



# CRISP Newsletter

Center for Research on Inclusion & Social Policy

DECEMBER 2018



## What is CRISP?

The IU Public Policy Institute (PPI) seeks to improve Hoosiers' lives by providing objective analysis to equip community leaders for better decision making. Indiana has many vulnerable populations at risk for negative outcomes, and a need remains to understand their unique, complex issues and how public policy and programs may address them. The Center for Research on Inclusion and Social Policy (CRISP) was created to better understand the systemic, cross-cutting issues in Indiana related to inequity and to help leaders across sectors identify effective solutions to those problems.

Over the next year, our team will work to evaluate programs to help identify solutions for complex social issues; conduct applied and translational research on these topics; and share this information with stakeholders and community members to improve outcomes and reduce disparities in their communities.

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# LETTER *from* the DIRECTOR



As of 2017, 17 percent of Marion County residents live in poverty. When we examine these trends by race and ethnicity, the numbers change to 13 percent for white, 24 percent for black, and 26 percent for Latinx individuals in Marion County.

It's easy to report the topline number instead of identifying which groups experience different outcomes. For some, the differences raise uncomfortable questions about why they exist, which is what motivated me to pursue disparities-related research.

Regardless of the policy area—health, education, criminal justice, employment, and others—individuals of color are significantly more likely to have worse outcomes than their white counterparts. Our lives are shorter, we are disciplined at greater rates in school, are less likely to be employed, and are more likely to be incarcerated. All of these factors complicate a person's ability to improve their outcomes, especially related to poverty.

The complex reality of these disparities has raised many questions for me about how to address them. Research, including experiences of community residents, suggests that a combination of ineffective policies, discriminatory practices, and cultural differences—among many other factors—have contributed to the root causes of poverty and other major social policy outcomes. It may be unrealistic to eliminate disparities completely, but reducing them is an attainable goal.

The creation of CRISP provides me and my team with a unique opportunity to discuss issues at the nexus of poverty and social demographics. While there isn't a one-size-fits-all solution to addressing disparities, CRISP is dedicated to identifying what can work to reduce them. Our projects will seek to make race and ethnicity and socioeconomic status a primary focus, with an understanding and a willingness to explore how those factors intersect with gender, neighborhoods, sexual orientation, and other identities that affect one's well-being. Our collaborative practices reflect the diverse nature of our team members' experiences and provide context to the communities we serve. We hope to be a source of information on area trends in inequity and opportunities to make Central Indiana more inclusive.

*Breanca Merritt*

**Breanca Merritt, PhD**, Founding Director

**Email:** Breanca@iupui.edu

**Phone:** (317) 278-1344

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

*We analyze and disseminate community-relevant research about social disparities and complex policy issues.*





# MEET *the* TEAM

Issues surrounding social policy and inclusion are complex. Effectively analyzing the complexity of these intersecting topics requires diversity of thought, backgrounds, and lived experiences. CRISP leadership has committed to building a team with members that not only reflect the communities we serve, but also reflect the topics we study. We have recruited a diverse pool of full-time and part-time staff from multidisciplinary backgrounds including—but not limited to—public affairs, public policy, criminal justice, environmental policy, nonprofit management, philanthropy, social work, and public health. Our graduate and undergraduate students, and mid-career professionals provide a unique and diverse perspective. As we progress in our work, we look forward to promoting and engaging students and faculty through ongoing recruitment and shared goals.

**WE'RE**  
**EXCITED**  
**ABOUT**

CRISP looks forward to understanding the complex issues that affect Indiana communities. The creation of CRISP presents boundless possibilities for our team to merge our expertise and passion for inclusion and social policy. In the coming year, our team is excited to develop and maintain meaningful partnerships with community agencies, nonprofits, university centers, and public entities. We will learn from our partners, refine our expertise, and position CRISP as a leader on topics surrounding equity and inclusion. Most of all, our team wants to empower our audience with the necessary tools and research that will enable them to effect change in their own communities.

## AREAS OF FOCUS



**Homelessness**



**Public Health  
& Safety**



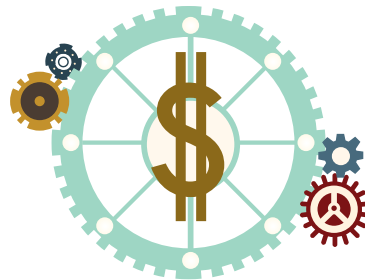
**Housing**



**Youth & Family**



**Crime Prevention**



**Poverty  
Reduction**



**Neighborhood &  
Community Development**



**Education**

*All current CRISP Projects touch upon one or more of these interrelated subjects.*



INDIANA UNIVERSITY  
**PUBLIC POLICY INSTITUTE**  
Center for Research on Inclusion & Social Policy

**Breanca Merritt, PhD**, Founding Director

334 North Senate Avenue, Suite 300  
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204  
[policyinstitute.iu.edu](http://policyinstitute.iu.edu)

**Email:** [IUCRISP@iu.edu](mailto:IUCRISP@iu.edu)  
**Phone:** (317) 278-1344

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