

*WHAT ARE THE STRATEGIES, IF ANY, THAT STATES ACROSS THE NATION EMPLOY WITH THEIR RESPECTIVE FAMILY COURTS TO WORK COLLABORATIVELY ON BEHALF OF CHILDREN IN CARE?*

**STATE SUMMARY: INDIANA**

**State CFSR**

Judicial members were part of the statewide CFSR taskforce. Included were the CIP Director, CASA, and another judicial administrator. Court personnel, including judges, were interviewed for the onsite review.

The courts were invited to drafting meetings for the PIP, and were part of various committees that focused on particular parts of the PIP. The courts also saw drafts of the PIP, and were given status reports upon request. The PIP addressed a number of court related issues, as set forth in Appendix A.

**Collaboration Following the Release of the PIP**

Since the PIP was approved, the state courts and agency have worked together to address statewide concerns, such as the status of delinquent children, relative placement, and concurrent planning.

Unfortunately, as with many other states, fiscal difficulties have blocked various initiatives that would include collaboration between the courts and agency.

**Ongoing Collaboration**

*Delinquency.* The courts and agency worked together to write interagency agreements to provide better services for delinquent children. These agreements have been implemented in most, if not all counties. The Juvenile Justice Improvement Committee of the Judicial Conference of Indiana, comprised of ten judges, worked on this area of the PIP.

The Juvenile Benchbook Committee of the Judicial Conference of Indiana produces a series of juvenile benchbooks. There are benchbooks on Children in Need of Services (CHINS), paternity, termination of child-parent relationship, and delinquency.

The benchbooks are updated every two to three years, and are available on the Indiana Judiciary website at <http://www.in.gov/judiciary/center/pubs.html>. As a result of the recent Title IV-E review followed by a collaborative meeting with agency personnel, the Juvenile benchbook committee is updating the CHINS bench book to help judges become more Title IV-E compliant. The Title IV-E review is on appeal, but there is court and agency collaboration on this issue nonetheless.

Foster care re-entry. The agency has developed a policy mandating a multi-disciplinary review prior to recommending reunification to the court, but it has not been implemented yet, thus the courts are unaware of it. Although there was no court involvement in the development of the policy, there will be collaboration once implemented. This was called for in the PIP.

Adoption. The proposed legislation to mandate that only children without identified families be placed on the Internet when TPR is filed or the court mandates filing failed to make it into law in 2003. The Governor blocked this legislation due to its predicted fiscal impact, as it was part of a larger bill.

Training on the Federal Parent Locator Service has been provided to child welfare staff and child support prosecutors, but not yet to court personnel, as called for in the PIP. An administrative letter outlining the process has gone to all county agency offices and a copy for the courts has been requested.

Relative placement. Training for caseworkers on expediting relative searches has been provided, but not yet to court personnel.

Concurrent planning. There are five pilot projects on concurrent planning, which started on October 1, 2003. The agency trained court personnel in all five pilot counties. The project is intended to ensure that a variety of options are considered for a child. Included is a Family Centered Risk Assessment Tool, which serves both as a guide to gathering information about the family, as well as assessing the risk that may exist to children within the family.

## **Conclusion**

Overall, when the court takes the initiative to involve the agency, the agency responds positively, but the agency has not reached out much to the court on PIP implementation. Thus, the courts are not integrally involved in the agency's activities to implement the PIP. There are no regular meetings involving both court and agency staff.

The CIP project hopes that coordination with the agency to implement the PIP will increase, especially as the next federal review approaches.

**APPENDIX A: INDIANA’S PIP EXTRACT**

**SAFETY**

**Item 3: Services to family to protect child(ren) in home and prevent removal.**

**Outcome:** Indiana will decrease the length of time for services to be initiated and continue to increase the number of children serviced in their home. From 1998 to 2001, expenditures for community-based services increased from \$28,815,452 to \$44,477,886. We are servicing more children and families prior to the child coming into care. This is evident by the decrease in total numbers of CHINS from 15,140 in 1998 to 10,316 in May of 2002. We are servicing more children in the community to prevent removal. Indiana has increased the average number of new Service Referral Agreements per month from 810 in the year 2000 to 860 in 2002. Informal Adjust Programs have increased from an average of 25 new Informal Adjustments per month in the year 2000 to an average of 153 new Informal Adjustments per month in 2002. We plan to continue to support community-based services as well as expedite the initiation of services once a referral to our agency has been made. Although we do not currently have the information available, we expect that our timeframe to initiate services in the home will decrease. We will measure this outcome with our Quality Assurance Review process and by evaluating our IVB referral data which tracks the length of time from referral of services to initial date that services begins.

Action Steps	Method of Measuring Improvement	Benchmarks Toward Achieving Goal
<b><u>1. Utilize Interagency Agreements between courts and the Division of Family and Children to better service delinquent children.</u></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Regional reports issued to Division Director regarding use of Interagency Agreements.</b></li> <li>• <b>Use of Agreements reported in Child Protection Plans.</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Draft of Interagency Use Agreement to Division Director by 4-1-02.</b></li> <li>• <b>Implementation of Agreements by 10-1-02.</b></li> </ul>

**PERMANENCY**

**Item 5: Foster care re-entries**

Conformity of statewide data indicators with national standards:

	National standard	State percentage
Foster care re-entries	8.6%	13.8%

**Outcome:** Indiana has proposed to decrease the incidence of foster care re-entries by 1.9% to bring the state to 11.9% by August 31, 2003. Additionally, Indiana believes that the adoption of concurrent planning will decrease, on average, the length of time it takes for children in Indiana’s care and custody to have a finalized permanency goal.

Action Steps	Method of Measuring Improvement	Benchmarks Toward Achieving Goals
1. <u>Develop policy mandating a multi-disciplinary review prior to recommending reunification to the court.</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Policy revision completed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Submit draft of policy to Division Director by 9-1-02.</li> <li>Train supervisors in new policy statewide by 1-1-03.</li> <li>In-service training for staff regarding new policies will be held on an ongoing basis.</li> </ul>

Item 9: Adoption

Conformity of statewide data indicators with national standards:

	National standard	State percentage
<b>Length of time to achieve adoption</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>22.75%</b>

**Outcome:** Indiana has proposed to decrease the length of time to achieve adoption for children in care by 2.9% to bring the state to 25.65% by August 31, 2003, increasing the number of children who receive adoption within the federally specified time frames. Additionally, Indiana believes that the adoption of concurrent planning will decrease, on average, the length of time it takes for children in Indiana's care and custody who are free for adoption to achieve this goal. Indiana will measure this outcome both with aggregate data submitted with AFCARS and NCANDS data, and we will also measure this outcome with our Quality Assurance Review process, ensuring that all efforts are being made to expedite this permanency goal.

Action Steps	Method of Measuring Improvement	Benchmarks Toward Achieving Goals
1. <u>Pursue a legislative change to IC-31-34-21-7.3 to mandate that only children without identified families are to be placed on the Internet when TPR is filed or the court mandates filing.</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ongoing effort to pursue legislative changes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Present legislative change to Legislative Liaison by 8-1-02.</li> </ul>
5. <u>Provide training for staff and courts regarding the Federal Parent Locator Service.</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Administrative letter out to counties.</li> <li>QA reviews.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaborate with the prosecutor's office to determine what protocols need to be established to utilize this service effectively.</li> <li>Train staff on the use of ISETS-ICWIS interface via supervisors' meetings and administrative letter by 12-31-</li> </ul>

Item 15: Relative placement

**Outcome: Our desired outcome is to increase the number of children who are placed with relatives when appropriate and that diligent searches for appropriate relatives will be complete within 90 days of a child coming into substitute care. Indiana will measure its success regarding this desired outcome with our Quality Assurance Review process, and the data results will be evaluated in 10-03 to ensure that we are making reasonable efforts to this end.**

Action Steps	Method of Measuring Improvement	Benchmarks Toward Achieving Goals
1. <u>Provide training to staff, foster /adoptive / kinship parents, LCPAs, CASAs/GALs, courts and providers regarding change in suggested adoption policies as well as existing policies on adoption.</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Statewide trainings provided with invitations sent to staff, foster/adoptive/kinship parents, LCPAs, CASAs/GALs, courts and providers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Designate funding for these services by 1-1-03.</li> <li>Staff trained regarding new policies and services rolled out by 6-1-03.</li> </ul>
8. <u>Develop a policy to have staff identify all relatives who are appropriate and willing to care for their relative children who have been taken into custody, subsequently notifying the court of this search.</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Compliance with this policy will be monitored through the Quality Assurance Review process.</li> <li>The subsequent report to the court will attest that the assessments on these families have been complete and will include a placement recommendation made to the court.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Draft policy submitted to Division Director by 9-1-02.</li> <li>Quality Assurance data compiled regarding this policy to ensure compliance by 6-1-03.</li> </ul>
9. <u>Provide training for staff and courts regarding the Federal Parent Locator Service.</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Administrative letter out to counties.</li> <li>QA reviews.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaborate with the prosecutor's office to determine what protocols need to be established to utilize this service effectively.</li> <li>Train staff on use of ISETS - ICWIS interface via supervisors' meetings and administrative letter by 12-31-02.</li> </ul>

## INDEPENDENT LIVING

### Item 8: Independent Living

***Outcome:** Indiana hopes to deliver independent living services to all youth in foster care between the ages of 14-18 who are appropriate to receive these services. Additionally, Indiana will service youth that were in foster care and return for services between the ages of 18-21. We will measure our progress toward achieving the goal of preparing youth for independence with our Quality Assurance Review tool, analyzing the first set of data in 10-03. We will continue to monitor the success of this program in the years to come and hope to increase the supports for and success of children exiting foster care. However, it will be several years before we have adequate data to measure a decrease in issues such as homelessness and employment for the population of former foster children between 18-21 years of age.*

Action Steps	Method of Measuring Improvement	Benchmarks Toward Achieving Goals
<p>1. <u>Revise interagency agreements between courts and local OFCs to include IL services; clarify responsibility for case planning; develop policy regarding visitation.</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Regional reports issued to Division Director regarding use of interagency agreements.</b></li> <li>• <b>Use of agreements reported in Child Protection Plans.</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Draft of interagency agreement to Division Director by 4-1-02.</b></li> <li>• <b>Implementation of agreements by 10-1-02.</b></li> </ul>

### Item 3: Services to family to protect child(ren) in home and prevent removal.

**Outcome:** Indiana will decrease the length of time for services to be initiated and continue to increase the number of children serviced in their home. From 1998 to 2001, expenditures for community-based services increased from \$28,815,452 to \$44,477,886. We are servicing more children and families prior to the child coming into care. This is evident by the decrease in total numbers of CHINS from 15,140 in 1998 to 10,316 in May of 2002. We are servicing more children in the community to prevent removal. Indiana has increased the average number of new Service Referral Agreements per month from 810 in the year 2000 to 860 in 2002. Informal Adjust Programs have increased from an average of 25 new Informal Adjustments per month in the year 2000 to an average of 153 new Informal Adjustments per month in 2002. We plan to continue to support community-based services as well as expedite the initiation of services once a referral to our agency has been made. Although we do not currently have the information available, we expect that our timeframe to initiate services in the home will decrease. We will measure this outcome with our Quality Assurance Review process and by evaluating our IVB referral data which tracks the length of time from referral of services to initial date that services begins.

Action Steps	Method for Measuring Improvement	Benchmarks Toward Achieving Goals
<p><b><u>1. Utilize Interagency Agreements between courts and the Division of Family and Children to better service delinquent children.</u></b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regional reports issued to Division Director regarding use of Interagency Agreements.</li> <li>• Use of Agreements reported in Child Protection Plans.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draft of Interagency Use Agreement to Division Director by 4-1-02.</li> <li>• Implementation of Agreements by 10-1-02.</li> </ul>