



Commission on Improving the Status of Children in Indiana

Meeting Minutes

Commission on Improving the Status of Children in Indiana

Wednesday, August 14, 2019

Indiana Government Center South, Conference Room B

- 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
- 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
- Serrilla Blackmon, Interim Director for Children, Division of Mental Health and Addiction
- David Powell, Executive Director, Indiana Prosecuting Attorneys Council
- Justice Loretta Rush, Chief Justice of Indiana
- Terry Stigdon, Director, Indiana Department of Child Services
- Representative Vanessa Summers
- Dr. Jennifer Walthall, M.D., Secretary, Indiana Family and Social Services Administration

1. Welcome and Introductions

Chief Justice Rush called the meeting to order at 10:05 and welcomed all participants and guests.

2. Consent Agenda

Action: The Commission approved the minutes from the July 10, 2019, meeting by a vote of 9-0. The Commission also approved the appointment of Senator Jon Ford as co-chair of the Child Safety and Services Task Force and Tashi Teuschler as co-chair of the Equity, Inclusion, and Cultural Competence Committee by a vote of 9-0.

3. Strategic Priority: Mental Health and Substance Abuse

Presentation: Jason Murrey of DMHA made a presentation on current suicide prevention initiatives in Indiana (slides 4-15 of the [meeting PowerPoint](#)).

Discussion: Rep. Summers asked Jason how much funding he would like to see the state dedicate to suicide prevention, given that there is no current state line-item funding for it. Jason stated that he could use \$1.5 million and show good results, and a dream would be \$10 million. Senator Breaux asked about the data Jason cited that shows Indiana's rate of African-American suicidality is higher than the national average, and asked whether Indiana was also above average for the majority population. Jason did not have that data handy. Senator Breaux said she would appreciate getting the breakdowns. Serrilla Blackmon noted that the Commission had moved the suicide prevention objective to the Mental Health and Substance Abuse Task Force, and that Jason is co-chairing the subcommittee with Dr. Hulvershorn.

Presentation: Dr. Leslie Hulvershorn presented a brief update on the work of the Mental Health and Substance Abuse task force, including work on a list of evidence-based practices for suicide prevention.

Discussion: Bernice Corley asked whether there was follow-up care after a suicide attempt that does not result in death. Dr. Hulvershorn said that was a very common event and that definitely triggers follow-up and flags a need for intensified treatment. Serrilla noted that the infrastructure for doing so consistently across the state is limited. This is called postvention, and the task force will also be looking at recommendations in this area. Chief Justice Rush mentioned "cutting" (also known as non-suicidal self-harm) and asked that the subcommittee also work that into its study and recommendations.

Presentation: Jennifer Tackitt-Dorfmeier of Choices Coordinated Care Solutions presented follow-up information on costs and savings involved with implementing mobile response and stabilization services (MRSS), as requested by the Commission after her presentation at the July 10, 2019 meeting (slides 18-33 of the [meeting PowerPoint](#)). Jennifer described a potential pilot MRSS program to be planned in DCS Region 9 (Hendrix, Putnam, Montgomery, Boone, and Morgan counties). That region was chosen because it contains both rural and metro-area counties.

Discussion: Rep. Summers pointed out that the selected pilot region has a very small African-American population, and therefore the pilot will not yield accurate information on the model's success with youth of color. She stated that when people are setting up new programs, it is important for them to think about the African-American population and ensure they are included in state initiatives, as a matter of cultural competency. Superintendent McCormick suggested also taking the previously presented suicide data into account and targeting the counties that are high in that data as well.

4. Strategic Priority: Educational Outcomes

Presentation: Christy Berger presented an update on a question that arose at the previous meeting on the possibility of including Title IX guidance in the previously presented Comprehensive Positive School Discipline Resource Guide. Christy explained that IDOE feels both topics are so important that they deserve independent treatment. Title IX is covered in a separate guidance document, which was provided to the Commission as a handout.

Brenda Graves-Croom of FSSA presented an update on the Equity, Inclusion, and Cultural Competency committee and the work the group had done to review the Comprehensive Positive School Discipline Resource Guide presented at the July meeting by the Educational Outcomes Task Force.

Discussion: Chief Justice Rush suggested that IDOE put its legal guidance on Title IX into a practical, engaging format similar to the positive discipline guide for classroom teachers. Christy said she would take that suggestion back to IDOE.

Rep. Summers verbally gave some feedback on the guide from a friend of hers and another community member who had reviewed the guide. Julie asked that she forward the written feedback so that it could be included with the work of the committee and passed along in the suggestions to IDOE for revising the document.

5. Strategic Priority: Child Safety and Services

Presentation: Angela Smith Grossman of the Department of Child Services made a presentation on DCS's kinship care navigator program (slides 35-51 of the [meeting PowerPoint](#)).

Discussion: Chief Justice Rush mentioned that the Coalition for Court Access could be helpful for connecting kinship families with pro bono or low-cost legal services.

Rep. Summers asked whether there was a need for federal legislation to relax the rules for CCDF vouchers, since so many grandparents raising grandchildren are excluded either because they are not working or they are working and are above the income threshold. She offered to go to Indiana's congressional delegation to see if those rules can be changed. Chief Justice Rush pointed out that there is a recommendation to add an objective to the Commission's strategic plan to work on these issues.

Action: The Commission considered a [proposed new objective](#) for its current strategic plan to add a focus on supporting kinship caregivers. Rep. Summers moved to add the objective. The motion was seconded and it passed 9-0.

6. Annual Report

Action: Rep. Summers moved to approve the Commission's annual report. The motion was seconded and passed 9-0.

7. Strategic Priority: Juvenile Justice & Cross-system Youth

Presentation: Judge Charles Pratt of Allen County made a presentation on a trauma audit of the juvenile and family court in Allen County, which was conducted by the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (slides 55-86 of the [meeting PowerPoint](#)).

Discussion: Chief Justice Rush asked whether a group was working on trauma-informed practices for the Commission. Judge Pratt replied that he and Serrilla both serve on the trauma subcommittee, which is chaired by Dr. Zachary Adams of IU. Chief Justice Rush asked whether there was a public defender on the subcommittee, and Judge Pratt responded that there is.

8. Strategic Planning

Presentation: Kate Shufeldt and Lacey McNary of the Indiana Youth Institute made a presentation on the data gathered to date from the Commission's strategic planning survey and outlined next steps to be taken in the strategic planning process (slides 88-104 of the [meeting PowerPoint](#)).

9. Committee Updates

Committees submitted written updates.

10. Executive Director Update

Presentation: Julie presented her professional goals for 2019, some of which remain the same from 2018 and some of which are new. The goals and accompanying action steps were included in a [handout](#). She welcomed feedback and suggestions from the Commission. Julie also presented some ideas related to accountability and tying the Commission's work to outcomes for children, which is a work in progress.

Discussion: Senator Breaux asked if there was a compilation of the Commission's accomplishments since its inception. Julie replied that the information was in each year's annual report, but it had not been put together into a single document. Chief Justice Rush asked for a presentation at the next meeting of the strategic plan goals and progress.

11. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 12:01 p.m.