Navigating the Changing Waters: Youth Homelessness in a Shifting World

Wisconsin Association for Homeless and Runaway Services
Annual Conference 2025 Agenda
(subject to change)

Monday September 29th to Wednesday October 1 Stone Harbor resort, Sturgeon Bay, WI

Monday evening: registration 3:30-5:00; Stone Harbor Lobby

Tuesday

8:00: Welcome Breakfast

9:00-10:30: (breakouts)

Setting Sail: Policy Currents, Advocacy Winds, and the State of RHY in Wisconsin

Drop anchor and gather your bearings as we open the conference by charting the current waters of youth policy, advocacy, and legislation in Wisconsin. This session will navigate the shifting tides of Runaway and Homeless Youth policy and local advocacy efforts shaping the landscape for youth and providers alike.

We'll look back at where we've come from—tracing the course of RHY work in Wisconsin—and cast forward to where we need to steer next. From statewide policy trends to grassroots advocacy in your own harbor, this session will prepare you to sail with purpose and strategy throughout the conference and beyond.

Come aboard ready to reflect, connect, and prepare for action as we launch a new leg of the journey in our shared commitment to Wisconsin's youth.

All Aboard: Launching Your AmeriCorps Voyage with WAHRS (Shana Dumbleton)

Welcome aboard, new and returning WAHRS AmeriCorps members! This energizing orientation is your first port of call as you prepare to embark on a powerful year of service. We'll kick things off with crew introductions, take the AmeriCorps pledge as one unified fleet, and navigate key topics like Core Competency Certificates, timesheets, and your service descriptions.

You'll also complete your "Meet the Member" handout and receive your official AmeriCorps gear—your uniform for impact as you chart a course through your service year. Returning members, your seasoned tips are the stars we'll sail by—so come ready to share your wisdom! Whether you're setting sail for the first time or returning for another voyage, this session is your launchpad for building community, clarifying expectations, and gearing up for a journey filled with purpose, growth, and service.

10:45-12:45 (breakouts)

the Charting the Course: Youth-Led Legal Change through Partnership & Power

Join national experts Kelly Russo (American Bar Association) and Sarah Billings (National Network 4 Youth) as we set sail on a transformative journey toward justice, equity, and systems change. This dynamic session—anchored by the ABA's Homeless Youth Legal Network (HYLN)—brings together youth and young adults with lived expertise, legal advocates, service providers, and community leaders from across Wisconsin to explore the legal tides impacting youth experiencing homelessness.

Through open dialogue, real-world problem-solving, and collaborative planning, we'll identify the systemic waves that challenge youth stability—and work together to build the partnerships needed to navigate them. With your insight as our compass, this workshop will chart a course for immediate action and long-term impact.

This session is not just a conversation—it's the beginning of a movement. Actions developed here will ripple forward into the Wisconsin Balance of State Conference in February 2026 and guide the work of WAHRS and its partners in the year ahead. Whether you're a seasoned youth leader or just coming aboard, your voice is essential to steering a future where youth are not only heard but leading the way.

Crew Harmony & Strong Shores: Navigating Conflict and Recruiting for Impact

Every great voyage depends on a skilled crew—and knowing how to navigate both the storms and the still waters. In this two-part workshop, Julie Bock, Senior Lecturer, UWM Helen Bader School of Social Welfare, will serve as your guide through two essential areas of community service: resolving conflict and building strong volunteer teams.

In Part One, we'll chart a course through conflict resolution, exploring real-world strategies for managing tension with families, co-workers, and community partners. You'll learn how to maintain calm in choppy waters and strengthen relationships through communication, empathy, and clarity.

In Part Two, we'll drop anchor and focus on volunteer recruitment and supervision, offering tools to help you grow and support a dependable volunteer crew at your agency. From onboarding to retention, you'll leave with resources to build partnerships that multiply your impact.

Whether you're new to the crew or a seasoned sailor in youth service, this session will equip you with practical tools to navigate challenges and lead with purpose.

12:45-1:45:

than the Harbor Connections: Lunch & Networking

Drop anchor, grab a plate, and join fellow conference voyagers for a relaxed networking lunch designed to help you connect, reflect, and recharge. Whether you're meeting new faces or reconnecting with familiar shipmates, this is your chance to exchange ideas, share stories from the field, and build partnerships that can strengthen your course ahead.

No agenda—just good food, great company, and meaningful conversation.

2:00-3:30 (breakouts)

🛞 Beyond the Horizon: Navigating Data with Purpose and Direction

Why do we collect data—just to check boxes for funders? Or could it be the compass that guides our journey? In this insightful session, **Katie Van Groll** invites you to go *beyond the grant* and set a new course for how you view and use data in your program.

We'll explore how to treat data like a ship's navigational chart—helping you spot trends, avoid hazards, and steer toward greater impact in real time. Learn practical strategies to analyze and interpret your data, uncover patterns, and use what you discover to improve service delivery, boost efficiency, and inspire continuous growth.

Whether you're the captain of your program or part of the crew, this workshop will help you sail smarter—not just harder—with data that actually does something.

Guarding the Compass: Navigating Confidentiality in Youth Work

In youth work, confidentiality isn't just a rule—it's the anchor of trust. Like a seasoned sailor protecting their charted course, youth workers must know when to share, when to stay silent, and how to navigate the legal, ethical, and policy waters surrounding sensitive information.

This essential session—required for WAHRS AmeriCorps members and highly recommended for all youth service professionals—will explore the laws, agency protocols,

and judgment calls that shape confidentiality in real-life scenarios. From working with minors to supporting families in crisis, we'll help you read the compass clearly and steer with integrity.

Come aboard to strengthen your skills, protect the privacy of the youth you serve, and uphold your role as a trusted navigator in their journey.

Anchored Voices: Youth Connection & Next Steps

Now that we've charted the course, it's time to anchor in and connect with your crew. This follow-up session is designed **exclusively for youth and young adults** to continue the powerful momentum sparked in *Charting the Course*. Come together in a youth-led, youth-centered space to reflect on what you heard, share what stood out, and start shaping what comes next.

We'll explore your vision for change, identify ways to stay connected, and begin designing your role in steering this work forward—both at home and at the upcoming Wisconsin Balance of State Conference in February, 2026.

This is your harbor for real talk, relationship-building, and movement-making. Whether you're fired up, fired out, or figuring it out, your voice matters—and this space is yours.

3:45 - 5:00 (breakout)

From Storm to Safe Harbor: Courage+'s Model for Stabilizing LGBTQ+ Youth in Crisis

When youth are caught in the storm, how do we respond with care instead of control? In this powerful session, **Ronnie Riviera and Brenna Creamer** of **Courage+** share a transformative model for guiding LGBTQ+ youth from moments of acute crisis to calm, stable waters.

Anchored in trauma-informed practice and youth-centered care, Courage+'s **Crisis Stabilization Model** integrates emergency housing, clinical support, and affirming community partnerships to uphold identity, safety, and agency. Attendees will chart the model's development from blueprint to real-world application—exploring key elements like safety planning, equity-driven staff training, and mental health collaboration.

Whether you're seeking to adapt this model or build your own rescue-ready systems, this workshop offers the compass, map, and tools to support youth through their most turbulent times—and help them reach the shore with dignity and belonging intact.

Mapping the Waters: Navigating YHDP Housing Innovations Across Wisconsin

Wisconsin's three **Youth Homelessness Demonstration Projects (YHDPs)** have launched bold new vessels in the journey to end youth homelessness—now it's time to come aboard and share what's working.

This facilitated session invites **YAB** members, project leaders, and service providers from across Wisconsin's **YHDP** projects and communities to come together, compare navigation tools, and reflect on what's been successful in providing housing and stabilization options for youth and young adults. From rapid rehousing and transitional housing to innovative support models, we'll explore what's helping youth find safe harbors—and what waters remain uncharted.

Whether your community is a seasoned captain or just setting sail, this session offers a chance to learn from one another, strengthen statewide alignment, and chart a collective course for the future of youth housing across Wisconsin's CoCs.

6:30: Dinner (provided on-site); Keynote; evening awards

Wednesday October 1

7:30-8:30 Breakfast

Supervisors, it's time to gather at the helm! Join fellow AmeriCorps site supervisors from across the state in this collaborative "Captain's Circle," where we'll chart strategies for guiding your AmeriCorps crew through a meaningful and memorable year of service.

This session will help you anchor your program in strong support, clear expectations, and purposeful engagement—ensuring your members not only stay aboard but thrive. We'll cover essential reporting and administrative currents, answer common questions, and create space for peer learning and one-on-one navigation with WAHRS staff and veteran supervisors.

Bring your insights, challenges, and compass—we're setting sail for smoother supervision and stronger service!

8:00-12:30: Youth Outreach half day intensive: Navigating Trust, Safety, and Connection with Youth

Set sail into the heart of outreach with this essential workshop for all youth engagement crew—required for WAHRS AmeriCorps members and valuable for any youth serving professional, especially in outreach and drop-in settings, navigating both calm and stormy water. Led by seasoned navigator **Adrienne Strelcheck**, this session explores what it takes to drop anchor and build real trust with youth, no matter where their journey begins. We'll dive deep into effective and culturally informed outreach strategies for both urban harbors and rural shores. You'll learn how to stay grounded in your own role as a support vessel while maintaining safety for both youth and staff. Special attention will be given to handling tough conversations—substance use, mental health, and trauma—with empathy, care, and clarity. Expect to build strong communication skills, sharpen your instincts, and leave this session ready to steer youth relationships with greater confidence, respect, and purpose.

8:30-10:00 (breakouts)

⊗ Steady at the Helm: Trauma-Informed Supervision to Anchor Staff Retention

In rough seas and calm waters alike, supervisors are the captains shaping the course of their crew—and in trauma-informed care, leadership isn't just about direction, it's about connection. Join **Julie Bock** for this powerful session exploring how trauma-informed supervision helps retain staff, prevent burnout, and build a resilient, empowered team.

We'll navigate the core principles of trauma-informed care—Safety, Collaboration, and Empowerment—through the tools of Communication, Flexibility, Empathy, Support, and Self-Care. Learn how to create a shipshape work culture where staff feel seen, valued, and supported in their journey.

Whether you're a new supervisor learning to steer or a seasoned leader looking to fine-tune your approach, this session will help you anchor your team in trust and guide them toward long-term success—because strong crews stay the course together.

Rising Tides: Youth Leadership at the Helm (Youth/Young Adult)

Every great voyage needs bold leaders—and in the movement to end youth homelessness, that leadership starts with you. In this energizing session designed for Youth Action Board (YAB) members, we'll hoist the sails on your personal leadership journey and explore how to grow your skills, confidence, and impact in your community.

Together, we'll chart the waters of life skill building, advocacy, and peer support, while diving into real strategies for stepping into leadership roles—whether in program planning,

policy change, or everyday action. You'll also explore the power of mentorship and coaching, and how to shape the decisions that directly affect your life and the lives of others.

You're not just part of the crew—you're at the helm. This is your time to lead, inspire, and guide the way forward.

10:00-10:30: Break and room check out

10:30-12:00 (breakouts)

Bridging Harbors: Building Cross-Sector Partnerships with Schools for Youth Advocacy

Strong partnerships are the bridges that connect safe harbors—and in the voyage to end youth homelessness, **schools** are **key ports** of **call**. Join **Christi DeChamps** and **Katie Van Groll** for this interactive session on building powerful, cross-sector alliances with school districts to create coordinated, community-wide responses for youth in crisis.

We'll explore how to share resources across agencies, align services, and establish communication channels that keep youth from falling through the cracks. You'll also learn how to elevate youth voices in advocacy efforts—turning lived experience into civic leadership that raises awareness and drives change at the community level.

Whether you're navigating new partnerships or strengthening existing ones, this session will equip you with the strategies to align your crew, share your charts, and move forward together with clarity, compassion, and purpose.

Casting Off: Returning Home with Purpose & Power (Youth/Young Adult)

As the tides of this gathering begin to ebb, it's time to prepare your ship for the next journey—back to your community, with new tools, connections, and clarity. In this closing session for youth and young adults, we'll reflect on where we've been, lift up what we've learned, and cast off with intention.

Together, we'll chart next steps for staying connected, keeping momentum, and continuing your leadership in your own harbor. Whether you're building your local YAB, starting a project, or just learning how to navigate systems—this space is yours to plan, share, and set your course.

We'll close with connection, celebration, and a reminder that no matter the distance, we're sailing in the same direction—toward a Wisconsin where youth lead the way.