



# Commission on Improving the Status of Children in Indiana

## Meeting Minutes

Commission on Improving the Status of Children in Indiana  
Wednesday, June 18<sup>th</sup>, 2024  
Indiana Government Center South

- 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. Rebecca Estes (non-voting member for 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
- John Hammond IV, 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
- Dr. Lindsay Weaver, State Health Commissioner, Indiana Department of Health

### 1. Welcome & Introductions

John Hammond called the meeting to order at 10:03 a.m. and welcomed Senator Jackson to her first meeting.

### 2. Consent Agenda

**Action:** To approve the [minutes from the April meeting](#), was motioned by Representative DeVon, seconded by Eric Miller, and approved unanimously 13-0.

### 3. Youth Risk Behavior Survey Data

**Sam Mundt and Kate Schedel, Indiana Department of Health**

The presentation can be found on slides 3-83 of the [meeting slides](#). Dr. Weaver introduced Sam Mundt and Kate Schedel. Sam shared a brief background on the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), mentioning how it is

designed by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and allows for nationwide comparisons and usage. She shared that the Department of Health (IDOH) is working on a data dashboard. She continued by sharing the school selection and compensation process, frequency of administration, and how the YRBS is a companion to school health profile data. Sam explained that because participation is not mandatory, obtaining weighted data does not happen each cycle. Next, Sam shared excitement for receiving weighted data in 2023 and outlined the sample's characteristics. The first category asked students about their overall health, physical health, mental health, sleep, screen usage, health classes, and access to school nurses. Next, she shared survey rates involving weight, nutrition, and physical activity. In the next category, injury and violence, Sam shared risk behavior rates around driving, bullying, and overall safety. Lastly, Sam shared statistics surrounding tobacco use with cigarettes/vaping and school education rates about this topic. Kate introduced herself and transitioned to alcohol and substance use, showing increases in drinking, marijuana, and other substance usage. Kate moved to sexual behavior, which included intercourse rates, contraception use, and revealing electronic messages. For dating and sexual violence, Kate mentioned that all related rates have increased since 2021. She shared school sexual education and service referral rates. In the mental health category, Kate included surveyed teacher response rates regarding mental health training access. She then outlined rates around stress, anxiety, depression, and suicide. Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) were also surveyed, including adult violence, unfair treatment, and home life and neighborhood environment. Next, Kate outlined student involvement in extracurricular activities and post-secondary plans. Kate finished with statistics around phone usage and parental/peer support. Kate highlighted the importance of the Department of Health and the Division of Mental Health and Addiction (DMHA) Youth Advisory Board.

As a reminder, all data points shared in this presentation can be found in the [meeting slides](#).

**Discussion:** Representative Summers asked about how different states are using the term “cannabis” instead of marijuana. Kate shared that the terminology in the YRBS comes directly from the CDC. Dr. Weaver shared that a steering committee helps word the questions so that they will be understood by youth. Senator Jackson asked what she as a state legislator should do to focus on solutions around the mental health rates. Dr. Weaver asked Jay Chaudry what contributors are most relevant. Jay described that the demand for treatment is likely going to surpass the service capacity, mentioning that the decreasing sleep rates could be a central factor. Dr. Weaver emphasized IDOH's prevention efforts with the role of local school health liaisons. Representative DeVon shared curiosity around solutions, such as starting school later. John Hammond asked if there are any outliers or variables that correlate to positive outcomes. Dr. Weaver shared that this data is deidentified and statewide, but that Health First Indiana can offer insight into local programs that work. She also shared that Indiana cannot become complacent after seeing positive trends. Representatives DeVon and Summers both commented on the surprising rates around wearing seatbelts and tobacco use. Dr. Weaver shared that peer-to-peer education and community engagement models are usually more effective in education and messaging. Senator Jackson asked what percentage schools surveyed have programs implemented around these topics. Dr. Weaver and Dr. Estes commented that these rates have decreased. Kate commented that Indiana partners with many different community education providers. Eric Miller asked which data points or trends stood out to the presenters the most. Dr. Weaver shared that she was not surprised by any of them, but mental health rates were concerning. She shared that having weighted data in back-to-back cycles for the first time is crucial.

#### **4. Strategic Plan Goal Update: Healthy Teen Relationships**

##### **Tammie Carter, LifeSmart Youth**

The presentation can be found on slides 84-101 of the [meeting slides](#). Tammie introduced herself as the CEO of LifeSmart Youth and as a member of the Child Health and Safety Task Force of the Children's Commission. She shared that LifeSmart Youth provides school-based programs addressing healthy relationships. She described how each program complies with parental consent policies and requires teacher presence. Tammie showed the number of young people they serve and in what areas LifeSmart Youth is involved across the state. She referenced some YRBS data points around sexual behavior, bullying, and many other areas of well-being, mentioning that parents sometimes are nervous about these topics and might not feel equipped to address them. Tammie outlined the 5 program topics and what grade they begin. These included human growth and

development in 4<sup>th</sup> grade, rights, respect, and responsibility in 7<sup>th</sup> grade, caring for and respecting each other in 8<sup>th</sup> grade, afterschool safety in kindergarten, and starting in 2025, mental health literacy in 9<sup>th</sup> grade. Next, she shared a few upcoming opportunities that align with the Children’s Commission, including funding for child sex abuse education, efforts to advance racial health equity and access, mental health literacy, and parent engagement.

**Discussion:** John Hammond thanked Tammie and shared that he is hopeful that more counties can get connected to the programs offered by LifeSmart Youth.

## 5. Presentation on KIDS COUNT Data

### **Ashley Haynes and Bri Youn, Indiana Youth Institute**

The presentation can be found on slides 102-122 of the [meeting slides](#). Ashley introduced herself and shared how the Indiana Youth Institute (IYI) was present to share data from the 2024 KIDS COUNT Data Book. She began with some promising statistics around poverty, food security, housing, and more that have been trending in an encouraging direction. Ashley shared juvenile justice data, including status case filings and new juvenile admissions. Next, Ashley talked about young people in foster care and kinship caregivers. She included national and state data involving mental health episodes and treatment access. She shared that ratios and trends are similar when addressing physical health too. Ashley named the partners working on the Youth Worker Well-Being project, which provides telehealth services for this sector of the workforce. Next, she mentioned childcare and early education access, sharing that the demand for these services is double the supply. She showed the correlation between poverty rates and educational outcomes. Next, she shared statistics around food insecurity, chronic absenteeism, and reading proficiency, showing correlations between high school graduation and college enrollment rates.

As a reminder, all data points shared in this presentation can be found in the [meeting slides](#).

**Discussion:** Representative Summers highlighted kinship care and asked about efforts to support grandparents. John Hammond and Mark Fairchild mentioned that they can work to make this topic an area of focus for future meetings. Representative DeVon asked how Indiana compares to other states. Ashley explained that Indiana ranks 27<sup>th</sup> in an overall ranking that includes the domains of family and community, economic well-being, education, and health. Senator Jackson asked about single parent households, poverty rates, and childcare access, mentioning that the legislature is likely to address these issues. Bernice mentioned that low reading proficiency rates, high graduation rates, and low college enrollment for Black children seemed contradictory. Ashley shared that Covid-19 and its disruption of data trends is something that IYI is monitoring.

## 6. Executive Director Updates

### **Mark Fairchild**

The presentation can be found on slide 123 of the [meeting slides](#). Mark reminded the Commission of the creation of the Early Childhood Mental Health Subcommittee and announced its co-chairs and their efforts to populate the group with relevant partners. He also shared an update on the Bullying and Suicide Prevention and Online Safety Task Force, mentioning that the group’s subcommittees have a goal to be co-chaired by a relevant community member. Mark asked the Commission and guests to refer anyone interested in potential contribution or membership. Next, Mark shared that Indiana was selected by the Forum for Youth Investment for the Building Ecosystems Statewide for Thriving (BEST) Youth Initiative. He outlined the team members, made up of state agency leaders and young people and parents with experience in those systems. Mark shared hopeful remarks that this group will come up with solutions for chronic absenteeism and was excited to meet the other states and consultants in Washington D.C. in late July. Lastly, Mark provided an update on youth and family engagement and education plans funded by Casey Family Programs. He outlined preliminary discussions around hosting virtual trainings in the fall of 2024 that will lead into a February 2025 in-person event. Mark mentioned the Commission’s internship has been renamed the Jean Breaux Fellowship. He finished by sharing that the Commission staff are working to their fullest capacity to expand impact and foresees the need for more support soon.

**Discussion:** Mark joked that legislators are not that scary, except Representative Summers. John Hammond congratulated those involved in being selected for the BEST Youth Initiative. He then thanked all the presenters for their efforts and Commission members' participation. Representative DeVon mentioned his time at a conference where he learned about the amount of money that is spent per day on abuse and neglect nationally. He mentioned some resource models for prevention and representation for kids in court. Mark responded by mentioning that both of those topics are scheduled for presentation and discussion at the next meeting.

## **7. Commission Member Announcements & Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 11:54 a.m.

### **Next Meeting**

Wednesday, August 21st, 2024, 10:00 a.m. – 12 p.m. Indiana Government Center South, Wabash 1&2, 302 W. Washington St., Indianapolis, IN 46204.