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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

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

Approved
Guide on trauma screening and surveillance
Recommendations on reintegration of justice-involved youth

Launched
Updated Information Sharing Guide app
Statewide Child Maltreatment Prevention Framework and Toolkit
Commission Evaluation and Continuous Quality Improvement Project

Endorsed
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

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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 Dejuna 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.

Dejuna 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.

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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 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.
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.

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.
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

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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

Dejuna 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 Wienke
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 Shackleford
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 Rowlison**
  Choices Coordinated Care Solutions
- **Jennifer Tackitt-Dorfmeyer, 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
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

Corajean Medina
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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

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