

DIALOGUE WITH YOUTH

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The Child and Youth Care Learning Center hosts monthly meetings in Milwaukee to give youth workers the chance to debate important youth-related issues in hopes of pooling our resources to provide better services. In August 1999 we had a meeting with only four attending. Due to the lack of bodies, we were able to move on to a new topic. The new topic began with asking me, a teenage-youth worker and new to the group, what my thoughts were on youth work in Milwaukee. The response I gave was not at all new to them. I said, "There's nothing for teens to do." There are YMCAs and places like the Holton Youth Center, and if that doesn't interest youth, Milwaukee's coffee shops are rampant. But, my first point was about transportation, or the lack thereof. The bus system in Milwaukee is very impressive, and for \$1.35 you can get practically anywhere you want within two blocks. Because of Milwaukee's non-existent subway system, the bus is a teen's only ride if he/she doesn't have a car. But as much as I like our public transit system, if a kid wants to go somewhere, it can take over an hour and multiple transfers. Now speaking from personal experience there are just times when I can't waste that much time getting somewhere.

I also brought up the matter of being outside in a storm or alone after dark. It makes some uncomfortable. When someone suggested that I go to the YMCA or a nearby neighborhood center I pointed out that I want more to do than homework help and basketball. When I try to go to the clubs, they kicked me out early because of my age. Coffee shops don't allow minors after 7:00 p.m. There are cheap to free youth camps, but why should they be only available in summer? Is there any reason it can't be a weekly event with field trips, games, transportation, and food available to anyone who wants it?