

**Indiana Commission for Women  
Hoosier INsight  
St. Mary's College Listening Session Report  
South Bend, Indiana  
Monday, April 11, 2011  
12:00-1:30 pm**

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## Overview

The Indiana Commission for Women (ICW) held the second university-based listening session on the campus of St. Mary's College on Monday, April 11, 2011, in order to reach out to younger women to include their voice in the project. The session was held over the lunch hour, 12:00pm – 1:30pm, to better accommodate class schedules.

As a group, the participants identified twenty-five (25) 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 cuts in government funding. A third issue (early education) received the same number of votes but it was decided by consensus that only two issues would be discussed due to the size of the group. An in-depth discussion of these two priorities was completed in small groups. Each group was 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 St. Mary's College listening session was sponsored by Center on Women's Intercultural Leadership (CWIL) on the campus of St. Mary's. They provided support by publicizing the session on campus and getting information out to the community. They also provided refreshments for the participants. The session was promoted in a variety of ways. CWIL sent out information on various listservs on campus. CWIL publicized the listening session to a wider community-based list to attract people who may not be able to attend the public session being held later in the day. A total of nine (9) 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.

### ***Cuts in federal and state budget (3)***

Poverty (2)

Pay equity

### ***Violence against women (3)***

Access to and cost of health care (1)

Affordability and Quality in child care

Early education (3)

Offender re-entry for women (1)

“Good Ole Boy Network”

Lack of women supporting women

Getting more women in public policy offices (1)

Women devaluing themselves

Challenges to women-dominated careers (2)

Single parenting – lack of child support (2)

Parenting for young mothers

Programs for comprehensive sex education, e.g. options, preventative

Lack of adequate education levels (2)  
Lack of support for women of color (multiplying factor) (1)  
Attitude towards women's colleges  
Misogynist humor  
Cost of Higher Education (1)  
Access to student leadership  
Hierarchy of gender roles in Higher Education (1)  
Salary negotiation (1)  
LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer) support (2)

## **Top Issues & Discussion**

The top issues that were identified by the participants were:

1. Violence against women
2. Cuts in government funding

Once these issues were identified, the participants broke up into small groups of 5-6 people to further discuss the components of each issue. 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 three (3) votes for this issue. The discussion of this topic is below.

### *Frame It*

- Root of the issue
  - ~ How can we raise male consciousness?
  - ~ Patriarchal society
  - ~ power and control
- Funding
- Pervasive across all income levels
- Starts in the community – needs a societal shift
- “We are a violent society”
- Needs mentoring and education

### *What's in place now?*

- YWCA
- Legal systems – consequences
- Family Justice Center / Family Children's Center
- SOS Rape Crisis Center
- BAVO - Belles against Violence Office on Saint Mary's campus
- Men Against Violence (MAV)
- Indiana Coalition Against Sexual Assault (INCASA)
- Take 10
- Anti-bullying education
- Core to success of these programs is funding

### *Who should be involved?*

- Coordination between groups
- Police and legal systems
- Violence against Women needs to be completely unacceptable
- Parents, teachers, clergy
- Media

### *Community / State Action*

- **\*\*Change entire society\*\***
- Proper trainings
- Local implementation of statewide concepts/resources
- Look at how other states are doing things
- Status of women and girls in Indiana
- Mayor (?) and Governor (?) – start at the top and trickle down
- Women elected to offices
- Coordinated effort
- Social media (twitter) – use effectively

### *Next steps*

- Prosecution and rehabilitation
- Education
  - ~ State point person to coordinate, develop, circulate
  - ~ Punishment and prevention
- Child abuse as a learned behavior – parenting training
- Health relationships
- Media – public awareness
- Eliminate pornography – violence against women

### **Issue #2: Cuts to government funding**

After much discussion, the group decided to look at cuts to government funding instead of early education as many issues, including early education, are dependant on government funding. There were three (3) votes for this issue. The discussion of this topic is below.

### *Frame it*

- Main components
  - ~ Women’s healthcare
  - ~ Planned Parenthood
  - ~ Education
- Budget cuts are being made by majority male, who aren’t being affected by the cuts

### *What’s in place now?*

- Access to healthcare
- Unions are fighting for recognition of labor (e.g. teachers unions)
- Budget cuts are primarily political, e.g. Planned Parenthood cannot offer many services without government funding
- Education should be the last budget cut

### *Who should be involved?*

- EVERYONE!
- The people who are involved the least and are affected the most
- Teach young students what is going on in the government (local, state and federal levels)
- Legal women voters (sic) – League of Women Voters

### *Community / State Action*

- Education to all levels and ages – “keep the muscle; take aware the little bits of fat around the edges.”
- Voters need to express their opinions
- Start at home – e.g. eliminate credit card debt

### *Next steps*

- Establish education programs that address political awareness – show them what is really happening

## 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

This summary report was prepared as an account of key issues, challenges, and suggested solutions described during a public discussion sponsored by the Indiana Commission for Women (ICW) and supported by local partnering organizations in conjunction with its *Hoosier INsight: Women's Issues Listening Sessions* initiative. The compilation of this summary report is provided as a courtesy and should not be considered in any way as an endorsement or promotion by the Indiana Commission for Women, by the State of Indiana or by ICW's partners and supporters. Opinions expressed are strictly those of session participants and not necessarily those of the Indiana Commission for Women, of the State of Indiana or of its partners and supporters. Recommendations from this meeting, together with inputs received from other sources, may inform the creation of a final report and potential plan of action to address the issues and challenges discussed as well as potential future ICW initiatives, programs and services. Furthermore, ICW may use information obtained from this meeting and from the results of this initiative to offer suggestions to other agencies, organizations or entities better suited to address particular issues and/or challenges uncovered during this initiative in order to facilitate maximum cooperation and collaboration between ICW and other entities. The Indiana Commission for Women and those associated with the agency do not assume any legal liability or responsibility for the accuracy or completeness of any comment made or of any third party's use or results of such use of any information contained in this summary report.