



WISCONSIN LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL STAFF MEMORANDUM

Memo No. 5

TO: MEMBERS OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON STRENGTHENING WISCONSIN FAMILIES

FROM: Scott Grosz, Staff Attorney

RE: Characteristics of Healthy Families

DATE: November 14, 2006

The following comments were submitted in response to Representative Kestell's request that committee members submit lists of the qualities of a strong family and the circumstances that facilitate those qualities.

QUALITIES OF A STRONG FAMILY

Jon Angeli

- **Caring & Appreciation** - Family members are willing to personally sacrifice for one another because they care.
- **Time Together** - Family members find the time, even when too busy or tired, to share both quantity and quality time together.
- **Encouragement** - Family members even if they do not understand or have the same point of view will still promote a sense of belonging and support family member's dreams or passion.
- **Commitment** - Family members recognize the worth of individuals and are committed to the value of the family as a unit.
- **Communication** - Family members do not fear speaking the unspeakable. Honest feelings are easily expressed and not met with anger but understanding. Time is set aside for family discussions.
- **Conflict Resolution** - Family members process conflict using effective problem-solving skills. There is respect for other's viewpoint and does not become the mind-set of winning at all costs.

- **Adaptive Ability** - This refers to a family's ability to adapt and persevere in order to meet the internal and external demands of family life.

- **Spirituality** - Family members support a shared belief in something greater than themselves. This belief supports their family values and goals and encourages the passing on of family traditions.

- **Clear Roles** - Family members have a clear idea about their roles and responsibilities. Parents and caretakers need to be in charge but flexible enough to receive input and suggestions from other family members.

John Burgess

- Love.
- Respect.
- Stable home.
- Functioning family unit.
- Supportive.
- Continuity.
- Consistency.
- Emphasis on education.
- Good communication.
- Sufficient income.

Charity Elson

- Parents who know how to nurture and care for children.
- Parents who are able to find other caring adults who can care for children in safe, nurturing environment while parents work.
- Parents who are able to develop and keep relationships and network, with other caring adults so that they, parents, have the emotional support so necessary to being a parent.

Carol Kelso

- Respect and love for each other.
- Basic Necessities - food, clothing, shelter, transportation.
- Employment.
- Self-sufficiency.
- Informal support system.

- Absence of impairing AODA issues.

Paul Minkus

- Stability.
- Support.
- Non-financial security.
- Tradition of family.
- Sense of purpose.

Jodi Roberts

- **Commitment** - working toward a shared goal through self-sacrifice, persistence, and loyalty to other family members. Cultivation of an environment of trust and dependability.
- **Connectedness** - receiving support from and contributing to extended family, neighborhood, and community which results in sense of belongingness as well as accountability.
- **Efficacy** - acting in self-confidence and self-reliance, translating optimism into making a difference in improving one's self and one's environment.
- **Cohesion** - maintaining family identity and togetherness, balancing family priorities with support for member esteem and achievement, producing strong family bonds and freedom for individual self-expression.
- **Adaptability** - coping with change, balancing stable roles and traditions with flexibility to change rules and share decisions.
- **Communication** - engaging in clear, open, affirming speaking and consistent, empathetic listening, leading to constructive conflict management and problem solving.
- **Spirituality** - believing in a higher power and acting on a value system beyond self interest, affecting a sense of purpose, and divine support in everyday and difficult events.
- **Time Together**- creating daily routines as well as special traditions and celebrations that affirm members, connect them to family roots, and add creativity and humor to ordinary events.

Jack Westman

- Provide the love and emotional support necessary for the development of a child.
- Foster the intellectual, social, and moral development of a child.
- Socialize a child by setting limits and encouraging civil behavior.
- Protect a child from physical, emotional, and social harm.

- Maintain stable family interactions through communication, problem solving, and responding to family members' needs.

CIRCUMSTANCES THAT FACILITATE STRONG FAMILIES

Jon Angeli

- **Community & Family Ties** - healthy families are connected to others in the community, such as extended family, friends and neighbors, and are involved in community organizations (church, school).

John Burgess

- Time, energy, money.
- Parent training.
- Quality child care.
- Community support systems.
- Education or training that meets specific needs.
- Affordable housing in desirable neighborhoods.
- Access to health care.
- Access to transportation.
- Access to small loans (micro loans).

Charity Elson

- Economically secure enough to meet needs for:
 - Safe and stable housing;
 - Transportation to work, school, and other critical appointments;
 - Health care;
 - Food; and
 - Clothing.
- Children who are able to take advantage of:
 - High quality early learning opportunities;
 - Time to read and recreate with their parents; and
 - After-school activities.

Carol Kelso

- Public/private partnerships.
- Non-duplicative public/private programs with measurable outcomes, accountability, and cost-benefit analysis.
- Inclusion and recognition of faith-based organization.
- Strong neighborhoods.

Paul Minkus

- Economic resources.
- Basic physical and mental health.
- Open communication among family members.
- Education.
- Traditions passed down from prior generations.
- Expression of emotions.

Jodi Roberts

- A safe place to live; a home.
- **Basic Skills** - in order to have a home, a person must have the skills needed to maintain that home.
- Food and clothing.
- Education.
- Employment and employment skills.
- Access to transportation.
- Access to child care.

Jack Westman

- Provide a home that gives a child an identity in a community.
- Provide sufficient income to maintain a family.
- Provide for a child's education.
- Provide for a child's health care.
- Provide for a child's recreation.