

## Legislative Council Special Committee on Strengthening Wisconsin Families Action Proposal

### I. Vision:

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

### II. Objective:

Strengthen Wisconsin childrearing families through government and private sector collaboration.

### III: Principles and process:

- Family-focused governmental policies and training.
  - Family Impact Seminars for legislators and department staffs.
  - Families Forward - WI
  - W-2 and Child Welfare Collaboration and Training Opportunities
- Nurture leadership for family-supportive neighborhoods and communities.
  - Poverty reduction depends upon empowering families to find ways to meet needs they identify in a network of families, faith organizations, schools, and other community institutions.
- Promote healthy parent-child relationships.
  - Home visitation for the parents of newborns and older at-risk children.
  - Fatherhood initiatives.
  - Integrated family services.
    - Coordinated services teams/Wrap-around teams.
    - Family therapy/family group conferencing.
- Promote economic self-sufficiency.
  - Employment through W-2 and supportive resources through TANF.
  - Resolve tension between “employment” and “education” in W-2.
  - Facilitate transportation to jobs and reinstatement of drivers’ licenses.

### IV. Family Systems Agenda for Committee:

The Committee has received input from experts and has outlined critical issues. It also needs information from practitioners in the field in order to identify effective collaboration models and to guide legislation.

#### Year 1:

- 1) Examine and evaluate selected local programs that receive State and/or Federal funds and claim success in strengthening families. Program administrators can provide an overview of their programs, funding, staffing, and outcomes.
- 2) Select programs from different counties that work closely with families,

understand their struggles, and want help. Provide their staffs with family systems training.

**Year 2:**

1) Meet with staff trained in family systems to discuss their experiences and make suggestions on how their programs can better meet the needs of children and families.

2) Assess the value of family systems training and its implications for licensing and regulations.

3) Identify desirable modifications or additions to state statutes.

**Year 3:**

Review findings and formulate recommendations to the legislature. for statutory changes and funding priorities.

**IV. Implementation:**

People with ideas are needed to initiate, and structures are needed to sustain, collaboration. Mandates and structures need to be based on shared values and beliefs about families to be effective. Even then, little will be accomplished unless people find collaboration is useful for them. A systems approach to families employs a powerful language that elicits and sustains collaboration through its values and proven methods.

The only way to bring the legislature, executive branch, nongovernmental organizations, and citizens together to strengthen families is through a council or board structure that provides an ongoing platform for communication between state agencies and localities. The latter would be more effective because it can be given rule-making authority:

**Family Services Integration Board.**

State interagency communication and collaboration.

Locality/state communication and collaboration.