Indiana Commission for Women
Hoosier INsight
South Bend Public Listening Session Report
St. Joseph County Public Library
Monday, April 11, 2011
5:00-7:00 pm

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Overview

The Indiana Commission for Women (ICW) held a public listening session at St. Joseph County Public Library on Monday, April 11, 2011, in South Bend, Indiana. The session was held 5:00pm – 7:00pm to better accommodate the work schedules of participants.

As a group, the participants identified twenty (20) issues facing women in Indiana. The group voted and determined that the top issues facing women to be addressed during the session were: violence against women and poverty. An in-depth discussion of these two priorities was completed. Participants were asked to answer specific questions regarding their issue and to start developing a plan of action for addressing the issue in Indiana. The results of the discussions are detailed later in this report.

Participants

The South Bend public listening session was sponsored by Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority (AKA) at the St. Joseph County Public Library. AKA provided support by publicizing the session to their members, getting information out to the community and providing refreshments for the participants. The event was also publicized through online community calendars. A press release for the session was sent out and resulted in being picked up by multiple local news outlets. It was sent out on the ICW listserv and Previous Torchbearers, ICW Advisory Board Members and legislators were invited to attend.

ICW utilized EventBrite to register participants. Four (4) participants took advantage of the online service with two of the four actually attending the event. However, a total of thirteen (13) women attended the listening session.

Issues Identified

The participants of the listening session identified issues they believed were barriers to women's full participation in society. These issues were then voted on to determine the top three issues facing women in Indiana. Each participant was given three (3) votes that she could use to help prioritize the issues. The numbers next to the issue represent the number of votes that issue received from the participants.

> ***Poverty (9)***
> Child Care – Access and affordability
> Employment – quality and affordability
> Pay equity (4)
> ***Violence against Women (5)***
> Health care – quality and affordability
> Transportation
> Issues of Race (2)
> Lack of Information women receive / access to resources
> Education – cost and access (2)
> Violence – Woman against Woman
> Job training – skills based (3)
> Access to civil legal assistance
> Access to influencing public policy (where are our voices?) (3)
> Lack of empowerment (1)

Lack of women in elected positions (1)
Portrayal of women in media
Positive role models
Reproductive health (3)
LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) issues

Top Issues & Discussion

The top issues that were identified by the participants were:
1. Violence against women
2. Poverty

Once these issues were identified, the participants decided to stay as a whole group to further discuss the components of each issue. The group was able to discuss two issues during the allotted time of the listening session. Participants were asked to consider a series of questions regarding these issues in order to start developing a plan of action for how we should work to overcome these challenges in Indiana. The questions were divided into five categories and are listed below.

Frame It
1. What are the critical components of this issue?
2. What should be addressed first?

What's in Place Now?
3. Are there any existing programs in place to help solve this issue?
4. Are there any agencies or organizations who currently deal with this issue?

Who should be involved?
5. Who are the people/organizations that should be involved in this issue?
6. Who should be responsible for strategizing ideas and implementing solutions for this issue?

Community/State Actions
7. How can the community work on solving this issue?
8. Is this an issue that should be addressed statewide? How?

Next Steps
9. What resources are needed to work on this issue?
10. What are the next steps that should be taken to address this issue?

Issue #1: Violence against Women

Violence against Women was one of the top priorities for the participants of this listening session. There were five (5) votes for this issue. The discussion of this topic is below.

Frame It
The participants identified the following main components of this issue:
- Domestic violence
- Sexual assault
- Trafficking
- Physical harm
- Child abuse/elder abuse
- Homelessness
- Poverty
- Substance abuse
- Lack of education / knowledge
- Societal norms
- Gender roles
- Lack of employment
- Cost of abuse
- Embarrassment
- Self esteem
- Mental illness
- Neglect
- Verbal abuse
- Psychological abuse

What's in place now?
The participants identified the following programs/organizations that currently exist that provide some form of services with regards to this issue.
- YWCA
- Alpha Kappa Alpha
- Churches
- St. Margaret's house
- HOPE
- Law enforcement
- Family support
- Institute for social concern (Notre Dame)
- Student organizations/universities

Who should be involved?
The participants identified the following organizations/groups that should be involved to help to improve the situation for this issue.
- MEN!!!
- YWCA or other group to act as clearinghouse of information (need lead organization)
- Institutions of higher learning
- WOMEN!!!

- Law makers
- Legal systems

Community / State Action
The participants determined that the following actions should be taken in order to help address the issues surrounding this issue.
- Create collaborations between higher education and NGOs
- Find census data and synthesize (not limited to normal channels) and investigate ways to expand census questions
- What are other states doing? – find creative inspiration
- Communicate and coordinate community response
- Start education earlier – add to state curriculum
- Get media involved / multimedia approach

Next steps
The participants determined that the next steps that need to be taken in order to begin making progress on this issue are:
- Identify exactly what we want to accomplish – metrics, vision, goals
- Tap into current resources - Women studies at IUSB
- Create more formal relationships with higher education
- Look at what other communities are doing
- Change cultural mindset – It is not the victim's fault
- Identify one group to take lead to move forward

Issue #2: Poverty

The group decided to look at issues around poverty. There were nine (9) votes for this issue. The discussion of this topic is below.

Frame it
The participants identified the following main components of this issue:
- Child Care
- Pay inequity
- Transportation
- Lack of safety net
- Lack of feeling safe
- Removing barriers that keep women there – cycles of poverty
- Hidden rules of poverty and middle class
- Lack of training
- Education of societal norms
- Violence against women as contributing factor
- Issues of race
- Attitudinal factors

What's in place now?
The participants identified the following programs/organizations that currently exist that provide some form of services that address this issue.
- Bridges out of Poverty
- Alpha Kappa Alpha

- St. Margaret's House
- YWCA
- St. Mary's College
- Ivy Tech
- Center for Homeless
- Extended families
- Churches
- Rescue component
- Food banks

Who should be involved?
The participants identified the following organizations/groups that should be involved to help to improve the situation for this issue.
- Agencies
- Legislators
- United Way
- People from poverty
- Local politicians
- Schools
- Religious organizations

Community / State Action
The participants determined that the following actions should be taken in order to help address the issues surrounding this issue.
- Change in public policy
- Funding grassroots issues to educate people on how to influence public policy
- Community empowered coalitions
- PSAs/public education
- Taking it to the community
- Use bottom-up **and** top-down approaches ("Start at home and do both') – Educate the community on issues and educate the women to move out of the situation
- Identify leaders/stakeholders/power brokers
- Broaden community
- Empower people to understand that we all are affected
- ICW to be voice of many communities – empower ICW to speak for women to Governor

Next steps
The participants determined that the next steps that need to be taken in order to begin making progress on this issue are:
- Organize groups into holistic coalition
- Do research on facts, data, statistics
- Communication is needed on this issue
- Make issue it is relative / make it personal
- Formulate action plan with what can realistically be accomplished

Conclusions

There are many barriers that create challenges to women in Indiana. The *Hoosier INsight: Women's Issues Listening Sessions* project is the first step in starting conversations to help to address the challenges that women still face in our state. The results of all of the sessions held around the state as well as of the accompanying survey will contribute to a report that will help to identify the top 3-5 issues that present major barriers to women in Indiana. These discussions are the beginning of a process to help move women in Indiana forward by engaging Indiana residents in public deliberation.

The *Hoosier INsight* project will help ICW continue to voice the needs, concerns, challenges, and viewpoints of women in Indiana. By better understanding the specific needs and desires of women, the commission will be able to better identify the ways in which they can help to remove barriers that hinder their participation in all areas of society.

A statewide event will occur once the results of the listening sessions, as well as the supplemental online women's issue survey, are compiled. ICW will facilitate a statewide debriefing effort that will guide key community partners and stakeholder to synthesize the results into a shared statewide action plan. It will be ICW's opportunity to inform the community on the primary issues affecting women regionally and statewide that were identified during the listening sessions; to expand coalitions and build capacity to work across networks and to improve outreach efforts on multiple issues.

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[*] **Summary Report Disclaimer**

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