



Commission on Improving the Status of Children in Indiana

Listening Tour Summary November 2017

During September and October, the Executive Director of the Children's Commission conducted a listening tour, meeting individually with each member of the Commission. At each meeting, the same five questions were asked:

1. What does success look like for the Children's Commission?
2. What obstacles or challenges do you see to achieving that success?
3. What one thing is most likely to propel the Commission toward your vision of success?
4. What would (or does) make the Commission a good use of your time?
5. What action or support on the part of the Executive Director would be most helpful to you for fulfilling your role on the Commission?

Commission members' responses to these questions naturally varied based on their individual roles and viewpoints, but there were also some consistent themes. The most common themes are summarized below.

Focus on Achieving Results. Several Commission members mentioned the importance of staying focused on the goals and objectives that have been defined, and using the strategic plan as a guide. Some stressed the need for less discussion and more action, and a few alluded to the need to find the low-hanging fruit and accomplish some quick wins.

Be Data-Driven. Several Commission members discussed the importance of research and data, both in determining which evidence-based policies and practices to support and in measuring outcomes. Some conversations included the idea of establishing a data or outcome dashboard by which the Commission can measure its success.

Leadership Role. Several members of the Commission discussed the great value of gathering top-level leaders together to discuss children's issues, because these individuals have the power to make change. The value of the Commission for building and strengthening relationships between and among those leaders was also highlighted.

Political Realities. Several members acknowledged that political realities may create difficulties because individual members and partner agencies will naturally have differing policy agendas. The need to build consensus around data-driven and fiscally sound solutions was apparent.

CISC as a Vetting Body. Several members highlighted the potential value of the Commission serving as a body that vets child-related policy, as well as child-related funding proposals. Having legislative proposals come through the Commission would give a sense of assurance that the experts and those whose work would be most affected have a voice in vetting those ideas.

Communication and Meeting Structure and Timing. Several Commission members noted the importance of communication between meetings to keep everyone up to date and on the same page. Additionally, it was noted that the four-hour timeframe of the meetings can be quite difficult to square with leaders' schedules, and the quarterly timing may be too infrequent to establish momentum on Commission initiatives. Some members suggested shorter, more frequent meetings (e.g., two-hour meetings every other month, instead of quarterly four-hour meetings.)

Need for Greater Awareness of CISC. Several members stressed the need to create greater awareness of the Commission and its role. This awareness needs to be built within the state capital, including the General Assembly, state agencies, and existing collaborative bodies, and also needs to be extended throughout the state to local communities. It was suggested that the Executive Director undertake some statewide travel to increase awareness of the Commission and to gain local input on current Commission initiatives.

Finally, all Commission members expressed a deep concern for the state's children and a willingness to use both their primary professional role and their role as Commission members to make Indiana a better place for children.