



Commission on Improving the Status of Children in Indiana

Meeting Minutes

Commission on Improving the Status of Children in Indiana
Wednesday, April 9, 2025
Indiana Government Center South

- ☒ Bernice Corley, Executive Director, Public Defender Council (via Zoom)
- ☒ Terrie Decker, Executive Director, Division of Youth Services, Indiana Department of Correction
- ☒ Representative Dale DeVon
- ☒ Senator Stacey Donato (via Zoom)
- ☒ 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 (via Zoom)
- ☒ 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)
- ☒ Eric Miller (non-voting for 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 10:00 a.m. and welcomed guests, asking members to introduce themselves and their role.

2. Acknowledging Child Abuse Prevention Month

Director Krupp greeted members and guests and explained his blue outfit as the theme color of Child Abuse Prevention Month. He praised the great turnout at its kickoff event at the Statehouse. Director Krupp shared that the Department of Child Services is excited about the events happening across the state and the many collaboratives, like the Children's Commission, to fight child abuse and strengthen families. Judge Kenworthy complimented the many staff and volunteers that work statewide in child welfare and thanked Director Krupp for his remarks.

3. Consent Agenda

Action: To approve the minutes from the [February 2025 meeting](#), was motioned by Representative DeVon, seconded by Justin Forkner, and approved unanimously 13-0.

4. Court Improvement Program Listening Sessions

Jamie Devine, Court Improvement Program Administrator

The presentation can be found on slides 5-15 of the [meeting slides](#). Jamie introduced herself and her role at the Office of Court Services in administering a federal grant funded program that works on child welfare system improvement. She shared the background of the three listening sessions as a directive from the Chief Justice and collaboration with the Children's Commission. She shared the judges selected for these sessions and the goals to address systemic issues through dialogue with foster parents, birth parents, and former foster youth. Jamie outlined the highlights from each session. From them, paralleling themes of concern included lack of communication and understanding, delayed permanency and child safety, and accountability. Jamie shared that the judges aimed to answer these questions and collaborate on producing recommendations with the participants. Themes of these recommendations included enhancing training on clear communication, promoting collaboration between stakeholders and all parties to a case, and continual improvement conversations.

Discussion:

Director Krupp asked if there was a written report available, to which Jamie shared she created one for the Chief Justice and can pull any data about specific requests if needed. Adam emphasized Jamie's points on communication, plain language, and supporting our birth/foster parents and case managers. Jamie reiterated that the recommendations from these listening sessions fall to the responsibility of all stakeholders involved. Representative DeVon asked Judge Kenworthy if, by the time the hearing happened, the judges had already decided. Judge Kenworthy shared that some counties do much better at including the voices of all parties than others, but the recommendations from these sessions will be shared widely with judicial officers to ensure better communication. Julia Stumler thanked Jamie and emphasized the point that lots of foster and birth parents want to collaborate with each other. She also shared that she felt heard by her judge and supported by her court appointed special advocate (CASA). Bernice thanked those involved in this project and shared that Indiana Public Defender Council (IPDC) has been advocating for representation at the initial hearing, knowing counties differ in resources and practices. She shared that she looks forward to

5. Chronic Absenteeism and Engaging People with Disabilities

Payton Bowling, CISC Fellow

The presentation can be found on slides 16-47 of the [meeting slides](#). Payton introduced herself as one of the Children's Commission's current interns and introduced her project. First, she shared absenteeism data in Indiana by year and race, listing the many contributing factors. She shared the importance of highlighting students with disabilities because they are 1.4 times more likely to be chronically absent. Payton showed data reports that indicated students with disabilities are bullied and suspended at higher rates. She mentioned that excused versus unexcused absence criteria can differ by school district, which complicates tracking and contains implications for those with medical needs. Payton listed the interim study committee on education recommendations and mentioned some of the existing obligations that school districts have to their student population. She mentioned research that shows how attendance conferences help address the needs of individual students. Payton listed existing data resources, pending legislation that will affect attendance, and considerations for the Children's Commission to better include the voices of those with disabilities.

Discussion: Judge Kenworthy thanked Payton and complimented her thorough research and presentation.

6. Lived Experience Integration Updates

Alyssa Newsom, CISC Fellow

The presentation can be found on slides 48-62 of the [meeting slides](#). Alyssa introduced herself and joked that she would try not to talk too much. She shared her educational background, her other job supporting those in recovery, and outlined her work as an intern. Alyssa complimented previous interns for their work in starting her project and described how she built a network of youth/family advocacy groups across the state. Alyssa also shared findings from her program evaluation where she compared CISC to similar structures across the country. Lastly, Alyssa shared some lessons learned and thanked the Commission for her time as a fellow.

7. Executive Director Report and Legislative Affairs Update

Mark Fairchild

Mark shared updates on bills related to youth/family/caregiver engagement, juvenile justice matters, absenteeism, family recovery courts, and court appointed counsel for minors. Representative Summers mentioned HB1241 to the Senate, and Mark shared that the Commission has staffed a trauma and resilience committee in the past. Representative DeVon asked about the status of the Suicide Prevention, Bullying, and Online Safety Task Force, to which Mark shared their activity and complimented the Department of Education (DOE) and the Division of Mental Health and Addiction (DMHA) on their leadership with that group.

8. Commission Member Announcements & Adjournment

Senator Jackson mentioned her job/resource fair and date and time if any members knew families who may be interested.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:52 a.m.

Next Meeting

Wednesday, June 18, 2024, 10:00 a.m. – 12 p.m. Indiana Government Center South, Conference Room A, 302 W. Washington St., Indianapolis, IN 46204.