



MCCOY 2022 Public Policy Agenda

GUIDING MCCOY'S ADVOCACY EFFORTS TO IMPROVE THE LIVES OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES IN INDIANA

MCCOY places diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice at the center of our organization's advocacy efforts.

EARLY CHILDHOOD

- Ensure that all Hoosier children have access to quality childcare and pre-school programs regardless of income or geographic location.
- Require kindergarten attendance and continue to fully fund full-day kindergarten statewide and continue to expand pre-k access for children ages 3-5.
- Provide greater access to developmental and mental health assessments for children ages three to five and increase training for mental and behavioral health professionals in treatment modalities that reflect best practices for this age group. Expand support services for the mental health needs of parents.
- Expand and distribute childcare financial aid equitably throughout the state and increase education opportunities for how to receive aid for families, in particular for ALICE families (asset limited, income constrained, employed) and families who are undocumented. Support policies to ensure expanded childcare financial aid is sustainable.
- Promote the recruitment and retention of a high-quality early childhood caregiving workforce with diverse backgrounds through increased pay and high-quality benefits. Likewise, expand financial aid options for parents to ensure that they can secure childcare while staying at work.

EARLY INTERVENTION & PREVENTION

- Ensure the focus of the Department of Child Services (DCS) includes workforce development and retention through increased pay and benefits along with supportive, trauma-informed, culturally competent practices in their workplace.
- Make certain that prevention and early intervention programs are available and accessible to youth, individuals, and families who require them before they are in crisis.
- Ensure that all pregnant and new mothers have equitable access to pre-natal medical care and support both at home and in the workplace.
- Provide all parents and caregivers with equitable access to resources and services they need to build safe, stable, nurturing environments and relationships for children.

YOUTH JUSTICE

- Reimagine the Indiana youth justice system into a restorative system that utilizes a culturally responsive, trauma-informed, developmental approach based on research-based policies paired with the science of brain development.
- Eliminate zero tolerance discipline policies at the school and state level in favor of graduated codes of discipline aimed at maintaining the student's academic progress, school attendance, and addressing the root causes of disruptive and aggressive behaviors.
- Reduce disparities based on race, ethnicity, gender, ability, and sexual orientation or gender identity and expression among children and emerging adults in the justice system as well as those who are victims of crime.
- Make sure youth and emerging adults in the justice system maintain supportive relationships and have appropriate guidance and counsel from legal professionals and caregivers.

In 2019, only **5%** of eligible Hoosier children ages 0-3 had access to Early Head Start and **24%** of eligible Hoosier children ages 3-5 had access to Head Start.

Infant care in Indiana costs **39.5% (\$3,574) more per year** than in-state tuition for a four-year public college.

15.2% of Hoosier children live in poverty.

Indiana's infant mortality rate-- the number of babies who die in the first year of life per 1,000 live births-- was **6.5** for 2019. Black infants are almost **2x** as likely to die before their first birthday (11 per 1,000) than White infants (6 per 1,000) and Hispanic infants (6.4 per 1000).

20.6% of Hoosier children have experienced two or more Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

The majority of Hoosiers who benefit from TANF cash assistance are children. Of the 18,662 TANF recipients in September 2020, 14,590, or **78.2%** were children.

1 in 3 juveniles released returned to confinement at the Indiana Department of Correction within 3 years; the majority of whom were males (30.8%) and Black (32.1%).

Students who are suspended early in their educational career, such as in preschool are **10x** more likely to drop out of high school, experience academic failure, grade retention, hold negative school attitudes, and face incarceration.





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Since the initial shut down due to COVID-19, **Indiana lost 50%** of its capacity to serve children in early care and education programs.

48.2% of Indiana students receive free or reduced-priced meals through the National School Lunch Program.

Nearly half of American students with learning barriers cited increasing amounts of stress, depression, and anxiety as the leading obstacle in the 2020-2021 school year. At the same time, students say their access to a trusted adult to discuss that stress decreased.

More than **1 in 6** Hoosier children (17.5%) are food insecure.

15.7% of Hoosier youth ages 12-17 reported suffering from at least one major depressive episode in the past year.

12.7% of Hoosier youth cope with severe major depression.

10.2% of Hoosier youth ages 3-17 have ever been diagnosed with anxiety problems.

Households with children are more likely to be **evicted** than childless households, even when controlling for family income and rent owed.

Nearly **1 in 7** children will experience eviction before their 15th birthday, including **1 in 4** children living in poverty.

SOURCES:

Fair Housing Center of Central Indiana
2021 Indiana KIDS COUNT Data Book
YouthTruth



EDUCATION

- Ensure students' basic needs are met while learning virtually or in person; this includes access to expanded broadband internet, digital learning tools, food, and housing support. Provide necessary support to parents and caregivers with additional responsibilities that are required of assisting with virtual learning.
- Provide equitable supports for children with disabilities or a compromised health condition.
- Expand new policies that address student learning loss and provide added social and emotional supports for children as they return to in-person learning.
- Prioritize both teacher and student wellness through social, emotional, and mental health support while managing the added stresses from required quarantine, teacher staffing shortages, hybrid learning, and other complications brought on by the COVID pandemic.
- Guide students to post-secondary opportunities like higher education, career and technical education, and workforce development opportunities by providing adequate funding for financial aid opportunities, and access to educational opportunities.
- Embrace a comprehensive evidence-based approach to prevent all forms of peer aggression and disruptive behavior, including bullying, gangs, dating violence, and suicide.
- Promote the recruitment and retention of a high-quality teaching workforce and school support staff with diverse backgrounds through increased pay and quality benefits.
- Support quality Out-of-School-Time programs that ensure children have equitable access to safe, enriching environments to address learning loss and/or unsafe behaviors and provide meaningful activities that promote better outcomes and trajectories for children.
- Strengthen and support community schools to ensure that schools, families, and communities collaborate to support students' educational success, build stronger families, and improve communities.
- Prevent any attempts to remove life skills education, factual history of marginalized groups, and culturally competent teaching from the classrooms.

WELL BEING AND SAFETY

- Ensure that policies affecting issues of youth safety and well-being are data-driven and reflect a comprehensive, holistic approach to understanding and addressing the root causes of the issues within families, communities, and schools.
- Protect youth who are being trafficked by increasing intervention services for victims and curbing trafficking demands through an elimination of the statute of limitations and increased criminal penalties for adults.
- Support policies that reduce food insecurity and eliminate food deserts in Indiana. Support healthy food distribution initiatives to provide food to children and families.
- Reduce and prevent youth suicide and substance abuse by expanding training in evidence-based prevention and awareness for all youth-serving professionals, expanding the mental health and substance abuse workforce, particularly in disproportionately affected areas, and improving access to both affordable and high-quality inpatient and outpatient behavioral health programs.
- Increase funding to support communities in implementing domestic violence prevention programs, and to support survivors as they work to rebuild safe and stable lives.



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