



Commission on
Improving the
Status of Children

Commission on Improving the Status of Children

FEBRUARY 4, 2025

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Agenda

1. Welcome and Introductions

Agenda

2. Consent Agenda

Action: Approve Minutes from the December 2025 Meeting

Agenda

3. Fatherhood Engagement Initiative Concept
 - a. Eden Bezy, IDOH



Indiana
Department
of
Health

FATHERHOOD INITIATIVES

EDEN BEZY, MPH

COMMISSION ON IMPROVING THE
STATUS OF CHILDREN

02/04/2026

OUR MISSION:

To promote, protect, and improve the health and safety of all Hoosiers.

OUR VISION:

Every Hoosier reaches optimal health regardless of where they live, learn, work, or play.



Background

- Father involvement is linked to cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and developmental outcomes
- Benefits appear across early childhood, middle childhood, and adolescence
- Father involvement is associated with improved academic outcomes, which correlate with long-term economic mobility
- Shared caregiving reduces maternal stress and improves maternal well-being
- Father involvement is associated with better co-parenting quality and relationship stability

Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative

- Statewide collaborative effort led by the Connecticut Department of Social Services
- Aims to strengthen systems that support fathers' positive involvement in their children's lives
- Established through legislation in 1999; first in the nation
- Coordination among state and local partners to improve policies and practices
- Special focus on fathers who live apart from their children
 - Engaged in the justice system
 - Child protective services

Guiding principles and impact

- Children are the central focus; supporting fathers strengthens the outcomes for the whole family
- Efforts enhance, not replace, supports for mothers; not an either/or approach
- Recognizes father involvement as supporting goals and strategies across state and local agencies and priorities—it takes all of us
- Builds on existing work that aims to support families

CISC and fatherhood; what it would like if...

- CISC explores what a statewide, cross-system fatherhood initiative modeled on Connecticut's collaborative approach (or something entirely our own!)
 - Embedded in the proposed creation and revision of the statewide youth, family, and caregiver engagement plan
 - Strategic Goal 4: Improve the safety and outcomes of children and youth who encounter multiple systems
 - 4. Promoting family and caregiver engagement at all stages of system involvement.
- Leverage CISC's existing structure & mandate for interagency coordination and cooperation
- Focus on systems change, embedding father engagement in existing or new work, not creating new 'programs'

Questions?

Eden Bezy, MPH

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Agenda

- 4. Legislative Engagement Updates
 - a. Mark Fairchild

2026 IGA LEGISLATIVE ENGAGEMENT UPDATES

- [SB 15: Foster Youth Bill of Rights](#) (**ACTIVE**)
- [SB 111: Family access for youth in detention](#) (**INACTIVE**)
- [HB 1046: Family recovery court fund](#) (**INACTIVE**)
- [HB 1003: Boards and commissions](#) (Kids First Trust Fund portion) (**ACTIVE**)
- [HB 1363: Various public safety matters](#) (DOC/DCS ward portion) (**INACTIVE**)
- Commission Discussion, Q&A and next steps

SB 15: FOSTER YOUTH BILL OF RIGHTS

The Department of Child Services shall collaborate with:

- At least one individual who is at least eighteen years of age and who has lived experience as a child within the child welfare system;
- At least one child placing agency;
- And any other person with expertise in older foster youth services;

to develop and update periodically a statement that describes the rights and responsibilities of a foster youth. The statement be distributed annually to all foster youth and distributed to current or prospective foster parents, as well as be published on the department's website.

SB 111: FAMILY ACCESS FOR YOUTH IN DETENTION

- A juvenile detention facilities shall offer a resident in-person contact visitation and telephone calls with the resident's parent, guardian, custodian or another person who has a supportive relationship with the resident that has been approved for visitation with the resident by a court (includes the resident's own child).
- In-person contact visits are least two times per week for at least one hour per visit. Calls are at least two each week and for at least 10 minutes per call.
- If in-person contact visits are unable to be conducted safely, the reasons must be documented, and reasonable efforts must be made to arrange alternative audiovisual visitation.

HB 1046: FAMILY RECOVERY COURT FUND

- Establishes the family recovery court fund and provides that the fund does not revert and consists of funds appropriated by the general assembly, opioid settlement funds, donations, gifts, and funds from other sources.
- Provides that money in the fund is continuously appropriated for the purpose of funding family recovery courts and safe baby courts.
- Provides that family recovery courts: (1) target cases of abuse or neglect wherein a parent or primary caregiver suffers from a substance use disorder or co-occurring disorders; and (2) are certified as problem solving courts by the office of judicial administration.

Note: While the bill did not move, an alternative non-reverting fund was found that meets many of the needs this bill sought to address.

HB 1003: BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

- **IC 31-26-4-5.5** - After December 31, 2026, any reference in a statute or rule referring to the Indiana children's trust fund board is considered reference to the Commission on Improving the Status of Children. On January 1, 2027, the commission becomes the owner of all the personal property and assets and assumes the obligations and liabilities of the Indiana children's trust fund board.
- The commission shall approve projects and recommend to the department that the projects receive funds under this chapter.
- The commission shall annually prepare a budget for expenditures from the fund for the following state fiscal year. The budget must contain priorities for expenditures from the fund to accomplish the projects that have been approved under this chapter.

HB 1363: VARIOUS PUBLIC SAFETY MATTERS

Provides that if the Department of Correction releases a child who is a ward of the Department of Correction from custody and the child is less than eighteen years of age the department of correction's wardship of the child ends.

If the Department of Correction releases a child as described above and no parent or guardian of the child allows the child to live with them after the child's release the department of correction must immediately inform the court that awarded wardship of the child to the Department of Correction that the child needs to be made a ward of the Department of Child Services.

Note: The Multi-System Youth Task Force of the CISC has previously discussed this issue and is interested in assisting future legislative efforts.

Agenda

- 5. Bullying and Online Safety Legislation
 - a. Sierra Suozzi

2026 Legislation Relevant to the SPBOS Task Force

[SB 78: Wireless communication device policy.](#) (ACTIVE)

[SB 140: Doxing.](#) (ACTIVE)

[HB 1034: Student cellular telephone use.](#) (INACTIVE)

[SB 129: Age verification for access to social media.](#) (INACTIVE)

[HB 1178: Minor access to social media.](#) (INACTIVE)

[HB 1093: Student bullying and abusive behavior.](#) (INACTIVE)

[HB 1107: Bullying oversight committees and ombudsman.](#) (INACTIVE)

SB 78: Wireless communication device policy.

Amends the definition of "wireless communication device". Requires each school corporation and charter school to adopt and implement a wireless communication device policy that:

- (1) prohibits a student from using a wireless communication device during the school day;
- (2) requires teacher directed use of a wireless communication device for educational purposes during the school day to occur only on school supplied wireless communication devices; and
- (3) mandates the use of a no device policy or a secure storage policy. Creates certain exceptions to a wireless communication device policy.

HB 1034: Student cellular telephone use.

Amends the definition of "wireless communication device." Requires each school corporation and charter school to adopt and implement a wireless communication device policy that:

- (1) prohibits a student from using or possessing a wireless communication device during the school day;
- (2) requires teacher directed use of a wireless communication device for educational purposes during the school day to occur only on school supplied wireless communication devices; and
- (3) mandates the use of a no device policy or a secure storage policy. Creates certain exceptions to a wireless communication device policy. Requires the department of education to publish model policy language and guidance.

SB 129: Age verification for access to social media.

Requires a social media operator to restrict a minor user's viewing of social media without first obtaining verifiable parental consent for the minor user. Defines a "minor user" as an individual who is less than 16 years of age. Allows the attorney general to:

- (1) bring an action against a social media operator that fails to implement a verifiable parental consent method; and
- (2) issue a civil investigative demand if the attorney general has reasonable cause to believe that any person is engaged in a violation.

HB 1178: Minor access to social media.

Provides that a social media provider that meets specified conditions may not create an account for an individual who is less than 14 years of unless the provider receives verifiable parental consent to creation of the account from a parent of the minor.

Requires a provider that creates an account for a minor to provide the minor's parent with the option of receiving a separate password that allows the parent to set limits on the minor's use of the account and configure the account in a specified manner, including by disabling access by the account holder to specified features and functionality of the social media platform.

Requires a provider to provide a minor account holder and the minor's parent with a clearly explained, simple to use, and easily accessible means of terminating the minor's account and terminate the minor's account within a specified time after receiving a request for the account's termination.

SB 140: Doxxing.

Provides that a person who knowingly or intentionally posts personal information of a targeted person, or of a person closely connected to the targeted person, to communicate a threat to the targeted person in retaliation for a prior lawful act commits doxxing. Provides that doxxing is a:

(1) Class A misdemeanor;

(2) Level 6 felony if the posting of the personal information results in the targeted person, or a person closely connected to the targeted person, suffering a serious bodily injury; or

(3) Level 5 felony if the posting of the personal information results in the targeted person, or a person closely connected to the targeted person, suffering a catastrophic injury or death.

HB 1093: Student bullying and abusive behavior.

Revises the definition of "bullying". Requires each public school, including a charter school, to track, monitor, and analyze specified aspects of bullying, and provides that a parent of a student or a student, if the student is an emancipated minor, may submit a grievance to the school for a violation of this requirement. Requires each school corporation and charter school to:

- (1) document and track all acts of bullying and abusive behaviors for analysis;
- (2) prepare and implement interventions to deter and prevent bullying and abusive behaviors; and
- (3) compile, prepare, and submit an annual report beginning July 1, 2027, to the department of education, the state board of education, and the legislative council summarizing the information collected.

HB 1107: Bullying oversight committees and ombudsman.

Establishes a state bullying ombudsman (ombudsman) position within the department of education (department). Establishes the duties of the ombudsman. Requires each school corporation to provide the ombudsman's contact information in certain rules, policies, and notices. Requires each school corporation to establish a bullying oversight committee.

Provides that a parent of a targeted student may submit a complaint to the committee if the parent believes that the school administration failed to investigate a bullying or physical assault incident involving the targeted student; or the resolution of an incident was insufficient or ineffective. Provides that a parent may request a hearing before the governing body of the school corporation regarding a complaint that a parent of a targeted student or parent of an alleged perpetrator may view any video evidence.

Agenda

6. Executive Director Report

2026 Meeting Dates

- April 22, 2026
- June 17, 2026
- August 19, 2026
- October 21, 2026
- December 9, 2026

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7. Commission member announcements and adjournment