



WISCONSIN LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

STRENGTHENING WISCONSIN FAMILIES

Legislative Council Conference Room
Madison, Wisconsin

January 9, 2007
1:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

[The following is a summary of the January 9, 2007 meeting of the Special Committee on Strengthening Wisconsin Families. The file copy of this summary has appended to it a copy of each document prepared for or submitted to the committee during the meeting. A digital recording of the meeting is available on our Web site at <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/lc>.]

Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Kestell called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. The roll was called and a quorum was present.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Rep. Steve Kestell, Chair; Reps. Don Pridemore and Donna Seidel; Sens. Lena Taylor and Dale Schultz; and Public Members Jon Angeli, Lisa Boyd-Gonzalez, John Burgess, Charity Eleson, Carol Kelso, Jodi Roberts, Jack Westman, and Carol Wright.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS EXCUSED: Public Members Paul Minkus, Kenneth Munson, and Paula Roberts.

COUNCIL STAFF PRESENT: Laura Rose, Deputy Director; and Scott Grosz, Staff Attorney.

Approval of the Minutes of the November 21, 2006 Meeting

Ms. Eleson moved, seconded by Mr. Westman, to approve the minutes of the November 21, 2006 meeting of the Special Committee. The motion was approved by a voice vote.

Description of Materials Distributed and Discussion of Committee Assignment

In order to begin the discussion on legislative options, Chair Kestell suggested that the committee should review Memo. No. 6, prepared by Legislative Council staff. He suggested that the committee discuss legislative options in the order they appear in the paper. Scott Grosz, Legislative Council Staff Attorney, discussed background information related to systems integration efforts, the first option in Memo. No. 6.

Chair Kestell introduced new committee member Carol Wright, Executive Director, Marquette County Human Services, and explained that the Joint Legislative Council voted by mail ballot to add Ms. Wright to the committee. Ms. Wright explained her background and noted her work with Coordinated Services Teams (CSTs) and Quality Services Review in Marquette County. She offered her thoughts on issues related to systems integration including funding flexibility, existing inter-agency communication, and typical outcomes in current Marquette County integration efforts.

The committee discussed the question of whether systems integration could be achieved without shifts in funding. Ms. Eelson asked why, if integration were the “right” thing to do, agencies could not achieve it without shifting resources. Ms. Wright noted that funding provides the benefit of formalized structure. Chair Kestell noted that each social services area that benefits from systems integration, including corrections and education, should contribute to the funding of integration efforts. Mr. Angeli noted that Grant County operates its CST program without state funding. Ms. Jodi Roberts suggested that the committee hear from the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) with regard to the role of schools in systems integration efforts. Mr. Burgess noted the impact of school expulsions on the issues faced by the committee.

The committee suggested further development of legislation related to CSTs and systems integration. Ms. Eelson suggested that the CST model was more mature and well-founded than Families Forward – Wisconsin. Senator Taylor asked why we should not mandate CSTs if their record of success is so great. Ms. Wright responded that each county is different and it may be better to merely enable adoption of particular programs in each county.

Ms. Boyd-Gonzalez noted that most county agencies support integration efforts but that they require more guidance on how to proceed with integration efforts. She noted the need for a separate coordinating agency to get W-2 and child welfare agencies together. Ms. Eelson noted the need for the committee to move away from labels and develop its own program based on effective existing models. She suggested basing programs around a collaborative goal, such as decreasing out-of-home placements. Chair Kestell suggested increasing the involvement of the education system. Mr. Westman reiterated the need to hear from the DPI.

Mr. Burgess noted that if a goal of collaboration is to reduce out-of-home placement, and collaboration is successful, then funding currently allocated to out-of-home placements should become available. He suggested allowing more flexibility in funding as part of the committee’s efforts.

Ms. Kelso inquired as to whether the CST program has been audited.

Chair Kestell inquired as to the role schools play in existing integration efforts. Ms. Eleson responded that schools have been involved in Dane County efforts since 1993. Chair Kestell suggested it would be beneficial to hear from educators as well as DPI administrators.

The committee shifted its discussions to options related to transportation. Scott Grosz described the recent reinstatement of drivers' license eligibility due to changes in the definition of Habitual Traffic Offenders. He also noted the substantial interest in this topic at the Milwaukee Fatherhood Summit. Ms. Eleson expressed an interest in learning more about the particular requirements for drivers' license reinstatement in a Habitual Traffic Offender situation. She suggested that an evaluation of those requirements would give the committee a better idea of possible changes. The committee also asked about current assistance programs for license reinstatement.

The committee also discussed options related to confidentiality. Ms. Wright noted that e-WISACWIS was a big step forward for information sharing in the state. She also noted her belief that the use of information releases is common throughout the state. Mr. Angeli noted the confidentiality problems associated with getting school districts to talk about "pre-problem" students and the release of information in preventative contexts. Senator Schultz suggested that a clear definition of agencies' responsibility to work together would benefit integration efforts.

Laura Rose, Legislative Council Deputy Director, provided a synopsis of the work to be completed for the next committee meeting. Items included development of a preliminary draft for county systems collaboration and Minnesota's funding model for out-of-home placements. As an additional legislative option, Ms. Boyd-Gonzalez suggested development of a data system that allows for cross-matching between human services agencies.

Chair Kestell stated that the committee would meet again on February 7, 2007. He noted that the committee will hear from Mark Perlman on fatherhood issues. Mr. Westman suggested that the committee hear from education speakers such as DPI administrators and school superintendents as well.

Other Business

There was no other business before the Special Committee at this time.

Plans for Future Meetings

The next meeting will be held on *Wednesday, February 7, 2007, at 10:00 a.m., in the Large Conference Room, Legislative Council, 1 East Main Street, Suite 401, Madison, Wisconsin.*

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 3:30 p.m.

SG:tlu