



Commission on Improving the Status of Children in Indiana

Meeting Minutes

Commission on Improving the Status of Children in Indiana

Wednesday, April 21, 2022

Indiana State Library, History Reference Room

- 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
- Jay Chaudhary, Director, Division of Mental Health and Addiction
- Bernice Corley, Executive Director, Public Defender Council
- Representative Dale DeVon
- Senator Stacey Donato
- Justin Forkner, Chief Administrative Officer, Indiana Office of Judicial Administration
- Kory George, Chief Probation Officer, Wayne County Probation Department
- John Hammond IV, Office of the Governor
- Zac Jackson, Director, State Budget Agency
- Dr. Katie Jenner, Secretary of Education
- Chris Naylor, Executive Director, Indiana Prosecuting Attorneys Council
- Todd Rokita, Indiana Attorney General (non-voting member)
- Hon. Loretta Rush, Chief Justice of Indiana
- Dr. Dan Rusyniak, M.D., Secretary, Indiana Family and Social Services Administration
- Terry Stigdon, Director, Indiana Department of Child Services
- Representative Vanessa Summers
- Stephanie Knight, Youth Commission Member
- Dejuna Rodriguez, Youth Commission Member

1. Welcome and Introductions

Chief Justice Rush called the meeting to order at 10:00 am and welcomed all Commission members and guests. Chief Justice invited all Commission members to the upcoming Mental Health Summit on October 21, 2022. Chief Justice summarized the goal of the summit and its role in providing education and raising awareness about mental health resources around the state.

2. Consent Agenda

Action: The consent agenda, including December minutes, was moved by Rep. DeVon, seconded by Terry Stigdon, and approved 13-0.

3. Strategic Priority: Juvenile Justice and Cross-System Youth

Presentation by Megan Horton, IOCS and Tracy Fitz, IPAC

Juvenile Diversion

Presentation can be found on slides 4-25 of the meeting PowerPoint, located on the CISC website. Tracy Fitz began the presentation by providing the background on the subcommittee and their designated area of study. Tracy stated that diversion isn't currently formal in the state and in its place, there is informal adjustment. Tracy discussed why the subcommittee was studying diversion, how they have begun to study diversion and what information they found about diversion throughout the state utilizing a survey method to capture information. Tracy stated that House Bill 1359 will give new policies regarding informal adjustment. Megan Horton then presented on the findings of the survey, located on slides 11-22. Throughout the presentation Megan highlighted specific areas that would require additional follow up, Tracy ended the presentation by informing the Commission of which specific topics they would want to collect next but plan to work with the Juvenile Justice oversight body in completing further data collection.

Discussion: Bernice asked Megan about slide 15, which details what diversionary programs, practices and/or policies, both formal and informal, survey respondents are using. Bernice questioned how respondents answered the survey if Indiana did not have formal diversion but instead informal adjustment therefore what diversion meant for those counties who responded to that portion of the survey. Megan stated that information is unknown and more follow up will need to be done to clarify that information. John Hammond asked if survey was the only way to gain information about informal adjustment, Chief Justice rush followed up with the same question. Chief Justice stated how that information should be in Quest or Odyssey. Chief Justice asked Kory if gathering informal adjustment information was required in those systems. Kory stated that informal adjustments are assigned a case number. Kory reviewed how that information is gained and the possible steps that could be taken to mandate collecting that information. Chief Justice asked Megan if they had talked to court tech, to which she responded no but agreed it would be a good next step. Senator Breaux asked how many of the diversion programs are putting children of color in them verse children that are not a minority. Megan stated that they would have moved towards gathering that as next step and hopes to see that information in HB 1359. Senator Breaux also questioned what an effective diversion program looks like. Chief Justice said that defining those outcomes will hopefully be defined through the work of HB 1359. Bernice stated that she would be interested in seeing data connected to school referrals to the criminal legal system. Megan agreed that referral types should be looked at it as well. Chief Justice stated how with this new information outcomes of the probation officer's recommendations can and should be a required field. Kory provided clarity on what information is required to be collected by probation and which isn't. Chris Naylor commended the group on gathering the data related to informal adjustment.

4. Strategic Priority: Juvenile Justice and Cross-System Youth

Presentation by Julie Whitman, Executive Director

Oversight body and workgroups for HEA 1359

Presentation can be found on slides 27-30 of the meeting PowerPoint, located on the CISC website. Julie went through and explained how the Commission will carry out its tasks designated by HB 1359. Julie explained how data will be collected, tools will be created, and purpose of proposed workgroups to begin implementing HB 1359. Julie requested referrals to the Chief Justice for members to join the Juvenile Justice Oversight Body.

Discussion: Chief Justice shared with the group how judges have shared with her how youth ages 12 and 13 are entering DOC due to a lack of placement. DeJuna shared with the group how she knows firsthand from friends how entering the system early can be the first step towards a pattern of going in and out the criminal and juvenile justice system. Senator Breaux added to the discussion by sharing how IYI showed data at the CISC State of the Child event on rates of children in kindergarten being expelled from school and how that is also a start to the justice system. Chief Justice expressed a need for funding to assist the CISC by hiring additional staff in order to meet the demands of HB 1359. Chief Justice provided some examples of how this bill will help children around the state and requested any referrals for individuals to join the workgroups.

5. Staff Updates

a. Presentation by Julie Whitman, Executive Director

Progress on current strategic plan and legislative summary

Presentation can be found on slides 32-42 of the meeting PowerPoint, located on the CISC website. Julie provided a detailed update on strategic plan goals, progress and implementation. Julie showed how all the work completed in the groups has led to groups being prepared to carry out state initiatives such as 9-8-8.

Julie informed the group that moving forward the members of the Equity, Inclusion and Cultural Competence Committee will be placed among all Task Forces to bring an equity lens to all work of the Commission.

Discussion: Representative DeVon asked what 9-8-8 was. Julie and Jay Chaudhary explained what 9-8-8- will be. Jay informed the group it will likely be 5-10 years before it is completely up and running. 9-8-8 goes into effect in July 2022. Chief Justice added there is more legislation to come to implement 9-8-8. Senator Breaux asked if there were any plans to add Karrah Herring, the Chief Equity, Inclusion and Opportunity Officer to the Commission, to the Commission through legislation. Julie said it was interesting, but it was unknown at this time. Julie informed the group hopefully someone from their office will join the data committee for the work being done with HB 1359. DeJuna asked how the progress of the strategic plan is tracked and how can members follow the process. Julie stated that she is the only source of tracking outcomes, but a formal process still needs to be established.

**b. Presentation by Janie Smith, University of Indianapolis Master of Social Work Intern
Implementation of Commission Actions**

Presentation can be found on slides 44-50 of the meeting PowerPoint located on the CISC website. Janie summarized the Commission's implementation process and how to improve it.

Discussion: Senator Breaux mentioned how some recommendations are not implemented due to funding. Janie stated how that information should still be tracked in order to close out certain topics. DeJuna shared that by tracking ideas that do not have funding could lead to focusing on how to explore funding options for those recommendations. Chief Justice added that it is harder to track some changes because they are happening due to the influence of the commission, information sharing and cross-agency collaboration. Senator Donato asked who determined if a legislative process was needed for recommendations. Julie responded letting the group know how she came to fill in that section and the tracking sheet. Julie shared the hope to collect informal outcomes of the commission during the program evaluation process with Transform.

Next Meeting

Wednesday, June 22, 2022, 10 a.m. – 12 p.m. Indiana State Library, History Reference Room