

During the previous legislative session, the Public Defender Commission received an additional appropriation of \$2 million/year over the next biennium to fund “At-Risk Youth and Families.” The majority of this funding has been allocated to fund pilot projects proposed by counties to implement and evaluate new services relevant to at-risk youth and families.

These projects should clearly relate to public defense and at-risk youth and families. Each project will also require a strong data and evaluative component. Commission staff works directly with each partner to develop the details of their project as well as a data collection plan.

Example Pilots:

SYSTEM NAVIGATOR SUPPORT SYSTEM

This program would serve to evaluate the impact of providing system navigators to public defenders who represent parents in CHINS and TPR proceedings. Under the direction of an attorney, system navigators would provide direct support to parents to help them understand and work through the CHINS system. The project would measure the rate at which children are removed from the home, time spent in out-of-home status, reunification rate, time to reunification, time to permanency, and overall case length based on this additional parental resource.



EARLY INTERVENTION PROGRAM TO ASSIST PARENTS

This pilot would be conducted in a medium-to-large county and target at-risk parents prior to CHINS petitions being filed. The target areas of improvement are primarily prevention of DCS involvement and removal of children from the home. Specific primary outcome measures would include rate of CHINS filing, rate of related informal adjustments, and rate of removal from the home. A legal team would be assembled consisting of one or more public defenders, social workers, and civil legal aid attorneys. This team would advise and assist parents on legal, housing, employment, and service issues, aiming to proactively prevent the need for DCS intervention. The Commission has not yet found a partner for a program of this type, though there are some localities interested. Proposals similar to this model, including other types of early intervention models with different implementations, are of special interest to the Commission.

The primary goals of the At-Risk Youth and Family projects are: (1) to create long-term improvements in systems that serve Indiana at-risk youth and families involved with Indiana's family/child welfare system, the juvenile delinquency system, or both, and (2) to create system improvements that proactively prevent such involvements.

"Indiana families are often subjected to state intervention as a result of a minor issue that could and should have otherwise been resolved. We hope to receive innovative funding proposals that will lead to systemic improvements that reduce the need for state intervention."

-Mark Rutherford
Chair, Indiana Public
Defender Commission

This is a very unique opportunity to fund projects at the local level. Please share this opportunity with all the stakeholders in your county.

CONTACT US

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Public defense at-risk youth and family grants available!

Apply today!

