

**Indiana Commission for Women
Hoosier INsight
Evansville Circles® Listening Session Report
Emanuel Lutheran Church, Evansville, Indiana
Thursday, April 28, 2011
6:30-8:30 pm**

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Overview

The Indiana Commission for Women (ICW) held a special listening session on Thursday, April 28, 2011, at the Emanuel Lutheran Church in Evansville, Indiana. This session took place through coordination with the Evansville Christian Life Center, the local host of the Circles® Campaign in Southwestern Indiana. ICW held the session during the group's April *Big View* meeting, which focuses on the problems of and solutions for barriers that hold people in poverty. The group generally meets once a month for dinner and community conversation on a specific issue, at which ICW was the featured presenter for their April meeting. This session helps to ensure that we are engaging women (and men) from a wide spectrum of backgrounds throughout this project. The time frame for the listening session was reduced to an hour in order to accommodate the group's regularly scheduled activities.

As a group, participants identified thirty (30) issues facing women in Indiana. By consensus, the group determined that the top issues facing women were: 1) Child care and 2) Affordable housing and homelessness. The group also decided to stay together as a single circled group. Because of time constraints the group decided to address one issue during the listening session. After a discussion, the group agreed to focus on child care issues. The group answered specific questions regarding this issue in order to start developing a plan of action that could be taken to address the issue in Indiana. The results of the discussion are detailed later in this report.

Participants

The participants of this special session were women and men from the Circles® Campaign group hosted by the Evansville Christian Life Center. Found in several communities around the state, the Circles® initiative empowers people from every economic class to solve poverty in their communities; provides families with networking with social resources that are essential to getting out of poverty; and affects change in the policies and social structures that lock people into poverty.¹ There were a total of twelve (12) women and men who participated in this session.

Issues Identified

The participants of the Evansville Circles® 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 issues facing women in Indiana. Each participant was given 3 votes to be used to help prioritize the issues. The numbers next to each issue represent the number of votes each issue received from the participants.

Depression

Child Care (6)

Domestic Violence (1)

Unequal pay in workplace (3)

Getting/Keeping jobs during pregnancy

Affordable housing/homelessness (6)

Transportation – vehicle upkeep and repair/fairness (5)

Unequal advancement in workplace

¹ Circles® Informational Flyer, <http://restoringpeople.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/Circles-Informational-Flyer-2010.pdf>.

Trust in authority (2)
Raising relatives' kids
Education (1)
Caring for parents
Lack of child support (5)
"Superwoman" complex (2)
Affordable legal help
Raising children/parenting (2)
Substance abuse (5)
Wise relationship choices
Finding one's own identity
Taking care of yourself (1)
Single mothers (3)
Single women in general
Affordable "stuff" – being able to afford items (1)
Co-dependency / self-sufficiency issues (1)
Unemployment (4)
Spirituality/religion
Personal safety
Breast cancer
Politics – having a voice
Women in community leadership

Top Issues & Discussion

The top issues identified by the participants were: 1) Child care issues and 2) Affordable housing and homelessness. Due to the shortened time given to complete the listening session process, the group elected to stay as a single group and discuss a single issue. By consensus, the group agreed to focus on child care issues. Participants were asked to consider a series of questions regarding these issues in order to start developing a plan of action for how 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: Child Care Issues

Child care issues were identified as a top priority during this listening session. There were six (6) votes for this issue. Individuals in the group felt that by having quality child care, they would be able to get good paying jobs. They also noted that without good paying jobs, they would not be able to afford quality child care. The discussion of this topic is below.

Frame It

The participants identified the following main components of this issue:

- Need both **quality** and **affordable** child care
- Long waiting lists for assistance
- Lack of funding
- Not affordable – currently in Evansville, families with children, ages 0-5, pay approximately \$135-155 per child and \$35 per child for before and after school care
- Policies of how the whole system is set up prevents quality affordable child care
- Affects whether an individual can get a job (need a job to get child care; need child care to get a job)
- According to policies, individuals can make too much to qualify for assistance so if someone gets a \$10/per week raise, he/she can be disqualified from receiving assistance and expected to pay at the full rate (which can be a more than \$100 per week increase)
- Need off-hour child care
- Lack of options for older kids and teenagers
- School times affect whether older kids can take care of their younger siblings
- Lack of child support from non-custodial parent

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.

- Not many to help teenagers
- Public Libraries have *Teen Zone*
- YMCA but individuals need membership; however at the Caldwell YMCW provides free membership/programs for families who qualify (children are “at-risk”)
- Wired Café
- Dream Center – for elementary and older kids
- Boys and Girls Clubs
- Two places to apply for vouchers
 - ~ Gatekeepers of Vanderburgh County
 - ~ WorkOne Centers
- 4C of Southern Indiana (a resource that provides free child care referrals and child development information)
 - ~ *Paths to Quality* program and trending on service provides
 - ~ Service will pay for one day if in a domestic violence shelter
- Milestones, the Seals Child Development Center in Evansville, IN, offers inclusive day care for children of all abilities, ages 6 weeks to 6 years
- Community Kids
- Homeless Prevention Coalition Child Care Committee

Who should be involved?

The participants identified the following organizations/groups that should be involved to help to improve the situation for this issue.

- Government at all levels
- Employers (“employee-based child care that can be affordable”)
- Churches (“could step up to the plate”)
- Parent Cooperative Day Care (Parents providing child care)
- Child Care Entrepreneurs
- WorkOne (“to tell people how many are on the list”)
- Funders
- Schools
 - ~ When kids get out of schools
 - ~ Need All-Day Kindergartens
- Head Start (has long waiting lists)
- Special needs providers
- First Steps
- Actual users of service (People facing needs should be involved)

Community / State Action

The participants determined that the following actions should be taken in order to help address the issues surrounding this issue.

- Funnel more funding to child care
- Provide studies about issues from economic perspectives and challenges of what’s happening to the community as a whole if there is no childcare / no jobs
- Look at the system and build a better infrastructure – “scrap the current system and fix!”
- Understand what are the numbers (“Just like what’s been done for Breast Cancer”)
- Find ways to find trusting people
- Build awareness of the issue
- Understand and help “latch-key” kids
- Do focus groups
- “Do something like ‘Secret Millionaire’ that goes in and reward the service providers that are doing it right”

Next steps

The participants determined that the next steps that need to be taken in order to begin making progress on this issue are:

- Make government aware of the complexity of the issue and of how important this issue is
- Provide training to people who would like to be child care providers
- Build awareness of how to become a provider
- Develop system to base fees on hourly basis, not daily
- Fund raising and advice from philanthropists to help on this issue and what to do with the money

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 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.

* Summary Report Disclaimer

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