

## Russian Delegation Learns about Best Practices in Foster Care in Indiana

A delegation from Russia was in Indiana this month studying our state’s child welfare and foster care programs. Travelling from the Kaluga region, a group of six women came to West Lafayette and Indianapolis through a congressional exchange program called Open World. While the overall theme of the visit was on social issues, members of this delegation are specifically involved with children in foster care, adoption and related issues in their home country.

The meeting of Russian and Hoosier child welfare professionals was a result of an exchange between the Lafayette Rotary Club, Purdue University and state leaders. While in West Lafayette the delegates sat through a court session with the juvenile court judge, visited Purdue University and toured several non-government organizations like the Cary Home and Boys and Girls Club. In Indianapolis, they met with Justice Loretta Rush at the Supreme Court and had lunch with several legislators before participating in a roundtable discussion with legislative and program staff from FSSA and the Department of Child Services (DCS).



The Russian delegation at the roundtable discussion, seated with the representatives from Purdue.

Roundtable participants from DCS and FSSA included:

- Brady Brookes, DCS
- Christina Hage, FSSA
- Tristyn Ryan, DCS
- Rebecca Buhner, FSSA
- Kathy Ogden, DCS
- Janet Sanford, FSSA
- Janet Deahl, FSSA
- Lisa Rich, DCS
- Isaac Whitley, FSSA

The Russian delegation was excited to meet with their peers in the child services industry and government officials to see how America (and Indiana) operates as far as caseloads, disability issues, finances and regulations. Christina Hage, Policy and Legislative Services Director for FSSA, and Brady Brookes, Legislative Services Director for DCS, agreed to meet with the delegation saying it provided an opportunity for Indiana child welfare professionals to learn from their Russian counterparts.

“With the help of a translator, we learned our service models have much in common; however, their system as it exists today is fairly new,” said Rebecca Buhner, DMHA’s Assistant Deputy Director of Recovery, Integration, Prevention and Policy. “We were especially pleased to find out foster care is growing in acceptance in Russia because it means more and more children are living with families instead of in orphanages.”