

**Indiana Commission for Women
Hoosier INsight
Scott County Circles® Listening Session Report
Grace Covenant, Austin, Indiana
Thursday, May 6, 2011
5:30-7:30 pm**

Table of Contents

Overview..... 3
Important Issues to Consider 3
Issue: Affordable and Quality Housing 4
Key Discussion Points 4
Conclusions..... 4

Overview

On Thursday, May 6, 2011, the Indiana Commission for Women (ICW) attended the May *Big View* meeting of the Scott County Partnership Circle™ Campaign Initiative at the Grace Covenant Church in Austin, Indiana. Found in several communities around the state, the Circles™ initiative empowers people from every economic class to solve poverty in their communities; provides families with networking with social resources that are essential to getting out of poverty; and affects change in the policies and social structures that lock people into poverty.¹ During the monthly *Big View* meeting, the group meets once a month for dinner and community conversation on a specific issue that focuses on the problems of and solutions for barriers that hold people in poverty. The group had already scheduled their monthly topic for May and had identified the key issue of affordable quality housing. Because this topic has come up frequently in other listening sessions, ICW staff was invited to take part in the conversation and took brief notes on the discussion.

ICW was also invited to present briefly on the work that it was doing in conjunction with its *Hoosier INsight Regional Listening Sessions*. During the dinner portion of the meeting, individuals were instructed to approach ICW staff and discuss any additional issues they felt were important, which several individuals took advantage of. Eleven (11) women who were in attendance requested to receive additional information about the initiative.

Important Issues to Consider

At the beginning of the dinner portion of the meeting, the director of the Circles™ Campaign Initiative requested that anyone who was interested in providing information about what they believe are the key issues facing women in Indiana that pose barriers or challenges to women's full participation in society could approach ICW staff in order to discuss. Those issues included:

- Women's health care in particular reproductive health (In particular, the Planned Parenthood Clinic is the only facility in the county that provides health services to low-income women. Residents expressed strong concern about where they will find the services that may be lost if this clinic would close)
- Lack of quality education and educated population in the area
- Economics and the loss of jobs
- Madison Juvenile Correctional Facility (MJCF)
 - ~ Only maximum security juvenile correctional facility for young women in the State of Indiana
 - ~ Outdated building
- Domestic violence and stalking
- Issues surrounding girls and the lack of options in their communities

It should be noted that this particular location was in the most rural setting of the entire listening session project. There was particular concern voiced that solutions would favor urban areas over rural areas. One individual pointed out that what may work in Indianapolis does not necessarily work in an area like Scott County and that special considerations should be made to address issues in rural areas.

¹ Circles® Informational Flyer, <http://restoringpeople.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/Circles-Informational-Flyer-2010.pdf>.

Issue: Affordable and Quality Housing

This particular session was not conducted like the other listening sessions. The Circle™ group had already been working on issues around affordable and quality housing. One of the members of the group facilitated the general conversation so they process did not follow the format of the other sessions. However, the information discussed was pertinent to the overall results of ICW's initiative.

Key Discussion Points

The participants discussed key points and made several good suggestions on what should be done to help address the issues surrounding this issue. The discussion of this topic is below.

General discussion

- There is no organization that will say that this particular housing site is substandard
- Questions:
 - ~ What to do when an individual has bad credit or felony
 - ~ What are the local ordinances on housing
 - ~ What are Section 8 qualifications
 - ~ What are tenants' legal rights and what are their responsibilities?
 - ~ What are landlords' legal rights and responsibilities?
- Agencies that can help
 - ~ Indiana Housing Authority
 - ~ Building Commission
 - ~ HUD subsidized housing
 - ~ Government Inspections (REAC-Real Estate Assessment Center)
- Management Company Inspections

Possible action to help situation

- Define what affordable housing is
 - ~ How does government define affordable?
- Develop a database of renters/housing
 - ~ Section 8 listings
 - ~ HUD Subsidized listings
- Come up with a "report card" on landlords
- Look for win-win solution
 - ~ Landlords want tenants who are responsible
 - ~ Tenants want landlords that are fair

Conclusions

There are many barriers that create challenges to women in Indiana. The Hoosier INsight: Women's Issues Listening Sessions project is the first step in starting conversations to help to address the challenges that women still face in our state. The results of all of the sessions held around the state will contribute to a report that will help to identify the top 3-5 issues that present major barriers to women in Indiana. These discussions are the beginning of a process to help move women in Indiana forward by engaging Indiana residents in public deliberation.

The Hoosier INsight project will help ICW continue to voice the needs, concerns, challenges, and viewpoints of women in Indiana. By better understanding the specific needs and desires of

women, the commission will be able to better identify the ways in which they can help to remove barriers that hinder their participation in all areas of society.

A statewide event will occur once the results of the listening sessions, as well as the supplemental online women's issue survey, are compiled. ICW will facilitate a statewide debriefing effort that will guide key community partners and stakeholder to synthesize the results into a shared statewide action plan. It will be ICW's opportunity to inform the community on the primary issues affecting women regionally and statewide that were identified during the listening sessions; to expand coalitions and build capacity to work across networks and to improve outreach efforts on multiple issues.

*** Summary Report Disclaimer**

This summary report was prepared as an account of key issues, challenges, and suggested solutions described during a public discussion sponsored by the Indiana Commission for Women (ICW) and supported by local partnering organizations in conjunction with its *Hoosier INsight: Women's Issues Listening Sessions* initiative. The compilation of this summary report is provided as a courtesy and should not be considered in any way as an endorsement or promotion by the Indiana Commission for Women, by the State of Indiana or by ICW's partners and supporters. Opinions expressed are strictly those of session participants and not necessarily those of the Indiana Commission for Women, of the State of Indiana or of its partners and supporters. Recommendations from this meeting, together with inputs received from other sources, may inform the creation of a final report and potential plan of action to address the issues and challenges discussed as well as potential future ICW initiatives, programs and services. Furthermore, ICW may use information obtained from this meeting and from the results of this initiative to offer suggestions to other agencies, organizations or entities better suited to address particular issues and/or challenges uncovered during this initiative in order to facilitate maximum cooperation and collaboration between ICW and other entities. The Indiana Commission for Women and those associated with the agency do not assume any legal liability or responsibility for the accuracy or completeness of any comment made or of any third party's use or results of such use of any information contained in this summary report.