



# Commission on Improving the Status of Children in Indiana

## Strategic Plan, 2023-2025

**Mission:** To improve the status of children in Indiana through systemic collaboration

**Vision:** Every child in Indiana will have a safe and nurturing environment and be afforded opportunities to reach their full potential and live a healthy and productive life.

### Overarching Principles:

- **Equity.** Historical inequities cannot be corrected by ignoring them. For statewide solutions to be effective, marginalized voices must be included, data must be disaggregated (by race, geography, gender and other relevant variables) and policies and programs must be responsive to the particular needs and strengths of each community and group of children in Indiana.
- **Two generations.** Parents are children's first teachers and role models. Efforts to support the safety, health, wellbeing, and education of children and youth are more effective when those efforts also support the role of parents and extended family members in the child's development.
- **Do no harm.** The state should only intervene in the life of a child or family if the intervention can reasonably be expected to improve the status of the child and/or family. Government intervention should not cause harm.
- **Trauma-informed.** An understanding of the impact of trauma and trauma-informed practice increases the effectiveness of all work with vulnerable children and families.
- **Youth and family voice.** All solutions are more effective if those who are expected to benefit from them participate in the process of developing them.

### How the Commission Does Its Work:

Based on the Commission's enabling legislation, and in an effort to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the state's response to vulnerable youth and families, the Commission works in the following ways:

- Fostering **collaboration** between and among the three branches and various agencies of state government
- Promoting appropriate data- and **information-sharing** across agencies at the state and local levels for the benefit of vulnerable youth and families
- Examining **disaggregated data** to shed light on persistent challenges, disparate outcomes, and potential solutions
- **Identifying gaps** and researching **solutions that have worked** in specific Indiana localities and in other states
- **Consulting with national organizations** with subject matter expertise
- **Consulting with youth, families, and direct service practitioners** with practical expertise
- Recommending **laws, policies, and procedures** for adoption by the state
- Promoting **evidence-based practices** for use by both public and private agencies serving vulnerable youth and families

**Strategic Goal 1:**

Improve the health and safety of vulnerable children and youth

*Objectives:*

1. Increase community-based social and concrete support for families with children, including those being cared for informally by relatives.
2. Increase housing stability for families with children.
3. Recommend ways to increase the power and voice of children in state care
4. Identify and encourage adoption of effective and promising models for promoting healthy teen relationships, preventing unplanned pregnancy, and reducing the sexual victimization of adolescents
5. Increase access to early intervention for vulnerable young children

**Strategic Goal 2:**

Increase access to quality mental health and addiction services for children and their families

*Objectives:*

1. Increase the use of evidence-based practices in mental health care and addiction treatment for youth and families
2. Increase collaboration and solution-finding among the mental health, disabilities, child services, and juvenile justice systems with regard to children with high-acuity care needs.
3. Increase screening for prenatal alcohol exposure, FASD awareness and training, and access to effective family-based interventions for FASD
4. Identify and encourage adoption of effective and promising ways to promote mental health and prevent addictions in youth, especially those whose families experience mental health and substance use disorders.
5. Increase access to programs and interventions that improve teen mental health and reduce youth suicide.

**Strategic Goal 3:**

Improve educational outcomes of vulnerable youth

*Objectives:*

1. Improve access to high-quality early care and education for vulnerable children and families
2. Increase use of restorative practices in schools throughout the state
3. Identify and encourage adoption of effective and promising practices that promote trauma-informed schools
4. Improve access to quality education for youth in residential, detention, and corrections facilities
5. Identify and encourage adoption of effective interventions for youth who have individualized education plans and are involved with one of the other state systems (DCS, FSSA, juvenile justice)
6. Identify and encourage adoption of effective and promising practices to promote access to postsecondary education and workforce readiness for vulnerable youth, including building a pipeline to future work in youth-serving professions.

**Strategic Goal 4:**

Improve safety and outcomes of youth who come into contact with the justice system

**Objectives:**

1. Identify and encourage adoption of effective and promising practices for identification, referral, and appropriate services for victims of commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC)
2. Identify and encourage adoption of effective policies and practices that promote family engagement, healing, and growth in juvenile status offense cases
3. Identify and encourage adoption of effective and promising programs and practices to support the healthy development of children with an incarcerated parent
4. Identify and encourage adoption of effective and promising practices and policies that integrate the science of child and adolescent development into the justice system's response to children and youth.