



Commission on Improving the Status of Children in Indiana

Strategic Plan 2026-2028

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:

- **Amplify Voices:** The expertise of those with lived experience must be utilized in building solutions.
- **Bridge Systems and Silos:** Serve as a convener across agencies, providers, and stakeholders.
- **Ensure Data Informed Approaches:** Leverage statewide data to identify needs and measure impact.
- **Promote Access:** Ensure strategies reflect the needs of all children and youth, especially marginalized or underserved groups.
- **Emphasize Prevention:** Focus on early intervention, upstream investments, and limiting the need for potential state involvement.
- **Support Workforce and Sustainability:** Strengthen pipelines for professionals and the programs and services they provide, including appropriate levels of training, funding and support.
- **Enhance Public Education and Awareness:** Promote and expand knowledge of services and supports available to youth, family and caregivers.

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 youth, family and caregiver needs, the Commission works in the following ways:

- Fostering **collaboration** between 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 youth and families.
- Examining **data** to shed light on persistent challenges, disparate outcomes, and potential solutions.
- **Identifying gaps** and researching **promising and evidence-based** practices with demonstrated results in Indiana, other states, and nationally.
- **Integrating the knowledge of individuals with lived experience** with respect to their direct subject matter expertise.
- **Consulting with agencies, organizations, and practitioners** with practical expertise.
- Recommending **legislation, policies, and procedures** for adoption by the state.
- Promoting **evidence-based practices** for use by entities serving youth and families.

Committees:

The committees of the Commission provide overarching support on areas that impact multiple aspects of the strategic plan and related initiatives.

The **Data Committee** will support the Commission and its Task Forces regarding their data needs, including vetting all Commission recommendations to ensure data accuracy and integrity. The committee will also review and update any data and information sharing guidance produced by the Commission.

The **Youth, Family and Caregiver Voices Committee** will support the Commission and its Task Forces by ensuring the integration of lived experience voices into our policies and practices and vetting all Commission recommendations. The committee will also lead the creation and revision of the statewide youth, family, and caregiver engagement plan.

The **Youth Justice Oversight Committee** was legislatively created to make improvements to Indiana's youth justice system. This charge includes improvements that enhance public safety, produce sustainable and effective outcomes for youth, are aligned with research on what works, increase equity and decrease disparities, make the most efficient and effective use of public resources and are informed by the experiences of youth and their families.

Goals and Task Forces:

Strategic Goal 1: Improve the health and safety of children and youth

The Child Health and Safety Task Force shall provide information, present recommendations, and provide follow-up on Commission approved recommendations regarding:

1. Increasing community-based social and concrete supports for families with children, including formal and informal familial caregivers.
2. Increasing housing stability for families and children, including transitioning youth.
3. Promoting healthy teen relationships, preventing unplanned pregnancy, and reducing the risk of sexual victimization of children and youth.
4. Increasing awareness and access regarding developmental and health services for children and youth.
5. Identifying safety factors in communities and improving dialogue on those factors.

Strategic Goal 2: Improve access to evidence-based mental health and substance use services for children, youth, families and caregivers

The Mental Health and Substance Use Task Force shall provide information, present recommendations, and provide follow-up on Commission approved recommendations regarding:

1. Identifying community, early care and school-based opportunities for partnership.
2. Increasing collaboration and support for children and youth with high-acuity care needs.
3. Identifying and promoting evidence-based practices specific to infant and early childhood mental health.
4. Promoting evidence-based prevention practices for youth mental health and substance use concerns.
5. Promoting mental health workforce development and appropriate reimbursement for services.

Strategic Goal 3: Improve the educational outcomes of children and youth

The Educational Outcomes Task Force shall provide information, present recommendations, and provide follow-up on Commission approved recommendations regarding:

1. Improving access to high-quality early care and education for children and families.
2. Improving school climate, including appropriate staffing and supports, to ensure all students can learn at their full capacity.
3. Improving access to quality, appropriate education for youth in residential, detention, and corrections facilities or other involvement with state systems, including transitioning students.
4. Promoting access to postsecondary education and workforce readiness.
5. Promoting student and family engagement and reducing absenteeism.

Strategic Goal 4: Improve the safety and outcomes of children and youth who encounter multiple systems

The Multi-System Youth Task Force shall provide information, present recommendations, and provide follow-up on Commission approved recommendations regarding:

1. Improving identification, referral, system responses and appropriate services for victims of commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC).
2. Identifying gaps and potential solutions for dual status youth and those involved with multiple systems.
3. Integrating the science of child and adolescent development into system responses.
4. Promoting family and caregiver engagement at all stages of system involvement.
5. Improving how systems transition children and youth, including both when they are transitioning between systems and when they are existing systems.

Strategic Goal 5:

Improve systems and methods for addressing suicide prevention, bullying and online safety

The Suicide Prevention, Bullying and Online Safety Task Force shall provide information, present recommendations, and provide follow-up on Commission approved recommendations regarding:

1. Reducing risk factors and building protective factors regarding youth suicide while responding to its impact with emphasis on screening, education, programming and supportive services.
2. Reducing risk factors and building protective factors regarding bullying of children and youth while responding to its impact with emphasis on both preventive and responsive policies and practices.
3. Analyzing gaps in knowledge, programming and interventions while promoting strategies, education and resources that improve online safety by reducing risks and increasing protective factors faced by children and youth online.