



From the Executive Director

You all know I wish I could report that the last year was easier than the one before it. You also know that I can't do that.

Discussion after discussion with many of you and your colleagues from around the state makes clear that this is the most difficult time to be providing services to children, youth, and families in many people's professional lives. The lingering stress and continued illnesses from COVID-19 have only been compounded by our collective shortages of staff. The resulting contraction of service capacity is being felt up and down our state. And, of course, that morale and fiscal effects of that contraction simply make the work more challenging. Nonetheless, you keep accomplishing the work.

You would think that two and a half years after the pandemic began, I would stop being amazed by the commitment and perseverance of Indiana's child and family welfare professionals. But I'm not. Everyday I hear a story that reminds me how exceptional you all are. I hear about a family has been kept together because of a team's exceptional support. Or a child and family that have been matched with a foster family who embrace their role in helping to build a path to reunification. Or a youth who has made a meaningful and lasting connection with a staff member at a residential treatment agency. Or ... some many other stories.

It's no secret that our community is struggling right now. And we're not alone. Almost every sector and profession that works with children and youth is understaffed and on the border of being overwhelmed. Yet, you all continue to change lives and preserve futures. Just know that your efforts don't go unnoticed or unappreciated. IARCA and our partners are working every day to do right by all of you and get you the support and resources you need.

All the best,
Chris Daley

Financials

IARCA continues to be on solid financial ground. The Association has continued to be able to realize some cost savings due to the ongoing shift to virtual engagements. We have also seen some cost savings as we've outsourced bookkeeping and payroll functions. Thanks to continued strong support from member agencies, we've been able to host more targeted in-person engagements this year, including the Leadership Mini-Retreat, a half-day summit to discuss process and practice for supervised visitation, and another half-day event to bring IARCA Work Groups together to Break the Silos.

The Institute is also doing well financially. The shift to virtual programming has allowed us to make more and more educational opportunities free to attend. We received a new grant from the United Way of Central Indiana this year and have submitted a proposal for a grant renewal with Lilly Endowment.

IARCA Membership August 2022

106 Total Members: IARCA's membership numbers continue to hold steady. As of August 1, 2022, we have: 92 Full Members; 8 Affiliate Members; and, 6 Associate Members

Practice Advancement

UWCI provide significant support to Co-Care work: Following an idea from leadership at The Villages, IARCA will now be the fiscal sponsor of a nearly \$130,000 project supported by the United Way of Central Indiana to build resources for explaining Co-Care to parents and foster and kinship parents. With help from The Villages, Firefly, and our partners at DCS, IARCA put together a plan that will include a work day with parents and foster/kinship parents identifying what their communities need to know about Co-Care and which messages will work to help promote the practice. We'll then turn that messaging into a series of short videos and materials to help develop parent champions for Co-Care. The project will culminate in a convening of parents and foster/kinship parents in early 2023 to debut the materials and talk about how to use them to build support for increased communication and collaboration between parents and the foster or kinship parents caring for their child or children.

Collaborative meeting with DCS and providers around Supervised Visitation: Almost 90 professionals from IARCA member agencies and DCS gathered on June 8th for an afternoon of discussion and creative problem-solving regarding supervised visitation in Indiana. The goal of the collaborative event was to better understand how we can work together to make sure that the supervised visitation services families receive are as effective as possible. Two panels, one of professionals and one of parents who have interacted with the community, shared their thoughts and experiences and then small groups discussed ways to make this service more efficient, collaborative, and effective. This event, coordinated by DCS and IARCA, was a great start and participants agreed that continued work is needed to improve these services.

IARCA Work Group Summit: On July 26th, a group of staff from IARCA member agencies representing the full array of child welfare programs met to brainstorm ways we can continue to improve our continuum of services based. The event included both small and whole group discussions about ideas and opportunities to help families receive more streamlined and easy-to-understand services. A key take-away from the meeting was that agencies can more to be in contact with colleagues working with the same families. We often rely on DCS to establish those connections but there is more we can be doing on our own to increase communication and collaboration.

IARCA Foster Alumni Team

IARCA's Policy Coordinator, Josh Oswald, has recruited several foster care alumni from around the state to hold small group meetings with key legislators before the end of the year. These alumni will share their personal stories as examples of why Indiana should continue to invest in services to children, youth, and families.

Former foster youth are key stakeholders in the child welfare system who have historically not had much of a voice in shaping decisions or reforms of the system that has so intimately affected their lives. IARCA is excited to support elevating their stories, including the exciting things they are doing today so that our partners in the General Assembly can better understand how investing in child and family welfare services benefit individuals and our state.

The team participated in an orientation on July 9. Josh led the training and shared insights he learned through his policy work in Indiana and on Capitol Hill. Team members discussed best practices in sharing their own stories - and keeping themselves safe while doing so - and dove into the structure of the legislature so that they better understood the role of the individual elected officials they'd be meeting with.

The team is now hard at work setting up meetings with legislators. They plan to meet with thirty legislators from all over Indiana before the end of the year.

Workforce and Leadership Development Project

IARCA is continuing to offer our *Executive Learning Circles* program, a partnership with IU's O'Neill School Executive Education program, which offers deeper learning and networking for IARCA member agency leaders. We initiated two cohorts this year, Multi-Service Agency leaders and Leaders of Color. Both will finish up their programs soon and response has continued to be strong.

The third annual IARCA Virtual Hiring Fair was held in April. While 29 IARCA agencies participated, we received only nine applications from prospective hires and no hires were made as a result. At least one agency indicated this was typical of today's job market, though, and shared that they still find value in hiring fairs to increase name recognition. Overall, agencies indicated they are still interested in holding a fair again next year.

IARCA staff are also working with numerous colleges and universities to offer IARCA member staff as guest speakers during a relevant class. Not only will these in-class presentations help educate students about child and family welfare, they will create opportunities to introduce them to possible future employers.

Advocacy

State-level Legislative Wins: Although 2022 was a short legislative session, IARCA saw an unprecedented amount of support from legislators for child welfare priorities. The major results of this support were two important changes. One allows new hires to begin training while out-of-state background checks are still pending, shortening the time to get some new hires into the field. Another codifies DCS's administrative review process of rates, to include allowing rate adjustment requests when they are connected to child/staff safety or DCS/accreditation requirements and requiring DCS to increase documentation of how review decisions are made.

IMD, QRTP, and Medicaid Issue Update: IARCA has continued advocacy at the state and national levels to ensure youth in some residential facilities do not lose their insurance coverage due to an unintended conflict between FFPSA and Medicaid exemptions for IMDs. The state has decided to move forward with assessments of QRTPs to determine if they are IMDs. If they are, youth in those facilities will have their Medicaid suspended and their health care costs will be covered by a "back up" insurance plan which pays the same rates as Medicaid.

Statewide Residential Open Houses: IARCA coordinated two days of statewide open houses at 24 Indiana child and family welfare residential services agencies in late July/early August. This idea came from discussions with DCS field leadership at the 2021 IARCA Regional Meetings. The open houses were a great opportunity for DCS staff, CASA staff and volunteers, and county probation teams to visit facilities and learn about the services the agency offers and the support they provide for Indiana youth and families.

Outcomes Project

At the recommendation of the Outcomes Task Force, the IARCA Institute Board approved a plan to rebuild EON, our outcomes database, in the Salesforce platform. This move will modernize our data collection and reporting processes and result in a system that will be much easier to update as needed in the future. The new system will also add a way to track outcomes on Family Preservation cases specifically. After testing is completed in the early fall, IARCA will begin training participating members in anticipation of launching on January 1st, 2023!

Training Project

Our "Lunch & Learn" series has been immensely popular and well-received thus far this year, focusing on *Motivational Interviewing* "boosters" and *Interrupting Racism for Children* and *TACTICS* deep dives. Attendance has exceeded other traditional events, and feedback has highlighted that members appreciate the new format and flexibility.

Numerous webinars and a handful of virtual seminars have also been provided across a range of topics, including using technology to increase foster family recruitment and retention, national accreditation process basics, and strategies in cost reporting.



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