



## RI Department of Children, Youth & Families Helps Justice-Involved Teens Secure Birth Certificates, State IDs

*DCYF partners with RIDOH, DMV, RI Family Court and the Office of the Child Advocate to remove barriers to education, employment, public benefits*

PROVIDENCE, RI (July 25, 2025) — The Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth & Families (DCYF), in partnership with the Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH), Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV), Rhode Island Family Court and the Office of the Child Advocate, has improved access to identification documents for young people under the care of DCYF's Division of Youth Development.

Through cross-agency collaboration, the state partners have streamlined the process by which young people involved with DCYF's Division of Youth Development can obtain their birth certificates and state-issued identification cards. The documents are essential for youth reentering the community, helping them secure housing, enroll in college or training, apply for jobs and access public benefits.

"At DCYF, we're focused on removing systemic barriers that too often stand in the way of a young person's success, especially those involved in the juvenile justice system," **said DCYF Director Ashley Deckert, MSW, MA.** "Securing something as fundamental as a birth certificate or state ID should never be an obstacle to moving forward. This partnership demonstrates what's possible when agencies work together with urgency and purpose to create real, lasting change. It's not just policy — it's a promise that we see their potential and are committed to supporting their path forward."

Under the updated internal policy, DCYF is authorized to request birth certificates on behalf of any child born in Rhode Island who is involved with the Department. To support this process, legal guardians may provide the necessary authorization, when applicable, using a new form created in collaboration with RIDOH's Office of Vital Records. In addition, a simplified and coordinated DMV process supports a more seamless transition for young people exiting custody or DCYF supervision.

"One of the most important functions of the Rhode Island Department of Health is collecting, storing and managing access to vital records, like birth certificates," **said Director Dr. Jerry Larkin.** "We are happy to be able to collaborate with our partners in state government to make these documents more accessible."

The Rhode Island Family Court also played a key role in this initiative by reinforcing the importance of identity access during reentry planning and ensuring alignment across all systems that serve youth.

“We are happy to have a solution to this issue thanks to this cross-agency collaboration,” **said Child Advocate Katelyn Medeiros, Esq.** “Too often, young people involved in the juvenile justice system face barriers that delay their growth and opportunity. Access to legal documents is critical for our justice-involved youth. These documents are more than paperwork; they are keys to education, employment, housing, and healthcare, promoting a sense of normalcy and independence.”

“Identification is more than a document; it’s a gateway to opportunity, stability and full participation in society,” **added Shannon Massaroco, chief of program development for DCYF’s Division of Youth Development**, who co-led the initiative alongside DCYF Administrator Jason Lyon. “By removing this hurdle, we are affirming our commitment to equity, dignity and giving every youth a fair chance to thrive.”

### **About the Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth & Families**

At Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth & Families, our mission is to build a system of care where every child grows up in a safe and loving family environment that supports the development of strong, resilient families throughout the state. To fulfill our mission, we believe that family, community and government share responsibility for the safety, protection and well-being of children, emphasizing prevention over intervention through an integrated continuum of care that reflects a partnership between all parties and is culturally relevant. Learn more at [dcyf.ri.gov](https://dcyf.ri.gov) and read our 2025-2030 strategic plan.

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