

**Commission on Improving the Status of Children in Indiana ~ Task Force Chair & Executive Committee “Retrospective”**

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The purpose of this retrospective was to provide an opportunity for Commission on Improving the Status of Children in Indiana Executive Committee members and Task Force Chairpersons to reflect back on their time and experience with their committee and/or task force and consider what is working well and should be continued as well as gaps, challenges and areas for improvement. Focus areas included communication, identification and implementation of priorities and activities, functioning and resources and structure. Below is a summary of themes from these interviews conducted by staff from Casey Family Programs along with recommendations/considerations for addressing gaps or challenges.

Area of Focus	What is Working Well	Gaps/Challenges/What Could be Improved
<p><b>A) <i>Communication between Task Forces and the Executive Committee/Commission</i></b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many positive relationships have been built through the Commission and Task Forces. Members know who to go to in the various systems and agencies. Cannot underestimate the value of these relationships and trust that has been built in the first three years.</li> <li>• Communication takes place both formally and informally based on the positive relationships that have been built.</li> <li>• Task Force Chairs meeting has been a value-add. Helpful to have a venue to hear what work is going on in each Task Force and to have a place to problem solve. These should continue.</li> <li>• Task Force members have helped to educate one another in addition to completing activities.</li> <li>• Working on developing more consistency in minutes and other forms of communication.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Task Forces would like more direction and guidance from the Executive Committee/Commission on assignments and priorities in order to have a better sense of “to what end” they are being asked to continue their work.</li> <li>• Task Forces are not always clear on rationale for doing the February verbal report out which includes a power point presentation followed by an additional written annual report. Much of the content is the same. Would like to see better alignment in process and clear intent.</li> <li>• Executive Branch recommendations need to be coordinated and well communicated by the Task Forces to the Executive Committee. There should be a multi-step process – which includes looping in Danielle McGrath and other necessary people for guidance and possible implications of recommendations before formally being submitted to the</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Angela’s leadership has resulted in clear expectations and reminders for meetings and reports.</li> <li>• Task Force Chairs feel that they can approach the Executive Committee if they need to communicate about an issue or assignment. Easy to bring items to Executive Committee meetings and response to requests has always been immediate.</li> </ul>	<p>Executive Committee and Commission. Perhaps a process could be developed so preliminary recommendations can first be communicated to the Executive Committee.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a sense of “looseness” or informality around some of the key processes and functions of the Commission, Committees and Task Forces which could be tightened up or made more formal. This is especially important in the event of personnel changes.</li> </ul>
<p><b>B) Identification and Implementation of Task Force Priorities and Activities</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When Task Forces were initially created there was more clarity regarding specific activities or topics for them to address. Many of these original intentions have been accomplished.</li> <li>• Task Forces don’t want to “squander” the opportunities they have with their members. The Chairs are committed to this work along with their members and have a desire to be as effective and efficient as possible.</li> <li>• Task Force Chairs and members are passionate and invested in the work they are doing. There is a sense that even if there are changes at the Commission or Task Force Chairperson level that the work will continue.</li> <li>• Many things have been accomplished through the Commission and Task Force Structure as identified through the annual reports provided by each Task Force and Committee.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the absence of direction or assignments from the Executive Committee or Commission Task Forces are identifying their own focus areas. Some concern that these may not be in line with Commission priorities or should included in the scope of the Task Force.</li> <li>• Concern that the some of the work being asked of, or completed by the Task Forces, is duplicative to that of other Task Forces or work being done in other systems or state agencies (e.g. Public Health) in the course of their day to day operations. Not sure the benefit of having the Commission Task Forces doing this same work.</li> <li>• Hard to keep momentum when a Task Force identifies a project area or task and begins to work on it and then are given an assignment which requires immediate attention. Trying to regain momentum once they are able to turn their attention back to their project can be difficult.</li> <li>• Task Force members are passionate about their work but don’t want to be doing</li> </ul>

		<p>activities to just stay busy or have meetings just to meet. Occasionally Task Forces have a meeting scheduled but don't necessarily have anything that they need to address or that they are actively working on.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Concern that the purpose of some of the Task Forces is too "open ended" or lacking clarity. In some cases a Task Force was formed to focus on a particular topic when a state agency had already done an extensive amount of work around the particular topic so there wasn't as much work for the Task Force to do. Other Task Forces don't have a concrete, defined issue to look at or well-articulated project. What they are looking at is new and harder to define which may be fine but additional clarity/direction from the Commission would be useful.</li><li>• Another challenge has been that as time has passed and different subjects or topics have been added they haven't always been connected to the original tasks or intent which has created some confusion. Or in some cases topics were assigned or being looked at by multiple Task Forces. For example, teen suicide. Multiple Task Forces were undertaking this simultaneously and the communication between them wasn't as smooth as it could have been. In hindsight this may have resulted in duplication and redundancy in task.</li><li>• There is not always clarity about roles and responsibilities related to legislative committee requests. It could be beneficial to</li></ul>
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		<p>the Commission to setting some consistent parameters. This would help the Task Force or Subcommittee receiving the request to be clear about their objectives.</p>
<p><b>C) Commission structure (Commission, Executive Committee, Committees and Task Forces), Task Force Functioning and Resources</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The direction of Chief Justice Rush on the Executive Committee has helped to influence leadership and connect parties.</li> <li>• Having a staff person who can help with scheduling meetings, preparing agendas, developing minutes, finding a location, pulling together documents, etc has been absolutely critical and helpful for those Task Forces who have this support. Not all Task Forces have the bandwidth to pull this kind of support out of their agencies.</li> <li>• Having a three branch approach and involvement of each branch has been immensely helpful.</li> <li>• The Commission structure has created ongoing public awareness of issues surrounding safety and well-being. Reminded us that external partners and the general public need to understand the issues that pertain to the well-being of children.</li> <li>• The structure of having co-chairs has worked really well especially when they are from different agencies. This can help to bring different perspectives. If both Chairs are not located in Indianapolis it's been beneficial to have one Chairperson who is available to attend in person meetings.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficult to do this work plus their day to day job. Even harder if there is not someone who is able to staff a Task Force. Chairs try to do the best they can.</li> <li>• Not all Task Forces feel they have the resources or expertise to be a study committee. Some areas of focus might need a fully funded study.</li> <li>• Some concern that what members might be asked to do within the context of their Task Force (e.g. make recommendations) might not be in alignment with their day to day work. This "thin line" creates some consternation for Task Force members.</li> <li>• Concerns that for some activities or projects that the Commission may not be the right forum or venue for the work needing to be done. Need to have a clear mechanism to determine what fits within the scope of the Commission and be able to push back if possible.</li> <li>• Unsure if the Commission would be able to list the changes that have occurred as a result of the Task Force's work. Not sure what the ultimate impact is when recommendations are made and then passed on to Legislators to consider.</li> <li>• Mechanisms are needed to eliminate or bridge the gap between each Task Force's work so the work is not siloed or being done</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to ensure that key systems are at the table. For example, the inclusion of key systems on the Cross-System Youth Task Force created the opportunity for dual-systems legislation to be passed. This wouldn't have happened if the Commission hadn't been created, the task force hadn't been created and tasked with creating the legislation.</li> <li>• There is a sense that the Commission has a real opportunity to be the place to go that is trusted to provide an objective view and that the Commission could use their political capital towards a big goal or master plan for children and families in Indiana. "Just beginning to scratch the surface on what they could do together."</li> </ul>	<p>in isolation. Continue to collaborate on ways to "do together what we couldn't do alone". This is the power of the Commission.</p>
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***Recommendations or actions to consider based on retrospective interviews from Task Force Chairs, Executive Committee Members and Casey Family Programs:***

- Consider developing a strategic plan for the next three years that clearly lays out the Commission's goals and outcomes to be achieved by 2019. This could include both short and long term objectives that creates space for legislative requests, which will continue to be made, along with other outcomes that can only be achieved by this particular body. Many Task Force Chairs and Committee members feel that there is value in doing another deep dive to clarify focus and goals. Would be an opportunity to help both existing and new members gain better buy-in and possibly identify new resources. Structure of Task Forces should be reorganized to best achieve these goals. Process should include some mechanism to not only track activities but also outcomes to measure what has been the benefit of the work of the Commission for children and families in Indiana and ensure sustainability.
- Explore time-limited and task focused sub-committees and task forces versus long-standing task forces that are topic focused (or may need a combination). For example, Commission/Executive Committee could launch short-term task forces with clear objectives and deadlines arrived at from a specific need. Members of the task force could be pulled from a pool of willing volunteers who have the expertise needed for the particular objective or topic. Experts in the pool could expect to participate on one or two task forces or sub-committees per year. Might generate more buy-in versus an appointment for life. This could be better determined as part of a strategic planning process with the intent to reorganize the structure to best be able to achieve the identified goals and objectives of the Commission.

- Clarify the roles, responsibilities and functions of current standing task forces or future time-limited, topic/task driven subcommittees. Functions might include: gathering existing research, analyzing research and making recommendations on well-studied issues ensuring that we have a full picture and have vetted as much information as possible from across the State; convening systems, agencies or stakeholders around a specific population, topic or work effort; pulling systems and collaborations together to avoid duplication of efforts.
- Identify processes which could benefit from being better defined or given more of a consistent framework for Task Force Chairs to follow. These might be related to communication, assignments, recommendations, etc. For example, when making legislative recommendations, develop a process to ensure all necessary entities are looped in as early as possible, recommendations are preliminarily presented to the Executive Committee before formally being made to the Commission.
- Move towards adding a full-time staff person who is responsible for helping to organize and staff the Commission and the Committee/Task Force structure. Part of their role would be to help make recommendations about how/where specific assignments or tasks should be assigned, help to pull together the necessary people and resources needed to achieve the goals, help identify where else similar work might be being done or expertise could be garnered and most importantly help to coordinate the efforts of the Commission to achieve their identified goals and objectives.