



Commission on
Improving the
Status of Children

Commission on Improving the Status of Children

APRIL 22, 2026

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Agenda

1. Welcome and Introductions

Agenda

2. Consent Agenda

Action: Approve Minutes from the February 2026 Meeting

Agenda

3. Child Abuse Prevention Initiatives

- a. Shannon Schumaker and Nicholle Probst, PCAIN



**Prevent
Child
Abuse
Indiana[®]**

A Division of The Villages



OUR MISSION

Prevent Child Abuse Indiana (PCAIN) is dedicated to being the leading voice for preventing child abuse in all its forms across Indiana.

OUR VISION

The vision of PCAIN is to make Indiana a state in which children flourish free from abuse and neglect.

OUR VALUES

Valuing children: We believe every child deserves to be safe, nurtured, and valued.

Strengthening families: We believe families and caregivers have strengths and the desire to succeed.

Engaging communities: We believe strong, informed, and connected communities are essential to preventing child abuse and neglect



**Prevent
Child
Abuse
America®**

CHILD ABUSE & NEGLECT IN INDIANA

THE NUMBERS

The data shown comes from risk factors such as, Substance Use, Domestic violence, Poverty and unemployment, Housing Instability, Food Insecurity, Limited Access to Services, Lack of Social Support.

276

Child fatalities investigated in 2024

59

Fatalities from child abuse and neglect in 2024

71%

Of the children who died were 3 years or younger

127

Children drowned from 2018-2023

30k

CyberTips reported to ICAC in 2025



16,000+

Children with DCS Cases in Indiana (2025)



200,000

Reports of child abuse and neglect (2025)

PREVENTION FRAMEWORK

ADVOCACY

AWARENESS

EDUCATION

PARTNERSHIP

LOCAL SUPPORT

TARGETED FOCUS



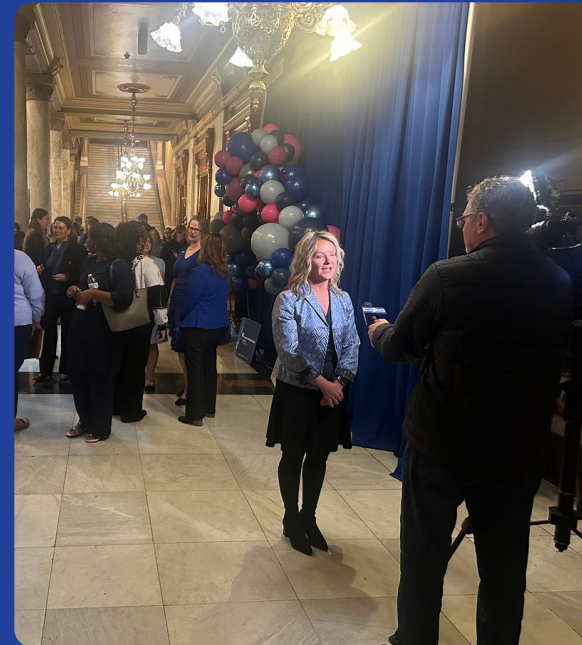


ADVOCACY

Access to childcare is one of our highest priorities. Vouchers for low-income families is crucial for prevention.

We work to elevate prevention as a shared community responsibility through strategic media engagement and public messaging.

RAISING AWARENESS



35

Media opportunities in 2026, so far. 12 radio, 20 television, and 3 print.

EDUCATION

Child Abuse 101

Details the four types of child maltreatment, prevention strategies, and reporting responsibilities.

Child Abuse 102

Defines consequences of violence on children, and how to integrate prevention activities.

Child Exploitation 101

Centers on building awareness, dispelling myths, and strengthening communities.

NetSmartz Internet Safety

Community Focused or Middle/High School focused - Provides tools for informed conversations, and who to trust online.

Nurturing Fathers

Fathers discuss relationships, and the type of father they'd like to be.

Question Persuade Refer (QPR)

Suicide prevention training that details warning signs of suicide and how to respond.

Safe Tots

An interactive training for professionals and caregivers who work with infants and young children.

Stewards of Children

Teaches adults actions they can take to reduce child sexual abuse in their communities.

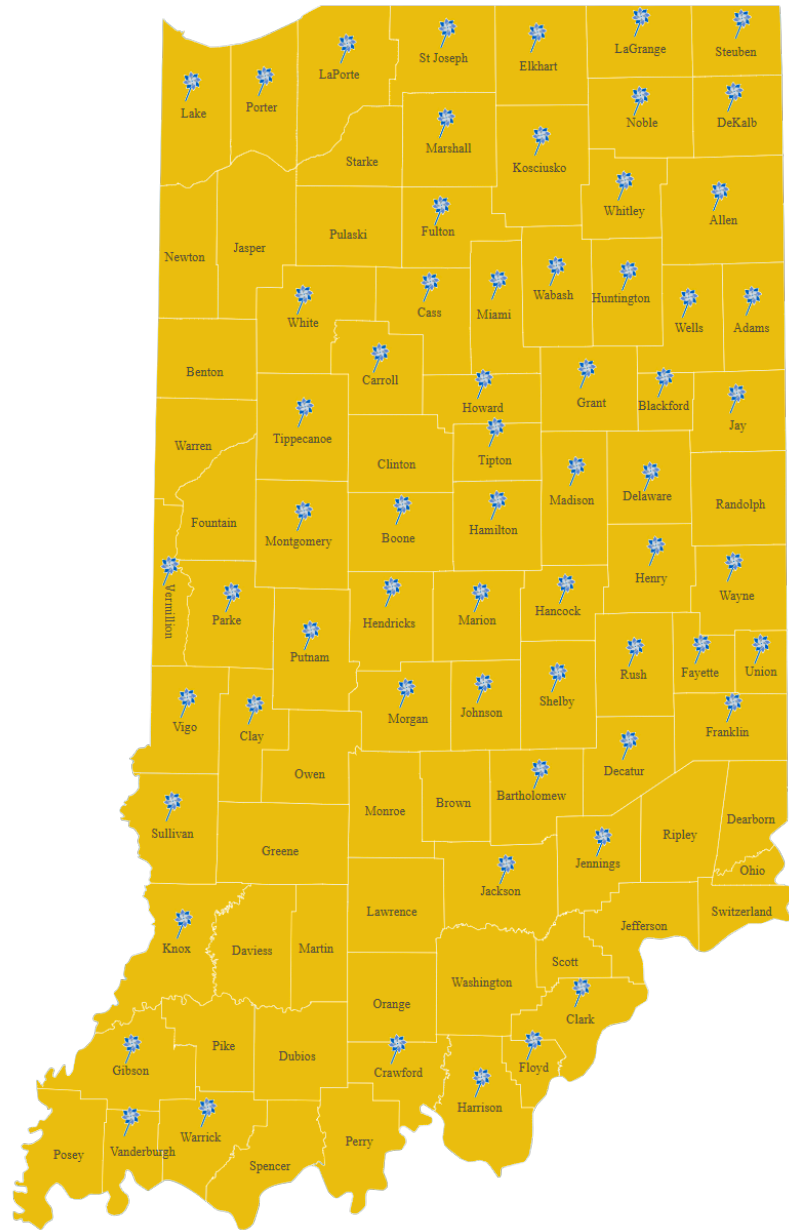
Water Safety

Centers on real-world water related risks and provides strategies to help prevent drownings.



PARTNERSHIPS





LOCAL SUPPORT



OUR COUNCILS

The vision of PCAIN is to make Indiana a state in which children flourish free from abuse and neglect.



TARGETED FOCUS



WATER WATCHER

- ✓ **WEAR THE BADGE**
Always wear the badge when you're on water watch duty.
- ✓ **PASS THE BADGE**
If your shift is up, or you need a break, always pass the badge to another adult first.
- ✓ **KNOW THE KIDS**
Be sure you know how many children you are watching.
- ✓ **NO DRUGS OR ALCOHOL**
Sobriety is extremely important for being on alert.

Prevent Child Abuse Indiana
www.pcaain.org

THE FUTURE OF PCAIN



We want to see fewer children entering DCS, increased awareness and therefore access to prevention services, stronger, connected local systems, and a measurable reduction in key risk factors.

THE FUTURE FOR INDIANA'S CHILDREN





THANK YOU

Together,
prevention is
possible.

Learn More Today

www.pcain.org

Agenda

4. Handle with Care Update
 - a. Chelsie Irwin, Indiana Department of Health



Indiana
Department
of
Health

HANDLE WITH CARE

CHELSIE IRWIN, MPH

YOUTH AND FAMILY PROGRAMS
DIRECTOR

April 22, 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.



Handle with Care

The Handle with Care program provides a platform for first responders to send a confidential notification to a child's school when they have been at the scene of a potentially traumatic event, providing a "heads-up" to the school to provide trauma-sensitive support, as needed.



Handle with Care Process

- **First Responders encounter a child at a scene and notify the school.**
- Schools observe behavior and prepare trauma-sensitive support for any child involved.
- Mental Health partners with schools for onsite support services.

Handle with Care Process

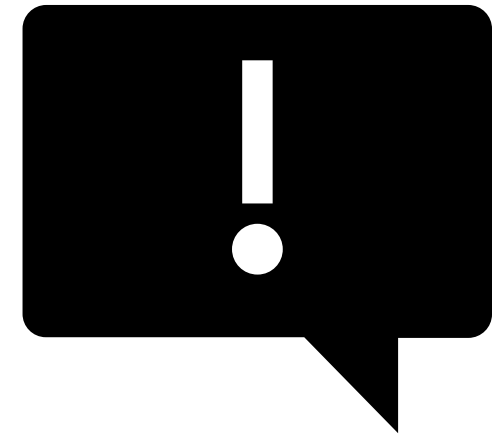
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Handle with Care Process

- First Responders encounter a child at a scene and notify the school.
- Schools observe behavior and prepare trauma-sensitive support for any child involved.
- **Mental Health partners with schools for onsite support services.**

The Notification

- Sent for children exposed to crime, violence, or abuse
- Serves as a warm handoff
- Program partners identify method
- Confidential, "Handle with Care"
- Never determine what is traumatic
- If unsure, send a notification
- Confidential, "Handle with Care"



The Notification Process

First responder identifies child(ren) at the scene



Notification sent with the **child's name, age, and school**



School receives the notification and notifies appropriate staff



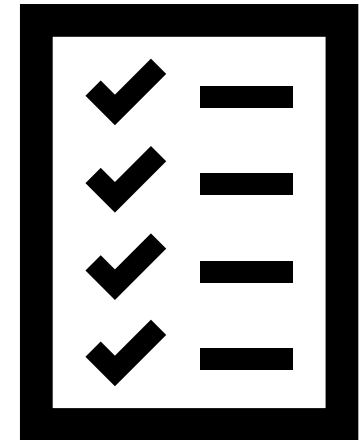
Staff notified **observe behavior** and provide support

Management of Notifications

- Notifications arrive before the start of the next school day
- Administrators create an internal process for triaging notifications
- “Need-to-know” staff alerted of notifications
- Staff observe the student(s) and provide appropriate support, if needed
- **A notification does not indicate a need to engage the child about the experience that led to the notification.**

Handle with Care: Do's and Don'ts

- **DO** provide empathy and sensitivity to what the student may be experiencing
- **DO** practice patience and compassion
- **DO** show care instead of consequences
- **DO** give grace
- **DON'T** ask questions
- **DON'T** play the role of investigator
- **DON'T** discuss HWC notifications with the student
- **DON'T** share notifications with others



Supporting Resilience and Safety

- Takes a whole-school approach
- Building safe, stable, nurturing environments through protective factors
- Built environment supports a child's ability to thrive academically
- Benefits all children, even those whose trauma will never be clearly identified
- Looks at the child's behavior from a different perspective

We aren't predicting behaviors, we are reducing the risk of future behaviors from progressing

Program Outcomes

Short-Term Outcomes

- Increased school knowledge of common symptoms of trauma and use of trauma-sensitive strategies
- Increased referrals for support and external mental health services
- Increased use of HWC data to inform

Mid-Term Outcomes

- Improved student attendance
- Reduced number of behavioral incidents
- Increased number of students receiving services to address symptoms of trauma

Long-Term Outcomes

- Sustained school staff use of programming and using data to inform decisions
- Improved student behavioral, attendance, and educational outcomes

What's Next for HWC?



Program Priorities

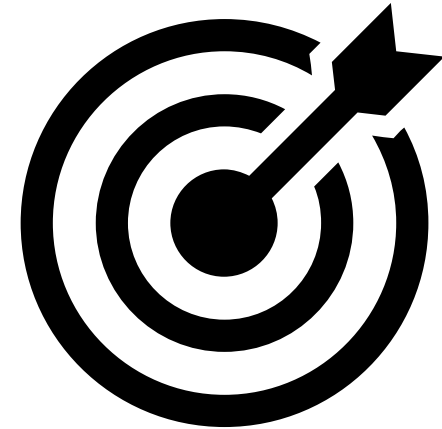
Handle with Care evaluation

- Phase I: Measuring partner engagement, fidelity, training (May-September)
- Phase II: Measuring outcomes (September and beyond)

Local technical assistance

- Improve data tracking
- Sustainability and process improvement

Statewide expansion



Questions?

Chelsie Irwin, MPH

Youth and Family Programs

Director

cirwin@health.in.gov



Agenda

5. School Attendance Update

a. Stephen Balko, Indiana Department of Education

Attendance Update

April 22, 2026



TODAY'S AGENDA

Why Attendance Matters

Attendance Insights

Attendance Resource Guide

Additional Resources

WHY ATTENDANCE MATTERS - ONE EXAMPLE

Percent of Students Passing IREAD (testing in 2023)

- Chronically Absent: 66%
- Not Chronically Absent: 84.4%

Percent of Students Passing IREAD (testing in 2024)

- Chronically Absent: 67.2%
- Not Chronically Absent: 84.2%

Percent of Students Passing IREAD (testing in 2025)

- Chronically Absent: 74%
- Not Chronically Absent: 89%

Results

As shown by the results here, students who are not chronically absent outperform those who are.

CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM RESOURCES

Attendance Insights Dashboard

- Attendance dashboard created by IDOE
- Provides current and historical attendance data
- Helps with early identification of trends
- [Attendance Insights Website](#)

Complete / Available



CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM RESOURCES

Attendance Resource Guide

- Designed for all stakeholders
- Provides guidance, definitions, how attendance data and reporting is used, and more
- Provides for common language

Nearly Complete



ATTENDANCE RESOURCE GUIDE

Schools

- Laws, definitions, requirements
- Reporting and accountability

Families

- Requirements for students and families
- Provides a common language

Juvenile Courts

- Strategies for engagement with schools
- How attendance data is used in schools

Stakeholders

- Common language and definitions

CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM RESOURCES - NEW

Early Warning Identification System

- Free system developed by AEI
- Machine learning, utilizes historical and current data
- Helps with early identification of students who may be at risk for chronic absenteeism

In Progress



GUIDANCE REVISION AND REVIEW

All guidance and memos are being reviewed

- Updated annually for legal updates, etc.
- Ensuring the guidance provided still fits the need
- Designed to assist schools on a wide range of absenteeism topics

In-Progress



Questions?

CONTACT INFORMATION

Stephen Balko

State Attendance Officer

sbalko@doe.in.gov

317-232-4914



Thank you!

Agenda

- 6. Legislative Session Updates
 - a. Mark Fairchild, CISC

2026 CHILD WELFARE LEGISLATION UPDATES

- [SB 15: Foster Youth Bill of Rights](#)
- [SB 171: Family and Children Matters](#)
- [SB 246: Redaction of Court Records](#)
- [HB 1003: Boards and Commissions](#)
- [HB 1036: Children in Need of Services](#)
- [HB 1257: Child Services Matters](#)
- [HB 1303: Sex Crimes and Child Safety](#)

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 171: Family and Children Matters

- Requires the local office of the department of child services (DCS) to provide notice of an adoption petition to the court in which a child in need of services proceeding is open or pending within 7 business days of receipt.
- Provides that the consent to adoption may be executed or acknowledged at any time after the birth of a child in the presence of an attorney, in person, or by video conferencing.
- Provides that a court may grant postadoption contact privileges if the child is at least 12 months old. (Current law requires the child to be at least 2 years old)
- Provides certain exceptions to confidentiality requirements including allowing notice of an adoption petition to be provided to the CHINS court.

SB 171: Family and Children Matters

- Provides that a placement with whom a child has resided with for at least 12 months, consecutively or nonconsecutively, is presumed to be an individual who has a significant relationship with the child.
- Requires a court to write a formal order with findings and conclusions, including any specific factors used to determine the child's best interest, when issuing a dispositional decree.
- Prohibits the court from considering certain information including the existence of an adoption petition or any pending matters or hearings in the adoption case when deciding whether the objectives of the dispositional decree are met.
- Requires any party seeking a change in placement to file a motion with the court, provide notice to all persons affected, and those persons of the right to file a written objection within 15 days. (Current law only allows DCS to file)

SB 171: Family and Children Matters

- Allows a court to rule on a party's motion for the change in placement without delay if exigent circumstances are alleged in the party's motion.
- Provides that, with exceptions, if a child is the subject of an adoption petition and the petitioner is the current placement and has been for at least 12 months, the court shall not change placement before ruling on the petition.
- Provides that if the party seeking a change of placement is a parent, guardian ad litem, or a CASA the party must provide notice to DCS, and DCS shall then notify the child's out-of-home placement.
- Requires a court to write a formal order on a petition to terminate the parent-child relationship with the court's findings and conclusions, including any specific factors used to determine the child's best interest.

SB 171: Family and Children Matters

When evaluating an out-of-home placement for a child in a CHINS case, requires DCS to consider whether the placement is in the child's best interest based on:

- The caregiver is interested in providing permanence for the child if reunification efforts ultimately fail.
- The expressed wishes of the child's birth parent and the child, if applicable, unless the wishes are contrary to law, child safety or stability.
- The relationship of the caregiver with the child and the child's family.
- The proximity of the placement home to the birth parents' home and the child's current school or school district.
- The strengths and parenting style of the caregiver in relation to the child's behavior and needs.

SB 246: Redaction of Court Records

- Requires the names and specified other information of child victims, child witnesses, and certain other persons to be redacted in criminal actions.
- Requires the use of an anonymous designator such as "Child Witness No. 1" when redacting a name and prohibits redaction that uses the person's initials or that describes the person in terms of a family relationship.

HB 1003: Boards and Commissions

- After June 30, 2027, 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 July 1, 2027, the commission becomes the owner of all the personal property and assets and assumes the obligations and liabilities of the 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.

HB 1036: Children in Need of Services

Requires the department of child services, subject to certain procedural safeguards, to have in-person contact with an alleged victim of child abuse or neglect no more than 30 prior to:

- Concluding an assessment; and
- Dismissing or terminating a pending child in need of services case with the juvenile court.

HB 1257: Child Services Matters

- Adds four members to the statewide child fatality review committee and adds information that must be included in the annual DCS child fatality report concerning child fatalities or near fatalities in Indiana that are the result of child abuse or neglect.
- Requires the department to promptly disclose to the public certain information regarding child fatalities or near fatalities.
- Allows DCS, upon request, to provide additional information regarding cases of child fatalities or near fatalities subject to certain requirements.
- Provides that DCS shall disclose information regarding reported child abuse or neglect to a member of the United States Congress representing Indiana or a member of the Indiana general assembly upon request.

HB 1257: Child Services Matters

- Provides that the DCS may release information to the news media to confirm, clarify, correct, or supplement information concerning reported child abuse or neglect that has been made public by a source other than the DCS.
- Provides that DCS may provide unredacted reports or material to a service provider that requires access to the unredacted reports or material to assess whether the provider's services are suitable for the child and the attorney general or a prosecutor for purposes of a criminal investigation.
- Provides that the statutory limit on DCS's provision of services to a parent, guardian, or custodian of a child who is the subject of a CHINS petition applies regardless of whether the child has been removed from the home of the parent, guardian, or custodian and beginning on the date on which the petition is filed.

HB 1303: Sex Crimes and Child Safety

- Specifies the sex offender reporting requirements for persons who are sex offenders or required to register in other jurisdictions.
- Adds "high risk missing person" to the definition of "missing child" and specifies that the silver alert program applies to missing children.
- Removes provisions concerning possession of child sex abuse material (CSAM) from the statute containing the offense of child exploitation and makes a new section for CSAM offenses.
- Creates a new crime for distribution of CSAM and generally conforms the sentencing enhancements for possession of CSAM, distribution of CSAM, and child exploitation.

Agenda

- 7. Status of 2026 Bullying and Online Safety Legislation
 - a. Sierra Suozzi, CISC

Agenda

- 6. Legislative Session Updates
 - a. Mark Fairchild, CISC

Age Verification for Social Media Use

- **HEA 1408: Education Matters**

- A social media provider that receives a request from an Indiana resident for creation of an account with the social media provider shall comply with the following:

(1) The social media provider shall use commercially reasonable means, such as a neutral age screen mechanism, to determine the age and state of residence of the individual requesting creation of the account.

(2) If the social media provider determines under subdivision (1) that the individual requesting creation of the account is an adolescent, the social media provider may create the account only if the social media provider receives verifiable parental consent to creation of the account from a parent or legal guardian of the adolescent.

Student Phone Usage in Schools

- **SEA 78: Wireless communication device policy**
 - Amends definitions, requirements, restrictions, and exceptions regarding wireless communication device policies adopted and implemented by school corporations and charter schools. Requires the department of education to publish model policy language and implementation guidance. Provides that, with exceptions, a school corporation, a school maintained by a school corporation, and a charter school, including school personnel, are immune from civil liability for any actions taken in good faith to comply with the school's wireless communication device policy.

Doxxing

- **SEA 140: Public safety**
 - → Amended into the intimidation statute
 - Removed language about getting a felony if someone acted upon the doxxing
 - Amends the definition of "threat" in the intimidation statute to include posting a person's personal information on a social media platform with the intent to cause: (1) bodily injury to the person; (2) damage to the person's property; or (3) the commission of a crime against the person. Increases the penalty for intimidation if committed against a legislator.

Bullying

- HB 1093: Student bullying and abusive behavior (inactive)
 - Revises the definition of "bullying". Requires each public school, including a charter school, to track, monitor, and analyze specified aspects of bullying. 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.
- HB 1107: Bullying oversight committees and ombudsman (inactive)
 - Establishes a state bullying ombudsman (ombudsman) position within the department of education (department). Requires, with an exception, each school corporation to establish a bullying oversight committee (committee). Provides that a parent of a targeted student may submit a complaint to the committee if the parent believes that: (1) the school administration failed to investigate a bullying or physical assault incident involving the targeted student; or (2) the resolution of an incident was insufficient or ineffective.

Next steps?

- What kinds of online safety prevention measures could the CISC support?
- What are potential ways to reframe the "punitive" aspects of bullying incident reporting to encourage accurate data collection from schools?

Agenda

- 8. Executive Director Updates
 - a. Mark Fairchild, CISC

2026 Meeting Dates

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

Agenda

9. Commission member announcements and adjournment