographical regions, youth demographics, cultural considerations and urban versus rural population centers.

In the past year alone, the state of Wisconsin has documented 16,000 youth justice referrals, with four out of five of those youth having had some contact with the Wisconsin Child Protective Services prior to their first referral. The state saw its lack of a centralized data system and the inability of case workers to track youth offense information within the juvenile justice court system as a major roadblock to understanding and correcting disparities within the system.

## The solution

CGI has worked with the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families - Division of Safety and Permanence for the past 20 years designing, developing and implementing Child Welfare Case



*"We need robust data to guide our continued efforts at improving the community-based youth justice system, or we will increasingly be flying blind."*

**- Shelby McCulley**

Director, Bureau of Youth services  
Wisconsin Department of Children  
and Families

Management Solutions. When the need arose for the development of a data tracking system for youth justice referrals, CGI sprang into action to gain a better understanding of the needs of the stakeholders and begin to work towards a solution.

The result was a robust enhancement to their system allowing for data collection to input, track and analyze real time data related to youth justice referrals. Other functionality includes:

- The ability to easily document case outcomes (closed and counseled, case closure - diversion services)
- Access to Deferred Prosecution Agreements that keep youth out of the formal court process
- Tracking and documentation of formal petitions providing details on youth offense engagement

## The benefits

Enhancements to Wisconsin's Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (eWiSACWIS) allowed for the documentation of youth justice referrals. Since the implementation of this new functionality, the social workers have documented over 40,000 referrals.

Moreover, an effort by the state to deliver more direct services for youth has resulted in more referrals being closed and counseled prior to any formal petitions in the court system. This effort contributed to the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) reporting a decline in arrests of juveniles in 2019.

The implementation of the enhanced data solution helped stakeholders to better understand:

- Specific points and mechanisms by which the system disproportionately impacts young people of color
- Which interventions were effective
- Where progress is being made
- Whether young people are transitioning to successful adulthood

Additionally, the localized data allows stakeholders to monitor if youth are being treated fairly across all 72 counties across the state.

*“The evidence we learn from our growing data systems can drive meaningful, lasting changes in practice at both the state and county level. This data gives us the compass to chart our path toward a truly 21st-century Youth Justice system in Wisconsin.”*

**- Carlton Frost, PhD, MPA**

Youth Justice Policy Coordinator,  
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Wisconsin Department of Children  
and Families

## About CGI

Founded in 1976, CGI is among the largest IT and business consulting services firms in the world.

We are insights-driven and outcomes-based to help accelerate returns on your investments. Across hundreds of locations worldwide, we provide comprehensive, scalable and sustainable IT and business consulting services that are informed globally and delivered locally.

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