



Commission on Improving the Status of Children in Indiana

Meeting Minutes

Commission on Improving the Status of Children in Indiana
Wednesday, February 4, 2026
Indiana Government Center South

- Audrey Arbogast, Chief of Staff, Indiana Secretary of Health & Family Services
- Emma Blackwell, Youth Representative
- Bernice Corley, Executive Director, Public Defender Council
- Jada Cuttriss, Youth Representative
- Terrie Decker, Executive Director, Division of Youth Services, Indiana Department of Correction
- Representative Dale DeVon
- Senator Stacey Donato
- Aaron Hood, Chief Administrative Officer, Indiana Office of Judicial Administration
- Dr. Katie Jenner, Secretary, Indiana Department of Education
- Hon. Dana Kenworthy, Court of Appeals of Indiana
- Adam Krupp, Director, Indiana Department of Child Services
- Chris Naylor, Executive Director, Indiana Prosecuting Attorneys Council
- Eric Miller (non-voting member for Mitch Roob, Secretary, Indiana Family and Social Services Administration)
- Chad Ranney, Indiana State Budget Director
- Todd Rokita, Indiana Attorney General (non-voting member)
- Sarah Sailors, Director, Division of Mental Health and Addiction
- Representative Vanessa Summers
- Eden Bezy (non-voting member for Dr. Lindsay Weaver, State Health Commissioner, Indiana Department of Health)
- Senator Shelli Yoder

1. Welcome & Introductions

Representative DeVon called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. and invited members to introduce themselves. Representative DeVon thanked Judge Kenworthy for her leadership of the Commission as the previous Chairperson.

2. Consent Agenda

Action: To approve the minutes from the December 2025 meeting, took by consent and approved unanimously 10-0.

3. Father Engagement Updates

Eden Bezy, Indiana Department of Health

The presentation can be found on slides 5-11 of the [meeting slides](#). Eden Bezy introduced herself and her role. Eden reviewed the Department of Health's mission and vision. She shared background on the benefits of father involvement. Eden summarized Connecticut's Fatherhood Initiative, highlighting the aim to strengthen the

systems that support father's positive involvement in their children's lives. She described the guiding principles and intended impact of the initiative. Eden explained what the Fatherhood Initiative would look like if embedded into the Children's Commission, emphasizing the possible use of the Statewide Youth, Family, and Caregiver Engagement Plan. Eden opened the floor for questions.

Discussion:

Representative Summers shared that she thinks this is a great initiative but emphasized the issue of men accessing and understanding their health. Chris Naylor asked Eden to expand on the idea of "new system, new work" instead of creating a new program. Eden explained how the initiative wouldn't add additional time or effort into an existing program but would place emphasis on supporting dads. Representative DeVon asked if Eden has any statistics on the outcomes of Connecticut's initiative. Eden offered to look into those statistics and added that she thinks part of the process of the initiative would be to figure out how to measure success. Mark added that many fatherhood engagement programs and initiatives are focused more on the results of the programs and less on the quality of engagement and support to those fathers. Bernice mentioned that DCS and DOC have father support programs and asked what is being envisioned to link fathers into the support. Eden replied that the next step, in her mind, would be to investigate existing fatherhood initiatives throughout Indiana and find out what is working well, along with including the voice of dad at the table. Bernice added the importance of engaging men who may not be a biological dad but still have children in their lives who they support. Eric Miller and Sarah Sailors agreed that DCS can be a great partner to learn from.

Action: To assign the Fatherhood Engagement to the Youth, Family, and Caregiver Voices Committee for further study and development, was motioned by Judge Kenworthy, seconded by Sarah Sailors, and passed unanimously 10-0.

4. Legislative Engagement Update

Mark Fairchild, Executive Director

The presentation can be found on slides 13-18 of the [meeting slides](#). Mark first described SB 15: Foster Youth Bill of Rights (active), which describes the rights and responsibilities of foster youth. The next bill Mark introduced was SB 111: Family Access for Youth in Detention (inactive), which establishes a floor for visitation for youth in correctional facilities. He then reviewed HB 1046: Family Recovery Court Fund (inactive), which establishes a non-reverting fund for family recovery and safe baby courts. Mark explained HB 1003: Boards and Commissions, which establishes the Commission as the owner of the Indiana Children's Trust Fund Board. Mark talked about HB 1363: Various Public Safety Matters, which included language about youth who are transitioning out of DoC who do not have parents to pick them up, would become a ward of DCS. Mark opened the floor to members for further discussion of bills of interest.

Discussion: Representative DeVon asked if the Commission would replace the Kid's First Trust Fund board or if the Commission would provide oversight for the board. Mark emphasized the vague language, leaving room for interpretation. Sarah Sailors asked about HB 1363 regarding if kinship care would be considered or if the child go straight into foster care. Mark responded that he is glad the Commission can do some tuning of the language in the interim. Judge Kenworthy added that the YJOC has the Transitional Services workgroup and are looking to combine the effort with the Multi-System Youth workgroup and that there was some confusion regarding the pay source paths for the youth coming out of DOC. Representative DeVon mentioned SB 88, mentioning it is a bill that came out of a focus group he was a part of during the summer.

Action: To approve the Legislative Engagement Agenda, motioned by Representative Summers, seconded by Representative DeVon, and passed unanimously 10-0. Rep. DeVon followed up by asking how much money is in the trust fund currently. Mark shared there is about \$3 million in the fund currently, but that it is important to look at new dollars flowing into the fund and the interest to ensure the fund isn't wiped clean.

5. Summary of Bullying & Online Safety Legislation

Sierra Suozzi, CISC

The presentation can be found on slides 19-27 of the [meeting slides](#). Sierra introduced herself and role. She first introduced SB 78: Wireless communication device policy and HB 1034: Student cellular telephone use, which both implement cellphone bans across all Indiana schools and specified teachers can only use wireless communication devices on school supplies devices and for educational purposes only. The next bill Sierra explained was SB 129: Age verification for access to social media, which requires social media platforms to restrict access for youth ages 16 and young unless they acquire verifiable parental consent. Sierra explained that HB 1178: Minor access to social media is very similar to SB 129 but goes on to make specifications of how parents can monitor accounts and creates the policy for those aged 14 and younger. She mentioned SB 140: Doxxing, which defines doxxing and makes it a class A misdemeanor and makes it a felony if someone were to act on the doxxing causing serious bodily injury or death to the target. Sierra noted a limitation of SB 140 due to a lack of distinction between youthful and adult offenders. She cited statistics about the prevalence of doxxing online among youth. Sierra reviewed HB 1093: Student bullying and abusive behavior, which requires schools to track instances of bullying, create interventions for bullying, and submit an annual report. The last bill she presented was HB 1107: Bullying oversight committees and ombudsman, which creates a state bullying ombudsman housed in the DoE and requires each school corporation to establish a bullying oversight committee.

Discussion: Representative DeVon added that some of the language in HB 1093 may be amended into other bills as the session progresses.

6. Executive Director Report

Mark Fairchild, Executive Director

The presentation can be found on slides 28 and 29 of the [meeting slides](#). Mark commented on the bullying legislation discussion and explained how next session there needs to be bullying legislation that gets filed and moves forward. He noted that Blane Cook passed the message that the Strategic Plan implementation is going well, and all Task Forces have co-chairs. Mark shouted out the annual Day of the Child on February 16th and invited members to come to the Statehouse to engage with the youth in attendance.

7. Commission Member Announcements & Adjournment

Sarah Sailors announced that all 92 counties now have mobile crisis units. Representative DeVon asked members to keep Director Krupp in their thoughts.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:10 a.m.