



Commission on Improving the Status of Children in Indiana

Meeting Minutes

Commission on Improving the Status of Children in Indiana

Wednesday, July 10, 2019

Indiana State Library, History Reference Room

- Christine Blessinger, Director, Division of Youth Services, Department of Correction
- Dr. Kris Box, Indiana State Health Commissioner, Indiana State Department of Health
- Senator Jean Breaux
- Bernice Corley, Executive Director, Public Defender Council
- Representative Dale DeVon
- Justin Forkner, Chief Administrative Officer, Indiana Office of Judicial Administration
- John Hammond IV, Office of the Governor
- Curtis T. Hill, Indiana Attorney General (non-voting member)
- Senator Erin Houchin
- Zac Jackson, Director, State Budget Agency
- Susan Lightfoot, Chief Probation Officer, Henry County Probation Department
- Dr. Jennifer McCormick, Superintendent of Public Instruction, Indiana Department of Education
- Serrilla Blackmon, Interim Director for Children, Division of Mental Health and Addiction
- David Powell, Executive Director, Indiana Prosecuting Attorneys Council
- Justice Loretta Rush, Chief Justice of Indiana
- Terry Stigdon, Director, Indiana Department of Child Services
- Representative Vanessa Summers
- Dr. Jennifer Walthall, M.D., Secretary, Indiana Family and Social Services Administration

1. Welcome and Introductions

Chief Justice Rush called the meeting to order at 10:03 a.m. and asked the new Commission members, Zac Jackson and Rep. DeVon, to introduce themselves.

2. Consent Agenda

Action: The minutes from the meeting on May 8, 2019, were approved.

3. Strategic Priority: Mental Health and Substance Abuse

Presentation: Dr. Leslie Hulvershorn presented an update on the Mental Health and Substance Abuse Task Force. She reported that several new members had been added and noted that the Task Force was working on a recommendation for increasing the number of evidence-based interventions being offered in Indiana.

Dr. Hulvershorn presented a [recommendation](#) to move the objective related to suicide prevention from the Child Safety and Services Task Force to the Mental Health and Substance Abuse Task Force. She also proposed changing the objective from simply coordinating with the Suicide Prevention Network to studying some specific issues related to the mental health needs of children with suicidal ideation.

Discussion: In response to a question from Chief Justice Rush, Dr. Hulvershorn note that suicide rates, including those by overdose, are increasing in teens, and the Task Force anticipates a need to work on some projects related to these issues. David Powell asked whether any particular drug or substance stood out among the overdose deaths, and Dr. Hulvershorn said that she could get the poison control data for the Commission.

Senator Breaux asked how the Task Force's work would relate to the work the state was already doing on suicide resulting from legislation passed a few years ago. Serrilla Blackmon discussed some current efforts and gaps with suicide work in Indiana. Both Serrilla and Leslie noted that Jason Murrey, the statewide suicide prevention coordinator, would be involved with the Task Force's work.

Chief Justice Rush asked about interventions for justice-involved youth. Dr. Hulvershorn noted that there are many evidence-based interventions for suicide prevention, but they are not always available. Dr. Box pointed out that the state should be screening children at school, but the legislature has been hesitant to do so. She also noted that some schoolwide programs are in use. Susan Lightfoot mentioned that the Indiana Office of Court Services was working on a screening tool and training for probation.

Action: Susan Lightfoot made a motion to approve the movement of the suicide recommendation to the Mental Health and Substance Abuse Task Force, and Dave Powell seconded. The motion passed 12-0.

Presentation: Jennifer Tackitt-Dorfmeier, CEO of Choices Coordinated Care Solutions, presented information on a model for mobile response for youth (slides 5-14 in the [meeting PowerPoint](#)). It is a model where a family can call for help when a youth is having a crisis and a team will come to them. The goal is to de-escalate and stabilize the youth, while keeping them in the home. The model has been successful in New Jersey and Arizona. Jennifer noted the success of a child welfare pilot in New Jersey where placement disruptions were prevented through the use of mobile response. She noted that mobile response can help prevent the need for deep-end services, and it also helps to coordinate across different child-serving systems.

Discussion: Bernice Corley asked about the role of law enforcement in the mobile response, as many families in crisis might begin by calling law enforcement. Jennifer said that the response looks different in different places, but law enforcement may take part in the response team and collaborate with it.

Senator Houchin expressed an interest in the potential for the child welfare use of the program to reduce placement disruptions. She asked about whether current efforts were a funded pilot and the cost of implementing or expanding services. Jennifer noted that individual efforts in Indiana were funded differently, including one that is specific to the opioid crisis and is funded by a federal grant for that purpose. She noted that the New Jersey model involves the collaboration of all child-serving systems so that no child in crisis is turned away based on insurance coverage or which system they may be involved with. Serrilla Blackmon noted that the

federal funding is restricted to opioids. She said that DMHA has considered using Medicaid, but that would restrict the number of providers, and so they need to come up with a different structure that would work efficiently across all child-serving systems.

Senator Houchin asked about ways to select areas for a pilot program, and Jennifer said that the subcommittee had looked at data on ER use as one factor showing need for a program like this. There was additional discussion about the number of teams and how they are deployed.

Chief Justice Rush asked DCS about the possibility of using Families First dollars for an intervention like this. David Reed said that DCS is working on its plan for use of Families First dollars, and that there are restrictions on which models can be paid for with Families First funding. Chief Justice Rush said there was also going to be some money for child mental health coming from the State Justice Institute, which might be another avenue to pursue to fund a pilot. Senator Houchin asked for the cost of the Choices program currently operating in Southeast Indiana. Jennifer reported that staffing is the largest expense and it's around \$700,000. She said she could bring back a budget with more precise numbers.

Chief Justice Rush mentioned the Sequential Intercept Model being researched by the Center for State Courts and said there is also going to be some funding available to systems to implement that model. She noted that the small number of programs approved for Families First dollars so far is disappointing. Senator Houchin also stated that DCS had just received a large budget increase, and she suggested that DCS might find funds within the current appropriation to pilot this model. There was some additional discussion of the Families First Prevention and Services Act and a request for a presentation on that topic at an upcoming Commission meeting.

4. Strategic Priority: Child Safety and Services

Presentation: Mark Fairchild, of Covering Kids and Families, presented on developmental screening of young children (slides 16-27 in the [Meeting PowerPoint](#)). Mark summarized the data on Indiana's rate of screening for young children on Medicaid, which is one of the lowest among all states reporting. The risk is that children with developmental delays are not being diagnosed until they enter school, which increases their risk, while early identification increases the effectiveness of intervention. Mark presented the subcommittee's [recommendations](#) to look into the ability for additional types of providers to use the Medicaid billing code for developmental screenings, such as First Steps and WIC providers, as well as developing a coordinated campaign to educate providers and families about the importance of screening. Mark noted that several different agencies have materials available and are doing some level of promotion, and what the subcommittee is recommending is coordinating the existing groups, including Help Me Grow, American Academy of Pediatrics, and the CDC's "Learn the Signs" campaign. Mark asked that the Communications Committee engage in the campaign with the Office of Medicaid Policy and Planning at FSSA. The subcommittee, recognizing there may be some costs, had done some research and identified several different grants and existing sources of funding that could potentially be used to assist with the coordinated campaign.

Discussion: Dr. Box agreed that WIC offices could be great locations for screenings, but she noted that the federal WIC office has recently pulled back on what ancillary services are allowed to be offered in WIC offices. She expressed an interest in discussing further and noted a few barriers with WIC. She suggested looking into state-funded preschools as an additional place to provide screenings.

Senator Breaux asked whether Indiana was being penalized financially for its low rate of screening. Mark explained that there is no direct penalty as it is a voluntary measure, but the later a diagnosis is made, the more expensive the treatment will be.

Senator Houchin asked about privacy and parental consent concerns with screening in preschool classrooms. Dr. Box noted that parental permission would definitely need to be sought, and that a provider could see many more children in a preschool than in a WIC clinic. Dr. Box also raised the issue of the way that clinics may code

and be paid. There was discussion about the probability that some screenings are being done but not reflected in Indiana's numbers because they are not being billed against the Medicaid code. Dr. Box noted that if doctors are not being paid separately for the screening, they have very little incentive to code it correctly.

Action: Senator Houchin made a motion to approve the recommendation on early developmental screening, and Dr. Box seconded. The motion passed 12-0.

Presentation: Dr. Zachary Adams, IU School of Medicine, presented a [set of definitions](#) related to trauma and adversity and recommended their adoption by the Commission. Two of the definitions come from the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, and one is from the Adverse Childhood Experiences study, which is endorsed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Dr. Adams explained that the definitions, if approved, could be used to inform state RFPs and other initiatives. And he noted that the trauma subcommittee is also working on an online resource hub for trauma and resilience information.

Discussion: Chief Justice Rush noted that the Commission's approval of the definitions would not be binding on other agencies, but just for the Commission. She also noted the particular importance of the concept of resisting retraumatization of children, as seen in definition number two.

Action: Senator Houchin moved the Commission adopt the recommended definitions. Christine Blessinger seconded, and the motion passed 12-0.

5. Strategic Priority: Educational Outcomes

Presentation: Christy Berger, Todd Bess, and Kristen Martin presented the work of IDOE and the Positive Discipline Subcommittee of the Educational Outcomes Task Force. Christy explained that HEA 1421-2018 required IDOE to produce a [guide for schools](#) on implementing positive discipline. Kristen and Todd described how the subcommittee spoke into the guide and how they hope to help disseminate it, as well as some of the barriers they identified to implementing the guide's recommendations—principally around information-sharing. The team [recommended](#) the Commission's endorsement of the guide, as well as additional promotion of the information-sharing app to help local teams collaborate to better serve youth.

Discussion: There was discussion about the Children's Commission information sharing app, which provides legal guidance to child-serving professionals on how to legally and appropriately share information about a child they are serving. Todd Bess agreed to promote the app through the Principals' Association, and the Commission agreed that additional, renewed efforts to promote the app were needed. Chief Justice Rush asked Todd whether he thinks that the guide will be well received by principals, and he said he did.

Rep. Summers asked about who was involved with creating the guide and specifically whether there was input from African-Americans. She pointed out that the use of the term "reentry" in the guide creates a mistaken impression of criminal justice involvement when that's not what's intended. She also noted the reference to black boys and black girls on the front page was problematic. She stated that the guide should be reviewed for cultural competency before being approved.

Dave Powell asked about the inclusion of Title IX and sexual harassment issues in the guide. Todd Bess explained that that wasn't necessarily the intent of the guide. He noted that the subcommittee will be turning next to bullying and cyberbullying in the context of overall school engagement, and that may be a place to work on harassment issues.

Senator Breaux asked whether JauNae Hanger of the Children's Policy and Law Initiative had been involved with the discipline guide, and the team replied that JauNae was on the Educational Outcomes Task Force, as well as the subcommittee. Senator Breaux also asked for additional information about the information sharing app.

Bernice Corley noted that the use of positive discipline guide is voluntary for schools, and she asked whether there would be any data collection about what types of discipline practices schools were using. Christy Berger responded that there is no formal data tracking in place yet, but that the school safety office was considering ways to collect that information, so she would pass along the suggestion to that office.

Senator Houchin noted that she would be more comfortable waiting to approve the guide until after the guide is revised for cultural competency and the possible inclusion of sexual harassment.

Action: The vote to approve the guide was tabled until the next Commission meeting, with a request to the Educational Outcomes Task Force and the Equity, Inclusion, and Cultural Competence Committee to conduct a cultural competence review of the document.

Presentation: Maggie Novak, consultant for FSSA, presented a summary of the Birth to Five strategic planning initiative of FSSA's Office of Early Childhood and Out of School Learning (slides 36-41 of the [meeting PowerPoint](#)).

6. Committee Updates

Presentation: Rep. Wendy McNamara presented an update on the work of the Child Services Oversight Committee. Prior to presenting her update, she noted that the teachers in her school would greatly benefit from the FAQ section of the positive school discipline guide. Evansville is engaged in a thorough and holistic initiative related to social emotional learning, and the guide fits well with what they are doing in her district.

Rep. McNamara stated that the Oversight Committee met in late May to hear a one-year update from DCS on its progress implementing the recommendations from the [CWG report](#). She noted that the agency is working on total institutional change, including mindsets, philosophies, and practices, which takes time.

Rep. McNamara noted that the Committee was asked to look at the attorney model and that the recommendation was that DCS continue to employ in-house attorneys.

Rep. McNamara reported on several actions DCS has taken over the past year in fulfillment of the recommendations, and noted that case numbers, attorney and FCM caseloads, the FCM-to-supervisor ratio, and staff turnover are all trending downward, which is a positive sign.

Presentation: Tyler Brown presented a brief update on the work of the Data Sharing and Mapping Committee. He noted that the Committee is working on updating the content of the information sharing app.

Presentation: Kathryn Dolan presented an update of the Communications Committee's work. She noted that the Committee is prepared to promote the annual report upon its approval at the next meeting. For the information sharing app, she stated that the Communications Committee feels strongly that the focus should be on internal communication within the agencies on the Commission, particularly including training on the app in agency onboarding.

Discussion: Senator Breaux asked about efforts to train legislative staff on the app. Kathryn said she would ask Gabby McLemore of the Communications Committee to help set up a training for legislative staff. Kathryn added that all Commission agencies, including the courts, need to do better internal communication for their own respective agencies.

Senator Houchin offered that the legislators would include a blurb about the app in their constituent newsletters. Kathryn agreed that a one-paragraph format would be useful for all agencies and the Communications Committee would provide that.

7. Executive Director Update

Presentation: Julie noted that the Equity, Inclusion, and Cultural Competency Committee had provided a written update, and that all committees would be transitioning to written updates for future meetings, except when they have a substantive item to present.

Julie provided an update on the strategic planning process, noting that Casey Family Programs is supporting the Commission to work with consultants from the Indiana Youth Institute, and that a survey would be going out soon to gather input for the new strategic plan. There will also be an opportunity for Commission members to be interviewed and offer more input. Community feedback gathered by the Executive Director over the past year will also be incorporated into the new plan. Julie asked for Commission members to volunteer for a strategic planning committee, which will meet for one half day to review the data and shape the draft plan.

Julie reminded the Commission members that she had sent them a draft of the annual report content and asked for feedback from Commission members, noting that the content would be sent to design two days after the meeting.

Julie announced a final screening of the film “Resilience” followed by a panel of state-level leaders on how trauma is being addressed in state systems on July 18, as well as an all-day event the following day featuring Dr. Anda who designed the ACES study.

8. Commission Chair Update

Chief Justice Rush tabled her update to the Commission on the National Judicial Opioid Initiative.

9. Commission Discussion

Rep. Summers raised the question of grandparents raising grandchildren and stated that people in that situation need help and resources and they don’t know where to turn. She asked what the Commission can do to help her answer questions she is receiving from grandparents in this situation.

Chief Justice Rush suggested adding this issue to the Commission’s strategic plan and having a presentation on what the state is currently doing. She asked that Rep. Summers suggest people to serve on the subcommittee that will look into this.

Senator Houchin suggested also looking at the data on parents who have died of opioid overdoses, in anticipation of a loss of potential kinship caregivers in the future when those who have been impacted by addiction will not be available for their grandchildren.

10. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 12:16 p.m.