



Commission on Improving the Status of Children in Indiana

Meeting Minutes

Commission on Improving the Status of Children in Indiana
Wednesday, January 15, 2025
Indiana Government Center South

- Christine Blessinger, Deputy Commissioner of Re-entry and Youth Services, Indiana Department of Correction
- Bernice Corley, Executive Director, Public Defender Council
- Representative Dale DeVon
- Senator Stacey Donato
- Dr. Katie Jenner, Secretary, Indiana Department of Education
- Justin Forkner, Chief Administrative Officer, Indiana Office of Judicial Administration
- Kory George, Chief Probation Officer, Wayne County Probation Department
- Senator La Keisha Jackson
- Hon. Dana Kenworthy, Court of Appeals of Indiana
- Adam Krupp, Director, Indiana Department of Child Services
- Aly Leonard, Youth Commission Member
- Chris Naylor, Executive Director, Indiana Prosecuting Attorneys Council
- Todd Rokita, Indiana Attorney General (non-voting member)
- Dr. Dan Rusyniak, M.D., Secretary, Indiana Family and Social Services Administration
- Julia Stumler, Youth Commission Member
- Representative Vanessa Summers
- Dr. Lindsay Weaver, State Health Commissioner, Indiana Department of Health

1. Welcome & Introductions

Judge Kenworthy called the meeting to order at 10:30 a.m. and welcomed guests, asking members to introduce themselves and their role.

2. Consent Agenda

Action: To approve the [minutes from the October 2024](#) meeting, was motioned by Representative DeVon, seconded by Dr. Weaver, and approved unanimously 11-0.

3. CISC Initiatives and Legislative Affairs Update

Mark Fairchild, Executive Director

The presentation can be found on slides 3-14 of the [meeting slides](#). Mark outlined the Commission's involvement in the BEST Youth Initiative on chronic absenteeism. He shared the team members lead by the Forum for Youth Investment, meeting occurrences and topics, and the landscape analysis report that will come next meeting. On the expansion of youth, family, and caregiver engagement, Mark reminded members of youth representation timelines and terminology importance. He also shared progress on populating each task force and committee with community representation. He also covered the rapid expansion of Day of the Child events,

both in-person and virtual. Mark finished this topic by mentioning the many groups and state models that are in this space, offering support for them and aspirations to continue expanding these collaboratives. For suicide prevention, bullying, and online safety efforts, Mark mentioned the new task force chairs will go into details of their work so far today. Lastly, for the continued support of the Youth Justice Oversight Committee (YJOC), Mark recapped the group's charge, work, and grant implementation phases. Moving to legislative affairs, Mark outlined the two main pieces of legislation that the Commission worked on. House Bill 1098 and House Bill 1403, which help support the Commission's youth, family, and caregiver engagement efforts and the Youth Justice Oversight Committee's implementation phase. Mark opened the floor for discussion on any other topics for consideration.

Discussion: Representative DeVon asked if lived experience folks are mostly recruited from Foster Success. Mark shared that they are great partners along with VOICES corp., IARCA, and many more. Representative DeVon shared that House Bill 1098 will be heard next week and most likely go onto Ways and Means. Mark shared that even without the appropriation, he hopes to see the language passed so that CISC can continue advancing this work. Representative Summers brought up the topic of housing. Mark shared that the Child Health and Safety Task Force has a housing subcommittee working on the many contributors to homelessness. Bernice Corey added commentary about the Department of Education's transportation flexibility can help with housing instability, to which Mark replied that he will search for relevant representation from them on this issue. Julia Stumler asked Mark to add House Bill 1485 to the Commission's list to look into. Judge Kenworthy shared the YJOC's budget could be potentially cut, meaning that rural communities with service gaps may not be able to receive behavioral health and diversion funds. Next, Judge Kenworthy mentioned Family Recovery Courts (FRC's) and their problem-solving processes for high-risk families, offering support for the fund based on positive outcomes from where they currently exist. Bernice also offered concern on House Bill 1006 and its implications to the Public Defender's Council. Representative Summers asked what Bernice thinks the rationale is, to which Bernice shared that it is cost related. Senator Jackson asked Julia Stumler if she supports the list of bills that the Commission outlined today. Julia shared agreement, especially those that help foster youth in residential facilities. Aly shared similar commentary, highlighting that anything that helps share resources and collaboration is worth it. Representative Jackson shared thanks to Aly and Julia. Representative DeVon shared that he and Representative Summers are always open to hearing input on these topics in their committee. Mark shared some details on absenteeism legislation, specifically how to better track data in Senate Bill 482.

4. Day of the Child Updates

Blane Cook, CISC Coordinator

The presentation can be found on slides 15-21 of the [meeting slides](#). Blane thanked the Commission for the opportunity to recap recent events and share some upcoming programming. He thanked Casey Family Programs, the Commission's funding partner in activities regarding youth, family, and caregiver engagement, for their support in the fall virtual summit. Blane then thanked Aly and Julia for all their planning contributions, especially behind the scenes. Recapping the Strategic Sharing Summit, Blane shared details of the keynote speaker, trainers and their topics, and the young advocates panel. For upcoming events, Blane shared the schedule of the Day of the Child on February 17, which includes the State of the Child presentation from the Indiana Youth Institute (IYI) and a lunch program from the Marion County Commission on Youth (MCCOY). On February 18th, the Children's Commission will be continuing the topics and conversations from the fall virtual summit at an in-person event at the government center. Blane shared that programming will be for both adult professionals and young advocates, all themed around strategic sharing. Blane shared links to the fall series recording and registration for the February events.

Discussion: Representative DeVon asked about the crowd and its numbers. Blane shared that these were held on Zoom, so attendees could engage with the chat feature. He also shared registration totaled around 100 and recording views had reached 45 just in a few days since going online.

5. CISC Task Force and Committee Updates

The presentation can be found on slides 22-57 of the [meeting slides](#). On behalf of the Child Health and Safety Task Force, co-chair Sonya Rush (DCS) introduced herself and outlined the many members that contribute. She outlined the group's strategic goal and its corresponding objectives. Sonya shared highlights from 2024, which included healthy teen relationships education efforts, a housing initiative presentation, Youth Risk Behavior Survey Data, and the onboarding of the group's first youth representative. For next steps, Sonya shared that their group looks forward to recruiting new members, onboard a new co-chair, and create long-term impact. Next, David Reed (DCS) outlined the membership of the mental health and substance use task force. He shared that this group focused on prevention efforts, early childhood, and workforce. Tanya Merritt-Mulamba (DMHA) outlined the Multisystemic Therapy (MST) efforts that the task force has been working on expanding. Currently in 22 counties, MST is an intensive therapy treatment to keep 12-17 in their homes. She showed referral data trends from 2024 and their referral sources. Showing 87 youth, Tanya explained that 77% of youth were able to stay in their homes. David shared that 4 or 5 years ago, Indiana was not able to offer evidence-based practices like MST. Next, Nancy Wever (JDAI) thanked Judge Carmichael for her support as co-chair of the Juvenile Justice and Cross System Youth Task Force. Nancy shared membership representation and the group's strategic goal and their corresponding objectives. She outlined subcommittee efforts regarding commercial sexual exploitation, status offenses, programs for children with incarcerated parents, and incorporating child/adolescent brain development in justice treatment.

Discussion: Representative DeVon asked about prevention efforts and how Indiana is able to track that data. David shared that changing reimbursement structures, finding different funding sources, and more will help this expansion. Representative DeVon complimented their efforts to go about expanding to new communities. Representative DeVon played a joke about Indiana University versus Notre Dame football. Kory asked about how so many referrals come from the Juvenile Justice System. David said he will dig into the data to see if MST works better for juvenile justice involved youth rather than DCS involved and shared that funding is not necessarily the issue to more rapid expansion, but rather. Dr. Weaver asked David to explain the funding. David explained MST support can come through local, state, and federal dollars. Representative DeVon asked Nancy about juvenile jurisdiction in mental health cases because of lack of alternatives. Nancy shared that one of the group's subcommittees is looking into that topic directly. Judge Kenworthy added that judges are looking at this on all the YJOC's workgroups. Chris Naylor asked if the lack of detention center spaces is accurate. Nancy confirmed and added that it is not only physical space but also staffing shortages as well. Next, Brianna Morse (DWD) and Michelle Clarke (DOE) outlined the Educational Outcomes Task Force membership and objectives. Michelle shared that 2024 highlights included reviewing student mental health frameworks, DOC education updates, assisting with job expansion, and high school redesign. Brianna shared that the group is looking for a new co-chair, support for legislative priorities, the addition of youth representation, and continued engagement with the BEST Youth Initiative. Next, Sarah Allison (DOE) and Michelle Fox (DMHA) introduced themselves as co-chairs of the Suicide Prevention, Bullying, and Online Safety Task Force. Michelle outlined the timeline of the group's creation and early progress. In 2025, Sarah shared that the group plans to create its objectives and emphasize leadership from youth perspectives. Lastly, on behalf of the co-chairs of the Data Sharing and Mapping Committee, Blane Cook read a statement. It included membership, a recap of the 2024 progress on the dashboard to connect data across child-serving state agencies and supporting data requests from other task forces.

6. Commission Member Announcements & Adjournment

Mark invited members and guests to a reception. The meeting was adjourned at 12:13 p.m.

Next Meeting

Wednesday, February 12, 2024, 10:00 a.m. – 12 p.m. Indiana Government Center South, Conference Room C, 302 W. Washington St., Indianapolis, IN 46204.