



Commission on Improving the Status of Children in Indiana

Meeting Minutes

Commission on Improving the Status of Children in Indiana

Wednesday, October 16, 2024
Indiana Government Center South

- Rachel McCaffrey (non-voting member for Christine Blessinger, Deputy Commissioner of Re-entry and Youth Services, Indiana Department of Correction)
- Jay Chaudhary, Director, Division of Mental Health and Addiction
- Bernice Corley, Executive Director, Public Defender Council
- Representative Dale DeVon
- Senator Stacey Donato
- Dr. Katie Jenner, Secretary, Indiana Department of Education
- Justin Forkner, Chief Administrative Officer, Indiana Office of Judicial Administration
- Kory George, Chief Probation Officer, Wayne County Probation Department
- Kathryn Box, Office of the Governor
- Joseph Habig, Director, State Budget Agency
- Senator La Keisha Jackson
- Hon. Dana Kenworthy, Court of Appeals of Indiana
- Aly Leonard, Youth Commission Member
- Eric Miller, Director, Indiana Department of Child Services
- Chris Naylor, Executive Director, Indiana Prosecuting Attorneys Council
- Todd Rokita, Indiana Attorney General (non-voting member)
- Dr. Dan Rusyniak, M.D., Secretary, Indiana Family and Social Services Administration
- Julia Stumler, Youth Commission Member
- Representative Vanessa Summers
- Amy Kent (non-voting member for Dr. Lindsay Weaver, State Health Commissioner, Indiana Department of Health)

1. Welcome & Introductions

Judge Kenworthy called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. and welcomed guests, asking members to introduce themselves and their role. Judge Kenworthy also thanked John Hammond for his many years of service.

2. Consent Agenda

Action: To approve the [minutes from the August 2024 meeting](#), was motioned by Representative DeVon, seconded by Senator Donato, and approved unanimously 13-0.

3. Child Health and Safety Task Force Update: Increasing Housing Stability

Dr. Jack Turman, Grassroots Maternal and Child Health Initiative

The presentation can be found on slides 3-57 of the [meeting slides](#). Jack introduced himself and shared that the Children's Commission was the first group to hear these updates that included positive news and results. Dr. Turman shared details of the Housing Equity for Infant Health Grant from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). He thanked its funders, leadership team, Healthy Beginnings at Home staff, community partners, and steering committee all involved in this project. He shared recent data showing an increase in infant mortality rates in Indiana, which included high racial disparities. Dr. Turman cited Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) statistics that indicated that social characteristics and physical environment affect mothers more than genetics, health behaviors, and medical care. He shared a qualitative story about a mother who experienced homelessness while pregnant. Dr. Turman then mentioned that housing insecurity is complex and showed a list of its many negative effects. He shared that housing insecurity while pregnant poses the same pre-term birth risk as smoking. Dr. Turman shared the grant has two parts, Healthy Beginnings at Home and Health Justice Interventions, all focused on the first 1,000 days of a child's life. Healthy Beginnings at Home includes housing navigation services, case management, and 24 months of rental assistance. The Health Justice Intervention includes community-based education, litigation, and legal analyses. He shared the timeline of grant funding and implementation, initial results from the pilot in Ohio, and the many different positive support players on each mother's team. The HRSA grant requires an intake system, sustainable housing paths, and a data tracking system. Jack complimented the many members of the staff and their work to achieve positive outcomes. He then shared the data around Indianapolis' first 25 participants and their demographics/characteristics, which included eviction histories, high-risk pregnancies, and medical debts. These mothers reported finances, uninhabitable living conditions, and toxic environments as the main reasons for housing insecurity. Jack shared that of the first 25 participants, 24 delivered babies, with a reduction in pre-term births and low-birth weight babies and an increase in health visits compared to the initial group. Jack then outlined the Health Justice work and began by showing eviction statistics. System changes outcomes included small claims court processes, Indiana Supreme Court recommendations, and tenant protections. He shared the invitation to legal education and thanked the many partners who helped administer eviction sealing clinics. Dr. Turman shared that 13 of the 25 participants were living in uninhabitable living conditions and that his team is working to improve conditions in Indianapolis. He asked some of the women what people should know about these programs and shared their quotes on the slides. Jack thanked the Commission and provided contacts and website links.

Discussion: Representative Summers asked Dr. Turman if the program incorporates midwives and doulas. He answered that all the participants use whatever their provider is through CareSource Medicaid. Mark thanked Kate Schedel for her time as co-chair of the Child Health and Safety Task Force.

4. BEST Youth Initiative Update

Mark Fairchild, Executive Director and Uma Ahluwalia, Forum for Youth Investment

The presentation can be found on slides 58-70 of the [meeting slides](#). Mark recapped the BEST Youth Initiative, and the agencies represented, and activities up to this point. Uma Ahluwalia introduced herself and thanked Commission members for their time and Commission staff for all their help. She shared the goals of the Forum for Youth Investment's BEST Youth Initiative for chronic absenteeism and its discovery timeline. She shared the discovery phase included quantitative data research and qualitative interviews with a multitude of system leaders, local staff, and people with lived experience. These activities were conducted to understand drivers of chronic absenteeism, the current landscape of policies and practice, and to identify needs. Uma shared the long list of those interviewed or who attended focus groups, the data sources used, and their ideal systems change approach. These changes include structural, relational, and transformational changes. Many examples of these are noted in the slides. Uma shared thanks and opened for questions.

Discussion: Uma echoed the previous presentation and comments surrounding the overlap between housing and health, mentioning that both of those topics came up in the discovery phase around school attendance. Mark joked that Indiana is winning compared to the other states participating in the BEST Youth Initiative.

5. Executive Director Update

Mark Fairchild

The presentation can be found on slides 71-84 of the [meeting slides](#). Mark shared that he would be presenting on progress and emerging needs with family and youth engagement efforts. He outlined timelines of youth representation, engagement summits, task force creations, and more that incorporate youth and families with relevant lived experiences. He shared that future activities would include educational opportunities for all family and youth members, populating each task force and committee, expanding in-person convenings/trainings, and creating a statewide engagement network. Mark mentioned that with this growth comes the request for funding, which would cover events and activities, additional support for youth and family representation to offset costs, and employing staff. Mark shared time studies of his position and the Commission's coordinator that showed large increases in time spent on youth and family engagement activities. He provided a financial breakdown and proposal which showed funding allotment. Mark reminded the Commission of why these efforts should always expand.

Discussion: Justin Forkner shared that the Supreme Court covers the administrative side of the Children's Commission and said that Mark and the Commission would make good use of the additional funding support. Representative DeVon shared that the legislative session is expected to be fiscally tight and jokingly asked Justin if the Supreme has extra loose change, to which Justin joked that he makes Mark empty his pockets in the elevator.

Action: To approve the funding request, was moved by Justin Forkner and Representative DeVon, seconded by Representative Summers and Senator Donato, and approved unanimously 13-0.

Mark finished by reminding the Commission of the legislative process and outlined the issues in the strategic plan that are eligible for Commission action or engagement. He asked if there were any other items for the Commission to consider. He shared that the last meeting, December 11, will have a lunch reception following. He shared a link to the Commission's upcoming virtual series around strategic sharing.

Discussion: Representative DeVon shared that the summer study fatality review may have recommendations coming out soon and mentioned a movie that Commission members should watch about a community adoption initiative.

6. Commission Member Announcements & Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 11:53 a.m.

Next Meeting

Wednesday, December 11, 2024, 10:00 a.m. – 12 p.m. Indiana Government Center South, Conference Room B, 302 W. Washington St., Indianapolis, IN 46204.