

**Indiana Commission for Women
Hoosier INsight
Bloomington Circles® Listening Session Report
St. Mark's United Methodist Church, Bloomington
Thursday, March 31, 2011
6:00p.m. – 8:30p.m.**

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Overview

The Indiana Commission for Women (ICW) held a special listening session on the evening of March 31. This session took place in Bloomington, IN through the coordination of the South Central Community Action Program (INSCCAP). ICW held the session with the Circles[®] Campaign group at one of their March meetings. This session will help to ensure that we are engaging women (and men) from various backgrounds in this project and reaching out to more than just the “usual suspects.” This session was different from the others in that this group meets each month for a dinner and a community conversation. ICW was the featured presenter for March. The time frame for the listening session was reduced to an hour in order to accommodate the schedule of this group and their regularly planned schedule.

As a group, the participants identified (27) issues facing women in Indiana. By consensus, the group voted and determined that the top two issues facing women that should be addressed first were: offender re-entry and gender equality in the workplace. The group split in two and an in-depth discussion of these top priorities was completed. Each group was asked to answer specific questions regarding each issue and to start developing a plan of action for addressing the issue in Indiana. The results of the discussions are detailed in later in this report.

Participants

The participants at this special session were women and men from the Circles[®] Campaign group that meets through INSCCAP. According to their website, “We exist to provide opportunities for low-income citizens to move toward personal and economic independence.”¹

There were a total of 28 women and men who participated in this session.

1. South Central Community Action Program. (2011). “Mission Statement.” Retrieved from <http://www.insccap.org/pages/Mission>.

Issues Identified

The participants of the Bloomington Circles[®] listening session identified the issues that 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 3 votes that they could use to help prioritize the issues. The numbers next to the issue represent the number of votes that issue received from the participants.

- Breastfeeding support – 2
- Dedicated rooms for breastfeeding mothers
- Smoking Cessation – 1
- More prevention health education – 1
- Comprehensive resource center (access to all types of information & referrals)
- Entrepreneurism – 2
- Legal support – 2
- Support for special education – 2
- Affordable extracurricular activities for children
- Education/support for mechanically challenged (honest, helpful) – 4
- Same-sex marriage support – 7
- LGBT issues
- Support for labor/craft fields – 2
- Making pre-school required part of education – 2
- Affordable prescriptions – 1
- Education on healthy relationships – 5
- Support for music/art/physical education (non-academic fields in schools) – 2
- Comprehensive sex education for teens – 3
- Support for Planned Parenthood
- Affordable Healthcare – 10
- Employment discrimination (including gender & age) – 9
- Affordable/quality childcare – 2
- Housing availability (eg. Section 8) – 5
- Dental care assistance – 5
- Support for single mothers – 8
- Support for second-time around parenting
- Support for women pursuing nontraditional jobs and education – 1

Top Two Issues & Discussion

The top two issues that were identified by the participants were: 1) Affordable healthcare and 2) Employment discrimination. Due to the shortened amount of time to complete the activities within the session, the group broke into two groups and the facilitator mediated the questions and conversations of each group. 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. Due to the shortened time restraints, “What’s in Place Now” was not discussed by the two groups as was done with the other sessions. 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? - excluded from this session

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?

Affordable Healthcare

Affordable healthcare was the number one priority for the participants of this listening session. There were 10 votes for this issue. The discussion of this topic is below.

Frame It

The participants identified the following challenges within the topic of affordable healthcare.

- Lack of funding
- Employer-provided insurance not widely available
- Preventative healthcare is expensive
- Insurance is expensive
- Medicine is expensive
- Doctor's only accept certain healthcare
- Ailments outweigh affordable insurance
- Maintenance dental healthcare is limited
- Affordable healthcare programs are too spread out – needs to be centralized

Who Should Be Involved?

The participants identified the following individuals/organizations/groups that should be involved to help improve access to affordable healthcare.

- Families
- Single parents
- Medical providers
- Social workers
- Insurance companies
- Service providers
- Nurses
- Nurse practitioners
- Legal mediators
- Drug companies
- Medical industry

Community/State Action

The participants determined that the following actions should be taken in order to help address the issues surrounding access to affordable healthcare.

- Doctor's required to perform a pro-bono quota each year (like lawyers)
- Free clinics with volunteers
- Volunteers in Medicine (VIM) should not be a monopoly of affordable healthcare
- More locally organized healthcare
- Legislators should get unbiased education

Next Steps

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

- Get funding
- Find doctors willing to work for less
- Find Space
- Find staff
- Find equipment
- All parties need to be involved by coming together in a committed meeting
- Find grant opportunities
- Medical schools to be less expensive or serve underprivileged communities with the incentive of debt forgiveness
- Study other communities or countries for other perspectives for solutions

Employment Discrimination

Employment discrimination was the second priority identified by the participants of this listening session. This issue received nine votes. The discussion of this topic is below.

Frame It

The participants identified the following challenges within the topic of employment discrimination.

- Getting hired and then mobility within company
- Age discrimination often means pay discrimination
- Workplaces don't reward typically feminine communication methods
- More women are getting degrees than men
- Male dominated fields (construction, etc.) are disproportionately affected

They believed that the following should be addressed first:

- Create a law to impose some sort of across the board salary transparency
- Cultural shift with family medical leave – men should take as much time as women

Who Should Be Involved?

The participants identified the following groups that they believe should be involved in helping to improve employment discrimination. The participants emphasized the groups italicized – these stakeholders could help to show the business value of improving childcare.

- The group believed that in order for this to be addressed fully there needs to be a cultural shift
- Media should be involved

Community/State Action

The participants determined that the following actions should be taken in order to help reduce employment discrimination.

- Circles! Bring issues that affect those in poverty into the radar of the middle class
- Be a good example
- Bring the conversation to existing leadership initiatives within the city/county
- State tends to mess this stuff up

Next Steps

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

- Start at home! Raise leaders, not followers
- Promote healthy families
- Educate people to advocate for themselves in the workplace
- Organize
- Teach women negotiating skills – get some sort of presentation practice

Conclusions

There are many issues that create barriers for women. The findings of this listening session will contribute to ICW's understanding of the specific challenges that face women in Indiana. The inclusion of sessions, like this one, targeted specifically to groups who are mindfully addressing issues of poverty helps to ensure that the project recognizes the specific needs of women who may also be struggling economically.

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 larger de-briefing event will occur once the results of all of the listening sessions, as well as the supplemental online women's issue survey, are compiled and will help promote the outcomes of the project. This will help to raise awareness for the issues and to aid in the development of a statewide action plan to deal with the top priority issues across the state. These discussions are the beginning of a process to help move women in Indiana forward by engaging Indiana residents in public deliberation.