



***LifeWise doesn't succeed because of religion — it succeeds when districts fail to set boundaries.***

# Indiana RTRI (LifeWise) Training

What You *Need* to Know, What's *Nice* to Know, and *Where to Go* Next

## 1. NEED TO KNOW

### A. The Legal Reality (Indiana-Specific)

- Indiana is a “**shall**” state for Released Time Religious Instruction (RTRI)  
→ Districts **cannot ban RTRI outright**
- **BUT** Indiana law **does not require** districts to:
  - Remove students from core instruction
  - Lower safety standards
  - Create inequitable conditions for non-participating students
- **School boards retain full authority** to set **strict conditions** — or decline participation if conditions aren't met

**Bottom line: RTRI shall be allowed — but *how* it operates is entirely within district control.**

### B. The Real Concerns (What Actually Moves School Boards)

Focus on operations, not religion:

- **Student safety & supervision**
- **Loss of instructional time**
- **Equity and peer pressure**
- **Transportation & custody gaps**
- **District liability**

### **C. What You Can Do (Concrete, Doable Actions)**

- Request meetings with administrators or board members
- Attend and speak at school board meetings
- Submit written comments and documentation
- Ask for **specific safeguards** using a clear checklist
- Coordinate with other parents and community members

### **D. The Winning Frame**

- **Lead with risk, not religion**
- Use **policy language**, not ideology
- Anchor everything in:
  - Student safety
  - Equity
  - Instructional integrity
  - Board authority

#### **Four key questions to ask administrators:**

1. Who supervises students at every moment they are off campus?
2. What instruction are students missing — and how is that addressed?
3. How is consent handled, renewed, and revoked?
4. What happens when something goes wrong?

### **E. You're Not Alone**

- Parents across Indiana are raising these concerns
- **DSSIN and allied groups have shown this approach works**
- Coordinated, calm engagement **changes policy**

## 2. NICE TO KNOW

- **LifeWise's business model**
  - Enrollment quotas, Salesforce tracking, ~\$90K leadership salaries
- **Curriculum concerns**
  - The Gospel Project is explicitly evangelical, not ecumenical
- **Constitutional background**
  - Zorach v. Clauson and Establishment Clause boundaries
- **How LifeWise expands**
  - Steering committees, petitions, child-to-child recruitment
- **Why districts feel pressure**
  - Voucher politics and legislative signaling
- **What other states are doing**
  - Stronger safeguards, policy revisions, or pushback

## 3. WHERE TO GO

### A. Organizations & Support

Use these organizations for education, policy guidance, and support:

- **Americans United**  
<https://www.au.org/RTRI>
- **Freedom From Religion Foundation**  
<https://ffrf.org/legal/report-church-state/>
- **Secular Education Association**  
<https://seculareducationassociation.org/>
- **Do Something Southern Indiana**  
<https://dosomethingsoin.com/>
- **Hoosiers United**  
<https://hoosiersunited.org/>

## **B. What to Request From Your District**

- Current RTRI board policy
- Communications with LifeWise or similar programs
- Transportation and supervision plans
- Board minutes and approval records

## **C. How to Stay Engaged**

- Attend board meetings consistently
- Submit written comments (they count)
- Document incidents carefully
- Coordinate with other parents

## **D. Materials Available After This Training**

- Indiana Policy Checklist for Parents
- School Board Talking Points
- Email Templates
- Incident Documentation Guide
- Follow-Up Action Plan

## **You do not need to be a lawyer**

- You do **not** need to argue religion
- You **do** have leverage
- Calm, persistent, policy-based advocacy works
- School boards **can** say no to unsafe or inequitable conditions

**Indiana law allows RTRI — it does not require districts to make it easy, disruptive, or risky.**

# Indiana Policy Checklist for Parents

***LifeWise doesn't succeed because of religion – it succeeds when districts fail to set boundaries.***

## Released Time Religious Instruction (RTRI)

### Key Principle

Indiana law *permits* released time religious instruction, but it does **not require** school districts to make it easy, convenient, or disruptive to instruction, safety, or equity.

## Student Safety & Supervision

- Written supervision plan covering **all time students are off campus**
- Background checks for **all adults** interacting with students
- Clear emergency, medical, and severe-weather protocols
- Written procedures for **late returns or missing students**
- No unsupervised walking to or from off-campus instruction

## Instructional Time & Equity

- No removal from **core instructional periods**
- No academic penalty for students who remain in school
- Meaningful, supervised alternatives for non-participants
- No public identification, incentives, or peer pressure

## Enrollment & Parental Consent (*Critical Under Indiana Law*)

- Written parental opt-in** consent only
- Consent renewed **every school year**
- Parents may revoke consent **at any time**
- No recruitment by teachers or school staff

## **Transportation & Custody**

- Clear chain-of-custody documentation
- District-approved transportation plans
- Weather safety rules enforced
- No student released unless a responsible adult is present

## **Oversight & Accountability**

- Annual school board review and approval
- Incident reporting requirements
- Immediate suspension for safety violations
- Public transparency and records access

# **Indiana-Specific School Board Talking Points**

### **Opening**

“Indiana law allows released-time programs, but it does not require districts to sacrifice safety, equity, or instructional time.”

### **Safety**

“When students leave campus during the school day, the district retains a duty of care.”

### **Equity**

“Public schools must serve all students equally, including those who do not participate.”

### **Instructional Time**

“Released time should not remove students from core academic instruction.”

### **Liability**

“Any safety incident off campus reflects on the district and board.”

### **Authority**

“The board has full authority to set strict conditions—and to decline participation if those conditions aren’t met.”

### **Closing**

“Strong policies protect students and protect the district.”

# Indiana-Customized Email Template to School Board Members

**Subject:** Indiana Released Time Policy – Student Safety and District Oversight

Dear Members of the School Board,

I am a parent/community member in the district writing regarding LifeWise Academy and other released-time religious instruction programs.

Indiana law permits released-time religious instruction, but it does not require school districts to structure schedules, transportation, or supervision in ways that disrupt instruction or compromise student safety.

My concerns are not theological. They relate to student supervision, instructional equity, and district liability. When students leave campus during the school day, the district retains a duty of care, and any failures in supervision or transportation ultimately fall back on the school corporation.

I respectfully ask the board to ensure that any released-time program operating in the district includes:

- Written parental opt-in consent renewed annually
- No removal from core instructional time
- Clear transportation and weather-safety protocols
- Continuous adult supervision
- Meaningful alternatives for non-participating students
- Incident reporting and annual board review

Indiana school boards have the authority to set strong, protective policies, and doing so benefits all students while reducing district risk.

Thank you for your time and service.

Sincerely,

[Name]

[School / District]

# Indiana Incident Documentation Guide

## Released Time Religious Instruction

### Why This Matters

School boards respond strongly to **documented operational failures**, especially those involving supervision or transportation.

## What to Record

- School corporation name
- Program name (e.g., LifeWise Academy)
- Date and time
- Student age(s)
- Location (school, church, vehicle, route)
- Weather conditions
- Who was responsible for supervision
- Exact description of what occurred

## Evidence to Save

- Emails or text messages
- Photos (weather, conditions, distance, timing)
- Witness statements
- School or district communications

## Writing Tips

- Stick to **verifiable facts**
- Avoid speculation or emotional language
- Use clear, chronological descriptions

## Who to Notify

- School principal
- Superintendent or district administration
- School board members
- Keep copies for yourself

# Indiana-Focused Follow-Up Action Plan

## Step 1: Know Your District (*Within 48 Hours*)

- Is RTRI active, approved, or proposed?
- What board policy governs released time?
- When is the next board meeting?

## Step 2: Engage Strategically (*Within 1 Week*)

- Email board members
- Prepare 2–3 Indiana-specific talking points
- Coordinate with other parents or community members

## Step 3: Show Up Consistently

- Attend board meetings
- Submit written comments
- Request policy review or amendments
- Document incidents carefully

## Key Reminders

- You do **not** need to debate religion
- Calm, policy-based engagement works
- School boards have discretion
- Persistence matters

**Indiana law permits RTRI — it does not require districts to make it easy, disruptive, or unsafe.**