



Commission on Improving the Status of Children in Indiana

Meeting Minutes

Commission on Improving the Status of Children in Indiana
Wednesday, August 16, 2023
Indiana Government Center South

- Christine Blessinger, Director, Division of Youth Services, Department of Correction
- Dr. Lindsay Weaver, 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
- Senator Stacey Donato
- Justin Forkner, Chief Administrative Officer, Indiana Office of Judicial Administration
- Kory George, Chief Probation Officer, Wayne County Probation Department
- John Hammond IV, Office of the Governor
- Zac Jackson, Director, State Budget Agency
- Dr. Katie Jenner, Secretary of Education
- Chris Naylor, Executive Director, Indiana Prosecuting Attorneys Council
- Todd Rokita, Indiana Attorney General (non-voting member)
- Dana Kenworthy, Court of Appeals of Indiana
- Dr. Maria Finnell (non-voting member), (Dr. Dan Rusyniak, M.D., Secretary), Indiana Family and Social Services Administration
- Eric Miller, Director, Indiana Department of Child Services
- Representative Vanessa Summers
- Michael Owens, Youth Commission Member
- Aly Leonard, Youth Commission Member

1. Welcome

Senator Donato called the meeting to order at 10:00am and welcomed guests. She also announced the Commission's two new Youth Representatives, Michael Owens and Aly Leonard.

2. Consent Agenda

Action: To approve the [minutes from the June meeting](#), was motioned by Kory George, seconded by Jay Chaudry, and approved unanimously 12-0.

3. Youth Justice Oversight Committee Report

Mark Fairchild
Leslie Dunn

Youth Justice Oversight Committee Report Presentation

The presentation can be found on slides 3-36 of the [meeting PowerPoint](#). Mark gave a brief overview of the [Youth Justice Oversight Committee](#) (YJOC), reminding members and guests of its origin from HEA1359 and its relationship with the Commission. The report will need to be approved by CISC members. Mark thanked Justice David for his work as chair and mentioned there will be a new chair appointed in the future. Mark recounted the YJOC's goals and acknowledged the effort put into creating this report by all involved in the subcommittees. Mark introduced Leslie Dunn, who covered the report's highlights and the recommendations produced for future action.

Leslie introduced herself as the appointed councilperson for this project and shared that Justice David could not attend the Commission meeting today but referred guests to read his letter at the beginning of the report. Leslie stated that over 100 diverse stakeholders from across the state and 20 people within the Office of Court Services helped compile the report. Regarding the Data Sharing goals, Leslie shared their aim was to build the state's capacity to collect, analyze, and report data with uniformity and consistency. A data dictionary was subsequently created and is attached to the report. Leslie shared that the YJOC recommends communication with 20 counties to understand better the data they collect and how they collect it, while also introducing alternative options to data storing. Additionally, Leslie reports that YJOC will conduct a pilot study with 5 counties with the goal of implementing data collection procedures. Leslie moved to the Screening and Assessment Group, which needed to establish a validated screening tool which would be approved by the Indiana Judicial Conference. Indiana Youth Assessment System (IYAS) was the validated tool selected and YJOC determined more training is needed regarding this multifaceted tool and how it can help make informed decisions. Leslie moved on to the Diversion goal and acknowledged its definition and how prosecutors make decisions. Bernice Corley echoed the importance of involving early diversion decisions made by officials other than the prosecutor. Leslie responds that they will make this broad interpretation of the definition be explained in grants. Leslie mentioned that counties with diversion programs are listed in the report and that informal adjustment programs need to be tailored to the risks of each youth. Leslie asked for support from members in helping spread the word to counties about grant opportunities, especially rural counties. Regarding Behavioral Health, the YJOC recommended that mental health assessments be done through community mental health providers rather than being assessed through the Department of Correction (DOC). They also recommended multidisciplinary teams models for high acuity youth. Regarding Grant Processes, Leslie covered the deliverables and elaborated on the idea of providing more money to the rural, under-resourced counties. She also mentioned that because Diversion has a definition with parameters, Community Alternatives mean alternatives to detention. It is to be determined by what counties say they need, regarding at what point (pre-adjudication, post-DOC, etc.) these grants are administered and used. For Transitional Services, Leslie mentioned that more communication and understanding is needed regarding what programs exist. The YJOC will make subsequent recommendations with more information. Leslie explains that juvenile probation standards were created and approved.

Leslie talked about the new language related to juvenile justice and a new reporting system that does not have the bandwidth to collect the requested information. Leslie mentioned the new requirements from HB1001-2023 that take effect July 1st, including the court must provide a rationale for youth detention if they are detained despite not scoring high risk on a detention tool, intake officers must complete a risk screening tool during preliminary inquiry and provide the results to all involved, and informal adjustments must not exceed 6 months. Training must be facilitated and will be created for counties to access. Leslie indicated that the next steps for YJOC will be discussed with the new chair.

Mark spoke about the role CISC and partnering committees and agencies will play in the next steps of implementing the YJOC recommendations. Mark stressed the role CISC plays in the implementation process. Mark mentioned there will be a great amount of education and outreach in the grant solicitation process, focusing on supporting smaller counties. CISC will not only be involved in information sharing but policy and legislative support at all levels.

Discussion: Bernice Corley asked for clarification on the consequences of a court reassuming jurisdiction for a child not in custody, but in need of transitional services. Leslie explains that the Department of Child Services (DCS) would pay for the transitional services and hopes that they will be expanded. Leslie explains these situations should be on a case-by-case basis.

Action: To approve the Youth Justice Oversight Committee Report was motioned by Representative DeVon, seconded by Judge Kenworthy, and approved unanimously 12-0.

4. Legislative Affairs Process

Senator Donato

The presentation can be found on slides 37-53 of the [meeting PowerPoint](#). Senator Donato explained how CISC and the legislature often work in parallel towards the same goal. Mark explained a legislative affairs process will help when something that fits within CISC's mission, vision, and goals, or even something unanticipated, there is a process for addressing it. Mark described the current practice and the difference between a recommendation and an endorsement. Mark stressed the importance of impartial information sharing so that the Commission stays within its mission. He mentioned the current practice of monitoring legislation related to children. Representative Summers asks if Mark is requesting a major change in the process, leading to Mark talking about the options available to the commission. Mark described the first potential level of involvement/activities. The first involves a full commission vote on any action. This includes concerns for when things quickly arise in the fast-paced legislative session. The second level of involvement is a legislative affairs agenda, containing issues the Commission is paying close attention to, that would be voted on by the full Commission. Both options stress the neutrality of legislation, and the Executive Director and Commission staff take on roles as educators to legislators. Mark welcomed ideas and discussion regarding the proposal and reminded members that another option is to continue the current process, however something needs to be formalized.

Discussion: Bernice thanked Mark for bringing this up and shared she did not have a preference moving forward. Representative DeVon mentioned that he enjoyed the proposal being on the table and that the Commission lacks notoriety with legislators. Mark agreed that introducing himself, the Commission, and how it can be a tool would be helpful. The idea of having an emergency meeting in January, should the Commission vote on the first option, was mentioned by Senator Donato. Mark mentioned that it is a possibility to create a policy committee, however it must remain public if so. Representative Summers also mentioned the lack of awareness people have of the Commission. She proposed options like a reception during session, where members act as ambassadors to educate their constituents. Mark echoed the idea and offers options like State House Day, partnering with an agency, or having their own open house. Mark explained the Commission has a larger capacity to do more with funding and staff. Representative DeVon mentioned that in the past previous Executive Directors have introduced themselves in the joint House and Senate committee hearing, and he hopes to help organize Mark participating in that in the next session. Multiple members echoed the important opportunity the Commission has to convey its message and its uniqueness and expertise. Judge Kenworthy expressed the availability of the Commission to those who have great ideas. She expresses a preference for the second option due to how quickly legislation moves and how organized it is. She requests that the December Commission meeting is well attended, and that the drafted legislative agenda be sent out in advance for Commission members to consider. Mark agrees and mentions that whatever path is chosen, the draft will be out a month before the meeting. Representative Summers explained a concern about the timing of session because it is difficult to anticipate other's legislative ideas. Mark mentioned that language regarding relevant topics will be left broad in the event specific issues are brought up in legislation, like daycare. Rep Summers mentions the need to have the language and anticipated ideas ready by October's meeting to prepare for December. Mark affirms that by saying October's meeting will include a vote on a legislative process followed by discussion about what to include on the agenda, allowing flexibility to edit the agenda once issues and ideas are more clearly identifiable. Zac Jackson asked Mark for clarification on how conflicting views from Commission members are discussed among committees. Rep Summers explains various advocacy roles members take on, and Mark reminded the Commission that he would not testify for or against legislation that the Executive Committee or

the Commission has had time to discuss and unanimously agree. Mark reminded the Commission that he speaks on behalf of what the Commission agrees with; if there is no consensus, Mark is transparent about that and maintains neutrality. Senator Donato invited agency executives to reach out to express concerns or ideas. Mark reiterated the importance of coming together as a collective of state agencies, political parties, and branches of government recommend what is best for Hoosier Children.

5. Executive Director and Committee Updates

Mark introduced Erin Reynolds, the new Intern for the Children’s Commission, and said that a new part-time administrative support staff will be brought on to help with capacity building. He mentioned that the annual report will be a deeper reflection of the story of the CISC due to its 10-year anniversary. Mark also mentioned the family and youth engagement summit is set to happen in a 2-day, virtual event in December.

6. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned, motioned by Representative DeVon, and seconded by Representative Summers.

Next Meeting

Wednesday, October 18, 2023, 10 a.m. – 12 p.m. Indiana Government Center South, Conference Room A, 302 W. Washington St., Indianapolis, IN 46204.