

Legislative Council Special Committee on Strengthening Wisconsin Families

Principles

I. Goal:

Every child in Wisconsin has the opportunity to become a productive citizen.

II. A family is defined by relationships and place:

Parent-child relationships

Childrearing homes

A family is a childrearing home.

III. Strengthening families means fostering:

Access to essential resources for all families

Healthy parent-child relationships

Stable families

Family supportive neighborhoods

IV. Strengthen families by:

Building family-supportive neighborhoods and communities.

Home visitation for the parents of newborns.

Focusing services on families.

Coordinated services teams

Wrap-around teams

Welfare reform

V. The New York City Commission for Economic Opportunity has a core set of shared values regarding welfare reform:

- Hard work and personal responsibility fuel our economy;
- All New Yorkers should share in the rewards of economic growth and prosperity;
- Wherever possible, government and the private sector must work together to reward work and support working families;
- Context is critical – poverty cannot be reduced outside the network of families, religious institutions, schools, and other community institutions.

HISTORY OF EFFORTS TO IMPROVE STATE/LOCAL COLLABORATION

1985: The Wisconsin Strategic Development Commission recognized the importance of developing state and local family supportive mechanisms in the economic growth of the state.

1990: The Governor's Task Force on Children and Families recommended that a state Commission on Children and Youth be created to coordinate programs between state departments and to model coordination efforts for local governments.

1995: The Commission for the Study of Administrative Value and Efficiency advocated creating a mechanism for improving cooperation between state and local governments "to reduce wasteful turf feuds and protectionism."

1996: The 1996 Legislative Audit Bureau report on prevention programs for children, youth, and families in state departments found extensive overlap.

1997: The Governor's Blue Ribbon Commission on Mental Health advised incorporating integrated prevention and early intervention practices into the public mental health system.

1999: The Joint Legislative Council introduced a bill to create a Prevention Coordination Council to enhance prevention services for children, youth, and families.

2000: The Turning Point Initiative under the Wisconsin Division of Public Health found that categorical funding streams often are not linked to local priorities and suggested improved coordination between state and local public health system partnerships.

2000: The Governor's Blue-Ribbon Commission on State-Local Partnerships for the 21st Century (Kettl Commission) concluded that Wisconsin should make government more productive and grow the economy by aggressively strengthening state/local partnerships.

Past responses to these recommendations to improve the efficiency of state government seem to have been that this can be done without a legislative mandate by the Governor directing departments to collaborate. Collaborative entities are being created in certain areas, such as:

- The Brighter Futures Initiative in the Department of Health and Family Services is being expanded to strengthen families and create family-supportive neighborhoods and communities.
- The Children Come First Advisory Committee has recommended forming a Coordinated Services Team Executive Steering Committee in the Department of Health and Family Services to oversee a philosophical, policy, and practice shift to assure that barriers identified by participating counties can be addressed and resolved quickly.

A state Family Policy Board would be a format for facilitating ongoing state/local prevention and intervention collaborative efforts in all state agencies. It would insure continuity through subsequent administrations. It would finally implement the recommendations made by seven governance study groups over the last eighteen years.