



# Commission on Improving the Status of Children in Indiana

## Annual Report

July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022

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## Commission on Improving the Status of Children in Indiana

Dear fellow Hoosier,

Indiana—and the world—held great hope that 2021-22 would represent a return to “normal,” and instead we saw the continuation of the COVID-19 pandemic. This past year we continued to endure pandemic life, with both positive and negative outcomes for children, youth, and families.

While indicators of youth mental health problems and domestic violence went up, the use of remote meeting technology increased access to telehealth services, improved attendance rates at service appointments and court hearings, and provided greater efficiency and productivity for professionals needing to collaborate. As state agencies and partners evolved their work methods to deal with ongoing health risks, some of the new flexibilities provided pathways to increased access and proved useful enough to maintain in a post-pandemic world.

Through it all, what has been constant is the dedication of the Hoosier professionals and volunteers who serve children, youth, and families. The accomplishments outlined in this report are a testament to that commitment and can-do spirit. This report is dedicated to everyone who doubled down on ensuring access, quality, and equity in services to families and children during the second year of COVID-19, especially those who were also caring for families of their own. We salute you.



For the children,

Julie L. Whitman, MSW  
Executive Director

# Commission Actions

State Fiscal Year: July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022

## Met during the fiscal year

Commission met in August, October, December, February, April, and June

Executive Committee met in August, September, October, November, December, February, March, April, May, and June

## Launched

[Updated Information Sharing Guide app](#)

Statewide Child Maltreatment Prevention [Framework](#) and [Toolkit](#)

Commission Evaluation and Continuous Quality Improvement Project

## Approved

[Guide on trauma screening and surveillance](#)

[Recommendations on reintegration of justice-involved youth](#)

## Endorsed

Creation of a vulnerable youth data dashboard

[Juvenile justice reform policy recommendations](#)

## Tracked & Reported on

297 bills, which resulted in [75 new laws impacting children](#)

## Hosted

Family and Youth Engagement Summit (Family YES!)

State of the Child 2022

## Heard presentations on

Data indicators related to the Commission's strategic plan

Application of the Commission's equity guide to juvenile conditions of probation

Indiana's suicide prevention plan

Implementation of 9-8-8 and a statewide crisis response system

Family engagement in the youth justice system

Statewide rollout of a screening tool for commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC)

Dual status youth protocol implementation

Statewide Multi-systemic therapy (MST) pilot project

Current state of juvenile diversion in Indiana

2021 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) results

State initiatives on youth mental health

Indiana Behavioral Health Access Program for Youth (Be Happy)

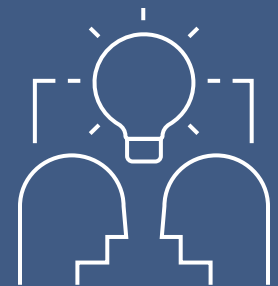
Foster youth educational outcomes and remediation plan

# Highlights

With input from nearly 300 task force, committee, and subcommittee members from around the state, the Children’s Commission made significant progress this year in several areas. Below are a few of the past year’s results.

## FAMILY & YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

*All solutions are more effective if those who are expected to benefit from them participate in the process of developing them.*



### New Commission Seats for Youth

In July, the Commission welcomed its 19th and 20th members—two young adults with previous experience in foster care and residential treatment. After legislation to add the two youth seats to the Commission passed in 2021, Stephaney Knight and Dejana Rodriguez joined the Commission ready to ask questions and speak up on behalf of the vulnerable youth the Commission is intended to serve. Their voices contributed a new perspective to Commission discussions this year.



Dejana Rodriguez (left) and Stephaney Knight (right) joined the Commission this year as youth members.

### Family YES!

In October, the Commission hosted the virtual Family and Youth Engagement Summit (Family YES!). This two-day

event provided space for youth and families to tell their stories about interactions with systems and services, and an opportunity for government workers, legislators, and service providers to listen, reflect, and learn how to make state systems more family-friendly. Evaluation results indicated the event hit its target, with participants praising the speakers and affirming that the information shared was valuable to them. With support from Casey Family Programs, Commission staff produced [a resource for families on self-advocacy](#) and [one for professionals on respecting and including family voice](#).

# YOUTH JUSTICE REFORM

*Since its inception, the Children's Commission has had an interest in better serving those youth who become involved in the justice system, particularly if they have also interacted with other state systems. That continuous improvement effort continued this year under the guidance of two different Commission task forces.*



## Juvenile Justice & Cross-System Youth Task Force

In April 2021, the Commission approved a package of recommendations related to the use of emergency shelter care for youth who need a short-term placement but do not require secure detention. This year, new leadership staff at the Department of Child Services took up those recommendations and began working with both staff and contracted service providers to implement them, with an eye toward increasing access to safe and appropriate spaces for all youth.

Throughout the year, a subcommittee of the Juvenile Justice and Cross-System Youth Task Force worked to develop recommendations to support youth transitioning back to their families and communities after out of home placement. The



Kory George, Chief Probation Officer of Wayne County (left) and Rep. Vanessa Summers (right) participate in discussion at a Children's Commission meeting.

subcommittee surveyed Indiana juvenile justice stakeholders on the types of reintegration services needed, available, and accessible in their communities, and made recommendations to be considered by the soon-to-be established Youth Justice Oversight Committee.

Another subcommittee of the Juvenile Justice and Cross-System Youth Task Force was tasked with developing recommendations

to prevent and divert youth from entering the justice system. That group also conducted a survey of stakeholders including prosecutors, probation officers, and judicial officers on current juvenile diversion practices in their counties. They presented their findings to the Children's Commission in April and will continue their work under the Youth Justice Oversight Committee.



Dr. Dan Rusyniak, Secretary of the Family and Social Services Administration (left) and Bernice Corley, Executive Director of the Indiana Public Defender Council (right).

## Juvenile Justice Reform Task Force

The Juvenile Justice Reform Task Force was created by the Commission in February 2020 to work on a statewide juvenile justice system assessment. That work continued in FY 2021-22, culminating in a set of juvenile justice reform recommendations, which were endorsed by the

Commission in December 2021. Those recommendations became the substance of House Enrolled Act 1359-2022. That act directs the Commission to create an oversight body to implement the items laid out in the legislation. The Youth Justice Oversight Committee held its first meeting on June 29, 2022.

## YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH

*Recent data from Indiana and across the country suggest that increasing numbers of youth and adults are struggling with their mental health. State systems that serve children and families are continuously concerned with getting the right services to the right kids and families, in a timely manner, to promote healing, family resilience, and healthy youth development. The Commission's Substance Abuse and Mental Health Task Force has been working on solutions in this area.*



Megan Horton, Juvenile Justice Strategist at the Indiana Office of Court Services, presents findings on juvenile diversion to the Commission.

## Multisystemic Therapy Pilot Program

One objective in the Commission's strategic plan is to increase the use of evidence-based practices in mental health care and addiction treatment for youth and families. A subcommittee of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Task Force focused on that issue developed a recommendation to

bring a particular evidence-based practice—Multi-systemic Therapy, or MST—to Indiana. This practice—particularly effective for youth with difficult behavior and at risk of involvement in the delinquency system—is currently not available anywhere in the state.

The subcommittee conducted research and developed a plan for eight pilot MST sites, without knowing how they could be

funded. Serendipitously, federal funding became available through the American Rescue Plan Act, and because the MST plan was well developed, it was able to be included in DMHA's

submission to the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) for the use of COVID relief dollars. That plan was approved, and as of the end of

FY 2021-22, six agencies were going through the MST needs assessment process, with plans to start training in late summer 2022 and begin providing services in fall 2022.

## DATA SHARING

*Vulnerable youth and their families often interact with multiple providers and government entities. When those professionals are able to appropriately share information with each other, the family can have a more streamlined experience.*



### Information Sharing Guide 2.0

During the summer and fall of 2021, Commission staff and volunteers engaged with attorneys from several different state agencies to update the content of the [Indiana Information Sharing Guide](#), an app for iPhone, Android, and desktop. The app allows professionals who work with children and families to quickly get accurate legal information about which records may be shared with whom, for what purpose, and with whose consent. New to version 2.0, foster parents can use the app to find out which records they may access, and children and youth can learn about accessing their own records.



Terry Stigdon, Director of the Department of Child Services (left) and Chief Justice Loretta Rush (right) watch a video describing multi-systemic therapy (MST), an evidence-based practice rolling out in Indiana.



**Left:** Senator Jean Breaux (center) asks a question about juvenile justice recommendations, while Chris Naylor, Executive Director of the Indiana Prosecuting Attorneys Council (left), and Dr. Kris Box, State Health Commissioner, listen. **Right:** Senior Judge Heather Mollo of Bartholomew County updates the Children's Commission on the implementation of Indiana's dual status youth legislation in courts across the state.





The Commission met six times during the fiscal year.

# Looking Ahead

A year from now, the Children’s Commission will celebrate the milestone of ten years since its creation by the Indiana General Assembly.

After nine years of collaboration for children, the Commission will have the opportunity this fall to gauge its impact and strive to increase it, as the ongoing evaluation and continuous quality improvement project wraps up with a final report and

recommendations. Through the Commission’s collaborative work, we hope to see a positive impact on the ways in which the state serves vulnerable children and families, as well as the outcomes of those youth and families. The Commission will also continue to explore more ways to engage

youth and families at the various Commission tables—including its task forces, committees, and other work groups—to ensure that all efforts are guided by the expertise of those who know the most—the children, youth, and families we exist to serve.

# Commission Members



**Christine  
Blessinger**

Deputy Commissioner,  
Re-entry and Youth Services,  
Indiana Department of Correction



**Representative  
Dale DeVon**

State Representative, District 5  
*Member, Executive Committee*



**Kristina  
Box, M.D.**

Indiana State Health Commissioner



**Senator  
Stacey Donato**

State Senator, District 18

*2023 Commission Chair  
Member, Executive Committee*



**Senator  
Jean D. Breaux**

State Senator, District 34



**Justin  
Forkner**

Chief Administrative Officer,  
Indiana Supreme Court



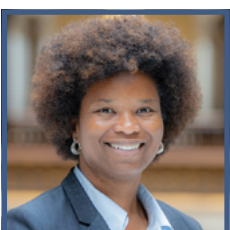
**Jay  
Chaudhary**

Director, Division of Mental Health and  
Addiction, Family and Social Services  
Administration



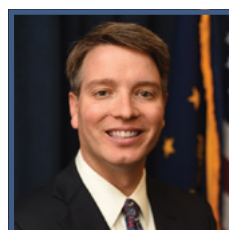
**Kory  
George**

Chief Probation Officer, Wayne County



**Bernice  
Corley**

Executive Director,  
Indiana Public Defender Council



**John R.  
Hammond, IV**

Deputy Chief of Staff,  
Office of the Governor

*2021 Commission Chair  
Member, Executive Committee*



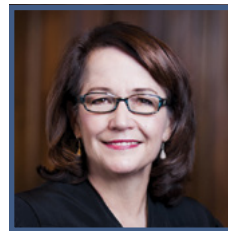
Zac Jackson  
Indiana State Budget Director



Todd Rokita  
Indiana Attorney General



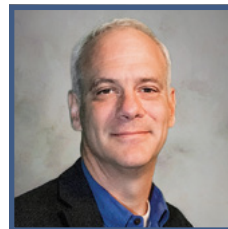
Katie Jenner, Ed. D.  
Secretary of Education



Honorable Loretta Rush  
Chief Justice of Indiana  
*2022 Commission Chair  
Member, Executive Committee*



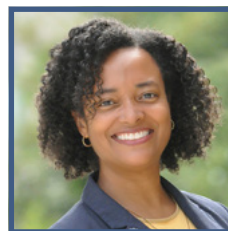
Stephaney Knight  
Youth Member



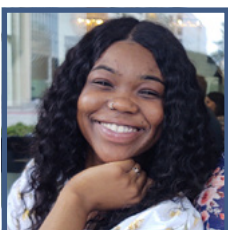
Dan Rusyniak, M.D.  
Secretary, Family and Social Services Administration



Chris Naylor  
Executive Director, Indiana Prosecuting Attorneys Council



Terry Stigdon  
Director, Department of Child Services  
*Member, Executive Committee*



Dejana Rodriguez  
Youth Member



Representative Vanessa Summers  
State Representative, District 99  
*Member, Executive Committee*

# Task Force & Committee Members

## Child Health & Safety Task Force

**Sarah Sailors, Co-Chair**

Indiana Department of Child Services

**Kate Schedel, Co-Chair**

Indiana Department of Health

**Christina Commons**

FSSA / First Steps

**Kristen Dauss, MD**

Indiana Department of Correction

**Susan Elsworth**

Indiana Alliance on Prenatal Substance Exposure

**Mark Fairchild**

Covering Kids & Families of Indiana

**Rachel Fisher**

Lutherwood

**Maureen Greer**

Indiana Perinatal Quality Improvement Collaborative

**Terri Lee**

Indiana Department of Health

**Angela Reid-Brown**

Office of Court Services, Indiana Supreme Court

**Sandy Runkle**

Prevent Child Abuse Indiana

**Sonya Rush**

Indiana Department of Child Services

**Shannon Shumacher**

The Villages

**Angela Smith-Grossman**

Indiana Department of Child Services

**Deanna Szyndrowski**

SCAN, Inc.

**Brittany Winebar**

Prevail

## Educational Outcomes Task Force

**Brianna Morse, Co-Chair**

Indiana Department of Workforce Development

**Gina Woodward, Co-Chair**

Indiana Department of Education & Governor's Workforce Cabinet

**Mary Beth Buzzard**

Indiana Department of Correction

**Shannon Chambers**

Johnson County Probation

**Bart Doan**

Indiana Department of Workforce Development

**Bethany Ecklor**

FSSA / Division of Mental Health and Addiction

**Melaina Gant**

Indiana Department of Child Services

**JauNae Hanger**

Children's Policy and Law Initiative of Indiana

**Jonathan Kraeszig**

Vocational Rehabilitation

**Susan Lightfoot**

Henry County Probation

**Barbie Martin**

Indiana Commission on Higher Education

**Janet Martinez**

Marion County Public Defender Agency

**Leslie Miller**

Indiana Department of Child Services

**Terri Miller, PhD**

Hamilton County System of Care

**Susan Roberts, EdD**

Nexus Point Consulting

**Rebecca Shetler-Fast**

Elkhart County System of Care

**Alison Slatter**

Indiana Association of Home Educators

**Gil Smith**

Department of Child Services

**Joan Smith**

Indiana Department of Education

**Lisa Truitt**

Riley Hospital for Children

**Jarod Wilson**

Foster Success

**Jess Yoder**

Indiana Department of Education

# Juvenile Justice & Cross-Systems Youth Task Force

**Hon. Steve Galvin, Co-Chair**  
Monroe Circuit Court

**Nancy Wever, Co-Chair**  
IOCS / Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative

**Stephen Balko**  
Indiana Department of Education

**Jeffrey Bercovitz**  
Indiana Office of Court Services

**Sirrilla Blackmon**  
FSSA / Indiana Division of Mental Health and Addiction

**Coleen Connor**  
Tippecanoe County CASA

**Ann Davis**  
Indiana Association of Child Resources and Advocacy (IARCA)

**Terrie Decker**  
Indiana Department of Correction

**Hon. Kimberly Dowling**  
Delaware Circuit Court

**Tracy Fitz**  
Indiana Prosecuting Attorneys Council

**Kory George**  
Wayne County Probation

**James (Mike) Goodwin**  
Sullivan County Department of Child Services

**Mike Gray**  
Madison County Probation

**JauNae M. Hanger**  
Children's Policy and Law Initiative of Indiana

**Jill Johnson**  
Marion County Public Defender's Office

**Hon. Heather Mollo**  
Bartholomew County

**Angela Reid-Brown**  
Indiana Office of Court Services

**Michael Ross**  
Indiana Criminal Justice Institute

**Sandy Runkle**  
Prevent Child Abuse Indiana

**Don Travis**  
Indiana Department of Child Services

**Joel Wieneke**  
Indiana Public Defender Council

# Juvenile Justice Reform Task Force

**Rep. Wendy McNamara, Co-chair**  
District 76

**Sen. Mike Crider, Co-chair**  
District 28

**Stephen Balko**  
Indiana Department of Education

**Rep. Dr. Brad Barrett**  
Indiana House District 56

**Sirrilla Blackmon**  
FSSA / Division of Mental Health and Addiction

**Chief Billy Bollin**  
Evansville Police Department

**Sheriff Jeff Campos**  
LaGrange County

**Rep. Tony Cook**  
Indiana House District 32

**Bernice Corley**  
Indiana Public Defender Council

**Alison Cox**  
Porter County Juvenile Detention

**Hon. Steve David**  
Indiana Supreme Court

**Rep. Michelle Davis**  
Indiana House District 58

**Terrie Decker**  
Indiana Department of Correction

**Sen. Jon Ford**  
Indiana Senate District 38

**Hon. Faith Graham**  
Tippecanoe Superior Court 3

**Christine Kerl**  
Marion County Juvenile Probation

**Hon. Dana Kenworthy**  
Grant Superior Court 2

**Hon. Kenton Kiracofe**  
Wells Circuit Court

**Susan Lightfoot**  
Henry County Probation

**Chase Lyday**  
Avon Community School Corporation Police

**Sen. Eddie Melton**  
District 3

**Rudy Monterrosa**  
Notre Dame Law School

**Chris Naylor**  
Indiana Prosecuting Attorneys Council

**Sen. Fady Qaddoura**  
Indiana Senate District 30

**Rep. Robin Shackelford**  
District 98

**James Taylor**  
MSD of Warren Township

**Don Travis**  
Indiana Department of Child Services

**Nancy Wever**  
Indiana Office of Court Services, Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative

**Kia Wright**  
Voices Corporation

## Mental Health & Substance Abuse Task Force

**Leslie Hulvershorn, MD, Co-Chair**  
FSSA / Division of Mental Health and Addiction

**David Reed, Co-Chair**  
Department of Child Services

**David Berman**  
Mental Health America of Indiana

**Sirrilla Blackmon, LCSW, LCAC**  
FSSA/Division of Mental Health and Addiction

**Cathy J. Boggs**  
Community Health Network

**Susan Elsworth**  
Indiana Alliance on Prenatal Substance Exposure

**Stephanie Lyons**  
Indiana University School of Social Work

**Steve McCaffrey**  
Mental Health America of Indiana

**Jason Murrey**  
Indiana Department of Education

**Gabriela Marie Rodriguez, PhD, HSPP**  
Indiana University School of Medicine

**Ty Rowilson**  
Choices Coordinated Care Solutions

**Jennifer Tackitt-Dorfmeier, LCSW, CYC-P**  
Choices Coordinated Care Solutions

**Lisa Truitt**  
Riley Hospital for Children

**Meribeth Adams Wolf**  
Our Place Drug and Alcohol Education Services, Inc.

## Child Trauma & Resilience Committee

**Zachary Adams, PhD, HSPP, Co-Chair**  
Indiana University School of Medicine

**Amber Becker, Co-Chair**  
FSSA / Division of Mental Health and Addiction

**Sirrilla Blackmon**  
FSSA / Division of Mental Health and Addiction

**Erin Busk**  
Indiana Department of Education

**Christy Gauss**  
SCP Consultants

**Kory George**  
Wayne County Probation

**JauNae Hanger**  
Children's Policy and Law Initiative

**Jessica Herzog-Hall**  
Indiana Youth Services Association

**Kristi Linson**  
Indiana State Department of Health

**Kelly McBride**  
Domestic Violence Network

**Terri Miller, PhD**  
Boone Hamilton Madison Special Services

**Laura Mobley**  
Traders Point Christian Church

**Lindsay Hill Stawick**  
Domestic Violence Network

**Karlin Tichenor, PhD, LLMFT**  
Family Links

**David Westenberger**  
Indiana Youth Services Association

## Child Services Oversight Committee

**Rep. Ed Clere, Chair**  
District 72

**Rae Feller**  
IOCS / State Office of GAL/CASA

**Sen. Jon Ford**  
District 38

**Rep. Carolyn Jackson**  
District 1

**Hon. Dana Kenworthy**  
Grant Superior Court

**Sean McCrindle**  
Bashor Children's Home

**Michael Moore**  
Indiana Public Defender Council

**Sen. Frank Mrvan**  
District 1

**Jim Oliver**  
Prosecuting Attorneys Council

**Joan Smith**  
Department of Education

**Terry Stigdon**  
Indiana Department of Child Services

## Communications Committee

**Zachary Osowski, Co-Chair**  
Indiana Prosecuting Attorneys Council

**Holly Lawson, Co-Chair**  
Indiana Department of Education

**Kathryn Dolan**  
Indiana Supreme Court

**Ron Galaviz**  
Indiana State Police

**Ben Gavelek**  
Indiana Criminal Justice Institute

**Jim Gavin**  
Indiana Family and Social Services  
Administration

**Annie Goeller**  
Indiana Department of Correction

**Michele Holtkamp**  
Office of the Governor

**Erin Murphy**  
Office of the Governor

**Jennifer O'Malley**  
Indiana Department of Health

**Noelle Russel**  
Indiana Department of Child Services

## Data Sharing & Mapping Committee

**Josie Fasoldt, Co-Chair**  
Management Performance Hub  
& Office of the Chief Equity, Inclusion &  
Opportunity Officer

**Alicia Kielmovitch, Co-Chair**  
Indiana Youth Institute

**Sirrilla Blackmon**  
Division of Mental Health and Addiction

**Tyler Brown**  
Management Performance Hub

**Mary DePrez**  
Indiana Office of Court Technology

**Nikki Ford**  
Department of Child Services

**Wendy Harrold**  
Family and Social Services Administration

**Corajeon Medina**  
Department of Child Services

**Jeff Milkey**  
Indiana Department of Education

**Christine Reynolds**  
Indiana Criminal Justice Institute

**Rebecca Shetler-Fast**  
Elkhart County System of Care

**Lisa Thompson**  
Office of Judicial Administration

**Tamara Weaver**  
Office of the Attorney General

**Chris Yirenkyi**  
Department of Correction

## Equity, Inclusion, & Cultural Competence Committee

**Jill English, Co-Chair**  
Child Advocates

**Timike Jones, Co-Chair**  
Indiana Coalition Against Domestic  
Violence

**Kenneth Allen**  
Indiana Youth Services Association

**Yalonda Brown**  
Engage Mentoring

**Erin Busk**  
Indiana Department of Education

**Valerie Davidson**  
Meridian Diversity Consulting

**Belinda Drake**  
Indiana Youth Group

**Carol Franklin**  
Phoenix Family and Community Services

**Brenda Graves-Croom**  
FSSA / Division of Mental Health and  
Addiction

**Gurinder Hohl**  
Immigrant Welcome Center

**Shannon Jackson**  
Hamilton Center

**Manpreet Kaur**  
Indiana Office of Judicial Administration

**Esther Lewis**  
Holistic Evolution, Inc.

**George Middleton**  
The George Middleton Group

**Tim Nation**  
Peace Learning Center

**Derika Parris**  
Goodwill of Central and Southern  
Indiana

**Chris Paulsen**  
Indiana Youth Group

**Calvin Roberson**  
Simon Cancer Center at IU Health

**Mark Russell**  
Indianapolis Urban League

**Meghan Smith**  
FSSA / First Steps

**Jessica Strong**  
Hamilton Center

**Tashi Teuschler**  
IOCS / Juvenile Detention Alternatives  
Initiative

**Latrece Thompson**  
Indiana Department of Child Services

**Jessica Tomasino**  
FSSA / First Steps

**Adrian Warren**  
Radio One



**Commission on Improving the  
Status of Children in Indiana**

[in.gov/children](http://in.gov/children)