



# Commission on Improving the Status of Children in Indiana

## Meeting Minutes

Commission on Improving the Status of Children in Indiana

Wednesday, October 23, 2019

Indiana State Library, Author's 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
- Jay Chaudhary, Director, Division of Mental Health and Addiction
- 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
- Chris Naylor, Executive Director, Indiana Prosecuting Attorneys Council
- Justice Loretta Rush, Chief Justice of Indiana
- Terry Stigdon, Director, Indiana Department of Child Services
- Dr. Jennifer Sullivan, M.D., Secretary, Indiana Family and Social Services Administration
- Representative Vanessa Summers

### 1. Welcome and Introductions

Chief Justice Rush called the meeting to order at 10:00 and welcomed all participants and guests.

2. Consent Agenda

**Action:** The minutes of the August 14 meeting were approved by the Commission.

**Action:** Rep. Summers moved, and Susan Lightfoot seconded, the appointment of Rep. Ed Clere to the Child Services Oversight Committee, and the appointment of Rep. Clere and Rep. Melanie Wright as co-chairs. The motion passed 12-0.

3. Executive Director Update

**Presentation:** Julie Whitman gave a brief explanation of the [Birth to Five strategic plan](#) that has been developed by FSSA, and explained the request of FSSA that the Children's Commission provide oversight for the implementation of the plan.

**Discussion:** Chief Justice Rush explained that the Executive Committee had met with Dr. Sullivan on the plan and agreed it would be good for the Commission to oversee the work. The Chief Justice asked that the Commission vote on the request in December.

**Presentation:** Julie presented a summary of progress on the objectives in the current strategic plan (slides 5-14 in the [meeting PowerPoint](#)), as well as a first draft of the next strategic plan (slides 15-40). Julie requested the Commission members' feedback on the proposed new strategic plan by November 1.

**Discussion:** It was agreed that a revised version of the new strategic plan would be voted upon in December.

**Presentation:** Julie also presented a [2020 calendar of Commission and Executive Committee meetings](#) and asked for the Commission's approval. It was noted that the meeting calendar is at the discretion of the chair and so no vote is required.

4. Strategic Priority: Juvenile Justice and Cross-System Youth

**Presentation:** Judge Holly Harvey presented the [report and recommendations](#) of a work group on Commercially Sexually Exploited Children (CSEC) she had chaired, which was tasked with examining the statutory language related to CHINS 3.5 cases. The work group asked for the Commission to adopt its recommendations, which are to eliminate the language requiring a child to admit or deny having been trafficked, and to require the appointment of counsel for the child in every CHINS 3.5 (CSEC) case.

**Discussion:** Senator Houchin asked whether a prosecutor had been involved in the work group. Judge Harvey explained that prosecutors are not typically involved in CHINS cases; rather, the parties typically include a DCS attorney and a public defender. Senator Houchin felt that it was important that the prosecutors be consulted for their input.

**Action:** The item was tabled pending review by IPAC.

**Presentation:** Judge Kim Dowling presented a [report and recommendations](#) from a second CSEC work group, which had been tasked by the General Assembly—through the Children's Commission—to study the employment by DCS of a human trafficking coordinator, including the duties and responsibilities of such a position and its collaboration with other entities in the state working on trafficking issues. Judge Dowling explained the group's process and conclusion and asked for approval of the report.

**Discussion:** Terry Stigdon affirmed that DCS was in agreement with the recommendations of the report.

**Action:** Senator Houchin moved approval of the report and recommendations. Senator Breaux seconded and the motion passed 14-0.

5. Strategic Priority: Child Safety and Services

**Presentation:** Kara Wood of Casey Family Programs gave an overview of the Family First Prevention and Services Act, from a federal perspective.

6. Strategic Priority: Educational Outcomes

**Presentation:** Christy Berger of IDOE presented the changes that had been made to the Comprehensive Positive Discipline Guide, based on a review of the guide by the Commission's Equity, Inclusion, and Cultural Competence Committee, and asked for the Commission's endorsement of the revised guide.

**Discussion:** Senator Houchin asked whether the guide included information on when arrest of a student is appropriate. Christy said that it does not, because that information is covered in the Department's School Safety guidance, including the training institutes that are put on for school safety staff and the guidance that does with those. Rep. Summers commented that the guide is about discipline, and arrest is different from discipline.

**Action:** Rep. Lightfoot moved Commission endorsement of the positive discipline guide, and Rep. Summers seconded. The vote was 8-1 in favor of endorsing the guide. As Commission actions require a majority of members for approval, the motion failed.

7. Strategic Priority: Mental Health and Substance Abuse

**Presentation:** Dr. Leslie Hulvershorn presented a brief update of the work of the Task Force, and then presented information on evidence based mental health interventions for justice-involved youth. She asked the Commission for feedback about how they would like to see the information disseminated.

**Discussion:** Chief Justice Rush asked that the information be put into a document that could be distributed broadly.

8. Committee Updates

Committees submitted written updates.

9. Commission Discussion

There were no new topics raised by the Commission.

10. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 12:10 p.m.