

Commission on Improving the Status of Children in Indiana

Communications Plan

Whitman, Julie

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2201 5th Avenue South, Suite 100
Birmingham, AL 35233
(205) 254-0129
www.clarusgroup.net

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I. Executive Summary

A. Background

Established in 2013 by SB125, the Commission on Improving the Status of Children in Indiana (CISC) is a multi-branch initiative working toward creating a future in which every child in Indiana will have a safe and nurturing environment and be afforded opportunities to grow into a healthy and productive adult. The Commission studies issues concerning vulnerable youth, reviews and makes recommendations concerning pending legislation and promotes information sharing and best practices.

Driven by its commitment to improve the status of children in Indiana, the Commission adopted its first strategic plan in 2016. Developed through a collaborative planning process, the strategic plan prioritizes and aligns the work of the Commission and its partners in four key areas: Child Safety & Services, Juvenile Justice & Cross-System Youth, Mental Health & Substance Abuse and Educational Outcomes. The planning process also identified a need for a communications plan to support implementation of the strategic plan and coordination of Commission activities.

B. Purpose of the Communications Plan

The communications plan presented in this report was developed by the Commission's standing committee on communications following a day-long planning session held in May, 2016. The plan is also informed by background data collected from a work session on communication held during the CISC's strategic planning process in September 2016. The purpose of the plan is to:

- Support CISC in achieving its goals
- Promote alignment of CISC stakeholders
- Prioritize communication activities to support CISC and its strategic plan
- Ensure resources for communication are utilized effectively

The plan addresses a need to develop and formalize foundational systems and processes to facilitate communication of the CISC utilizing Commission partner agencies.

C. Plan Structure and Goals

The plan outlines key audiences and messages to support implementation of the plan. The plan also includes objectives and action steps that drive toward two primary goals:

- **Goal A: Strengthen communication among the Commission, Task Forces, Standing Committees, and Commission Partners**
- **Goal B: Advance the work of the Commission through strong communication with external audiences**

These goals will be achieved through building structures and processes to support strong communication over the long term, while addressing shorter term communication needs. The plan also includes several consultant recommendations for leveraging the plan going forward.

Finally, the plan includes several tools to support timely and effective implementation of the plan. The first tool is a template for a work plan that will serve as the management tool for implementation of the plan by the communications committee, Commission executive director and other key stakeholders and partner agencies (Attachment B). The second is a Stakeholder Map which will help plan and coordinate communication activities going forward (Attachment C).

II. Key Audiences

The Commission on Improving the Status of Children in Indiana believes its mission of improving the lives of Hoosier children can best be achieved through a collaborative effort. The communications plan targets a number of key audiences who can join in support of this mission.

A. Internal Audiences & Commission Partners

- Commission Members
- Commission Executive Committee
- Task Force Chairs and Members
- Task Force Subcommittee Members
- Standing Committee Chairs and Members
- Indiana Department of Education
- Indiana General Assembly
- Indiana Department of Child Services
- Indiana Supreme Court
- Indiana Prosecuting Attorneys Council
- Indiana Public Defender Council
- Indiana Family and Social Services Administration
- Indiana State Department of Health
- Indiana Department of Correction, Division of Youth Services
- Indiana State Budget Agency
- Indiana Family and Social Services Administration, Division of Mental Health and Addiction
- Office of the Indiana Attorney General
- Office of the Governor

B. External Audiences

- Media
- General Public
- Non-governmental youth workers

III. Key Messages

The key component of any communication plan is a clear understanding of the essential elements the organization wishes to communicate, or its key messages. Once identified and crafted, key messages become the cornerstone of all communications. The Commission’s strategic plan provides a strong foundation for its key messages. The communications committee has also begun to outline some additional key messages that will allow the Commission to provide a clear, consistent message about its work and goals. *The key messages below should be considered draft and should be reviewed, revised, added to and confirmed as the communications committee works to implement the plan.*

A. Mission and Vision

- **We have a critical mission and bold vision for Indiana’s children.** Our mission is to improve the status of children in Indiana. Our vision is that every child in Indiana will have a safe and nurturing environment and be afforded opportunities to grow into a healthy and productive adult.
- **We have leadership committed to our mission and vision.** Our Commission consists of eighteen members representing all three branches of state government. As the Commission has grown and matured in its work, we engaged a full-time Executive Director to support the Commission and promote and execute the decisions and policies set by the Commission.

B. Our Goals & Strategic Plan

- **Our strategic plan focuses our efforts and resources to create the greatest impact.** We adopted a strategic plan in 2016 as a focused framework to guide the work of the Commission through 2019. The strategic plan will help align our resources and efforts to make the greatest impact on behalf of Hoosier children, especially the most vulnerable.
- **We have four key goals we are working toward over the next few years.** The strategic plan is built around these four goals:
 1. **Child Safety & Services.** Support the well-being of Hoosier children by promoting a continuum of prevention and protection services for vulnerable youth and their families
 2. **Juvenile Justice & Cross-System Youth.** Promote interagency communication and collaboration to improve prevention, outcomes and address the unique and complex needs of Juvenile Justice and/or cross-system involved youth
 3. **Mental Health & Substance Abuse.** Support creative and effective methods of improving assessment, access to treatment, and wrap-around resources for vulnerable youth and households in need of mental health and substance abuse services
 4. **Educational Outcomes.** Promote interagency collaboration to better connect vulnerable youth with appropriate education and career pathways that lead to successful completion of high school or equivalency, post- secondary education, job certification, and sustainable employment

- **Implementation of our strategic plan is our top priority.** We have formed four Task Forces, which are actively working to implement our strategic plan. The Task Forces represent agencies across state government, as well as local partners, who can help us achieve the plan’s goals.

C. Collaboration

- **Safety and well-being of Hoosier children is a shared priority.** The Commission brings together leadership from all three branches of state government to address the most pressing issues for children in Indiana, reinforcing the understanding that the safety and well-being of Indiana’s children is a shared priority for each branch of government.
- **Collaboration across branches directly benefits Hoosier children.** The “three branch” approach of the CISC promotes collaboration, increases effectiveness, minimizes costly duplication of effort and leverages resources to promote best practice, policies and programs for vulnerable children in Indiana.
- **Collaboration across regions of the state is critical.** Our Commission represents geographic regions across the state of Indiana. This promotes local awareness of our work and ensures our work is informed by many perspectives.

D. Our Impact

- **The CISC is making a positive difference in the lives of vulnerable children in Indiana.** We use our collective voice to endorse and promote important issues. Recent examples include:
 - Publication of the *Indiana Youth Information Sharing Guide*, a comprehensive 204 page white paper about sharing information and records related to children and youth.
 - Development of a mobile application for smartphones and tablets, and a desktop application for computers containing most of the *Indiana Youth Information Sharing Guide* contents in a portable, graphic and user-friendly format.
 - Endorsement of a recommendation to increase representation on local community corrections boards to support juvenile justice interests.
 - Endorsement of efforts to increase fiscal resources for local juvenile courts and counties to develop and sustain innovative, evidence-based juvenile justice programs.

IV. Goals, Objectives and Action Steps

Plan Goals and Structure

For the purposes of the communications plan, the following definitions apply:

- Goals: The intended broad, crucial outcomes of communication efforts
- Objectives: The approaches used to achieve goals
- Action Steps: The measurable steps taken to achieve the strategy

Goal A: Strengthen communication among the Commission, Task Forces, Standing Committees, and Commission Partners

The Commission is best positioned to achieve its mission when the Commission, Task Forces, Standing Committees and Commission Partners are aligned around the Commission's work and priorities. Strong communication can support this alignment and promote information sharing down through the organizations represented on the Commission and partner agencies, ultimately creating a strong network of support for the Commission and its work. The communications committee can serve as a conduit for stronger communication.

Objective A1: Facilitate communication between and among the Executive Director, Executive Committee, Commission, Task Forces, and Standing Committees

Each entity of the Commission is critical to its work and accomplishing the priorities of the strategic plan. As each Task Force and Standing Committee focuses on a specific priority area of the Commission's work, it is critical to leverage this work in order to support collaboration and avoid duplication of efforts.

- A1a: Establish vehicles for regular and formal updates between the Executive Director, Executive Committee, Commission, Task Forces, and Committees, including specific vehicles for Task Forces to regularly update the Executive Director on outcomes, communication requests or other items as needed
- A1b: Establish communication as a standing item on Task Force, Subcommittee and Standing Committee agendas to capture items the Commission would like communicated through stakeholder networks, and items which the task forces and committees would like disseminated

Objective A2: Leverage stakeholder networks to promote a shared understanding among Commission partner agencies regarding issues related to vulnerable children

The Commission believes its mission of improving the lives of Hoosier children can best be achieved through a collaborative effort. The Commission, Task Forces, and Standing Committees have built strong relationships to support the Commission's important work. These relationships can be leveraged to support a broad understanding of issues related to vulnerable children among the Commission's partner agencies.

- A2a: Identify Commission stakeholder networks
- A2b: Identify Task Force and Standing Committee stakeholder networks

- A2c: Develop a process and criteria for determining which messages and outcomes need to be communicated through the stakeholder networks of the Commission and its Committees and Task Forces, and whether those messages should come from the CISC Executive Director or the CISC members to their stakeholders
- A2d: Develop a process for how information will be shared throughout partner agencies, including identification of the most appropriate and effective communication vehicle(s) for each type of message and timing of announcements. *Note: Process should allow flexibility for Executive Director to communicate quickly / as needed regarding emerging issues*

Goal B: Advance the work of the Commission through strong communication with external audiences

The Commission will benefit from continuing its work of engaging the public in its activities and initiatives.

Objective B1: Develop vehicles to effectively communicate the work of the Commission

Communicating the work of the Commission to the general public is an important factor in achieving the vision and mission of the CISC. Steps have already been taken to create a centralized media contact list, which will need to be maintained. Understanding the array of communication vehicles available to the Communications Committee and aligning messages and vehicles effectively will help the Commission better communicate their work to external audiences.

- B1a: Maintain partner agency PIO email list
- B1b: Develop and maintain key media contact list
- B1c: Inventory communication vehicles e.g. website, news releases, social media, mass email, advisory notices, and in-person meetings
- B1d: Formalize process for approving press releases

Objective B2: Develop a process for announcing regularly occurring Commission meetings and activities (ongoing)

Regularly scheduled Commission meetings provide a venue for core Commission activities and information sharing. Publicizing these meetings and other regularly occurring activities in a seamless way will continue to support building strong stakeholder networks and public awareness.

- B2a: Identify the most effective vehicle(s) for communicating regularly occurring Commission meetings and activities

Objective B3: Develop a process for sharing outcomes and special initiatives of Commission (as identified)

The Commission is already creating impact on behalf of Indiana's children. As the Commission continues implementing its strategic plan, this impact and associated outcomes will increase. It is critical to communicate these outcomes and other special initiatives to those who can benefit from this work.

- B3a: Identify criteria for types of information to promote to the public and the media

- B3b: Identify process for capturing outcomes to be shared from CISC meetings
- B3c: Identify the most effective vehicle(s) and develop a process for communicating outcomes and special initiatives
- B3d: Using information developed in B3c, develop targeted communication and outreach efforts as needed to promote specific outcomes or special initiatives

V. Consultant Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on Clarus' observations throughout the planning process and are presented for consideration by the CISC Communications Committee.

1. Review and revise key messages.

Key messages are foundational for ensuring effective and coordinated communication. The key messages outlined in the communications plan are intended as draft statements, and should be routinely reviewed, revised, added to and confirmed by the Communications Committee as the plan is implemented.

2. Review and revise implementation work plan template and stakeholder map.

The communications plan includes two tools to support implementation of the plan: a) a work plan template to serve as a management tool for implementation by the Communications Committee; and b) a stakeholder map to help plan and coordinate communication activities. These tools were pre-populated by Clarus using information gleaned from the communication work session, but should be reviewed and revised by the Communication Committee to best meet the committee's needs going forward.

3. System and Process Development & Evaluation.

The CISC Communications Committee was established in May, 2017 and the Committee immediately undertook the task of developing a Communications Plan to guide its work. Because there were few formal processes in place for communication prior to the development of the newly formed Communications Committee, the Communications Plan is largely focused on development of foundational systems and processes. Once implemented, these systems and processes should be re-evaluated at regular intervals and adjusted as needed to ensure the needs of the CISC are being met.

4. Strategic Communication.

As communication becomes more of a standard practice for the CISC, the Communications Committee should look for opportunities to help the CISC communicate more strategically and proactively. For example, the Communications Committee could work with the Executive Director and Executive Committee to clearly identify what the organization would like to accomplish as a result of communication of the Annual Report, and modify the structure, publication and audience of the report to meet identified goals.

VI. Attachments

- A. Communications Plan Summary Table
- B. Work Plan Template
- C. Stakeholder Mapping Tool
- D. Communications Committee Roles & Responsibilities

A. Communication Plan Summary Table

Commission on Improving the Status of Children in Indiana Communications Plan	
Goals	
A. Strengthen communication among the Commission, Task Forces, Standing Committees, and Commission Partners	B. Advance the work of the Commission through strong communication with external audiences
Objectives and Action Steps	
<p>A1: Facilitate communication between and among the Executive Director, Executive Committee, Commission, Task Forces, and Standing Committees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> A1a: Establish vehicles for regular and formal updates between the Executive Director, Executive Committee, Commission, Task Forces, and Committees, including specific vehicles for Task Forces to regularly update the Executive Director on outcomes, communication requests or other items as needed <input type="checkbox"/> A1b: Establish communication as a standing item on Task Force, Subcommittee and Standing Committee agendas to capture items the Commission would like communicated through stakeholder networks, and items which the task forces and committees would like disseminated 	<p>B1: Develop vehicles to effectively communicate the work of the Commission</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> B1a: Maintain partner agency PIO email list <input type="checkbox"/> B1b: Develop key media contact list <input type="checkbox"/> B1c: Inventory communication vehicles <input type="checkbox"/> B1d: Formalize process for approving press releases
<p>A2: Leverage stakeholder networks to promote a shared understanding among Commission partner agencies regarding issues related to vulnerable children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> A2a: Identify Commission stakeholder networks <input type="checkbox"/> A2b: Identify Task Force and Standing Committee stakeholder networks <input type="checkbox"/> A2c: Develop a process and criteria for determining which messages and outcomes need to be communicated through the stakeholder networks of the Commission and its Committees and Task Forces, and whether those messages should come from the CISC Executive Director or the CISC members to their stakeholders <input type="checkbox"/> A2d: Develop a process for how information will be shared throughout partner agencies, including identification of the most appropriate and effective communication vehicle(s) for each type of message and timing of announcements. <i>Note: Process should allow flexibility for Executive Director to communicate quickly / as needed regarding emerging issues</i> 	<p>B2: Develop a process for announcing regularly occurring Commission meetings and activities (ongoing)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> B2a: Identify the most effective vehicle(s) for communicating regularly occurring commission meetings and activities <p>B3: Develop a process for sharing outcomes and special initiatives of Commission (as identified)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> B3a: Identify criteria for types of information to promote to the public and the media <input type="checkbox"/> B3b: Identify process for capturing outcomes to be shared from CISC meetings <input type="checkbox"/> B3c: Identify the most effective vehicle(s) and develop a process for communicating outcomes and special initiatives <input type="checkbox"/> B3d: Using information developed in B3c, develop targeted communication and outreach efforts as needed to promote specific outcomes or special initiatives

B. Stakeholder Mapping Tool

The stakeholder map below is a tool to help plan and coordinate communication activities. It was partially pre-populated using information gleaned from the communication work session, but should be reviewed and revised by the Communication Committee.

Commission on Improving the Status of Children in Indiana Communications Plan Stakeholder Mapping Tool: 2017																			
Audiences	Communications Vehicles								Messengers										
	Website	Social Media	News Releases / Media	Face-to-Face Meetings	Publications	Trainings	Audience Specific				CISC	Executive Committee	Executive Director	Task Force Co-Chairs	Communications	Legislative Affairs			
Internal Audiences & Commission Partners:																			
Commission Executive Committee																			
Commission Members																			
Task Force Chairs and members																			
Task Force Subcommittee members																			
Standing Committee Chairs and members																			
Indiana Department of Education																			
Indiana General Assembly																			
Indiana Department of Child Services																			
Indiana Supreme Court																			
Indiana Prosecuting Attorneys Council																			
Indiana Public Defender Council																			
Indiana Family and Social Services Administration																			

Indiana State Department of Health																			
Indiana Department of Corrections, Division of Youth Services																			
Indiana State Budget Agency																			
Indiana Family and Social Services Administration, Division of Mental Health and Addiction																			
Office of the Indiana Attorney General																			
Office of the Governor																			
External Audiences:																			
Media																			
Community Partners																			
General Public																			

C. Communications Committee Role & Responsibilities

The CISC approved the following roles and responsibilities of the Communications Committee:

- Develop processes for improved information sharing among Commission members and between Commission members and their agencies, including development and implementation of a comprehensive Communication Plan
- Promote the work of the CISC through the media and other outlets
- Identify ways for CISC to access reports of other organizations doing work in similar areas as CISC
- Promote CISC to the legislature as the preferred entity for vetting potential legislation related to vulnerable children *
- Respond to assignments from the CISC Executive Committee and/or Task Forces
- Work with CISC staff to develop and disseminate the CISC annual report

**The Executive Director and Communications Committee propose moving this responsibility to the Executive Director and/or a yet-to-be created Legislative Committee.*