

**Indiana Commission for Women
Hoosier INsight
Muncie Circles® Listening Session Report
First Baptist Church, Muncie
Thursday, March 24, 2011
6:00p.m. – 8:00p.m.**

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Overview

The Indiana Commission for Women (ICW) held a special listening session on the evening of March 24. This session took place in Muncie, IN through the coordination of TEAMwork for Quality Living. ICW held the session with the Circles[®] Campaign group at their March Big View meeting. This session will help to ensure that we are engaging women (and men) from various backgrounds in this project and reaching out to more than just the “usual suspects.” This session was different from the others in that this group meets each month for a dinner and a community conversation. ICW was the featured presenter for March. The time frame for the listening session was reduced to an hour in order to accommodate the schedule of this group and their regularly planned schedule.

As a group, the participants identified (31) issues facing women in Indiana. By consensus, the group voted and determined that the top two issues facing women that should be addressed first were: offender re-entry and gender equality in the workplace. The group split in two and an in-depth discussion of these top priorities was completed. Each group was asked to answer specific questions regarding each issue and to start developing a plan of action for addressing the issue in Indiana. The results of the discussions are detailed in later in this report.

Participants

The participants at this special session were women and men from the Circles[®] Campaign group that meets through the TEAMwork for Quality Living. There were also some Ball State University students present who have been coordinating with TEAMwork for Quality Living on a project. According to their website, “Our work focuses on mobilizing the social capacity of the community to surround people highly motivated to get out of poverty. This work, through the Circles model, enables highly motivated people to move toward their self-sufficiency goals.”¹

There were a total of 28 women and men who participated in this session.

1. TEAMwork for Quality Living. (2011). “What we do.” Retrieved from <http://www.teamworkql.org/Teamwork/index.php>.

Issues Identified

The participants of the Muncie Circles[®] listening session identified the issues that they believed were barriers to women's full participation in society. These issues were then voted on to determine the top two issues facing women in Indiana. Each participant was given 3 votes that they could use to help prioritize the issues. The numbers next to the issue represent the number of votes that issue received from the participants.

Getting removed from social services once employed – 8
 Safe transportation – 3
 Childcare – 11
 Childcare for sick children (back-up care) – 4
 Childcare program assistance waiting list – 3
 Affordable housing – 7
 Support for care givers – 3
 Support for grandparents raising grandchildren
 24 hour childcare
 Affordable/better healthcare insurance – 15
 Pay equity
 Childcare for disabled children
 Financial assistance for education
 Domestic violence – 4
 Support for children born with addiction – 1
 Paid time off from work
 Support for ex-offenders – 1
 Support for menopausal women
 Support for women's health – 4
 Alternative support for additions esp. parents – 1
 Reproductive health care
 Support for self-esteem issues for girls – 5
 Assistance with repair services (consumer knowledge) – 2
 Self defense training – 1
 Rape prevention training
 Education on sexual violence
 Temporary housing for families with older children – 1
 Positive role models – 7
 Mentoring opportunities – 2
 Support for single mothers – 3
 Legal aid services – 4

Top Two Issues & Discussion

The top two issues that were identified by the participants were: 1) Affordable/better healthcare insurance and 2) Childcare. Due to the shortened amount of time to complete the activities within the session, the facilitators broke the group into two groups and each facilitator mediated the questions and conversations of each group. Participants were asked to consider a series of questions regarding these issues in order to start developing a plan of action for how we should work to overcome these challenges in Indiana. The questions were divided into five categories and are listed below.

Frame It

1. What are the critical components of this issue?
2. What should be addressed first?

What's in Place Now?

3. Are there any existing programs in place to help solve this issue?
4. Are there any agencies or organizations who currently deal with this issue?

Who should be involved?

5. Who are the people/organizations that should be involved in this issue?
6. Who should be responsible for strategizing ideas and implementing solutions for this issue?

Community/State Actions

7. How can the community work on solving this issue?
8. Is this an issue that should be addressed statewide? How?

Next Steps

9. What resources are needed to work on this issue?
10. What are the next steps that should be taken to address this issue?

Affordable/Better Healthcare Insurance

Affordable/better healthcare insurance was the number one priority for the participants of this listening session. There were 15 votes for this issue. The discussion of this topic is below.

Frame It

The participants identified the following challenges within the topic of affordable/better healthcare insurance.

- Benefit issues for women with lower paying jobs
- Set co-pays
- Coverage for birth control
- Coverage for menopausal issues
- Pre-existing conditions
- Affordable healthcare coverage
- More options for deductibles
- Women de-incentivized to work (lose public benefits & can't afford private costs)
- Denied coverage because of past credit history
- Lack of understanding of healthcare coverage explanations

What's In Place Now?

The participants identified the following programs/organizations that currently exist to help improve access to affordable/better healthcare insurance.

- Employer sponsored health insurance programs
- Chamber of Commerce – focusing on small business
- Gateway – federally funded clinics
- Medicaid/Medicare
- Incentives for healthy behaviors

Who Should Be Involved?

The participants identified the following individuals/organizations/groups that should be involved to help improve access to affordable/better healthcare insurance.

- State legislators – need to question if costs are affordable to Hoosiers
- State Attorney General & Insurance Inspector
- Hospitals
- Healthcare providers
- Insurance companies
- General public
 - Women in particular – need more representation from women
- Employers
- U.S. Congress
- Human services agencies
- Media to communicate the story

Community/State Action

The participants determined that the following actions should be taken in order to help address the issues surrounding access to affordable/better healthcare insurance.

- Band together and get the word out
 - Petition
 - Form a taskforce/committee
- Pools of small businesses to buy into group insurance
- Elect people who are in favor of health insurance reform
- Incentivize insurance companies to adopt health insurance reform
- Make business case – it's good for business
- Promote understanding of the needs of women in poverty
- Educate consumers of insurance options/policies
- Discount for combined insurance (medical/dental/vision – like discounts with same agent - home, car, etc.)

Next Steps

The participants determined that the next steps that need to be taken in order to begin making progress on this issue are:

- Assemble a taskforce or committee
- Understand where legislators stand on the issue
- Educate public about the issues
- Educate community of affects on women in poverty
- Educate community on language of insurance
- Broader financial literacy on costs of insurance
 - Retired insurance agents to help counsel individuals – informed, but impartial advocates
- Work with professional associations rather than companies to keep impartiality intact

Childcare

Childcare was the second priority identified by the participants of this listening session. There were many subcategories of childcare that the group felt was important, but overall, they decided that all aspects of childcare were a priority issue for women in Indiana. This issue received eleven votes, not including the votes for the subcategory issues. The discussion of this topic is below.

Frame It

The participants identified the following challenges within the topic of childcare.

- Safety – with both the facility and the provider(s)
- Cost prohibitive
- Issues with the need for a second income just to pay for care
- Lack of adequate hours (parents who don't work the day shift)
- Issues with finding care for sick children
- Licensing and quality care
- Having to pay to “protect” spots
- Long waiting lists for best programs
- What to do when school is closed
- Issues with single parents finding adequate care & managing schedules
- At-will employment – parents lose jobs due to childcare issues
- Last minute care
 - Costs extra
 - Costs to job and loss of benefits
- Emotional stability of children if constantly changing caregivers
 - Continuity of care
- Care for disabled children
 - Quality care and affordability
 - Access to care for special needs
- Care for the time between school and work – what happens afterschool during unsupervised time?
- Care for infants
- Issues with teen mothers

What's In Place Now?

The participants identified the following examples and programs that help to improve childcare. They also noted during this discussion that when the economy is bad this creates additional barriers as childcare providers are not highly valued by society for their work.

- Boys and Girls Club
- Latch Key
- Childcare Development Fund (CCDF) – long waitlist
- United Daycare
- Hufford
- Ball Memorial Hospital (for employees only)
- Many private sector centers
- Some employer provided care

- Afterschool programs (ex. Motivate Our Minds)

Who Should Be Involved?

The participants identified the following groups that they believe should be involved in helping to improve childcare. The participants emphasized the groups italicized – these stakeholders could help to show the business value of improving childcare.

- *Employers*
- School administrators
- Neighborhood associations
- Mothers
- Fathers
- *Chamber of Commerce*
- Community Center – make larger daycare opportunities
- YMCA
- Policy makers
- City government
- Schools
- Ball State Early Childhood Department

Community/State Action

The participants determined that the following actions should be taken in order to help improve childcare.

- Develop a community action plan
- Create social networks between moms to create childcare co-ops
 - Need to develop connections & trust
- Utilize volunteers
 - In order to do this must acknowledge issues with certifications & safety
 - Must be certified & must have some training (CPR, etc)
- Rethinking the value of childcare
- Cultural mindset change
 - Provide appropriate compensation reflective of the importance of high quality childcare that is accessible by all (regardless of income level)

Next Steps

The participants determined that the next steps that need to be taken in order to begin making progress on this issue are:

- Publicity & Media
 - Use public access channel – it's free
- Educate community
- Look at the big view – not just an issue for parents, but for ALL community members
 - What is the cost of inadequate childcare to society?
- Petition
- Research – provide more data & statistics
- Put a face on the issue – make it more personal
- Show reality of what it costs to pay for childcare
- Research on companies who offer support for childcare (onsite, vouchers, etc.)
- Show the cost to the community
 - Teen pregnancy rates
 - Violence
 - Unsupervised accidents, etc.
- Support for women
- Support for nontraditional care giving roles
 - Ex. More men are taking on care giving roles – how to support them and encourage more participation by fathers as caregivers
- Promote the value for businesses to support childcare policies – “It’s good for business”

Conclusions

There are many issues that create barriers for women. The findings of this listening session will contribute to ICW's understanding of the specific challenges that face women in Indiana. The inclusion of sessions, like this one, targeted specifically to groups who are mindfully addressing issues of poverty helps to ensure that the project recognizes the specific needs of women who may also be struggling economically.

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 larger de-briefing event will occur once the results of all of the listening sessions, as well as the supplemental online women's issue survey, are compiled and will help promote the outcomes of the project. This will help to raise awareness for the issues and to aid in the development of a statewide action plan to deal with the top priority issues across the state. These discussions are the beginning of a process to help move women in Indiana forward by engaging Indiana residents in public deliberation.