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Commission on  
Improving the  
Status of Children

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# Commission on Improving the Status of Children

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APRIL 9, 2025

# Agenda

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## 1. Welcome and Introductions

# Agenda

2. Acknowledging Child Abuse Prevention Month - Adam Krupp, DCS Director

The link to the PCAIN website as follows: <https://pcain.org/events/>



## BENEFITING PREVENT CHILD ABUSE INDIANA

Join us to raise funds and awareness to support the ongoing efforts to prevent further child abuse and neglect.



**SUN.  
APR 27, 2025  
10:30 AM**

\*FAMILY ACTIVITIES  
BEGIN AT 9:00 AM

**SCENIC  
INDIANAPOLIS  
CANAL 5K,  
MILITARY PARK**

**MORE INFO:**



**PRESENTED BY:**



[www.villageskids.org](http://www.villageskids.org)

# Agenda

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## 3. Consent Agenda

- a. **Action:** Approve Minutes from the February 12, 2025 Meeting

# Agenda

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- 4. Court Improvement Program Listening Sessions
  - a. Jamie Devine, Court Improvement Program Administrator

# Lifting Their Voices: Lessons Learned From Lived Experts

Jamie Devine, JD

Court Improvement Program Administrator

Indiana Office of Court Services

# Listening Session Series



**Directive from Chief Justice  
Rush**



**Collaboration between the  
Commission on Improving  
the Status of Children in  
Indiana and the Court  
Improvement Program**



**Dialogues between lived  
experts and judges with  
expertise in juvenile law**



**Identified areas of concern  
and recommendations**



# Foster Parent Listening Session

## Areas of Concern:

- Lack of clear communication
- Inconsistent inclusion in court hearings
- Delayed permanency
- Child safety
- Holding parents accountable





# Foster Parent Listening Session

04/09/2025

## Recommendations:

- Education and training
- Best practices
- Stakeholder collaboration



# Birth Parent Listening Session

## Areas of Concern:

- Lack of understanding of the system and expectations
- Court-appointed counsel
- DCS



# Birth Parent Listening Session

## Recommendations:

- Education and training
- Best practices
- Stakeholder collaboration



# Youth Listening Session

## Areas of Concern:

- Inclusion in case-related decision-making
- Court process
- DCS accountability
- Focus on timelines v. allowing family the necessary time for successful reunification



# Youth Listening Session

## Recommendations:

- Inclusion in the process
- Clear communication
- Balance need for timely permanency with needs of the youth and family

# Key Takeaways



**Clear communication**



**Collaboration between stakeholders**



**Continue the conversations**

# Questions?

Jamie Devine

[jamie.devine@courts.in.gov](mailto:jamie.devine@courts.in.gov)

(317) 234-4164

CIP Child Welfare Court Performance Measures

<https://www.in.gov/courts/iocs/cip/welfare/>

# Agenda

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## 5. Chronic Absenteeism and Engaging People with Disabilities

a. Payton Bowling, CISC Fellow



# Engaging People with Disabilities: Chronic Absenteeism

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PAYTON BOWLING, CISC INTERN

# The Importance of Attendance

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Chronic absence means kids are less likely to:

Read by 3<sup>rd</sup> grade

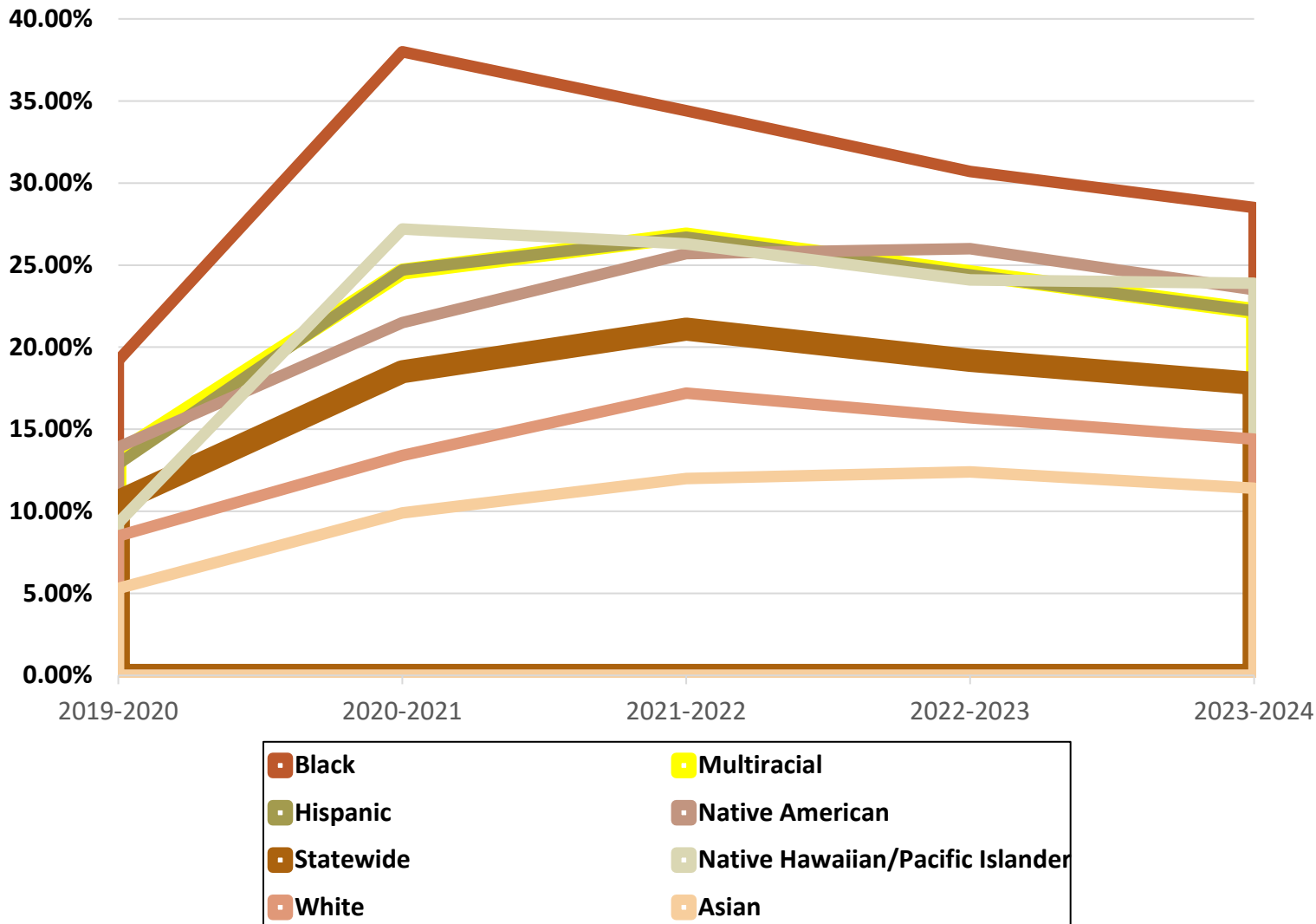
Be college-ready

Meet key benchmarks  
for reading and math



*In one study, Chicago high schoolers' chances of graduating dropped 20% with every week of missed school.*

Indiana Absenteeism by race, 2019-2024



Where we  
are right  
now

# Who is missing school?

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# What are the Barriers?

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## Housing Insecurity

- Housing habitability

## Food insecurity

## Lack of clean clothes

## Transportation

- Rural areas
- Violence or traffic on walk to school

## Caretaking of siblings/parents

## Lack of Engagement

- Lack of cultural and vocational relevance in curriculum
- Lack of student voice

## Bullying

- School refusal

## Physical Health

- Poor ventilation in schools
- Mold
- Asthma
- Fatigue or pain
- Weak immune system

## Mental Health

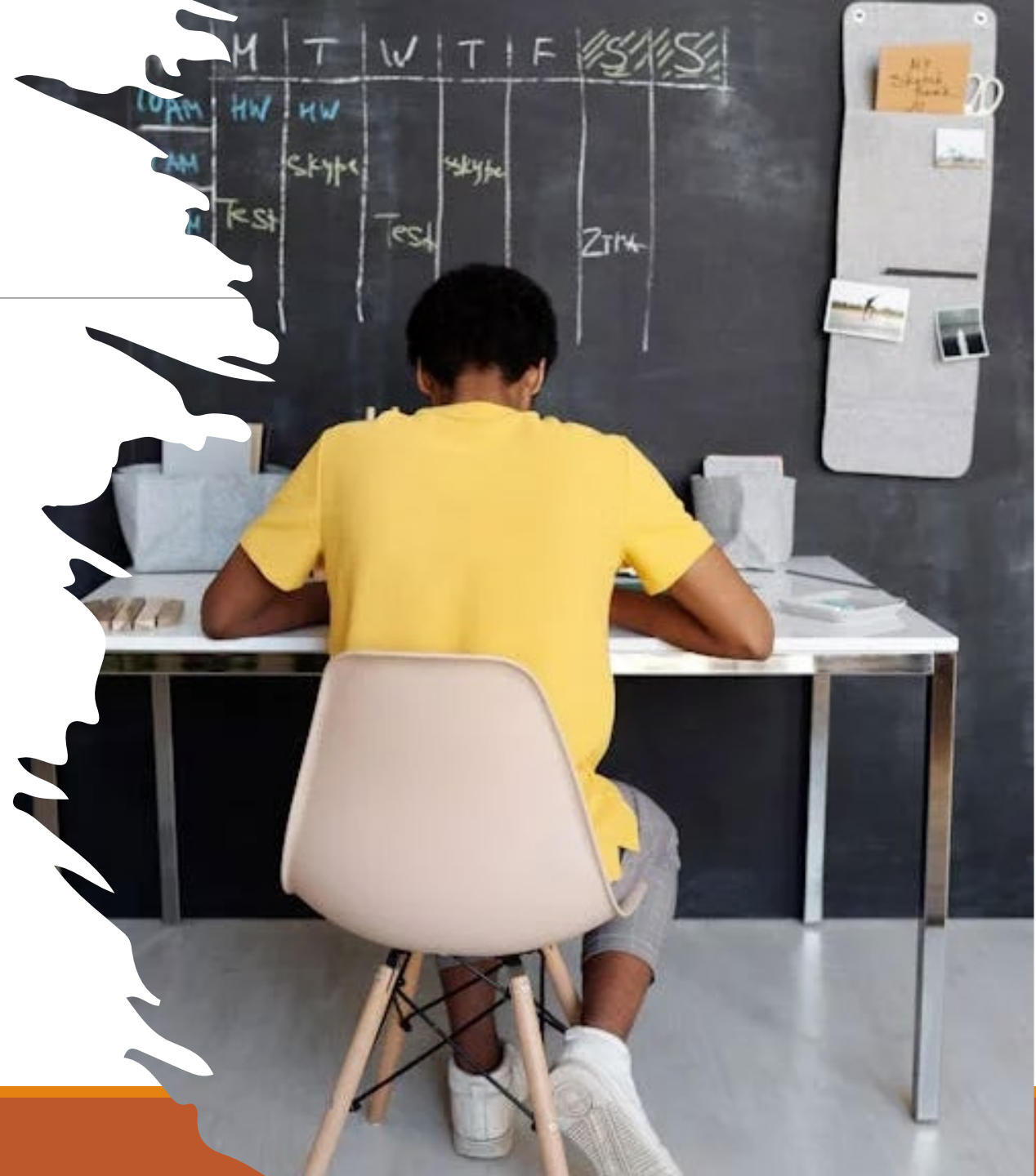
- School refusal again

## Immigration Enforcement

## Punitive discipline practices

- Out of school suspensions

# Disabilities



# Why Spotlight Students with Disabilities?

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**7.5 million** U.S. students (**15%**) have disabilities (2022-23)

U.S. high school students with disabilities **1.4x as likely** to be chronically absent (2013-14)

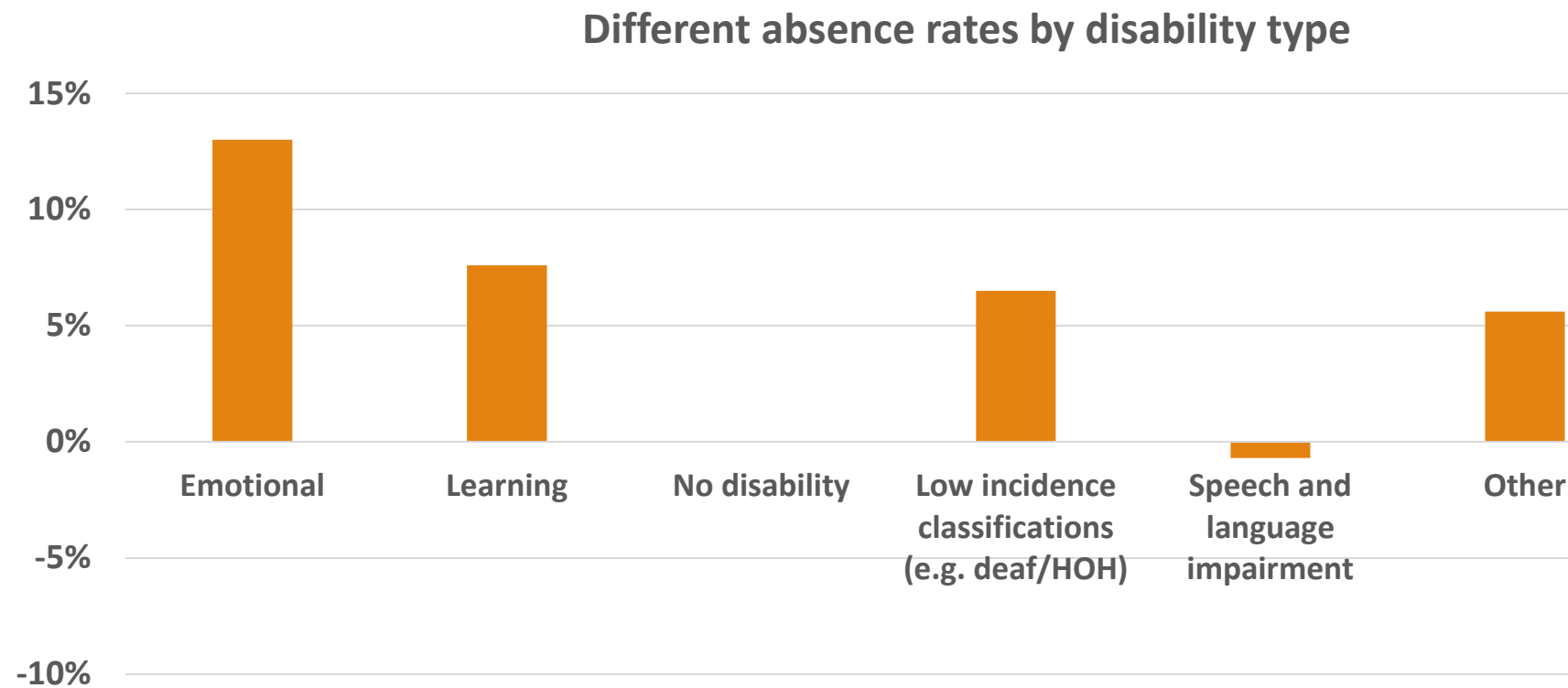
- Students with emotional disabilities had highest chronic absence

In 2013-14, only Native American and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander students had higher chronic absence than students with disabilities

Lack of data means the population would benefit from more attention

- Could not find clear number of kids with disabilities in K-12
- Could not find disparity statistics more recent than 2013-14
- Had difficulty finding Indiana-specific statistics
- Disability statistics are lacking for *many* different issues- not just this one

# Absence by Disability Type





# Barriers for students with disabilities



Bullying



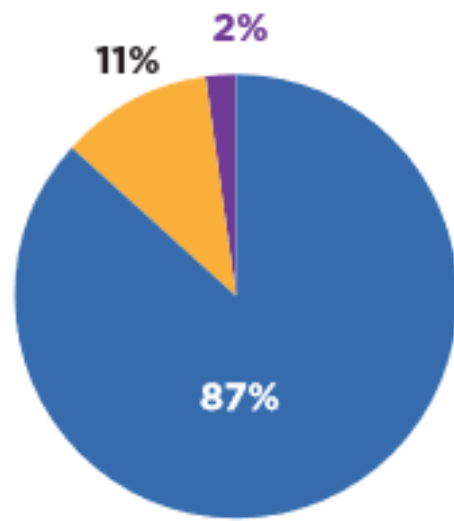
Higher discipline/Out of School Suspension



Medical challenges



Lack of staff

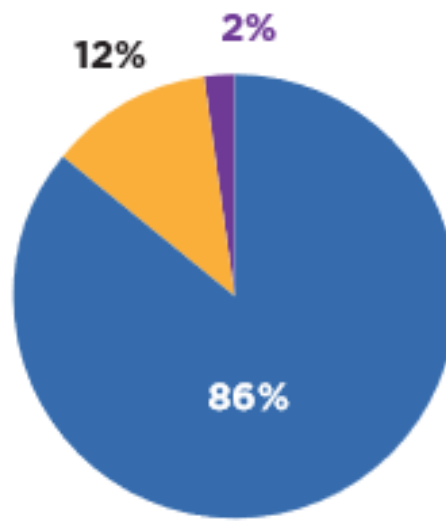


**14,900**

Number of Students Reported  
as Harassed or Bullied

**On the Basis of Sex**

■ Students without  
Disabilities

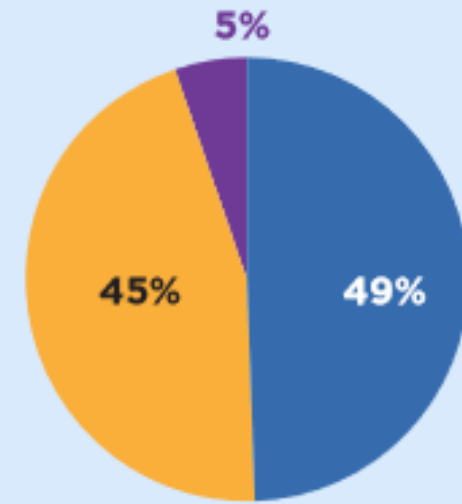


**10,700**

Number of Students Reported  
as Harassed or Bullied

**On the Basis of Race**

■ Students served  
under IDEA



**3,400**

Number of Students Reported  
as Harassed or Bullied

**On the Basis of Disability**

■ Students served under  
Section 504 only

# Bullying

Source: 2020-21 Civil Rights Data Collection

# Discipline and Out of School Suspensions

Out of school suspensions count as an absence for chronic absenteeism.

	2013-2014	2020-2021
Total IN Students with at least one out of school suspension	73,542	28,128
Percentage of these students who have a disability	28%	31%

**15% of U.S. students have a disability**

School to prison pipeline:

- Children with disabilities are 400% more likely to be arrested in elementary school
- 25% of incarcerated adults have a cognitive disability

# Medical Challenges: Short and Medium-term

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What happens when Mono (Epstein-Barr virus) takes a student out for a few weeks?

- Certificate of Child's Incapacity- more long-term doctor's note- no limit on absences
- Working things out individually with professors

Are the pathways for medium-term attendance challenges well-known, used, and functional?

- Not all schools mention Certificate of Child's Incapacity on their attendance policy webpage- IPS
- Homebound education

Details for illness-related excused absences are left up to each school corporation

- How many can be called in by parents?
- How many require a doctor's note?
- What happens when a student has a weak immune system, and gets sick often?

# Medical Challenges- Long-term

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What do we do for kids who are intelligent, but easily fatigued?

Not everyone has resources for homeschooling

Do schools have written policies for absence due to longterm health conditions?

Data:

- What helps students?
- Common accommodations used
- IDEA/504 access statistics for those with chronic medical conditions- do these students even typically get access to formal accommodations?

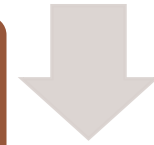
Some IEPs have flexible attendance built into them



Doctors' appointments, procedures, and therapies: Is a child missing school because of attendance barriers, or because they're getting the care that they need? (Excused/Unexcused)



Rather than just assuming kids are going to be able to attend more, ask what isn't happening when this kid doesn't attend? What are they missing, that maybe they need?



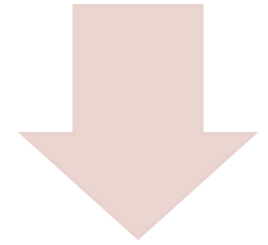
If a student is going to be more absent anyway no matter what, how are we as a state and how are individual schools ensuring that they are able to get caught up?

# Reframing attendance questions

# The Case Against Flexible Attendance

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School is a place of social support; kids develop social and emotional learning skills



Could unintentionally deprive students with disabilities of their right to a free and appropriate public education

# School budgets, low pay, shortages, and turnover: Teachers and Special Ed staff

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## TEACHERS

Positive relationships with teachers increase school engagement, student achievement, and attendance

Staff turnover can affect this, leading to lower attendance

Fast food and retail sometimes pay higher vs teachers and support staff- the most challenging and crucial support jobs are paying the least (Briody, 2023)

## SPECIAL ED STAFF

Special ed staff shortages impact whole classroom learning as teachers don't have proper support for higher-need kids

Support staff shortages can and do result in IEP violations

- Kids with certain medical needs can be left unable to go to school if the school district cannot employ a nurse to work 1-on-1 with them



# Special Ed Teacher Turnover

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## Teacher pipeline funding

- I-SEAL program lets special ed teachers get licensed for free
- Funded through covid emergency relief; Part B of Indiana's Individuals with Disabilities Act funding
- With covid funds expiring, IDOE plans to advocate for teacher pipeline funding programs this legislative session.

## Will new teachers want to stay teachers if they can't make a living wage?

- Look for ways to ensure schools can afford to pay teachers fairly

Ensure public schools are still adequately funded with growth of private/~~charter~~ vouchers



# Recommendations and possible solutions

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# What boosts attendance?

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Engagement

Positive relationships

Feeling of safety

Having basic needs met

# Interim Study Committee on Education's recommendations

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1. The Department of Education should **study the categorization rationale used by schools to differentiate between excused absences and unexcused absences.**
2. The Department of Education should **study the basis for student suspensions or expulsions categorized as “other”** by school districts, and should consider expanding the available suspension or expulsion categorization options.
3. The Indiana General Assembly, the State Board of Education, and the Department of Education should **consider prohibiting the use of suspensions and expulsions for chronically absent students** and habitual truants.
4. The Indiana General Assembly, the State Board of Education, and the Department of Education should **consider increasing the timeline for an attendance conference under IC 20-33-2.5-4 from five days to ten days.**
5. **Increased use of the Department of Education's early warning dashboard, when available, by all schools** to ensure appropriate intervention measures will be taken for students with attendance issues.

# Recommendations for Students with Disabilities

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State leaders should work to ensure that attendance policies don't harm students with disabilities unintentionally

- especially that health- and disability-related absences aren't penalizing to students or schools
- Fits with Interim Study Committee's recommendations

Include disability discussions in attendance conferences, and attendance discussions in IEP/504 meetings (also recommended by NCEO)

Ensure that extracurricular activities are accessible (increases engagement)

# Child Find Obligations

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IDEA Child Find obligation: School districts have a responsibility to evaluate all kids in jurisdiction that have or are suspected of having a disability and need special ed or accommodations.

- There have been legal cases on schools having evidence of disability needs along with chronic absence, and failing to fulfill the child find obligation or 504.

When investigating excessive absences, consider if there is need for IEP/504

- Recommends that states consider including this in their absence policies
- Would fit well within IN's legislation on attendance conferences
- Would help school districts avoid legal trouble
- Careful not to pathologize kids, or funnel disadvantaged kids into special ed programs

# Possible Adjustments to SB 282 Based on Best Practices

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SB 282's current incarnation of Attendance Conferences:

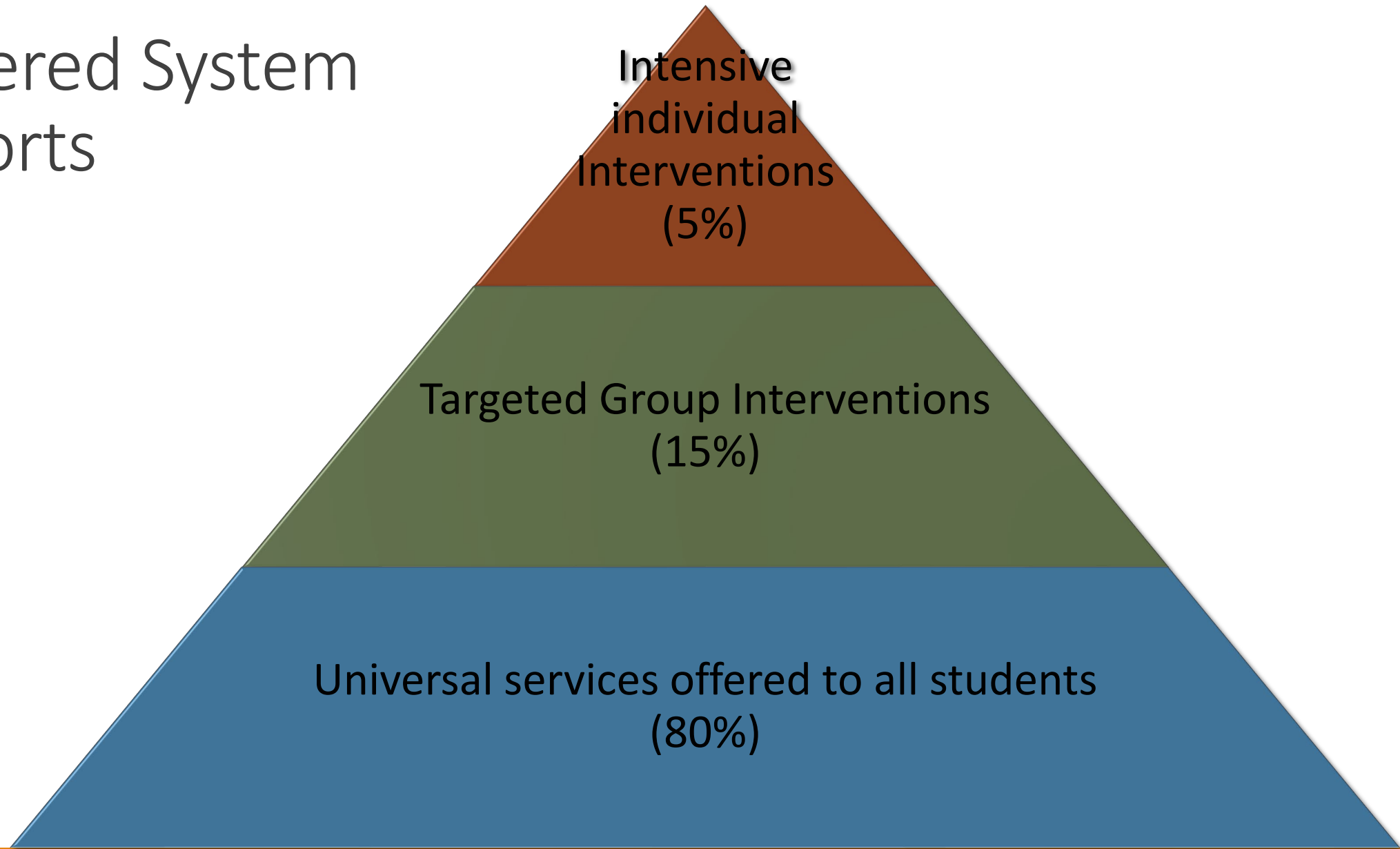
- Tier 3 without Tier 1; reactive response to individual issues.
- Does not encourage schools to implement any infrastructure that would allow for learning from individual situations, or systems improvement.

Attendance Conferences are a part of recommended best-practice strategies...

- More support people involved
- Attendance team reviews data periodically to identify more proactive approaches, possible Tier 1 & 2 responses to implement
- Expanding attendance conference/MTSS from K-6 to all grades- high school and kindergarten show highest levels of absenteeism
- Consider possible need for accommodations during conferences

Consider pursuing other avenues than legislation

# Multi-Tiered System of Supports





# Using Our Existing Data Resources

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## Early Warning Dashboard

- Helps identify students at risk of not graduating early on
  - Attendance is one of the markers
- Could be used to help identify patterns, for Tier 1 and 2 interventions
- Pilot began this September

## Attendance Insights Dashboard

- Policymakers can easily see which districts and schools are most in need, and see statewide trends
- Needs disability data- Only demographic from ESSA accountability system that is missing

# Pending Legislation on attendance

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## SB 482 and HB 1201

- DOE must establish a categorization for excused and unexcused absences; schools must follow it
- Attendance Conference- 10 missed days instead of 5; K-12 instead of K-6
- Public schools can't suspend K-8 students solely for absence or truancy

Some minor differences between the two; Commission is supporting SB 482

## SB 409: Employee absence for certain meetings

- Employers can't take adverse actions against employees for attending a child's attendance conference.
- If this passes with language that indicates general school meetings rather than just attendance conferences, it could apply to IEP meetings as well

# How would this legislation affect students with disabilities?

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## Categorization of excused/unexcused:

- Possible less uncertainty for parents whose children who have frequent absence for medical needs
- DOE will need to take medical needs into consideration when deciding attendance categories; if not, SWD could be unintentionally hurt

## Absences not being a reason for suspension:

- Can prevent students from being suspended due to health-related absences

Attendance conferences for all age groups will provide needed support for students

## Further consideration:

- When a student is frequently absent, how can schools and DOE support them if they are not able to be in the classroom?

# Complementary Legislation

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## HB 1098: Youth, Family, and Caregiver engagement initiative

- Include the voices of children with disabilities and caregivers in decision-making processes
- Instrumental in gathering information for this presentation
- Nothing About Us Without Us

## HB 1285: Education matters

- Schools cannot prevent parents from recording IEP meetings
- Each school building must have at least one employee present who is trained in nonviolent crisis intervention
- DOE is required to review and recommend nonviolent training programs
- Multiple parents testified on this bill hoping it could address bullying
  - Bullying can increase absences (Attendance Works, 2023)

# Considerations for the Commission on integrating youth and family voices

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## Commission engagement of people with disabilities

- Youth representatives
- Task force members
- More diffuse, less formalized ways to engage
  - Seeking recommendations as opposed to Commission membership

## Nothing About Us Without Us

## Utilize language in 2025 Strategic Plan

Consider needs of all populations when working on issues that affect Hoosiers.

Having a disability can take up a lot of energy and time.

- Burden of reaching out should be on the Commission

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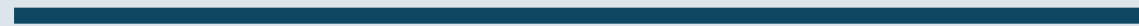
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# Agenda

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- 6. Lived Experience Integration Updates
  - a. Alyssa Newsom, CISC Fellow





# Fellowship Key Milestones and Achievements

**Alyssa Newsom**

April 9, 2025

04/09/2025



# About Me

I am a Master's level student studying Social Work at IU Indianapolis.

I received my Bachelor's in Social Work in 2023 from Ball State University.



## My Focus

# Youth, Family, and Caregiver Engagement

- Part of our ongoing goal to increase youth representation in state systems
- Youth representatives
- Summer internship project – develop a model for our youth engagement efforts
  - Literature review
  - Community assessment
  - Recommendations
- Advisory Group List
- Fall Virtual Summit
- Day of the Child
- Strategic Sharing Academy
- Website Page
- Youth Engagement Learning Action Network

04/09/2025



# Interagency Collaboration

- Meaningful Collaboration
- Key issues
  - Sharing of data
  - Lack of youth perspective
  - Duplicated efforts and operating in silos
- The Goal
  - Expand networks
  - Share resources
  - Collaborate over shared initiatives
- Learning Action Network
  - Bringing together stakeholders to improve engagement efforts through collaboration and shared knowledge

04/09/2025



# Event Planning & Tabling



04/09/2025

Stories of Our Lives: Strategic Sharing Summit



IYI Kids Count Conference



# Event Planning & Tabling



Day of the Child 2025



Strategic Sharing Academy

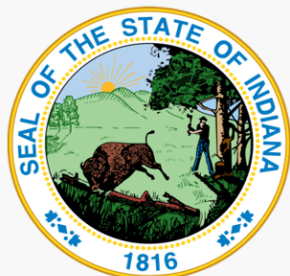
# HB 1098

- Expanding youth and family voices in a sustainable way
- Dedicated staff to youth engagement
- Ensuring youth voices are meaningfully integrated into decision-making at every level

## House Bill 1098

Youth, family, and caregiver engagement initiative.





# Commission on Improving the Status of Children in Indiana

## Task Forces

*Address the goals and objectives outlined in the strategic plan*

### Child Health and Safety Task Force

*Improve the health and safety of vulnerable children and youth.*

### Mental Health and Substance Use Task Force

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

### Educational Outcomes Task Force

*Improve educational outcomes of vulnerable youth.*

### Juvenile Justice and Cross-System Task Force

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

### Data Sharing and Mapping Committee

*Improve data sharing across agencies at the state and local levels for the benefit of vulnerable youth and families.*

### Bullying & Suicide Prevention, and Online Safety Task Force

*Develop and improve experience-informed statewide intervention/prevention strategies for youth and families.*

## Task Force Operations

Bipartisan and cross-agency collaboration

Recommend laws, policies, and procedures

Promote appropriate data and information sharing across agencies

Identify gaps and researching solutions

Consult with youth, families, and direct service providers

Promote evidence-based practices for use by both public and private agencies

Examine disaggregated data



# Program Evaluation



- How are other children's cabinets around the nation collecting data and evaluating?
- What makes us different?

04/09/2025

*SYSTEMS AND STRUCTURES:  
HOW INDIANA CONTINUES TO MEET THE NEEDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE*

(Forum for Youth Investment, 2020)



# Commission on Improving the Status of Children in Indiana

## Overarching Principles

*Inform the Commission's Activities*

### Trauma-Informed Practice

*The use of trauma informed practice increases the effectiveness of all work with children and families.*

### Youth and Family Voice

*Solutions are more effective if those who are expected to benefit from them participate in the process of developing them.*

### Do No Harm

*Government intervention should never cause harm.*

### Equity

*Policies and programs must be responsive to the particular needs and strengths of each community and group of children in Indiana.*

### Two Generations

*Efforts to support children and youth are more effective when they include parents and extended family members.*

## Commission Members

*Collaborate systemically from and among all three branches and state agencies*

### Community Members with Lived Experience

#### Legislative Branch

Republican State Senator

Democrat State Senator

Democrat House Representative

Republican House Representative

#### Executive Branch

Indiana Department of Child Services

Office of the Governor

Indiana State Department of Health

Indiana Department of Correction, Division of Youth Services

Indiana Family and Social Services Administration

Indiana FSSA, Division of Mental Health and Addiction

Office of the Indiana Attorney General

Indiana State Budget Agency

Indiana Department of Education

#### Judicial Branch

Indiana Supreme Court

Indiana Prosecuting Attorneys Council

Indiana Public Defenders Council



## Commission on Improving the Status of Children in Indiana



### ABOUT THE COMMISSION

The three-branch statewide Commission is aimed at improving the status of children in Indiana. In cooperation with other entities, members of the Commission on Improving the Status of Children in Indiana will study issues concerning vulnerable youth, review and make recommendations concerning legislation, and promote information sharing and best practices.

### TASKFORCES & COMMITTEES

- Child Health & Safety Taskforce
- Data Sharing & Mapping Committee
- Educational Outcomes Taskforce
- Juvenile Justice & Cross-System Youth Taskforce
- Mental Health & Substance Use Taskforce
- Suicide Prevention, Bullying, & Online Safety Taskforce



#### 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.



#### PURPOSE

- Study and evaluate issues concerning vulnerable youth.
- Promote information sharing and best practices.
- Develop recommendations concerning legislation, policy, and practice.

### Information Sharing Guide

A mobile-friendly guide that summarizes how specific types of information about children and families can be shared between professionals.



### FAMILY, YOUTH, AND CAREGIVER ENGAGEMENT

The Children's Commission is committed to developing a statewide plan to support, encourage, and expand the engagement of youth, families, and caregivers in state policymaking. Throughout the past few years, the Commission has made considerable strides toward the vision for a collaborative engagement space where the individuals most impacted by state system policies are directly involved in their development.

### COMMISSION MEMBERS AND PARTNERS

Legislatively created in 2013, the Commission includes 20 members, 2 youth representatives, more than 100 volunteers serving on Task Forces and Committees, and multiple State agencies.

- Indiana Department of Education
- Indiana General Assembly
- Indiana Department of Children Services
- Indiana Supreme Court
- Indiana Prosecuting Attorney's Council
- Indiana Public Defender Council
- Indiana Family and Social Services Administration
- Indiana State Department of Health
- Indiana Department of Correction, Division of Youth Services
- Indiana State Budget Agency
- Indiana Family and Social Services Administration, Division of Mental Health and Addiction
- Office of the Indiana Attorney General
- Office of the Governor

### CONTACT US

#### Commission Executive Director

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#### Commission Coordinator

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# What's Next?

04/09/2025

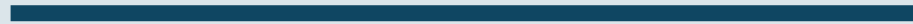


# Final Thoughts

04/09/2025



*Thank you*



# Agenda

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## 7. Executive Director Report & Legislative Affairs Update

- a) House Bill 1098: Youth, Family and Caregiver Engagement Initiative
- b) House Bill 1403: Juvenile Justice Matters
- c) Commission discussion on bills selected for monitoring and potential action
  - Senate Bil 482: Absenteeism
  - House Bill 1107: Funding for Family Recovery Courts
  - House Bill 1485: Court Appointed Counsel for Certain Minors
  - House Bill 1605: Juvenile Law Matters
  - Other bills of interest to Commission members

# Agenda

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8. Commission Member Announcements and Adjournment



# 2025 Meeting Dates

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- June 18
- August 20
- October 15
- December 10 with reception