



**The Council of State Governments Justice Center
Draft Scope of Work to the Commission on Improving the Status of Children in Indiana**

The Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice Center will partner with the Commission on Improving the Status of Children in Indiana and other key stakeholders in the state over the course of 6-9 months to conduct a preliminary assessment of the state’s juvenile justice system, including the state’s capacity to collect and track juvenile justice data, and to develop a formal plan to conduct a comprehensive statewide system assessment to protect public safety, reduce racial and ethnic disparities, and improve outcomes for youth in contact with Indiana’s juvenile justice system.

The goals of this planning process are to 1) establish a shared understanding of juvenile justice research and best practice and an associated vision for reform across key county and state stakeholders; 2) baseline the current state of juvenile justice data collection at the state level and across counties, identify key data gaps and barriers, and determine what data is available to conduct a statewide assessment; 3) identify initial policy, practice, and funding priorities for improvement; and 4) secure the buy-in of key stakeholders across all branches of government and state and local lines for launching a collaborative, consensus-based process to reform Indiana’s juvenile justice system.

To accomplish these goals, the CSG Justice Center will focus on the following objectives and activities:

Objective 1: Identify opportunities to leverage and build upon past and current juvenile justice reform efforts to develop an initial statewide plan for system improvement.

CSG Justice Center staff will aggregate and review analyses related to past/current juvenile justice system improvement efforts at the state and local levels to ensure that the initial assessment and statewide plan builds upon system strengths and is not duplicative. Staff will review recent annual reports, strategic plans, and other available information including but not limited to: Commission and Juvenile Justice and Cross-System Youth Task Force strategic planning documents, recommendations, and reports; Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) reports, handbooks, and related materials; and the Department of Corrections’ performance based standards work; among others. All of this information will be synthesized to inform how a comprehensive, statewide assessment process can build upon and leverage lessons learned from past and current reform initiatives as well as to identify areas that warrant further attention.

Objective 2: Evaluate Indiana’s current capacity to collect, analyze, report, and use key juvenile justice data critical for developing a data-driven statewide plan and for positioning system stakeholders to measure system performance and progress and make data-driven decisions.

The CSG Justice Center research staff will work directly with research and IT staff within DYS and county juvenile justice agencies to assess Indiana’s capacity to collect and analyze the case-level juvenile justice data critical to developing a data-driven statewide plan, including data on arrests; system referrals; diversion; detention; dispositions; risk levels; probation; out-of-home placements; and service delivery and outcomes. The assessment will also examine how data are collected and used from other youth serving systems, including child welfare, education, and behavioral health. Further, staff will determine



how data on race, ethnicity, and gender are captured at each point in the juvenile justice continuum; whether this data is captured consistently and accurately; and whether and how these data are used to guide and evaluate system performance and decisions.

CSG Justice Center staff will use the results from this data assessment to both inform the development of initial recommendations to improve Indiana's collection and reporting of juvenile justice data, as well as to outline what kind of analysis can and should be conducted to ensure objective data guides the development of Indiana's statewide plan. The CSG Justice Center has over a decade of experience in working with corrections and supervision agencies to collect these data and conduct comprehensive system assessments, using sophisticated methods of analysis to match disparate data sets and identify multi-year system trends related to system performance and youth outcomes.

Objective 3: Establish initial priorities for system improvement shared by key stakeholders, and secure buy-in for a collaborative statewide assessment, planning, and improvement process.

First, CSG Justice Center Staff will present to members of the Commission, county juvenile justice leaders, the Division of Youth Services, legislature, and other key stakeholders on what research shows works to reduce recidivism, improve positive outcomes for youth, and reduce racial and ethnic disparities. Given the bi-furcated nature of Indiana's juvenile justice system, the goal of these presentations is to ensure that all system stakeholders have a shared understanding of "what works" to improve outcomes for youth and how this research should guide statewide efforts. To support this process, presentations will also highlight best practice policy, funding, and practice strategies aligned with this research from other states and counties, including states with bi-furcated systems.

Second, the CSG Justice Center will conduct focus groups with state and local leaders across the juvenile justice system to identify challenges, determine priorities for improvement, and create buy-in for a collaborative, consensus-driven improvement process. The CSG Justice Center will conduct separate on-site interviews and focus groups with members of the Commission, state policymakers, the Division of Youth Services, county juvenile court judges and probation staff, prosecutors and public defenders, law enforcement, community-based providers, education, child welfare, and other youth/family serving systems. Importantly, staff will also explicitly seek to incorporate the voices and perspectives of those most impacted by the juvenile justice system through focus groups with youth, families, and victims. All of these conversations will focus on how the juvenile justice system currently operates, how resources are allocated across the system, and challenges and opportunities for improved system performance, youth outcomes, and equity. Based on experience conducting juvenile justice focus groups in more than half of all states across the country, CSG Justice Center staff will create tailored interview guides for each focus group specific to Indiana, and document key themes and takeaways.

Finally, as a key complement to these focus groups, CSG Justice Center staff will have one-on-one meetings with key leaders across all branches of government. These discussions will be designed to encourage their buy-in for a statewide planning process, identify their priorities for system improvement and potential challenges/barriers for building statewide consensus, and seek their guidance for how the planning process should be structured so it has the best possible chance to result in systemic change.



Objective 4: Assess alignment of Indiana’s legislative code and statewide funding approach with research and national best practice.

The CSG Justice Center will conduct a preliminary scan of Indiana’s juvenile justice legislative code and related appropriations to identify strengths, key gaps and areas of confusion, and identify initial opportunities for revision that reflect research and best practices. Based on our extensive experience supporting states in aligning legislation with what research shows is effective, the CSG Justice Center has developed a checklist that details the key elements of research-based/best practice juvenile justice statute. We will apply this checklist to our review of the legislative code in Indiana to assess current alignment with these key elements, and identify potential gaps. Our analysis will also include a review of state funding strategies to inform initial priorities for improved resource allocation.

Objective 5: Prepare and present a report to all key stakeholders that identifies priorities for system improvement, details initial recommendations for potential legislative, administrative, and fiscal changes, and provides a detailed roadmap for developing a data-driven statewide plan.

The CSG Justice Center will develop a report based on this preliminary assessment, and formally present key takeaways to the Commission and other key stakeholders. The summary report will include:

- Assessment of the current status of Indiana’s juvenile justice system operations, performance, equity, and youth outcome data; what improvements are needed; what data would be available to guide a statewide plan; and what steps are needed to collect, aggregate, and match this data.
- Pre-requisites for conducting a successful system assessment and developing a statewide plan, including how to leverage past and current reform efforts and ensure stakeholder buy-in.
- Consensus priorities for system improvement across stakeholder groups, and initial recommendations for key changes that might be required to align statewide policy, practice, and funding with research and best practice.
- Roadmap for developing a statewide plan including recommended assessment and consensus-building activities, oversight structure, key partners, and deliverables with associated timelines.