



Commission on Improving the Status of Children in Indiana

Meeting Minutes

Commission on Improving the Status of Children in Indiana

Wednesday, August 20, 2025

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
- ☒ Aleanya Moore (non-voting member for Terrie Decker, Executive Director, Division of Youth Services, Indiana Department of Correction)
- ☒ Representative Dale DeVon
- ☒ Senator Stacey Donato
- ☐ Justin Forkner, Chief Administrative Officer, Indiana Office of Judicial Administration
- ☐ Senator La Keisha Jackson
- ☒ Brooke Huntington (non-voting member for 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 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 Beezy (non-voting member for 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 introduced new commission members including Youth Representatives, Emma Blackwell and Jada Cuttriss, in addition to Audrey Arbogast, Governor's Office Appointment, and Chad Ranney, State Budget Director. Judge Kenworthy invited all members to introduce themselves and their role and reviewed participation expectations.

2. Consent Agenda

Action: To approve the minutes from the [April 2025](#) and [June 2025](#) meetings, was motioned by Representative DeVon and seconded by Senator Donato, and approved unanimously 11-0.

3. Juvenile Justice & Cross System Youth Task Force Recommendation

Hon. Holly Harvey, Monroe Circuit Court, Joel Wieneke, Child Advocates, & JauNae Hanger, Waples & Hanger

The presentation can be found on slides 9-22 of the [meeting slides](#). Hon. Holly Harvey introduced herself and her role as the co-chair of the Juvenile Justice and Cross System Youth Task Force as well as a juvenile court judge in Monroe County. She shared background on members of the taskforce and reviewed the task force's goals and objectives. Judge Harvey requested the Commission's support in legislation ensuring family access to youth in secure detention. Joel Wieneke introduced himself as an attorney for Child Advocates working with older foster youth in DCS. Joel explained the difficulty in balancing the need for youth to behave in prosocial ways with the need to be compassionate and understanding of their adolescent development. Joel highlighted some of the progress that has been made around juvenile justice in the past 5 years. He outlined benefits of visitation while in custody of incarcerated people and juveniles specifically. He then reviewed existing Indiana juvenile law highlighting the importance of parent-child relationships, visitation space, and family contact. Joel mentioned that due to the absence of guidelines around visitation, juvenile detention centers have created vastly differing policies. Further explaining the need for a minimum floor for visitation opportunities. He connected the relationship between family access and behavior within facilities. Joel explained the variation in phone call, audio/visual, and in-person visitation policies among facilities. Joel briefly explained the components of the proposed legislation, emphasizing the standards within the legislation to provide a minimum visitation requirement for facilities. JauNae Hanger thanked members for their attention to children within detention centers and emphasized the vulnerability of children while in facilities.

Discussion:

Representative DeVon asked if guardians would be included in "parent rights", to which Joel referenced Senator Breaux's idea to allow the court to appoint another adult to be an approved "trusted connection" for a child in a detention center. Representative DeVon continued, inquiring about the role of supervision during visitation. Joel reported a role for supervision, but not close monitoring when communicating with family or a court-appointed adult. DeVon reported a detention center using a "level" system of behavior, asking if that was common for the facilities, to which Joel responded yes; it is common. Director Krupp shared that detention centers limiting phone calls to 5 minutes and charging 25 cents per minute is unfair. Audrey Arbogast asked about the resources or staffing needs in association with the different types of visitations, impacting the timeframes available for visitation. Joel responded that there will be a staffing need for in-person visits. Representative Summers stated she was concerned about the detention center staff being authoritative towards the children within the detention centers, causing a barrier to family visitation. Joel validated their concerns and commented on the vulnerability of children within facilities around the nation and is attempting to focus on taking a positive step forward. Mark Fairchild reinforced the proposed legislation is attempting to establish a baseline for visits and phone calls within juvenile detention centers but recognizes the need for standards within the system and could be a topic to come back to. Representative DeVon recommended that the Commission members visit a facility. Eric Miller asked about plans to do a full fiscal analysis on potential costs associated with the legislation. Joel responded with the need to hear from the detention facilities themselves to determine if there would be a fiscal impact. Audrey suggested the task force should look at other states who have made similar revisions in the law to see if they had any associated economic costs. Bernice was curious about why children who may have a parent who is incarcerated were not included in the language and what that would look like in this legislation. Joel replied having a parent who is incarcerated would be a barrier to in person visits but is encouraging the language of the bill to utilize audio/visual visits when barriers to in-person visits occur. Judge Kenworthy gave her appreciation that the legislation included upholding no-contact orders between parent and child and asked about including language of everyone, specifically children who are visiting, are ensured safety. Sarah Sailors expressed concern about the need for a formal court order to authorize an adult for visitation and the delay that might cause for visitation. Sarah suggested allowing probation officers to authorize adults, so the process is quicker and ensuring documentation of reasons as to why visits did not happen are available to the courts. Joel emphasized the trusting relationship between a judge and a probation officer and that if a probation officer recommended an adult, the judge would quickly approve it. Bernice suggested adding a determination of safety within the facility each time a family visits. Representative DeVon asked if the proposed legislation would pertain to state facilities in addition to county. Joel responded that the legislation is currently for juvenile detention facilities, controlled by the counties. Chris Naylor suggested looking into the scope of staffing issues within detention centers to understand the potential impact on the centers' ability to implement the legislation.

Action: To receive additional information from detention centers regarding staffing levels, motioned by Chris Naylor, seconded by Director Krupp, and passed unanimously 11-0.

4. BEST Youth Initiative Recommendation

Mark Fairchild, Executive Director

The presentation can be found on slides 23-28 of the [meeting slides](#). Mark reviewed the BEST Youth Initiative and recent work done in collaboration with the Forum for Youth Investment. He defined chronic absenteeism as missing 10% or more of the school year and outlined the complexity and causes of chronic absenteeism among students. Mark explained the negative impact of chronic absenteeism on reading levels and school engagement. Mark proposed a position statement of the commission on chronic absenteeism. He then presented 4 broad implementation goals to guide the BEST Youth Initiative's reduction in chronic absenteeism.

Discussion:

Bernice asked Mark to elaborate on the meaning of "accountability systems" used in an implementation goal and if there would be space to add "incentives" to 2 of the goals. Mark explained that "accountability systems" refers to the following code created under SB 482 and SB 282, outlining goals to match the data systems in place. Mark agreed with adding "incentives" to the language in 2 of the goals to include incentivization systems within schools.

Action: To approve use of chronic absenteeism position statement and implementation goals on chronic absenteeism, was motioned by Senator Donato, seconded by Representative Devon, and passed unanimously 11-0.

5. Support of the Child Welfare Task Force Created Under HEA 1273

Mark Fairchild, Executive Director

The presentation can be found on slides 31-35 of the [meeting slides](#). Mark introduced the recommendation of building a supportive relationship with the Child Welfare Taskforce. He described the purpose and specific areas of study for the Child Welfare Taskforce. Mark listed the membership roster determined by code, highlighting the youth representation. He explained the supports the commission can offer to assist the Child Welfare Task Force, such as staffing, meeting planning, and use of the CISC website for housing information produced. Mark shared the first meeting of the Child Welfare Task Force will be shortly after the next commission meeting.

Action: To approve the request for a supportive relationship with the Child Welfare Task Force, motioned by Representative Summers, seconded by Sarah Sailors, and approved unanimously 11-0.

6. Executive Director Update

Mark Fairchild, Executive Director

The presentation can be found on slide 30 of the [meeting slides](#). Mark first shared early work from task forces on strategic planning and reminded members of the potential dates for a full-day strategic planning session. He explained who will be in attendance and the purpose of the strategic planning session. Mark thanked the Forum for Youth Investment for donating their time to facilitate the strategic planning session. Mark ensured that outside stakeholders would also be given the opportunity to voice their input on the strategic plan's objectives through a survey. Mark also gave an update on the commission's annual report and asked the members to look at it before the finalized version is due September 1st.

7. Commission Member Announcements & Adjournment

Representative DeVon shared he is hoping the Cubs go to the playoffs this season!

The meeting was adjourned at 11:35 a.m.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, October 15, 2025, 10:00 a.m. – 12 p.m. Indiana Government Center South, Conference Room A, 302 W. Washington St., Indianapolis, IN 46204.

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