



Commission on Improving the Status of Children in Indiana

Meeting Minutes

Commission on Improving the Status of Children in Indiana
Wednesday, February 12, 2025
Indiana Government Center South

- ☒ Bernice Corley, Executive Director, Public Defender Council
- ☒ Terrie Decker, Executive Director, Division of Youth Services, Indiana Department of Correction
- ☒ Representative Dale DeVon
- ☐ Senator Stacey Donato
- ☒ Kory George, Chief Probation Officer, Wayne County Probation Department
- ☐ Dr. Katie Jenner, Secretary, Indiana Department of Education
- ☒ Justin Forkner, Chief Administrative Officer, Indiana Office of Judicial Administration
- ☐ 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)
- ☐ Mitch Roob, 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 January 2025 meeting](#), was motioned by Representative DeVon, seconded by Justin Forkner, and approved unanimously 12-0.

3. BEST Youth Initiative

Dana Kunzman and Uma Ahluwalia, Forum for Youth Investment

The presentation can be found on slides 3-10 of the [meeting slides](#). Dana and Uma introduced themselves and their roles with the Forum for Youth Investment. Dana explained the Building Ecosystems Statewide for Thriving (BEST) Youth Initiative and its goals to address chronic absenteeism in Indiana. She shared that the first part of its plan, the discovery phase, is to partner with people with lived experience and system leaders to conduct a landscape analysis of the drivers of absenteeism in Indiana. Dana shared an overview of recent data, policies, and strategies that currently exist or are being implemented. Uma outlined the key insights found from their

discovery phase. These included some policy examples, the prioritization of the issue by the Indiana Department of Education, and promising models. From those with lived experience, Uma shared the main barrier theme involved resource variation by district. Uma emphasized the multi-system approach needed to address these barriers. Uma shared a list of potential future goals for CISC and the state to consider, including deciding on a unanimous goal, bolstering data sharing, joining national initiatives, and many more. Dana shared that the next phase of the initiative is to unpack the discovery report with the whole team and explore ideas for an action plan.

Discussion: Adam Krupp supported digging deeper into data surrounding this issue and advised that the group thoroughly considers how the data is being displayed and used. Judge Kenworthy asked if there is an expected report timeline. Dana shared that the report will be finalized and public within the month. Bernice Corley asked about the racial disparities and if there are unique circumstances facing this population. Uma shared that early warning indicators show poverty, hunger, transportation access, language access, juvenile justice involvement, and much more contribute to these disparities. Dana reiterated that this initiative is not looking for a single solution that will fit every community.

4. City Connects Program

Abe Manlove

The presentation can be found on slides 11-37 of the [meeting slides](#). Abe introduced himself and his role at Marian University and the City Connects Program. Abe shared research showing two thirds of student success is impacted by factors outside of school. These impacting factors include housing stability, food insecurity, health conditions, and more. He shared that City Connects tries to implement individualized support plans to address academics, social-emotional behavior, health, and families. With reviews with their teachers, City Connects works with anyone to identify goals and intervention steps. Abe shared that these reviews outline strengths and areas of risk and attempt to connect families to services in their communities. He shared through feedback and follow-up, City Connects has seen increases in test scores, attendance rates, post-secondary education entrance, grade retention, and much more. Abe stated that national data shows a 13 percent decrease in chronic absenteeism in City Connects participants. He outlined the main duties of City Connects coordinators and emphasized the importance of their role. Abe shared his contact information

Discussion: Representative Summers asked Abe to describe Marian University's role. Abe clarified that Marian was granted permission by the state to implement the national City Connects Program in Indiana. Kory George asked Abe if they had data on schools before and after implementation regarding truancy arrest rates. Abe said he would research this. Judge Kenworthy asked about the number of schools served, their age level, and their funding sources. Abe shared that City Connects is in 45-50 schools in Indiana at all age levels, though the model is suited for elementary. He shared that schools work their services into their own budgets, but they are largely funded by grant awards.

5. Executive Director Report and Legislative Affairs Update

The presentation can be found on slides 38-40 of the [meeting slides](#). Mark shared a preview on the Day of the Child activities that will occur on President's Day at the Statehouse. He described the contents of House Bills 1098 and 1408, which would create a plan to bolster youth, family, and caregiver engagement efforts by the state and solidify the next phase of the Youth Justice Oversight Committee (YJOC) and help distribute its grant funds to the communities in need. He also listed details on a group of bills addressing absenteeism, family recovery courts, court appointed counsel for certain minors, and other juvenile law matters. Judge Kenworthy shared some more details about HB1605.

Discussion: Judge Kenworthy mentioned that HB1107 has not received a hearing at Ways and Means. Justin Forkner mentioned that the Supreme Court's budget request included Family Recovery Courts in it. Aly shared that she benefited from having direct counsel and Julia agreed. Mark shared that while this may not move this legislative session, the Commission will continue to make it a priority. Representative DeVon shared that he

would want to hear more from judges for their thoughts on this issue. Judge Kenworthy shared that most judges would love to give youth counsel and anything else they need, but typically a lack of attorneys exists.

6. **Commission Member Announcements & Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 11:37 a.m.

Next Meeting

Wednesday, April 9, 2024, 10:00 a.m. – 12 p.m. Indiana Government Center South, Conference Room C, 302 W. Washington St., Indianapolis, IN 46204.

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