



Commission on Improving the Status of Children

Indiana Selected for Innovative BEST Youth Initiative

Indiana is proud to announce its selection for the Building Ecosystems Statewide for Thriving (BEST) Youth Initiative, a groundbreaking three-year program led by the Forum for Youth Investment. This initiative aims to enhance outcomes for youth ages 5-24 through collaborative, cross-system approaches.

Indiana was chosen for its:

1. Commitment to improving youth outcomes through strategic system alignment
2. Readiness to shift from reactive to proactive, cross-sector solutions
3. Dedication to engaging diverse voices, especially those with lived experiences

Our state team brings together Indiana's Department of Education, Division of Mental Health and Addiction, Department of Health, Commission on Improving the Status of Children and many other state agency partners. The team also includes four individuals with lived experiences: four youth representing each system and one parent, ensuring a diversity of perspectives. The three-year program begins in the summer of 2024.

"We're thrilled to launch the BEST Youth Initiative this summer with a national convening, bringing together select states to shape a shared vision and strategy in partnership with youth and families with lived experience. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the urgent need for collaboration across systems, capacity to implement strategy, and improved stakeholder alignment," said Mishaela Durán, Forum CEO. "Through the BEST Youth Initiative, we're answering this call by empowering states to create interconnected systems that truly serve all youth. This collaborative effort marks a significant step towards reimagining how we support young people nationwide."

The BEST Youth Initiative will unfold in three stages:

1. Discovery: Landscape analysis
2. Co-Design: Strategic planning
3. Co-Create: Implementation support

Throughout the initiative, Indiana will participate in a peer learning community with other selected states, sharing knowledge through collaborative inquiry and reflection. Our goal is to create an enabling environment that fosters ongoing innovation to improve life outcomes for youth, with cross-system reforms guided by insights from those with lived experience.

“Indiana’s participation in the BEST Youth Initiative will allow us to expand and improve the ability of our state systems to work together for the good of all Hoosiers,” said Mark Fairchild, Executive Director of the Commission on Improving the Status of Children. “The most important aspect of this initiative is its respect and integration of youth served directly by those systems. Decisions made by our state must be informed by the lives they impact whenever possible.”

For more information about Indiana’s participation in the BEST Youth Initiative, please contact Michelle Clark at mclarke@doe.in.gov or Mark Fairchild at mark.fairchild@courts.in.gov

To learn more about the national BEST Youth Initiative, visit forumfyi.org/BEST.