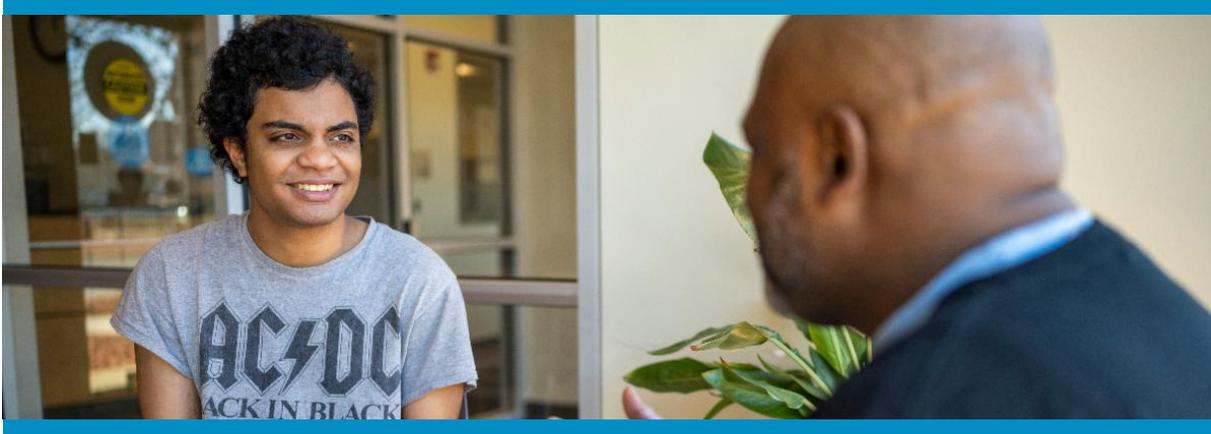


## WCS Connection

March 2021



*From the desk of the WCS Executive Director:*

### Time Has Come to Return 17-Year-Olds to Juvenile Court

In 2020, Vermont became the first state in the country to expand juvenile court jurisdiction to over age 18 for several offenses committed prior to an individual turning 20-years-old, resulting in juvenile court having jurisdiction over those offenses. At the other end of the spectrum, Wisconsin, along with Texas and Georgia, is one of three states that has not made the change to return 17-year-olds to juvenile court jurisdiction. The proposed 2021-2023 biennial budget for the state of Wisconsin includes a provision to do just that. You do not have to look any further than what the other 47 states have done, and the bold move by Vermont, to understand why this is long overdue and needs to be approved. In the state of Wisconsin, adult court jurisdiction of 17-year-old individuals dates to 1995 when the majority of the Juvenile Justice Code, also known as Chapter 938, was written. The time that preceded the passage of that legislation saw a significant increase in juvenile crime (from about 6,500 per 100,000 in 1984 to about 9,200 per 100,000 people in 1993). However, the number of juvenile arrests (for youth 17 and under) in Wisconsin has dropped significantly from 122,460 in 2002 to 44,157 in 2015. The reduction in juvenile crime has largely been fueled by interventions, reforms, and policy changes at the local level in child welfare, juvenile justice, courts, and other venues where youth who are facing challenging circumstances are likely to appear. Additionally, the role of science has been very influential in getting most other states to have 17-year-old youth come under the jurisdiction of juvenile court. This includes a growing body of knowledge regarding brain development which tells us that 17-year-old individuals, much like younger adolescents and 18- and 19-year-olds, have brains that are still developing and therefore prone to making impulsive and poor decisions. There is also a growing body of research suggesting that youth are more likely to be arrested when going through the adult system. Ultimately, what all of this tells us is that it is time for Wisconsin to do the right thing and return 17-year-olds back to the jurisdiction of juvenile courts.

*Clarence Johnson*



## Mediation Services at WCS

The Mediation & Restorative Justice Center specializes in small and large claims disputes. In 2020, the Center mediated more than 730 cases in Waukesha County. Of those cases, 69% of the participants had their cases resolved, and 80% stated they will deal with conflict in new ways by using the skills they learned from the process. Mediation assists people in resolving conflicts or disputes. The mediator does not make decisions for the parties or determine who is right or wrong. Mediation sessions are informal, structured discussions to help clarify the issues and move towards agreement. During the COVID-19 Pandemic mediations are done virtually.

### Impact of Mediation Services:

- Mediations offer the opportunity for people to find their own solutions with the assistance of a trained mediator
- Quick and efficient process to resolve cases, with most conflicts being resolved in one session, saving time in court
- Mediation sessions take place in a private, neutral, confidential setting
- The Mediation Center can file agreements directly with the Court
- Opportunity to listen to each other and to speak without interruption
- Mediation fosters and encourages creativity, collaboration and non-adversarial problem solving, which allows people to maintain relationships

If you are interested in mediation, please contact the Center at 262-544-1647. A case manager will discuss your situation and the explain the process in detail. Mediation sessions are scheduled at times that are convenient for all participants. Most disputes can be resolved in one session. Parties will be informed of any applicable fees prior to the mediation taking place.

### What individuals say about the Center:

*"Thank you for all your help in getting this case over with."*

*"Would definitely choose mediation again."*

*Thanks for working with us throughout this process."*



## Honoring Ruth Parsons Baker

By Krista Templeman, WCS Development Associate

*Here is your chance to learn about a truly important figure in women's history in the Greater Milwaukee area. Be sure to read to the end for some amazing insight into how far ahead of her time she was!*

Ruth Parsons Baker was born in 1896 in California and grew up in Missouri and Minnesota. As a child, she loved to accompany her father, a Congregational minister, when he visited people who were incarcerated. At each meeting, she watched and listened as these individuals talked about their plans and hopes for their futures. Little did she know then that these visits would be the foundation of a lifetime dedicated to working with individuals involved in the justice system.

As a teenager, Ruth volunteered to help her father, James Parsons, when he became the superintendent of the Minnesota branch of the Society of the Friendless, a group dedicated to the care of people who were returning to their communities from prison. She attended college at the University of Minnesota and Macalester College in St. Paul, but moved to Kansas City, Missouri in 1918 when her father became the national superintendent of the Society for the



Without Ruth Parsons Baker, WCS would not be the organization it is today. In celebration of **Women's History Month**, we are proud to tell the story of Baker, the first woman to lead the organization that became WCS.

Friendless. While in Kansas City, she became a case worker for the Society, meeting with hundreds of individuals in prisons and assisting them with finding housing and work upon release.

Ruth married John Baker in 1922 and moved to Wisconsin where John was employed at the Milwaukee Journal. Once in Milwaukee, she discovered that Wisconsin's branch of the Society of the Friendless, which began in 1912, was no longer active. Although she originally thought that a man should lead the effort to revitalize the Society, she soon realized that she was the best person for the job, and by 1924, the Wisconsin branch was flourishing again. For nearly 20 years, she served as the superintendent, acting as a case worker, fundraiser, executive director, and more. She traveled from town to town, speaking at churches and civic events, and visited countless detention centers and prisons, including the Milwaukee House of Correction, the Wisconsin State Reformatory of Green Bay, and the Wisconsin State Prison in Waupun. Ruth was considered to be the "first woman social worker providing services in a male prison." When she stepped down as superintendent in 1941, her work was lauded by members of the judiciary, wardens, parole officers, community leaders and many of the individuals she assisted along the way.

She went on to serve as the first executive director of the International Prisoner's Aid Association (IPAA), a group dedicated to world-wide improvement in correctional services, the promotion of cross-cultural correctional research, and fostering cooperation among official and private agencies involved in criminal justice. The IPAA, which became a delegate agency to the United Nations Economic and Social Council, was a powerful international voice in all issues related to criminal justice from 1950-2006.

Ruth died in 1989 at the age of 92. During her lifetime, she visited thousands of individuals who were in prison. Yet, in an interview with Arizona's *Daily Progress* after she retired, she said she "wouldn't be able to tell you what ten of them" had done to be incarcerated. Instead, Ruth said, she was interested in what each person "wanted to do...wanted to be, and how they felt." Now, nearly 100 years after she led the agency, the words, work, and legacy of Ruth Parsons Baker endure and thrive at WCS!



Do you want to make a difference in a child's life?

Have you thought about fostering a child in your safe & caring home?

Learn how you can become a licensed Treatment Foster Care Parent by attending an informational session at Wisconsin Community Services, Inc. (WCS)

Information will include:

Who can be a treatment foster care parent

The responsibilities of a treatment foster care parent

How long it takes to become a treatment foster care parent

The support you will receive from WCS once a child is in your home



If you are want to learn more, please attend an informational session via Zoom.

Sessions will be held on Tuesday, March 23rd at 12:00 pm & Tuesday, April 6th at 5:00 pm.

Register by contacting Megan Skaggs at [muskaggs@wiscs.org](mailto:muskaggs@wiscs.org) or 414-840-3503

Once you register you will be sent the direct Zoom link to participate in the session.



# Career Opportunities at WCS

WCS is looking for caring and enthusiastic people to fill the following positions:

## Assistant Program Director – Milwaukee Youth Services

The Assistant Program Director is an important position that provides leadership, support, and supervision of staff in the WCS Milwaukee Youth Services programs. The Assistant Program Director will be responsible for advancing the implementation of the Positive Youth Justice (PYJ) Model, programming, data management and reporting, contract compliance, and adherence to various Evidence-Based Practices. Qualified candidates must have a bachelor's degree in social work, psychology, counseling, child development, education, or a related field, as well as previous experience working with adjudicated youth and/or their families.

## Case Manager – Targeted Case Management (TCM) Program

As a TCM Case Manager, your work will have a significant impact on those who are often overlooked and underserved. The position encompasses the care of people experiencing mental health concerns. Under supervision, the individual in this position will develop and implement treatment plans and provide the necessary follow-up, case management, and intervention. Applicants must have a bachelor's degree in a behavioral science (master's degree encouraged) and the ability to work with individuals living with mental health concerns.

## Care Coordinator – Adult Comprehensive Community Services (CCS)

We are looking for a kind and compassionate team player for this full-time position. The Care Coordinator will work with participants in CCS, a psychosocial rehabilitative program, to help them understand, navigate, and progress in their recovery. Qualified candidates must have a bachelor's degree in Social Work or a related field (master's degree preferred). At least one year of experience working in the mental health and substance use field is preferred.

## Youth Care Worker – Youth Shelter Program

If you are passionate about working with youth and want to serve as a mentor, then this is a position for you. The Youth Care Worker provides supervision of the youth placed in the Youth Shelter Program. This includes implementing the daily schedule of activities, providing group educational activities, recreational activities, following up individually with youth, and serving as a mentor and role model for youth. Applicants need to have at least three years of experience youth.

## Did You Know?

The Mediation & Restorative Justice Center offers workshops in mediation and dispute resolution.

Currently workshops are scheduled for May and September of this year.

To learn more, contact the Center at 262-544-1647.



MEDIATION AND RESTORATIVE JUSTICE CENTER



**Wisconsin Community Services, Inc.**

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Milwaukee, WI 53208

Phone: 414-290-0400

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[www.wiscs.org](http://www.wiscs.org)

*Wisconsin Community Services, Inc. (WCS) advocates for justice and community safety, providing innovative opportunities for individuals to overcome adversity.*

WCS is a 501(c) 3 non-profit agency that provides services in southeastern Wisconsin.  
WCS has been serving the community successfully for over 100 years.

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