

**Indiana Commission for Women
Hoosier INsight
Fort Wayne Public Listening Session Report
Allen County Public Library, Fort Wayne, Indiana
Thursday, April 21, 2011
5:00-7:00 pm**

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Overview

The Indiana Commission for Women (ICW) held a public listening session on Thursday, April 21, 2011, at the Allen County Public Library in Fort Wayne, Indiana. The time of the session was 5:00pm-7:00pm in order to better accommodate individuals work schedules. The session began a few minutes late to allow for people coming from work and other commitments.

As a group, the participants identified twenty-eight (28) issues facing women in Indiana. By consensus, the group voted and determined that the top issues facing women that should be addressed during the listening session were: 1) Lack of good quality jobs especially non-traditional jobs; 2) Access to affordable health care; 3) Gender-equity in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) careers; and 4) Female heads of household and children in poverty. An in-depth discussion of these priorities was completed in small groups. Each group answered specific questions regarding their issue and to start developing a plan of action for addressing the issue in Indiana. The results of the discussions are detailed later in this report.

Participants

The Fort Wayne public listening session was sponsored by the Fort Wayne chapter of the American Association of University Women (AAUW) and the Women's Bureau. In addition, the League of Women Voters and the YWCA provided support. They provided tremendous support by publicizing the session, getting information out to the community and providing refreshments for the participants. The session was promoted in a variety of ways. The sponsoring groups sent out notices to their members and also contacted many groups and individuals in the community. A press release for the session was sent out and resulted in being picked up by multiple local news outlets. It was sent out on the ICW listserv and previous Torchbearers and ICW Advisory Board Members were invited.

ICW utilized EventBrite to register participants. Twenty-eight (28) participants took advantage of the online service, with nineteen (19) of those registrants attending. A total of thirty-eight (38) women and two (2) men attended the listening session.

Issues Identified

The participants of the listening session identified issues they believed were barriers to women's full participation in society. These issues were then voted on to determine the top two issues facing women in Indiana. Each participant was given three (3) votes that she could use to help prioritize the issues. The numbers next to each issue represent the number of votes each issue received from the participants.

Lack of good quality jobs especially non-traditional jobs (12)

Child Care (4)

Men who don't pay child support (2)

Health Care – access/affordability (17)

Healthy relationships (2)

Small business-women owned (2)

Lack of support for immigrant women (2)

Family planning access (5)

Lifelong economic security (3)

Family balance / workplace flexibility

Education for women / equality (7)

Sexual harassment
Affordable higher-education (1)
Enforcement of Title IX
Gender-equity in STEM (11)
Wage parity (5)
Access to mental health specific to women (4)
Female head of households and children in poverty (11)
Education-re-entry after jail (3)
Better legal assistance – job discrimination (3)
Self-esteem
Environment
Public transportation (1)
Teen pregnancy (4)
Cultural/religious sensitivity e.g. exercise (1)
Education / support for those with STDs
How to find resources (centralized location resources) (4)
Out of date public assistance (6)

Top Issues & Discussion

Because of the size of the group and the outcome of the votes, the group came to a consensus to focus on the top four issues identified by the participants. Those issues were:

- 1) Lack of good quality jobs especially in non-traditional jobs
- 2) Access to affordable health care
- 3) Gender-equity in STEM education and careers
- 4) Female heads of household and children in poverty.

Once these issues were identified, the participants broke up into four groups of 8-10 people to continue the discussion on the components of each issue. Participants were asked to consider a series of questions regarding these issues in order to start developing a plan of action for how we should work to overcome these challenges in Indiana. The questions were divided into five categories and are listed below.

Frame It

1. What are the critical components of this issue?
2. What should be addressed first?

What's in Place Now?

3. Are there any existing programs in place to help solve this issue?
4. Are there any agencies or organizations who currently deal with this issue?

Who should be involved?

5. Who are the people/organizations that should be involved in this issue?
6. Who should be responsible for strategizing ideas and implementing solutions for this issue?

Community/State Actions

7. How can the community work on solving this issue?
8. Is this an issue that should be addressed statewide? How?

Next Steps

9. What resources are needed to work on this issue?
10. What are the next steps that should be taken to address this issue?

Issue #1: Access to affordable health care

Access to affordable and quality health care was identified as a top priority during this listening session. There were seventeen (17) votes for this issue. The discussion of this topic is below.

Frame It

The participants identified the following main components of this issue:

- Quality: No doctor at *Matthew 25*, a faith-based organization providing free primary healthcare services to uninsured, low-income residents of Allen County
- Insurance: Healthy Indiana
- Family planning and sexual health
- Birth control
- Mental health issues
- Disabilities
- Diabetes
- Smoking
- Limited Medicaid
- Single with no kids
- Immigrants health

What's in place now?

The participants identified the following programs/organizations that currently exist that provide some form of services that address this issue.

- Neighborhood health clinics
- Lafayette Medical Center: Title X
- Planned Parenthood
- St. Patrick's Clinic
- Mobile Mammograms
- Visiting nurse and hospice
- Focus on Health
- Board of Health
- Healthy Indiana Plan (HIP)
- Matthew 25
- Park Center
- Bowen Center, a comprehensive community mental health center
- SCAN, Inc. (Stop Child Abuse & Neglect)
- Hope Alive
- Eating disorders support groups
- Other support groups

Who should be involved?

The participants identified the following organizations/groups that should be involved to help to improve the situation for this issue.

- Hospitals, doctors, nurses and nurse practitioners
- "People with the money: banks and foundations
- State government – Women in Government!!
- Board of health

- Educate voters on issues (both men and women)
- Minority Health Coalition
- United Ways
- Girl Scouts
- Women's Businesses
- YWCA
- Indiana Health Coalition
- All who are already on list
- CANI (Community Action of Northeast Indiana)

Community / State Action

The participants determined that the following actions should be taken in order to help address the issues surrounding this issue.

- Create a coalition of health providers
- Compile a resource and getting it into the community
- Find and create foundations that will support
- Create a way to make people clearly understand
- Create Commission on Women Health Status in Northeast Indiana
- Priority is prevention and early detection, access, cost, quality
- Set priorities

Next steps

The participants determined that the next steps that need to be taken in order to begin making progress on this issue are:

- Help to design a program to look at the access and cost
- Look at the data that is out there to determine where the holes are (access/needs)
- Health education at a young age

Issue #2: Lack of good quality jobs

The lack of good quality jobs especially in non-traditional – specifically manufacturing jobs – and better paying fields was determined to be one of the top priorities for the participants of this listening session. There were twelve (12) votes for this issue. The discussion of this topic is below.

Frame It

The participants identified the following main components of this issue:

- Manufacturing jobs going overseas
- Misconception of what manufacturing jobs are
- Economic development policies and support sustaining manufacturing jobs locally
 - ~ Policy
 - ~ Education
 - ~ Better career planning
 - ~ Public policy to forgive college debt

What's in place now?

The participants identified the following programs/organizations that currently exist that provide some form of services that address this issue. When asked whether there needs to be improvement, the group agreed that there was need for improvement.

- Labor Unions
- Business Groups
- Economic Development groups
- The Innovation Center
- The Alliance
- WorkOne Centers

Who should be involved?

The participants identified the following organizations/groups that should be involved to help to improve the situation for this issue.

- Bi-partisan Commission for Women – a coalition that is established to address women's issues
- University
- Central agency
- High school and middle school guidance counselors
- University counselors
- Business, economic and labor leaders
- Local and state government
- Finance educators
- Environmental agencies
- Nonprofit agencies advocates

Community / State Action

The participants determined that the following actions should be taken in order to help address the issues surrounding this issue. It was also discussed that this issue is an issue that needs to be addressed statewide

- Diverse community roundtables
- Build awareness

Next steps

The participants determined that the next steps that need to be taken in order to begin making progress on this issue are:

- A state and local coalition established to address women's issues as to the lack of good quality jobs.
- A budget
- Follow-through with quarterly meetings

Issue #3: Gender equity in STEM careers

Gender equity in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) careers and education was identified as a top priority during this listening session. There were eleven (11) votes for this issue. The discussion of this topic is below.

Frame It

The participants identified the following main components of this issue:

- Girls are not thinking they are able to do STEM
- Awareness and education issues
- Women in Engineering at IPFW into schools
- New technology not representing girls
- Stereotyping women in engineering and information technology careers
- Gender discrimination in hiring practices
- Internships at college level for women
- Educational training

What's in place now?

The participants identified the following programs/organizations that currently exist that provide some form of services that address this issue.

- Project Lead the Way in high schools (some schools)
- Agencies – not any group was aware of
- School systems

Who should be involved?

The participants identified the following organizations/groups that should be involved to help to improve the situation for this issue.

- ICW should be involved
- Ft. Wayne Women's Bureau helps women in poverty
- AAUW
- Colleges and universities
- All schools

Community / State Action

The participants determined that the following actions should be taken in order to help address the issues surrounding this issue.

- Coalition of partnerships from many groups of women's organizations
- Teach women how to negotiate for jobs
- ICW can be involved since this is a statewide issue

Next steps

The participants determined that the next steps that need to be taken in order to begin making progress on this issue are:

- Board of Regents in state over all public universities – this group can be a special commission appointed by the political party in power
- Have a group which will help women get jobs when out of work

Issue #4: Female heads of household and children in poverty

Issues revolving around female heads of household and children in poverty were identified as a top priority during this listening session. There were eleven (11) votes for this issue. The discussion of this topic is below.

Frame It

The participants identified the following main components of this issue:

- The most important aspect of this issue is education and understanding of healthy relationships with education being addressed first
- Unhealthy relationships/lack of hope
- Affordable and quality health care
- Self-esteem and life skills
- Lack of child support and collection
- Lack of resources and where to find them
- Decent and affordable housing
- Male education – how to be husbands/fathers
- Female education – how to be wife/mother (self-esteem)

What's in place now?

The participants identified the following programs/organizations that currently exist that provide some form of services that address this issue.

- Girl Scouts
- Friends of Bethany mentoring
- Whittington (closing)
- Boys and Girls Clubs of America
- Big Brothers/Big Sisters
- Wellspring
- YWCA
- CANI
- YMCA
- Urban League
- Allen County Network for Safe Families agencies
- SCAN, Inc.
- Churches
- Salvation Army trustees, etc.
- Community awareness of this vulnerable population
- Many mental health issues
- Women in trouble with the law affects success or failure of recovery

Who should be involved?

The participants identified the following organizations/groups that should be involved to help to improve the situation for this issue.

- More social workers
- Volunteers
- Mentors
- United Way model
- Churches
- Communities

Community / State Action

The participants determined that the following actions should be taken in order to help address the issues surrounding this issue.

- Still an education issue
- Provide better choices
- New model built on relationships
- Role models – someone who has walked the walk
- Educate through children – then parents see a difference and change
- Faith needs to be at heart of the change
- Church + Community + Family
- New housing – women with families with prison records (housing first then probation)

Next steps

The participants determined that the next steps that need to be taken in order to begin making progress on this issue are:

- More focus groups (educate)
- Grassroots efforts
- Existing organizations should work together
- Engage Homeless Taskforce at United Way
- Use social media
- United Way model
- Beyond state funding
- Start with elementary to educate children
- Information and resources

Conclusions

There are many barriers that create challenges to women in Indiana. The Hoosier INsight: Women's Issues Listening Sessions project is the first step in starting conversations to help to address the challenges that women still face in our state. The results of all of the sessions held around the state will contribute to a report that will help to identify the top 3-5 issues that present major barriers to women in Indiana. These discussions are the beginning of a process to help move women in Indiana forward by engaging Indiana residents in public deliberation.

The Hoosier INsight project will help ICW continue to voice the needs, concerns, challenges, and viewpoints of women in Indiana. By better understanding the specific needs and desires of women, the commission will be able to better identify the ways in which they can help to remove barriers that hinder their participation in all areas of society.

A statewide event will occur once the results of the listening sessions, as well as the supplemental online women's issue survey, are compiled. ICW will facilitate a statewide debriefing effort that will guide key community partners and stakeholder to synthesize the results into a shared statewide action plan. It will be ICW's opportunity to inform the community on the primary issues affecting women regionally and statewide that were identified during the listening sessions; to expand coalitions and build capacity to work across networks and to improve outreach efforts on multiple issues.

* Summary Report Disclaimer

This summary report was prepared as an account of key issues, challenges, and suggested solutions described during a public discussion sponsored by the Indiana Commission for Women (ICW) and supported by local partnering organizations in conjunction with its *Hoosier INsight: Women's Issues Listening Sessions* initiative. The compilation of this summary report is provided as a courtesy and should not be considered in any way as an endorsement or promotion by the Indiana Commission for Women, by the State of Indiana or by ICW's partners and supporters. Opinions expressed are strictly those of session participants and not necessarily those of the Indiana Commission for Women, of the State of Indiana or of its partners and supporters. Recommendations from this meeting, together with inputs received from other sources, may inform the creation of a final report and potential plan of action to address the issues and challenges discussed as well as potential future ICW initiatives, programs and services. Furthermore, ICW may use information obtained from this meeting and from the results of this initiative to offer suggestions to other agencies, organizations or entities better suited to address particular issues and/or challenges uncovered during this initiative in order to facilitate maximum cooperation and collaboration between ICW and other entities. The Indiana Commission for Women and those associated with the agency do not assume any legal liability or responsibility for the accuracy or completeness of any comment made or of any third party's use or results of such use of any information contained in this summary report.