



Commission on Improving the Status of Children in Indiana

Meeting Minutes

Commission on Improving the Status of Children in Indiana

Wednesday, October 15, 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
- 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
- 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 invited all members to introduce themselves and their role.

2. Consent Agenda

Action: To approve the minutes from the August 2025 meeting, was approved unanimously 12-0.

3. Juvenile Justice & Cross System Youth Task Force Recommendation

Nancy Wever, Task Force Co-Chair & Joshua Nichols, Indiana Juvenile Detention Association President

The presentation can be found on slides 5-14 of the [meeting slides](#). Nancy Wever reintroduced the Juvenile Justice and Cross System Youth Task Force and briefly reviewed the proposed legislation. Joshua Nichols introduced himself as the president of the Indiana Juvenile Detention Association and the executive director of

the juvenile detention center in Evansville, IN. Joshua recognized the variety of perspectives of the juvenile detention centers, noting not all are fully supportive of the proposed legislation, but 98% of the facilities recognized the importance of family contact. He reported getting good survey response rates from the facilities, with the overall response of detention centers reporting there would be no fiscal impact. Concerns voiced from detention facilities were regarding staffing, visitation time, and number of visits per week. Joshua volunteered the IJDA to work with juvenile detention centers to implement the new legislative practices into the facilities. Nancy asked the commission to support the legislation, creating minimum requirements for family access to youth in juvenile detention facilities.

Discussion:

Sarah asked if Joshua's members had capacity issues at the juvenile detention centers. Joshua thought it would depend on each center but reported that many are running near full capacity. Representative DeVon inquired about getting a list comparing total bed capacity in the juvenile detention centers to the number of those beds filled. Nancy Wever advised Representative Devon that the DOC maintains a list of all detention facilities and their capacities, noting that getting a list of beds that are filled currently could change daily or even hourly. Devon asked about engagement with the state facilities in addition to the county facilities. Nancy Wever responded that the DOC is no longer holding young people in their facilities.

Action: To approve the legislative recommendation from the Juvenile Justice and Cross System Youth Task Force, motioned by Bernice Corely, seconded by Senator Donato, and passed unanimously 12-0.

4. Strategic Planning Update

Patrick Freeland, Forum for Youth Investment & Mark Fairchild, Executive Director

The presentation can be found on slides 16-20 of the [meeting slides](#). Patrick Freeland introduced himself as the Director of Statewide Quality Improvement Systems with the Forum for Youth Investment. Patrick explained his role in facilitating the strategic planning session held by the Children's Commission. Patrick summarized the 5 goal areas the Commission is and will be working on in the next strategic plan. He briefly explained the purpose of the session and reviewed the activities participants engaged in. Patrick recognized the common themes members identified, including centering youth voice, avoiding duplication and silos, system flexibility and data use, and identifying non-punitive, equity-based approaches. Mark Fairchild thanked the Commission's partners at the Forum for Youth Investment for giving neutral support during strategic planning. Mark explained the next steps of strategic planning including taking information from the session and turning it into draft objectives which would be sent out for review by the stakeholders, members, affiliates, task forces, and public. He shared his hope that the draft objectives would be prepared and shared by late November. Once that step is completed, the strategic plan will be compiled into a draft form, which be voted on during the December Commission meeting. Mark explained the purposes of the Data Sharing and Mapping Committee and the Youth, Family, and Caregiver Voices Committee as entities that "vet" recommendations made by the Task Forces.

5. Department of Child Services Older Youth Initiatives

Anisa Evans-Tucker, DCS

The presentation can be found on slides 22-31 of the [meeting slides](#). Anisa Evans-Tucker began the presentation by providing an overview of older youth services and older youth case management, noting they are controlled by both federal and state policy. Anisa focused on older youth services, specifically for youth exiting foster care. She outlined procedures involved for youth exiting foster care, which begin with a Youth Driven Child and Family Team Meeting when the child is 14. She outlined the Transition Plan for Successful Adulthood and the Transitional Service Plan and explained these are the two plans that help the youth navigate their needs when transitioning out of foster care. Anisa listed the rights of youth, aged 14 and older, when engaging in the court process. She next described the components of older youth services which focus on independent living, emphasizing skill building. Anisa explained the Transition to Successful Adulthood Services, helping young adults by providing intensive case management. She gave an overview of the Collaborative Care program, describing it as Indiana's extended foster care program for young people who have not yet completed their independent

living goals. She outlined an aftercare program, called Voluntary Services, that provides young people with support navigating their world when facing hardships. Anisa explained how young people opt-in to the Collaborative Care program as they age out of care. She further explained that even if youth exit care, they can utilize the reentry program to participate in Collaborative Care. Anisa shared a story, highlighting the function of Indiana's extended foster care program, Collaborative Care.

Discussion:

Representative DeVon asked about the oldest age a young person can opt back into Collaborative Care. Anisa reported that 20 is the oldest age to opt-in since Collaborative Care ends at age 21. Rep. DeVon asked how DCS works with youth at age 14 in deciding what they would like to do with their future. Anisa described how Authentic Youth Engagement supports and empowers youth, using research about the adolescent brain, to ensure they have the resources they need to be on the right path to future career goals. Senator Donato inquired about the age of 21 being a "hard stop" for individuals with disabilities opted-into Collaborative Care. Anisa clarified that federally, 21 is the age that case management is stopped for young people, and 23 is the age that service delivery is stopped. In terms of people with disabilities, it is DCS's responsibility to partner with other agencies whose job would be to work with that person for the rest of their life. Sarah Sailors, Aleanya Moore, Bernice Corley, and Judge Kenworthy expressed concerns about juvenile justice involved youth being excluded from older youth services. Anisa explained that youth involved with the DOC have to be placed in federally recognized foster homes and highlighted the need for all systems to work together to address dual-system youth. Judge Kenworthy asked Anisa how and when Collaborative Care is presented to youth. Anisa explained that when a young person begins older youth services, at 16 years old, they should begin hearing about the support and services available to them in their future. Anisa clarified that Collaborative Care is Indiana's extended foster care program and the terms are used interchangeably. Director Krupp reported there are about 3,500 youth in traditional foster care and about 5,200 in kinship care. Representative DeVon asked Anisa to explain the difference between state and federal guidelines for foster care. Anisa explained that the state follows federal guidelines for foster care. Judge Kenworthy requested to discuss the topics of older youth services and dual-system youth during the next Executive Committee meeting. Mark agreed and noted that dual-system youth were discussed during strategic planning and would be included as an objective.

6. Executive Director Report

Mark Fairchild, Executive Director

The presentation can be found on slides 32-34 of the [meeting slides](#). Mark reviewed the legislative affairs process of the Commission. Mark reminded members that the Commission keeps a list of bills they are watching during the session. He reviewed some of the rules the Commission follows when engaging with legislation. Some of the legislative actions could be writing letters of support from the Commission or going to the Statehouse to testify on a particular bill or section of a bill. Mark reminded members that he would only testify "in support" of a bill if the Commission votes on it. He mentioned if he were to testify without holding a formal vote from the Commission, he would consult with the Executive Committee, and his testimony would have to be "neutral" and factual. Mark emphasized the importance of bringing bills to the December Commission meeting to get the Commission's support. Mark brought potential meetings date for 2026 forward for the Commission members to discuss potential schedule conflicts.

Discussion:

Representative Summers asked if the legislative process of the Commission is necessary due to the short nature of the upcoming legislative session. Mark replied that while the short session makes it difficult to get full endorsement from the Commission, it is necessary for him to answer questions regarding the Commission's position on various bills impacting children. Representative DeVon asked Mark if he anticipated any of the Task Forces to create legislation. Mark responded the main piece of legislation was the one presented today regarding family visitation in the juvenile justice system but mentioned some community partners within the Task Forces may be drafting some legislation that the Commission could potentially support and vote on during the December meeting. Judge Kenworthy mentioned the family recovery courts bill will be returning to this session. Representative Summers expressed concern over the February Commission meeting date. Mark

decided to play the February meeting date by ear and wait until calendars are finalized for the upcoming session. He moved the December meeting date up to the 9th.

7. Commission Member Announcements & Adjournment

Bernice shared IPDC will have a trial practice institute for attorneys representing juveniles and delinquency matters in early November. Director Krupp pointed out that October is infant safe sleep awareness month and DCS and DOH are working together to spread awareness and develop safe practices. He also mentioned that November is national adoption awareness month.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:25 a.m.

Next Meeting: December 10

Wednesday, December 10, 2025, 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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