

Juvenile justice summit

National, local experts to discuss issues, solutions

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An unprecedented conference of national and local experts on juvenile justice issues in Indiana and elsewhere in the United States is set to take place in late August.

The Indiana State Bar Association will present the "Summit on Racial Disparities in the Juvenile Justice System: A Statewide Dialogue" from 8 a.m. to 4:15 p.m. Aug. 27 at the Indiana Government Conference Center, 402 W. Washington St. in Indianapolis. The ISBA will accept the first 200 registrations, and encourages anyone who is interested to apply as soon as possible.



A pre-summit meeting will take place Aug. 26. It is open to the first 75 people who register.

Chief Justice of Indiana Randall T. Shepherd and State Rep. Bill Crawford, D-Indianapolis, serve as the *Arredondo* honorary chairs. Marion Superior Judge Tanya Walton Pratt and Lake Circuit Judge Lorenzo Arredondo serve as the working chairs.

The event is sponsored by the Indiana Supreme Court and the Indiana Criminal Justice Institute. To register, click on "Events" on the ISBA's Web site, www.inbar.org.

Organizers encourage anyone with a connection to juvenile justice to attend, including juvenile court judges, prosecutors, defense attorneys, social workers, educators, legislators, and law enforcement officers.

The goal is to have an open dialogue between all points of contact in the juvenile justice system, said JauNae Hanger, a former commissioner of the Indiana Commission on Disproportionality in Youth Services and former chair of the ISBA Children's Rights Committee.

"We're not pointing fingers. ... We want to get beyond the defensiveness, bring everyone to the table, and discuss different solutions," she said.

By inviting people with a variety of backgrounds to the conversation, "we're hoping for a diversity of viewpoints," she said.



In some ways the summit will pick up where a 2004 conference, "Children, Mental Health, and the Law Summit," left off.

Because of that summit, the state's pilot program to screen, assess, and treat juvenile offenders with mental health and substance abuse issues was started in 2007. Ten detention centers are participating in the pilot project at this time.

That summit also led to legislation regarding mental health issues for juvenile offenders, including the 2009 session's House Enrolled Act 1536, which would ensure an eligible child can participate in Medicaid upon release from a detention center or correctional facility.

Thureau

"That was a very productive summit ... and we saw the benefits of that summit," Hanger said.

Based on the success of the 2004 summit, organizers for the 2009 summit have high hopes.

"The focus is on racial disparity, but will go beyond that," Hanger said. "We'll look at how the system works for all children."

She added the ISBA is in a unique position to bring these different professionals together.

The summit will include recent data studies and implications for juvenile justice officials, presented by Dr. Russell Skiba, director of the Equity Project at the Center for Evaluation and Education Policy at Indiana University; a panel discussion of the role of law enforcement, judges, defenders, and prosecutors in reducing disproportionality and disparity; collaborative approaches to addressing disproportionate minority contact; policy considerations and economics of reforming disparate practices in juvenile justice; concluding with a roundtable discussion and wrap up with summit speakers and Indiana officials.

The lunch keynote speaker is James Bell of San Francisco, the founder and executive director of the W. Haywood Burns Institute, a leading national organization working to reduce over-representation of youth of color in the juvenile justice system. Previously, Bell served for more than 20 years as a staff attorney for the Youth Law Center in San Francisco.

Other speakers include police chiefs, prosecutors, public defenders, representatives of juvenile justice organizations, and juvenile court judges from Indiana and other parts of the country.

Hanger said all of the speakers were eager to participate and look to this summit to serve as a model for future summits around the country.

For instance, Lisa Thureau of Cambridge, Mass., established and works for Strategies for Youth. In 2004, she worked with the Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority Police Department to help officers start the Stop Watch program to more effectively work with

