**Commission on Improving the**

**Status of Children in Indiana**

**Child Services Oversight Committee**

**December 20, 2022**

**1 p.m.**

**Indiana Statehouse, Ways and Means Committee Room 404**

**Meeting Minutes**

* Call to order
* Welcome and introductions

**Department of Child Services (DCS) Director Terry Stigdon Presentation:**

* Director Stigdon outlined operational goals of the organization consisting of people, service, finance, and IT goals
* Accomplishments seen within DCS consisting of:
	+ Child Safety with fewer children in care, since agency high point (2017) there has been a 54% decrease in residential placements and 45% fewer children in foster care.
	+ Approved Prevention plan that allows for access to new IV-E federal funding to support prevention programing
	+ Adoption subsidies floor
	+ Improved Transparency
	+ Out-of-state background checks
		- New position has been created dedicated to helping providers with out of state child protective services history checks
	+ Pre and post guardianship adoptive services
		- Services began July 1
	+ Began studies to evaluate service provider rates
* Chief Financial Officer Department of Child Services Aaron Atwell
	+ Rate Improvements
		- Home and community based rates
			* Contract with Milliman
			* As impartial third party, Milliman will:
				+ Recommend evidence-based rates
				+ Evaluate recent economic shifts
				+ Utilize provider input
	+ Rates for licensed child placing agencies (LCPAs) and residential providers
		- Improvements in the 2023 rate bulletin:
			* Modernizes cost of living adjustment
			* Eliminates penalty for low unit occupancy
			* Established more flexible maximum staffing requirement
		- Maximus to recommend long-term solutions to improve rate processes
			* Help DCS establish rates
			* Helps providers have resources to accept DCS referrals
* Child abuse hotline maned 24/7
	+ Rate of calls hovering between 210K and 240K on track to reach a little over 200K in 2022
	+ Assessments open each month, seeing a normal trend of lower calls during the summer with Educators being the number 1 report source.
* Total DCS cases continue to trend down
* Time it takes for a case to remain open
	+ CHINS 160 days for case closure
		- Down from 220 days
* Indiana family preservation services have help lead to this decline
* Children in foster care continues to trend down
	+ 50% of kids in foster care are living with relatives
		- Relatives do receive some support
* Adoptions
	+ This past November there was more than 290 adoptions around the state, more than last year
* Workforce
	+ As of the end of November a little over 200 family case managers short 123 family case managers in training at the moment
	+ Workforce issues have impacted all areas within child welfare
	+ Indiana law requires no more family case managers to manage no more than
		- 12 cases related to initial assessments
		- 12 families with in home services
		- 13 children monitored in out of home placements
	+ Statewide staffing met 89% of need as of 6/30/22
	+ 207 additional FCMs needed to meet 12/12/13 standard
	+ 13 of 19 regions had at least 90% of staff needed to meet the 12/12/13 standard
* Challenges
	+ Recruitment and retention of family case managers
	+ Access to appropriate treatment for youth with complex needs
	+ Supports for unlicensed kinship caregivers
	+ Provider workforce
	+ Recruitment and retention of foster parents
* Budget Proposal/Changes
	+ Establish operating margin for nonprofit providers
	+ Increase foster care maintenance payment rate
	+ Increase foster care maintenance payment rate
	+ Establish monthly stipend for unlicensed kinship caregivers
	+ Provide ongoing appropriation for Hoosier Families First changes
	+ Fund internal agency changes and compensation study
	+ Implement home and community-based rate study
* Director Shoshanna Everhart, Director of DCS Ombudsman Bureau
	+ Brief overview of the Bureau
	+ Appointed role of director in September of 2020
	+ Has worked in child welfare for over 40 years
	+ Agency created by statute
	+ Been in operational since 2010
	+ Three full-time assistant Ombudsman
	+ DCS Ombudsman is not apart of DCS, but rather a separate agency
	+ All annual reports are available at IN.gov
* 2021 report highlights
	+ Since 202 bureau has added an experienced ombudsman to the staff
	+ 2022 very experienced ombudsman had resigned after completing MSW
	+ Staff was able to retain good response time even with brief reduction in staff
	+ Continue to work to improve case management system
	+ Completed plan for creating records retention to archive files
	+ Office continues to provide services to constituent through hybrid work schedule utilizing phone calls, zooms, etc
	+ Advocate for policy rule and regulation
* Three ways of responding to an inquiry
	+ Information and referral
		- Provide education regarding DCS protocol and procedure
	+ Assist
		- Office makes a connection between client and managerial staff at the county level to explain concerns
	+ Formal complaint process
		- Required to be done in writing
		- Online and physical form available
* In 2021 information referral numbers were at 1,345 increase of 147 from previous year
* Assists were at 133 down 7 from previous year
	+ Process of assist is often most helpful, often a key to mediating and solving issues by connecting individuals for conversation
* 132 cases opened in 2021 with two of them being the more intensive investigations
* Four areas of concern that seem to come up in complaints
	+ Case planning
	+ Placement of children
	+ Child safety issues
	+ Removals
* Each completed complaint is given validity standard
* Report back to DCS findings with a request for response within 60 days
* In 2021 less than 1% of cases had full merit findings
* 15% had merit and non-merit findings
* 79% were non-merit findings
* 13% of cases had other resolutions
* Active member of the US ombudsman association participating in on-going training

Tara Rothchford, on behalf of Rae Feller Staff person at the GAL CASA Office

* Certified CASA programs in 88 of the 92 counties
* Slightly over 4K active volunteers serving 23,290 CHINS cases of those cases 91.6% were served by a CASA advocate

Senator Jon Ford

* Assigning council to all kids in child welfare system
* Created independent study committee to research this matter
* Council for kids concept has been around since the mid-60s
* 7 States without any council for kids and Indiana is one of them
* Three ways council is provided
	+ Client direct legal representation
	+ Best interest representation
	+ Varied representation based on age
* Youth feels this helps them to be recognized in the situation
* Expedites time lines
* Increases rates of kinship placement

Representative Clere closed the meeting by thanking Julie Whitman for her work on the Commission.