



Youth Justice Oversight Committee

Meeting Minutes from April 9, 2026

The Youth Justice Oversight Committee (YJOC) met on April 9, 2026, from 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. at the Indiana Government Center South, Conference Room C. Judge Dana Kenworthy chaired the meeting.

Members Present:

The following members of the Committee were present in person:

- ☒ Dana Kenworthy, Chair
- ☒ Dr. Matthew Aalsma, Indiana University School of Medicine
- ☒ Stephen Balko, Indiana Department of Education
- ☐ Judge Marshelle Broadwell, Marion Superior Court 7
- ☒ Shannon Chambers, Johnson County Probation
- ☐ Terrie Decker, Indiana Department of Correction
- ☒ Judge Darrin Dolehanty, Senior Judge
- ☒ Mark Fairchild, IOCS, Commission on Improving the Status of Children in Indiana
- ☒ Tracy Fitz, Indiana Prosecuting Attorneys Council
- ☒ Magistrate Carolyn Foley, Allen Superior Court
- ☐ Judge Faith Graham, Tippecanoe Superior Court 3
- ☒ Elizabeth Houdek, Indiana Public Defender Council
- ☒ Doug Huntsinger, Indiana Criminal Justice Institute
- ☐ Waylon James, Indiana Department of Child Services
- ☒ Judge Ryan King, Ripley Circuit Court
- ☒ Nichole Phillips, Bartholomew County Probation
- ☒ Catheryne Pully, Indiana Office of Court Services
- ☒ Magistrate Amy Richison, Huntington Circuit and Superior Courts
- ☐ Sarah Sailors, Indiana Family and Social Services Administration
- ☒ Nancy Wever, IOCS, Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative
- ☐ Kia Wright, Voices, Inc.

Members Attended Via Zoom:

Judge Faith Graham and Kia Wright.

Members Absent:

Judge Marshelle Broadwell, Terrie Decker, Waylon James, and Sarah Sailors.

Staff:

Leslie Dunn, Payton Lester, Colleen Saylor, Chris Biehn, Blane Cook, Audrianna Lingren, Sierra Suozzi and Rose Walker from the Indiana Office of Court Services (IOCS).

Others Present:

Dalayna Anderson and Ellen Sheets from ICJI.

Welcome and Introductions:

Judge Kenworthy welcomed members.

Setting Priorities:

Judge Kenworthy met with workgroup chairs to get ideas on priorities. A priority for YJOC is to develop ad hoc committees or a standing workgroup to convene as needed to address defined issues, with the possibility of flexible membership depending on the task. Members should identify issues other groups are working on, develop priorities that fill gaps and are not duplicative, discuss the needs within their communities with stakeholders, and come to the June meeting with their top three priorities.

Priority areas for consideration may include:

- Gun safety
 - Programs that target a child's belief that a gun is necessary for defense and include safe storage of guns.
- Legislation
 - In advance of the next legislative session, identify areas in the juvenile code that are creating issues in implementation, and how this group can help.
- Improving engagement of parents in JD/JS cases
 - Tailored parental participation orders and participation plans in JD/JS cases like in CHINS cases.
 - Incorporate parents and improve procedural fairness.
- Community Alternatives to Detention
 - Do we have detention space for children who present a high safety risk to the community? There are facilities with available beds, but not enough staff for placement.
- Youth substance use, including increased cannabis youth among youth, and the accompanying mental health implications.

The group will determine whether to assign the work to an existing workgroup or ad hoc workgroup and clearly define goals and objectives.

Commission on Improving the Status of Children (CISC) and Legislative Update:

Mark Fairchild provided an update on recent legislation, including items that did not make it through and how to move them forward next session. Given the bills presented in this past session and needing modifications, in the future, it would be beneficial to begin discussions with legislators much earlier.

SB171 contained forty elements. The legislation prohibits a CHINS court from changing a child's placement if there is a pending adoption petition except in extenuating circumstances. This has created confusion as to whether it applies to trial home visits. Need to balance birth parents' rights with the need for timely permanency and foster parents' rights. Lists best interests factors, which is helpful; be sure we are checking all the key variables.

SB246 addressed the redaction of court records with the goal of limiting the potentially identifiable information of children, such as initials, in court orders.

HB1036 requires DCS to see a child in-person before closing out a case and at other key points to help ensure child safety.

SB140 addresses doxing, which is sharing someone's information on social media with the intent to cause them harm. The intent of the legislation was to address adult conduct, but it had significant implications regarding youth. The original language raised it to a felony if someone acted on the posted information; the enhanced charge in the intimidation statute clarifies that there must be intent. If it is youth-driven, there should be an option for diversion.

The expungement bill contained language regarding adults in the juvenile section; this bill did not move forward. YJOC may want to consider reviewing the language to identify other areas of concern.

Last session, the issue of parent visitation and calling privileges for youth in detention did not get a hearing. CISC has prepared a draft bill and identified sponsors to introduce it next session and does not anticipate controversy.

Safe baby courts are in the section of the code regarding problem solving courts. This caused barriers in implementation because in practice, the Safe Baby Courts Team Approach is a model to provide targeted intensive services for children aged zero to three, not a separate problem-solving court for children in that age group. The legislature did not address this during the last legislative session, and it is a potential priority area for this group for the next session.

In anticipation of the 2027 legislative session, the group should proactively identify priority issues to address with legislators and continue developing positive working relationships across branches of government.

Going forward, YJOC should consider the structure and public meeting rules of ad hoc teams; Mark will investigate the rules. We should consider an ad hoc group to focus on legislation, and

legislative issues will need to be carefully vetted. Judges and DCS should be involved with evaluating the safe baby court process and making recommendations.

Workgroup Updates:

Grants Workgroup, Doug Huntsinger:

The workgroup received forty-six applications (the most ever received in a round) for 12.6 million dollars in requested funding. Half of the available funds will be allocated with this round. The Grants Review Committee is reviewing the grant applications. New counties and programs applied. Once this application round concludes, the workgroup will set the date for the next round. The workgroup is considering offering technical support to applicants with viable projects that the independent group did not select this round and that may benefit from assistance with the application process. The workgroup is discussing addressing barriers created by the funding formula, sustainability plans since many grantees require ongoing grants, and how to determine program structure when an organization or county applies requesting funds for multiple counties. To help with sustainability, it may be beneficial for an ad hoc committee to collaborate with applicants on braided funding and identifying alternate funding streams.

Data Workgroup, Dr. Matt Aalsma and Chris Biehn:

The workgroup has shifted from Phase I of the pilot to Phase 2. In Phase 2, the group will work with six pilot counties and IOCS partners with JDAI to engage in a deeper dive into long-term solutions for data quality and connectedness. Examples of solutions in other fields include back-end improvements with data entry, continuity, and standardization. The group is considering sustainability and whether services exist at the state level to assist counties. Counties found it beneficial to identify gaps and inconsistencies with their data. The workgroup shared the final report with YJOC.

Behavioral Health Workgroup, Magistrate Anah Gouty and Sarah Sailors:

Judge Kenworthy provided an update. The workgroup is considering streamlining this workgroup with the CISC's Mental Health Task Force, and whether it will be a merger or how to allocate tasks between the two groups to avoid overlap. The group has not decided on a final plan at this stage.

Wrap-Up Discussion:

Members shared various updates on the work they are doing:

- Blane Cook is leaving CISC and CISC is starting the application process to fill the position.
- Elizabeth Houdek noted that the Indiana Public Defender Council posted a link to the Diversion Directory created by YJOC.
- Doug Huntsinger reported that ICJI is working to build capacity and apply for new grants.

- Catheryne Pully shared that IOCS is evaluating workgroups to reduce duplication and identify gaps and promote intentionality in collaboration and breaking down silos. She recommends that if we create more groups, we should be mindful of existing work.
- Dr. Aalsma noted that there are good programs available to assist youth with substance use to provide treatment instead of expulsion.
- Stephen Balko is considering a shift from spotlighting data to a percentage increase or decrease, and how to use data for continuous improvement.
- Tracy Fitz noted that Megan Horton is facilitating a workshop on diversion at a national conference in New Hampshire in June and will highlight Indiana's diversion directory and guide.
- Magistrate Richison shared that they are working to identify gaps in services for youth. They are making headway on filling gaps between needed and available services.
- Nichole Phillips will give a presentation about pre-dispositional reports at the upcoming justice services conference. She would like a judicial officer to co-present with her.
- Senior Judge Dolehanty emphasized the importance of the legislative piece and suggested prioritizing 1) determining what legislation this group wants to support and be proponents of, and 2) what legislation do we want to react to by assisting legislators in identifying how their ideas will work in practice.
- Magistrate Foley shared that they are in the process of redoing their juvenile advisement of rights videos to make it more understandable to young people. They rewrote the script and made the videos with assistance from their local public library. The videos are also available in Spanish and Burmese.
- Judge King reported that they are three years into their Youth and Family SMART program with the YJOC grant. The entire program costs less than the cost of one residential placement for a child, and provides family centered therapy, individual therapy, truancy prevention, suspension alternatives, addresses drug use in school without court involvement, and provides mentorship to youth. Community partnerships are a key component of the program. Positive outcomes include a decline in felony cases. They are working on sustainability. Because the application process has improved, this grant round was much easier to complete than it was during the first round. They presented at conferences with positive feedback, and state and national entities have reached out to them about their program. It would be interesting to identify families in the program with younger siblings, and measure whether the parents' increased skill set decreased future cases for all youth in the family.
- Nancy Wever suggested a potential research project around Ripley County's SMART program. They work with thirty-seven JDAI counties and three non-JDAI counties as well, serving 74% of youth in the state. Since this is the only group solely focused on youth justice, that should remain the priority if YJOC decides to combine workgroups. She will send a survey out asking respondents for topic suggestions for the youth justice conference in the fall.

Upcoming Meeting Dates:

Thursday, June 11, 2026, 10:00 AM-12:00 PM, Conference Room A

2026 Meeting Dates:

Thursday, August 13, 2026, 10:00 AM-12:00 PM, Conference Room A

Thursday, October 8, 2026, 10:00 AM-12:00 PM, Conference Room A

Thursday, December 10, 2026, 10:00 AM-12:00 PM, Conference Room A