



Commission on
Improving the
Status of Children

Commission on Improving the Status of Children

DECEMBER 10, 2025

"Please be advised that this is a public meeting in accordance with Open Door Law that is being livestreamed to the public and recorded. The recording will be archived and available to the public for no less than 90 days. By attending and participating in this meeting, you acknowledge and consent to the livestreaming and recording of the meeting, including your image, voice, and any contributions you make."

Agenda

1. Welcome and Introductions

Agenda

2. Consent Agenda

Action: Approve Minutes from the October 2025 Meeting

Agenda

3. 2026-2028 Strategic Plan

a. Mark Fairchild



Commission on
Improving the
Status of Children

Proposed Strategic Plan

2026-2028

MARK FAIRCHILD, MSW, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Our Overarching Principles

- **Amplify Voices:** The expertise of those with lived experience must be utilized in building solutions.
- **Bridge Systems and Silos:** Serve as a convener across agencies, providers, and stakeholders.
- **Ensure Data Informed Approaches:** Leverage statewide data to identify needs and measure impact.
- **Promote Access:** Ensure strategies reflect the needs of all children and youth, especially marginalized or underserved groups.

Our Overarching Principles

- **Emphasize Prevention:** Focus on early intervention, upstream investments, and limiting the need for potential state involvement.
- **Support Workforce and Sustainability:** Strengthen pipelines for professionals and the programs and services they provide, including appropriate levels of training, funding and support.
- **Enhance Public Education and Awareness:** Promote and expand knowledge of services and supports available to youth, family and caregivers.

How the Commission Does Its Work

Based on the Commission's enabling legislation, and in an effort to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the state's response to youth, family, and caregiver needs, the Commission works in the following ways:

- Fostering **collaboration** between the three branches and various agencies of state government.
- Promoting appropriate data and **information sharing** across agencies at the state and local levels for the benefit of youth and families.
- Examining **data** to shed light on persistent challenges, disparate outcomes, and potential solutions.

How the Commission Does Its Work

- **Identifying gaps** and researching **promising and evidence-based** practices with demonstrated results in Indiana, other states, and nationally.
- **Integrating the knowledge of individuals with lived experience** with respect to their direct subject matter expertise.
- **Consulting with agencies, organizations, and practitioners** with practical expertise.
- Recommending **legislation, policies, and procedures** for adoption by the state.
- Promoting **evidence-based practices** for use by entities serving youth and families.

Commission Committees

The committees of the Commission provide overarching support on areas that impact multiple aspects of the strategic plan and related initiatives.

- The **Youth, Family and Caregiver Voices Committee** will support the Commission and its Task Forces by ensuring the integration of lived experience voices into our policies and practices and vetting all Commission recommendations. The committee will also lead the creation and revision of the statewide youth, family, and caregiver engagement plan.

Commission Committees

- The **Data Committee** will support the Commission and its Task Forces regarding their data needs, including vetting all Commission recommendations to ensure data accuracy and integrity. The committee will also review and update any data and information sharing guidance produced by the Commission.
- The **Youth Justice Oversight Committee** was legislatively created to make improvements to Indiana's youth justice system. This charge includes improvements that enhance public safety, produce sustainable and effective outcomes for youth, are aligned with research on what works, increase equity and decrease disparities, make the most efficient and effective use of public resources and are informed by the experiences of youth and their families.

Strategic Goals & Task Forces

Strategic Goal 1: Improve the health and safety of children and youth

*The **Child Health and Safety Task Force** shall provide information, present recommendations, and provide follow-up on Commission approved recommendations regarding:*

1. Increasing community-based social and concrete supports for families with children, including formal and informal familial caregivers.
2. Increasing housing stability for families and children, including transitioning youth.
3. Promoting healthy teen relationships, preventing unplanned pregnancy, and reducing the risk of sexual victimization of children and youth.
4. Increasing awareness and access regarding developmental and health services for children and youth.
5. Identifying safety factors in communities and improving dialogue on those factors.

Strategic Goals & Task Forces

Strategic Goal 2: Improve access to evidence-based mental health and substance use services for children, youth, families and caregivers

*The **Mental Health and Substance Use Task Force** shall provide information, present recommendations, and provide follow-up on Commission approved recommendations regarding:*

1. Identifying community, early care and school-based opportunities for partnership.
2. Increasing collaboration and support for children and youth with high-acuity care needs.
3. Identifying and promoting evidence-based practices specific to infant and early childhood mental health.
4. Promoting evidence-based prevention practices for youth mental health and substance use concerns.
5. Promoting mental health workforce development and appropriate reimbursement for services.

Strategic Goals & Task Forces

Strategic Goal 3: Improve the educational outcomes of children and youth

*The **Educational Outcomes Task Force** shall provide information, present recommendations, and provide follow-up on Commission approved recommendations regarding:*

1. Improving access to high-quality early care and education for children.
2. Improving school climate, including appropriate staffing and supports, to ensure all students can learn at their full capacity.
3. Improving access to quality, appropriate education for youth in residential, detention, and corrections facilities or other involvement with state systems, including transitioning students.
4. Promoting access to postsecondary education and workforce readiness.
5. Promoting student and family engagement and reducing absenteeism.

Strategic Goals & Task Forces

Strategic Goal 4: Improve the safety and outcomes of children and youth who encounter multiple systems

*The **Multi-System Youth Task Force** shall provide information, present recommendations, and provide follow-up on Commission approved recommendations regarding:*

1. Improving identification, referral, system responses and appropriate services for victims of commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC).
2. Identifying gaps and potential solutions for dual status youth and those involved with multiple systems.
3. Integrating the science of child and adolescent development into system responses.
4. Promoting family and caregiver engagement at all stages of system involvement.
5. Improving the transitions of youth exiting systems or transitioning between systems.

Strategic Goals & Task Forces

Strategic Goal 5: Improve systems and methods for addressing suicide prevention, bullying and online safety

The Suicide Prevention, Bullying and Online Safety Task Force shall provide information, present recommendations, and provide follow-up on Commission approved recommendations regarding:

1. Reducing risk factors and building protective factors regarding youth suicide while responding to its impact with emphasis on screening, education, programming and supportive services.
2. Reducing risk factors and building protective factors regarding bullying of children and youth while responding to its impact with emphasis on both preventive and responsive policies and practices.
3. Analyzing gaps in knowledge, programming and interventions while promoting strategies, education and resources that improve online safety by reducing risks and increasing protective factors faced by children and youth online.

Notes on the 2026-2028 Strategic Plan

- The groups previously called “subcommittees” working on specific areas of Task Force goals will now be referred to as “workgroups” to avoid confusion that the function under the guidance of our committees. As these workgroups may be convened, changed or discontinued based on Task Force needs, they are generally not listed in the strategic plan.
- References to “vulnerable youth” have been removed from the plan. Although this language exists in the legislative code creating the Commission, it does not accurately reflect a strength-based view of lived experience preferred for public-facing documents such as the strategic plan.
- Efforts to integrate the work of the Youth Justice Oversight Committee are expected to continue into 2026 as the various projects of its workgroups reach completion and the next iteration of their work commences.

Agenda

- 4. Legislative Engagement Updates
 - a. Mark Fairchild

Agenda

4. Legislative Engagement Updates

- Legislation based on Commission recommendations
- Other issues for potential legislative action
 - Issues specifically noted in the 2026-2028 Strategic Plan
 - Problem-solving courts
 - Foster youth rights and services

Agenda

5. Task Force and Committee Updates

- Child Health and Safety
- Suicide Prevention, Bullying and Online Safety
- Mental Health and Substance Use
- Data Sharing and Mapping

EDUCATION OUTCOMES TASKFORCE

2025 Review

Co-Chairs: Megan Carlson (IPS) and Rebekah Frazer (DOE)



Membership

Representatives from:

- Dept. of Education
- Dept. of Workforce Development
- Commission for Higher Education
- Dept. of Correction
- Juvenile Probation
- Dept. of Mental Health and Addiction
- Dept. of Child Services
- Vocational Rehabilitation
- Post-Secondary Education Institutions
- Persons with lived experience (PWLE)

2023-25

Goals

- 1.IMPROVE ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION FOR VULNERABLE CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
- 2.INCREASE USE OF RESTORATIVE PRACTICES IN SCHOOLS THROUGHOUT THE STATE
- 3.IDENTIFY AND ENCOURAGE ADOPTION OF EFFECTIVE AND PROMISING PRACTICES THAT PROMOTE TRAUMA-INFORMED SCHOOLS
- 4.IMPROVE ACCESS TO QUALITY EDUCATION FOR YOUTH IN RESIDENTIAL, DETENTION, AND CORRECTIONS FACILITIES
- 5.IDENTIFY AND ENCOURAGE ADOPTION OF EFFECTIVE INTERVENTIONS FOR YOUTH WHO HAVE INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PLANS AND ARE INVOLVED WITH ONE OF THE OTHER STATE SYSTEMS (DCS, FSSA, JUVENILE JUSTICE)
- 6.IDENTIFY AND ENCOURAGE ADOPTION OF EFFECTIVE AND PROMISING PRACTICES TO PROMOTE ACCESS TO POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE READINESS FOR VULNERABLE YOUTH, INCLUDING BUILDING A PIPELINE TO FUTURE WORK IN YOUTH-SERVING PROFESSIONS.

2025 Highlights

- 1 High School Redesign: Indiana's New Diploma Requirements & BEST Youth Initiative: Chronic Absenteeism
- 2 Collecting data from youth (e.g. Youth Summit, facilities)
- 3 Increased voice from youth and those with lived experiences in CISC teams
- 4 Involvement with the Fight for Life Foundation, Indiana University, home educators, and many other community partners.





What's Next and How You Can Help

- Appointed New Co-Chairs in 2025
- Support Student-focused Legislative Priorities
- Review current data & find baselines
- Collaboration between state agencies and community partners.
- Review other states best practices.



A top-down view of a desk with various school supplies including a laptop, a spiral notebook, a pair of glasses, a smartphone, a magnifying glass, and a pencil, all in a muted blue color scheme.

THANK YOU!

from the Education Outcomes Taskforce

A solid yellow horizontal bar at the bottom of the image.

Juvenile Justice & Cross-System Youth Task Force

A Task Force of the Commission on Improving the Status of Children in Indiana

December 17, 2025

Members

Judge Holly Harvey – Co-Chair

Monroe Circuit Court – Division 7

Nancy Wever – Co-Chair

Indiana Office of Court Services

Steve Balko

Indiana Department of Education

Amber Becker

Division of Mental Health and Addiction

Ann Davis

*Indiana Association of Resources and Child
Advocacy (IARCA)*

Terrie Decker

Indiana Department of Correction, DYS

Judge Kim Dowling

Delaware Circuit Court 2

Tracy Fitz

*Indiana Prosecuting Attorneys
Council*

Mike Goodwin

Department of Child Services

JauNae Hanger

Children's Policy and Law Initiative

Liz Houdek

Indiana Public Defender Council

Waylon James

Department of Child Services

Jill Johnson

*Marion County Public Defender
Agency, Juvenile Division*

Samantha Lewis

Wayne County Probation

Josh Nichols

*Indiana Juvenile Detention
Association*

Kiarra Pearson

*Division of Mental Health and
Addiction*

Leah Pezzarossi

Open Door Youth Services

Kaylee Price

Lived-Experience Community

Colleen Saylor

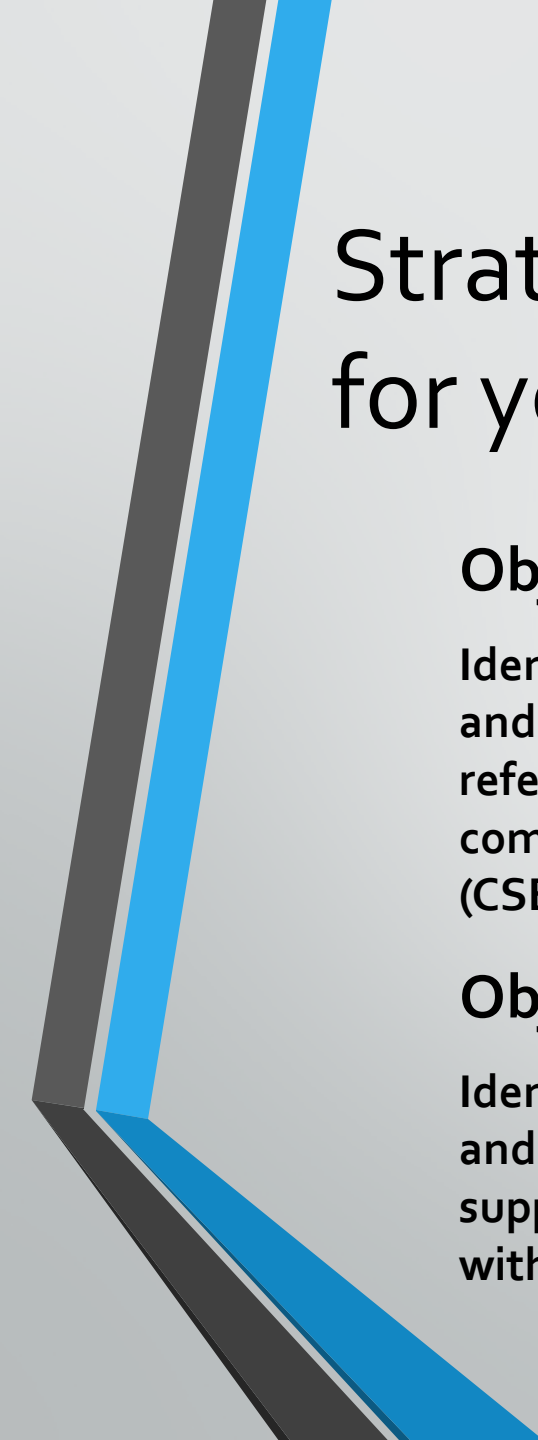
*Indiana Office of Court
Services*

Ellen Sheets

*Indiana Criminal Justice
Institute*

Joel Wieneke

Child Advocates



Strategic Goal: Improve safety and outcomes for youth who encounter the justice system

Objective #1:

Identify and encourage adoption of effective and promising practices for identification, referral, and appropriate services for victims of commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC)

Objective #3:

Identify and encourage adoption of effective and promising programs and practices to support the healthy development of children with an incarcerated parent

Objective #2:

Identify and encourage adoption of effective policies and practices that promote family engagement, healing, and growth in juvenile status offense cases

Objective #4:

Identify and encourage adoption of effective and promising practices and policies that integrate the science of child and adolescent development into the justice system's response to children and youth

Objective #1:

Identify and encourage adoption of effective and promising practices for identification, referral, and appropriate services for victims of commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC)

Sub-Committee co-chaired by Judge Dowling and Judge Harvey

- ✓ Probation Departments are using the Human Trafficking Screening Tool
- ✓ Training provided to probation, educators, law enforcement, healthcare
- ✓ Quick Indicator Cards updated, printed, distributed
- Work Plan to include:
 - Legislation
 - Required training
 - Removal of prostitution as delinquent act
 - 3.5 CHINS – appointment of counsel and not requiring admission for CHINS finding
 - Penalty enhancement for purchasing offense if the person purchased is a child
 - Continued and expanded training
 - Train the Trainer
 - Professionals at entry points – healthcare, service providers

Objective #2:

Identify and encourage adoption of effective policies and practices that promote family engagement, healing, and growth in juvenile status offense cases

Sub-Committee co-chaired by Tracy Fitz and Leah Pezzarossi

- Chronic Absenteeism and Truancy
- Report being developed with recommendations

Objective #3:

Identify and encourage adoption of effective and promising programs and practices to support the healthy development of children with an incarcerated parent

Sub-Committee co-chaired by Joel Wieneke and Steve Balko

- ✓ Partnered with Objective #4 Sub-Committee on legislation supporting access to families for youth who are securely detained – youth who are parents
 - Jail and Prison
 - Fatherhood Initiatives

Objective #4:

Identify and encourage adoption of effective and promising practices and policies that integrate the science of child and adolescent development into the justice system's response to children and youth


Sub-Committee co-chaired by JauNae Hanger and Kate Province

- ✓ Access for families for youth held in secure detention
- Minimum age for juvenile court jurisdiction



Preparing for the Strategic Plan

- **Renew/New Membership**
- **Organize sub-committees**
- **Present report re: Status Offenses**
- **Get to Work!**



**Thank you for the
opportunity to do this
work!**

Agenda

6. Engagement Updates & Planning

a. Audrianna Lingren, MSW, *Engagement Coordinator*

audrianna.lingren@contractors.courts.in.gov, 317-480-6870

2026 Meeting Dates

- February 4, 2026
- April 22, 2026
- June 17, 2026
- August 19, 2026
- October 21, 2026
- December 9, 2026

Agenda

7. Commission member announcements and adjournment