

Assuring the Economic Health of all Hoosiers

2010 Human Services Priorities



January 2010

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Executive Summary

The Indiana Coalition for Human Services is committed to enhancing the quality of life for all Hoosiers. Recognizing the challenges Indiana faces in the current economic climate, ICHS supports legislation and policies that reward work, value families and vulnerable individuals, and grow the Hoosier economy.

Quality Health and Human Service Programs for Children and Families

- ❖ Invest in human capital through health and human services as part of Indiana's economic development plan.
- ❖ Ensure adequate and timely funding for health and human services.
- ❖ Provide sufficient resources to protect Indiana's vulnerable children and youth.
- ❖ Guarantee sufficient resources for support of people with intellectual and other developmental disabilities.
- ❖ Support the Department of Child Services Ombudsmen.
- ❖ Provide the funding necessary to ensure all Hoosiers can access 2-1-1 information and referral services and the vital human service connections it makes.
- ❖ Fully implement the recommendations of the Commission on Disproportionality in Youth Services.
- ❖ Enhance state revenue streams while leveraging as much additional federal funding as possible.

Economic Security

- ❖ Increase availability of Individual Development Accounts (IDAs).
- ❖ Establish a State Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit.
- ❖ Provide adequate funding and income thresholds for Child Care Development Funds (CCDF).
- ❖ Enact mortgage foreclosure relief for Hoosier homeowners.
- ❖ Reform township poor relief by moving both funding and administration to the county level.
- ❖ Work with social service providers and advocates to create and implement a public benefits eligibility determination process that works for Indiana's citizens.
- ❖ Ensure access to emergency food assistance for Hoosiers in need
- ❖ Ensure that low-income and fixed-income customers have access to adequate and affordable home energy and reinstitute the sales tax exemption on the Low Income Heating Assistance Program funds.

Health Care Coverage and Services

- ❖ Monitor and enroll the maximum number of uninsured Hoosiers in the Healthy Indiana Plan.
- ❖ Ensure that Indiana's health care assistance programs are patient-centered, offering access to both primary and specialty care close to home.
- ❖ Increase resources for home and community-based services and supports.
- ❖ Expand Medicaid coverage to include individuals with incomes of up to 300 percent of poverty, and maximize the use of Medicaid for payment of health services.
- ❖ Provide fair reimbursement for all health and behavioral care providers.

Education

- ❖ Ensure necessary funding and support for full-day kindergarten for all children at no cost to their parents.
- ❖ Provide adequate funding for public education.
- ❖ Ensure that children in special education services receive fair and equitable treatment.
- ❖ Create a higher level of school accountability, and achievement and excellence beyond standardized test scores.

Immigration

- ❖ Develop comprehensive immigration reform policies that do not disproportionately impact any one demographic group on the basis of income level, level of education, ethnicity or national origin, health status, sexual orientation, religion or suspected immigration status.
- ❖ Respect human rights and dignity for all those residing within our State's borders.
- ❖ Make preserving family integrity for children who are U.S. citizens living in mixed-status families a top priority in any reform of immigration policies.
- ❖ Ensure that comprehensive immigration reform policies do not place undue burdens on not-for-profit human service providers with regards to employment, contracts and service provision.
- ❖ Recognize that immigration issues are and should remain a national policy.

Quality Health and Human Service Programs for Children and Families

Provide necessary resources for vital programs

The Indiana Coalition for Human Services supports adequate funding for health and human services in the state budget to ensure the delivery of health and human services throughout the State of Indiana.

Children are entitled to protection, care and treatment under state and federal law; however, Indiana continues to have high rates of child abuse and neglect. In Indiana, 109,499 reports of abuse and neglect were made during SFY 2008. In 2008, the rate of substantiated reports of child maltreatment was 11 per 1,000 children ages 0–17. Providing adequate, well-trained staff and services is the best approach to protecting children, supporting families and providing timely, appropriate intervention.

The Indiana Coalition for Human Services supports the following for the State of Indiana:

- **Invest in human capital through health and human services as part of Indiana’s economic development plan.**

All Hoosiers must be included in Indiana’s economic development plans to strengthen Indiana’s working families and the workforce. Investing in health and human services generates business activity in the state and local economies, and helps individuals meet their basic needs and reach economic self-sufficiency.
- **Ensure adequate and timely funding for health and human services.**

As poverty and joblessness in Indiana increase, so does the number of people in need of health and human services. Reducing services during these times results in families unable to meet their basic needs of housing, food, health care, childcare and other vital resources. Contracted service providers should receive payment based on the actual cost of rendering services and in a timely manner as defined in existing service contracts.
- **Provide sufficient resources to protect Indiana’s vulnerable children and youth.**

Resources should be sufficient to comply with Indiana Code and best practice standards for programs and services. In addition, timely payments to providers and investment in community-based prevention services for youth and families must be made to decrease violence, neglect and juvenile delinquency.
- **Guarantee sufficient resources for support of people with intellectual and other developmental disabilities.**

All persons with developmental disabilities, as well as their families, deserve programs, funding and public policies that will assist them in realizing their goals of learning, living, working and playing in the community.
- **Support of the Department of Child Services Ombudsman.**

The creation of a DCS Ombudsman was a great step forward in improving Indiana’s child welfare system, promoting community trust in DCS’s efforts and services and providing accountability to Hoosier citizens. The State of Indiana must provide appropriate support to the ombudsmen when deemed necessary in order to ensure the Ombudsmen has the ability to complete its work in a satisfactory, timely and efficient manner.
- **Provide the funding necessary to ensure all Hoosiers can access 2-1-1 information and referral services and the vital human service connections it makes.**

2-1-1 provides critical services comparable to 9-1-1 despite the lack of dedicated public funding. In 2008, the economic downturn and three federally declared state disasters demonstrated the need for state support of comprehensive 2-1-1 services for all Hoosiers.
- **Fully implement the recommendations of the Commission on Disproportionality in Youth Services.**

All Hoosier children are entitled to fair and equitable services that will allow them to flourish in their families and communities. The Commission’s recommendations provide a blueprint for creating necessary changes in the child welfare, education, juvenile justice and mental health systems. Continue to ensure measures passed in 2009 legislative session are fully implemented.
- **Enhance state revenue streams while leveraging as much additional federal funding as possible.**

Indiana must find ways to maintain revenue to fund fully essential health and human services for its citizens. Indiana citizens pay more in federal taxes than the state receives back in federal spending, making it a “donor” state. Thus, Indiana must also maximize the amount of federal funding available for health and human service and outreach programs.

Economic Security

Ensuring opportunity for Indiana's working families

As the country remains in tough economic times it is clear that our state's working families finding themselves in increasingly financially insecure times. We continue to see the numbers of vulnerable citizens accessing public services swell like few times in our collective history. The foundations of opportunity -- living wages, job stability and upward mobility -- have been strained, endangering the future of thousands of Hoosiers.

An economy that is struggling on many fronts requires both immediate and long-term solutions to help working families. Indiana must lay the groundwork for rebuilding and strengthening a good jobs economy: If Indiana's workers succeed, Indiana's economy will as well.

The Indiana Coalition for Human Services supports the following for the State of Indiana:

- **Increase availability of Individual Development Accounts (IDAs).**
IDAs provide working families matched savings for education, home purchase, home repair and business startup. The State estimates that only 10% of all eligible families participate in the current IDA program. An increase in the availability of IDAs will help more low-wage families attain economic self-sufficiency.
- **Establish a State Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit.**
A state child and dependent care tax credit that is a percentage of the federal credit would help families enter and remain in Indiana's work force.
- **Provide adequate funding and income thresholds for Child Care Development Funds (CCDF).**
Child Care Development Fund vouchers are an economic development tool that ensure parents can remain employed and provide for their families. Investing in child care will assist Indiana in expanding economic and workforce development initiatives for low income workers.
- **Enact mortgage foreclosure relief for Hoosier homeowners.**
Even homeowners with good credit are falling behind on their payments in growing numbers. The State of Indiana must continue to help borrowers gain access to counseling and short-term financial resources so as to ensure a fair foreclosure process, encouraging creditors to pursue foreclosure alternatives, protect against predatory and fraudulent foreclosure "rescue" practices and ensure creditor maintenance of vacant properties.
- **Reform township poor relief by moving both funding and administration to the county level.**
While it is a major component of the safety net for low-income and vulnerable individuals and families, the township-administered poor relief system has high administrative costs and subjective eligibility criteria. This essential service must be reformed through county-wide administration, a standard eligibility determination framework, the ability of local units to contract with non-profit organizations to administer services, and assurances that services can be readily accessed in communities throughout each of Indiana's 92 counties.
- **Work with social service providers and advocates to create and implement a public benefits eligibility determination process that works for Indiana's citizens.**
As policy makers consider ways to improve Indiana's eligibility system there must be one singular desired outcome: a system that allows all individuals to apply for, maintain and sustain benefits for which they are eligible in a fair, fully accessible and efficient fashion.
- **Ensure access to emergency food assistance for Hoosiers in need.**
As poverty rates increase, hunger and food scarcity become problematic for many Hoosiers. Ensuring the efficient application and administration processes of the federal SNAP (food stamp) program and encouraging public and private resources to invest in emergency food purchases and distribution are vital to ensure that Hoosiers have access to nutritional food that will help them achieve success in school, at work, and in life.
- **Ensure low-income and fixed-income customers have access to adequate and affordable home energy, and reinstitute the sales tax exemption on the Low Income Heating Assistance Program funds.**
Low and fixed-income households are struggling with the increased burden of home energy bills. Access to adequate and affordable utility service is necessary for the health and safety of all Hoosiers, critical to families being able to stay in their homes, and vital for the welfare of children, persons with disabilities, and senior citizens.

Health Care Coverage and Services

Adequate coverage of all Hoosiers

Hoosiers want a health care system that works for everyone. But our current health care system which captures vast amounts of our state and nation's resources, employs many of its talented citizens, and promises both to promote health and relieve the burdens of illness, is failing far too many.

Over the past year, the number of uninsured across the country has grown by more than one million, and tens of millions more are underinsured and at immediate risk of financial ruin if they are seriously ill or injured. Individuals, families, employers and every level of government are feeling the financial pressure caused by rising health care costs. More often than not, people do not receive the best care that science has to offer. Many are bewildered by the complexity of health care and insurance coverage.

Current limits in public programs and gaps in employer coverage leave nearly 800,000 Hoosiers uninsured, resulting in substantial barriers to obtaining timely and appropriate health care.

The Indiana Coalition for Human Services supports the following for the State of Indiana:

- **Monitor and enroll the maximum number of uninsured Hoosiers in the Healthy Indiana Plan.**
Continued efforts should be made to assist the largest possible number of people, including the working poor, uninsured adults without dependent children and parents of children already enrolled in Medicaid.
- **Ensure that Indiana's health care assistance programs are patient-centered, offering access to both primary and specialty care close to home.**
Appropriate access to care is an essential element for both existing and new programs.
- **Increase resources for home and community-based services and supports.**
With adequate and readily available funding, senior citizens and people with developmental disabilities can live safely in their homes and their community, avoiding unnecessary institutional care.
- **Expand Medicaid coverage to include individuals with incomes of up to 300 percent of poverty, and maximize the use of Medicaid for payment of health services.**
Maximum use of available federal funds will enhance the use of state funds while providing quality care for the working poor, children, and uninsured adults.
- **Provide fair reimbursement for all health and behavioral care providers.**
Without fair and adequate reimbursement for health and behavioral care providers, it will become increasingly difficult for low-income and uninsured Hoosiers to access necessary preventative and primary care health services because of decreasing numbers of providers and the increased financial burden placed on them for caring for at-risk populations.

Education

Setting Hoosier children on a path for success

Full day kindergarten – Both in Indiana and nationally, school districts have focused attention on the importance of early childhood education. Preparing all students to be “ready to learn” and succeed by first grade will help shrink the achievement gap among subgroups of students.

Full-day kindergarten programs result in both academic and social benefits. Teachers report significantly greater progress for full-day children compared to half-day students in literacy, math, general learning, and social skills. The full-day schedule allows for challenges that are more appropriate for children at all developmental levels.

Funding for Public Education – Over the past few years both the federal and state governments have placed many new demands on the K-12 education system. More work must be done to implement fully the state’s school accountability system and the federal No Child Left Behind Act.

Concurrently, every Hoosier is concerned about economic growth and expansion. A key element for such growth is a prepared workforce that is the result of a fully-funded education system.

The Indiana Coalition for Human Services believes that the State of Indiana should:

- **Ensure necessary funding and support for full-day kindergarten for all children at no cost to their parents.**
All students should be “ready to learn” by first grade, thus helping to reduce the achievement gap. A full-day kindergarten schedule provides challenges that are more appropriate for children at all developmental levels.
- **Provide adequate funding for public education.**
Tuition support is the backbone of Indiana’s K – 12 education system. For schools to respond to the requirements of both state and federal government, Indiana must provide the necessary resources and training to assist all children.
- **Ensure that children in special education services receive fair and equitable treatment**
Children with special needs have the right to be educated along with their peers in an inclusive educational setting, with appropriate supports, so they may earn a high school diploma to enhance job placement and the continuation of higher education.
- **Create a higher level of school accountability, achievement and excellence beyond standardized test scores.**
Many public schools are not preparing students to meet the demands of our increasingly complex society. Contributing factors include overcrowding, high teacher to student ratios, teaching toward standardized tests and outdated teaching practices and materials. By helping schools to utilize and access technology, updated delivery methods and theories for teachers, and other resources better, public schools can better equip future generations of Hoosiers.

Immigration

Policies that uphold equity and human rights

During the 1990's and early 21st Century, the United States' immigrant population increased significantly. More than one in every nine residents of the United States is an immigrant, 11.5 percent of the population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2003). This is the highest percentage since 1930 and up dramatically from the low of five percent in 1970. In Indiana, the state's population increased by 3.6 percent between 2000 and 2006. Twenty-seven percent of that increase is attributable to international immigration. If the current rate of immigration continues, by the year 2050, the percentage of foreign-born people in the U.S. will equal the all-time high of 15 percent reached in 1900 (Capps, Passel, Perez-Lopez, & Fix, 2003). Already in the United States, one in every five school children is the child of immigrants, as is one of every four low income children. One-half of all new workers entering the U.S. workforce in the 1990s were immigrants (Urban Institute, 2004). Therefore, one cannot overstate the significant impact immigration will continue to have on the State of Indiana.

The Indiana Coalition for Human Services believes that:

- **Comprehensive immigration reform policies must not disproportionately impact any one demographic group on the basis of income level, level of education, ethnicity or national origin, health status, sexual orientation, religion or suspected immigration status.**
- **Comprehensive immigration reform policies must respect human rights and dignity for all those residing within our borders.**
- **Comprehensive immigration reform policies must make preserving family integrity for children who are U.S. citizens living in mixed-status families a top priority.**
- **Comprehensive immigration reform policies should not place undue burdens on not-for-profit human service providers with regards to employment, contracts and service provision.**
- **Keeping these principles in mind, comprehensive immigration reform is and should remain a national policy.**



ICHS MISSION & CORE PRINCIPLES

Mission

The mission of the Indiana Coalition for Human Services is to promote public policy that better the lives of those at risk and in need.

Core Principles

The Coalition's work is guided by three core values in all efforts to voice the needs of vulnerable Hoosiers: inclusiveness, comprehensiveness, and quality. Specifically, ICHS advocates for:

- Inclusion of individuals and human service groups in priority setting, policy formulation, program development and evaluation;
- The development of comprehensive human services programming; and
- The delivery of quality human services programming in our state and local communities.

Coalition members voluntarily join together to communicate that all citizens are valued and to insure that human needs are provided. Members of the Coalition Cultivate, Advocate, Represent, and Educate (CARE):

CULTIVATE relationships with state and local officials.

ADVOCATE with one unified voice.

REPRESENT Coalition issues before the General Assembly.

EDUCATE legislators, Coalition members, and the state-wide community about the issues affecting Indiana's most vulnerable populations.

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The Indiana Coalition for Human Services, comprised of 30 member organizations from around the state, supports the approaches and recommendations stated in the 2009 Policy Position Statements in order to strengthen the safety net and improve both the access to and delivery of health and human services in Indiana.