



From the Executive Director

Welcome to the 2020 *State of the Association*. Like many of you, I've run out of ways to describe the last six months. What I can articulate, though, is the way the pandemic has tested the resolve of IARCA members, other child and family welfare agencies, and our state and local partners. What is amazing, and worth sitting with, is how brilliantly Indiana's child and family welfare community has passed that test.

Despite profound uncertainty and risk, thousands upon thousands of child welfare workers showed up for children and their families every day. Agencies stayed open and services continued. As a result, the tremendous stress that the pandemic put on our children and their families was lessened, their trauma was treated, and their needs were supported. We rightfully focus on the resiliency of our children and their families. The last six months have shown in dramatic fashion just how resilient child and family welfare professionals are as well.

During this time, IARCA staff have been working hard to keep information flowing out to the field and from the field to our state and national partners. We've been working to help the state and local volunteers distribute PPE to member agencies. We've stayed in close touch with the Governor's office, the State Budget Agency, and DCS about the extra costs many member agencies are carrying as they work to keep children and their families safe in a pandemic.

At the same time, we've launched a number of exciting new initiatives as well as continued our core work. I've included some highlights in this update of that work. As always, please reach out to me with any questions, ideas, or concerns.

All the best,
Chris Daley

Association Financials

Despite the financial stress that members are experiencing during the pandemic, your commitment to paying annual dues means that IARCA's financial position is solid. The IARCA Board of Directors approved a 2020 budget of just under \$800,000.

To date, we have realized 89% of projected income for the year. Because of the transition of our conference to a virtual format, we will miss our income target for the year. However, those losses are more than offset by much lower than expected expenses for the Conference and other categories. As a result, we are in a good financial position.

The IARCA Institute for Excellence is also financially healthy. The Institute was granted a new three-year grant from our long-time partners at Lilly Endowment. We have also submitted a renewal grant with the Anthem Foundation. We continue to discuss new support with other partners and expect to bring on additional funders in the coming years.

IARCA Membership 2020

IARCA's membership continues to grow. As of September 1, 2020, we have:

Full Members: 91

Affiliate Members: 11

Associate members: 5

Total Members: 107

Advocacy

- Since the early weeks of the pandemic, IARCA members have been engaged with our state partners to make sure that costs associated with keeping children and their families safe during the pandemic are covered contemporaneously. Many IARCA members saw an increase in expenses because of the safety precautions they took to make sure they could continue providing services. IARCA is in discussions with the State Budget Agency about whether federal CARES Act funds can be used to reimburse a portion of these costs.
- As the scope of the pandemic became clear, IARCA and our members strategized about how we could continue service provision, keep children and their families safe, and reduce risk for child welfare workers and other essential employees to the greatest degree possible. Together, we advocated with DCS for communication of common sense policy modifications that was clear and widely distributed. We urged the Department to make meaningful use of virtual services and continue to urge them to allow use of virtual platforms that effectively supplement (and sometimes surpass) in-person services and training after the pandemic is over.
- After DCS advocated for changes in background requirements in Indiana's code, delays in processing the six kinds of checks now required before some child and family welfare professionals can be hired began to create havoc in recruiting new staff. Working with our partners in the General Assembly, IARCA sought to better balance the legitimate use of background checks against longstanding, effective onboarding practices that have kept children safe for decades. Unfortunately, that advocacy was not successful. Now, the onset of the pandemic has further exacerbated background check delays. In response, IARCA and partner organizations successfully advocated with federal partners for background check waivers that recognized the need for more flexibility. IARCA continues to advocate with DCS to adopt the federal flexibility.
- Working closely with our national partners and champions on Capitol Hill, IARCA has helped to turn the spotlight on the need for additional federal funding and flexibility when it comes to child and family welfare. Along with more than 40 IARCA agencies, we submitted a letter of support for the *Supporting Foster Youth and Families through the Pandemic Act*. In meetings alongside our Hoosier partners, we've urged Senate staff to look at how the legislation would support the needs of older youth, offer needed flexibility in implementation of FFPSA, and increase the stability of other important programs.

New Initiatives

Reimagining Foster Care Community Work Group: IARCA is staffing this important Work Group that is focused on identifying cultural and structural changes that Indiana's child and family welfare community needs to make to better connect birth parents with the foster and kinship parents who are caring for their child or children. The Work Group is Co-Chaired by Mary Mims from Dockside Services, Angela Smith-Grossman from DCS, and Teresa Lyles from the state's CASA Office and is evenly comprised of public and private sector members. When it completes its process, the Work Group will produce community-wide recommendations. While no explicit deadline has been set, the Work Group anticipates meeting through the end of 2021.

Racial Justice Action Plan Work Group: Rising to the call of national protests for racial justice, the IARCA Public Policy Committee and Board created an ad hoc Work Group to develop recommendations for a racial justice plan. Recognizing that we have not yet fully eliminated the effects of racism from child welfare efforts in Indiana, the Work Group will focus on substantive changes within the Association, recommendations for IARCA members agencies, and an advocacy agenda with our state partners. The recommendations will focus on removing structural barriers that children of color and their parents face in achieving successful outcomes. In particular, the plan will highlight the needs of Black children and their families in recognition of the myriad of ways that structural, and too often interpersonal, racism has added to the trauma and depravation that our community is committed to alleviating.

Training Project

IARCA's Training Project had to completely transform itself over the last six months. With only a few exceptions, IARCA Institute trainings have focused on an in-person experience. Obviously, the pandemic necessitated a wholesale change in that practice.

With the help of our training partners and the enthusiastic support of the IARCA membership, the Training Project has been able to offer a full slate of virtual trainings in Motivational Interviewing, Trauma-Informed practices, and Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. The feedback from participants has been very positive. They've found the trainings to be engaging, informative, and useful. Many thanks to our trainers for their willingness and ability to transition to virtual training.

We also built on the IARCA Institute's Webinar series this year with important webinars on DCS billing practices, transition to virtual services, and enrolling as a Medicaid provider. Obviously, the virtual nature of the webinars has been very appropriate for the moment.

So has the nuts and bolts content of the webinars so far this year. Participants have appreciated the opportunity to focus on a specific issue so they can get a grounding in it and ask questions of the experts. We're looking forward to more webinars in the series in the coming year.

Outcomes 2020

The launch of Outcomes 2020 has been a huge success. In the 18 months leading up to January 1, 2020, the IARCA Outcomes Task Force and our outside evaluators worked through the assessment tools we had been using throughout the first two decades of the project. They identified the pieces they wanted to keep and adopted (and adapted) additional assessments to bring the project up to modern data collection capabilities and expectations.

A key component of the launch of Outcomes 2020 was training in the evidence-based tool that is at the heart of the changes, the North Carolina Family Assessment Scales (NCFAS). The Outcomes Task Force has been working on a follow-up to that training for most of 2020. The next training, which we expect to launch in November, will expand on the understanding of the tool, managing its subjective components, and increasing interrater reliability.

The Task Force and our external evaluators are also busy looking at how the new assessment tool is working. Reports so far are that it is being welcomed by the field. We're looking forward to having a whole year's worth of data so that we can take a closer look at the results.

In the meantime, we are working on a mechanism to produce interim provider reports. In the past, we've produced one provider report each year. Based on feedback from participating agencies, we have started to look at how we could produce interim reports to agencies so they could benchmark their progress mid-year, for example. We expect to be able to produce an interim report based on the first three quarters of 2020 this year. In future years, we'll look to increase the frequency of interim reports.

Workforce and Leadership Development Project

Thanks to support from Lilly Endowment, the IARCA Institute opened a new project and reimagined another.

Workforce Development Project

The workforce demands on child and family welfare agencies are intense, never ending, and growing in their complexity. For this reason, the Institute launched its first programming specifically geared toward building and sustaining a pool of future child and family welfare workers. We kicked off the project with a virtual hiring fair and are looking at more programming in the coming months.

Leadership Development Project

Building on IARCA's highly successful Leadership Academies, this project focuses on supporting our existing and emerging leaders in a format that better fits with everyone's overburdened schedules. Later this year, we'll be opening up the application process for our first Executive Learning Circle cohort. The group of 8-12 selected leaders will begin meeting in early 2021.



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