



WISCONSIN LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

STRENGTHENING WISCONSIN FAMILIES

Room 411 South, State Capitol
Madison, Wisconsin

October 1, 2007
10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

[The following is a summary of the October 1, 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

Chairperson Kestell called the meeting to order. The roll was called and a quorum was present.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Rep. Steve Kestell, Chairperson; Rep. Don Pridemore; Sen. Dale Schultz; and Public Members Jon Angeli, John Burgess, Kenneth Munson, Paula Roberts, Jack Westman, and Carol Wright.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS EXCUSED: Sen. Lena Taylor; Rep. Donna Seidel; and Public Members Lisa Boyd-Gonzalez, Charity Eleson, Paul Minkus, and Jodi Roberts.

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

APPEARANCES: Pence Revington, Child Development and Home Visitation Specialist, University of Wisconsin (UW)-Extension; Audrey Laszewski, Project Director, The Early Years Home Visitation Outcome Project of Wisconsin; Jennifer Hammel, Child Abuse Prevention Fund Director, Children's Hospital and Health System; Ann Stueck, Infant and Child Health Nurse Coordinator, Department of Health and Family Services (DHFS); Sandy Ellis, Director of Prevention, Children's Service Society of Wisconsin; and Polly Snodgrass, Program Director, Healthy Families/Prenatal Care Coordination, Family Services of Northeast Wisconsin.

Approval of the Minutes of the August 20, 2007 Meeting

Senator Schultz moved, seconded by Mr. Westman, to approve the minutes of the August 20, 2007 meeting of the Special Committee. The motion was approved by a voice vote.

Presentation by Invited Speakers

- ***Pence Revington, Child Development and Home Visitation Specialist, UW-Extension***

Pence Revington said that the UW-Extension brings research-based information to families and recognizes that families are an important component to community life. She said that the UW-Extension has a contract for providing training and technical assistance to Family Foundations home visitation program sites and also has a contract for providing such services for the Empowering Milwaukee Families site.

Ms. Revington said that there are five national home visiting models. She said that each model has a presence in Wisconsin and that each home visitation program in Wisconsin chooses its own combination of models based upon the program's resources and the community's needs.

Ms. Revington said that a successful home visitation program must have the following elements of best practice: (a) it must be voluntary on the part of families; (b) it must use strength-based practices that engage families in partnership; (c) it must see families through transitions in the early years of a child's life; and (d) it must be built on effective community cooperation.

Ms. Revington said that the UW-Extension has developed model-free core training for home visitors and supervisors. She said the UW-Extension also holds an annual home visitation conference, "Fulfilling the Promise," and maintains a home visitation website. She said the UW-Extension is currently developing web-based training so that training is more affordable and accessible.

Chair Kestell said that the Governor's budget proposal provided funding for "home visiting" but did not specify how the funding would be directed. He asked how the Legislature should direct resources. Ms. Revington responded that she is confident that the funding could be used effectively by programs in Wisconsin. She said that some of the best programs in the state combine models, and that some have five to six funding sources. She said funding should be directed to particular programs based upon their practices and outcomes.

- ***Audrey Laszewski, Project Director, The Early Years Home Visitation Outcome Project of Wisconsin and Jennifer Hammel, Child Abuse Prevention (CAP) Fund Director, Children's Hospital and Health System***

Ms. Laszewski said that, in Wisconsin, there are many model types and program features in home visitation programs. She said that before the Outcomes Project was established, the various programs were isolated and there was competition for limited resources. She said there were also limited evaluation efforts, and there was no forum for the programs to collaborate.

Ms. Laszewski said that the Outcomes Project measures common outcomes for “eight” home visitation programs that have volunteered to participate in the project. This provides an opportunity to develop a framework of accountability without regard to a program’s model or funding source.

She explained that home visitors have been trained to collect data in a reliable manner, and the project is using DHFS’s public health web-based data base to store the data. She said that the evaluations meet the requirements of evaluation for many of the home visitation programs’ funding sources.

Chair Kestell asked how legislative policy could be developed around the Outcomes Project’s findings. Ms. Laszewski said that funding should be awarded to programs with successful characteristics. Ms. Hammel said that, as a person allocating funds to home visitation programs, she wanted the programs to show their impact through data. She said that programs with good outcomes are sustainable programs because they can show funding sources that their programs work. She said the state should fund programs that can eventually sustain themselves.

Mr. Angeli expressed concern that the Outcomes Project was focused on child development rather than family strengthening.

Senator Schultz said that he would like home visitation programs to collaborate with schools more frequently.

- ***Ann Stueck, Infant and Child Health Nurse Coordinator, DHFS***

Ms. Stueck described the Family Foundations program which provides funding to nine counties and one tribe to provide home visitation services. The program awards a total of \$995,700 to the counties and the tribe annually. She said the program is targeted to first-time parents whose child is eligible for Medicaid and assessed to be at risk of child maltreatment. Parents must voluntarily participate.

She described how the sites are evaluated and discussed data showing the effects of the home visitation programs funded by Family Foundations. She said the sites have demonstrated high quality services and positive results.

Ms. Stueck also discussed the Empowering Families of Milwaukee program, which is a component of DHFS’s efforts to promote healthy births and reduce disparities in birth outcomes in high-risk areas of the City of Milwaukee.

- ***Sandy Ellis, Director of Prevention, Children’s Service Society of Wisconsin (CSSW)***

Ms. Ellis said that the CSSW operates six home visitation programs, all using different models. She said that in her presentation, she would use Start Right in Marathon County as a model because that is CSSW’s oldest and broadest program. She said Start Right is a Family Foundations site and participates in the Outcomes Project.

Ms. Ellis said that Start Right offers universal services because CSSW wants to change the norm that only high-risk families benefit from parenting support. However, she said that CSSW is

redesigning the program and will offer a menu of services, one component of which will be for the most high-risk families.

She said programs need to have a public/private partnership because they need both sources of funding, but also because they need the collaboration. She also said that communities' programs should pool their outcomes because no one program can improve the community alone, and the goal should be to improve the community.

Mr. Burgess asked about Start Right's budget. Ms. Ellis responded that the program receives \$800,000 from the county and \$600,000 in private funding. She said the program has to be accountable to the county board.

Mr. Westman said that, in some cases, the families that need the services most are the least likely to accept them. He asked about what a home visitor does when he or she becomes aware of abuse or neglect. Ms. Ellis responded that the program requires the visitors to report suspected child abuse or neglect. She said the practice of Start Right home visitors to make reports of abuse or neglect in cooperation with the family, and that the family usually trusts the visitor enough to cooperate in reporting the incident.

- ***Polly Snodgrass, Program Director, Healthy Families/Prenatal Care Coordination, Family Services of Northeast Wisconsin***

Ms. Snodgrass said that she is the director of the largest Family Foundations site, and that her site is accredited by Healthy Families America. She said her program is targeted to families at higher risk of child abuse and neglect.

Ms. Snodgrass said that current research on child brain development shows the permanent effects of early neglect and abuse. She said that society cannot afford not to support families who cannot take care of their newborns well. She said there are countless families who have little support and are very much alone in their parenting responsibilities. She said that communities need to bring people together to serve children and families. She said that the home visitation model does not matter as long as a program has best practice standards and is accountable.

She noted that she does not believe that a home visitor needs to be a nurse, but that there should be a level of professionalism. She also said that a home visitor needs to be well suited for that type of work.

Mr. Westman noted the high level of accountability of the home visitation programs represented among the speakers.

Mr. Burgess said that several states have statewide home visitation programs. He said that programs are funded by private, state, federal, and county funds. He stated that if all of the funding sources could be combined, it is possible programs could pay the funding back within one to two years. He also said that Wisconsin should possibly push for a Medicaid waiver to garner additional funding.

Discussion of Committee Assignment

- ***WLC: 0075/4, relating to collaborative systems of care for families who are involved in multiple systems of care***

Chair Kestell said that the committee will discuss WLC: 0075/4 at the next meeting when more information relating to funding is available.

- ***WLC: 0157/1, relating to requiring child welfare staff and Wisconsin works staff to meet requirements for training in family systems theory***

Laura Rose described WLC: 0157/1. Chair Kestell asked for information on how many hours of training would be required, the cost of the training, and the availability of the training. Mr. Angeli responded that there is training available through the University of Iowa and that the training could last from three to 10 days. Chair Kestell also asked if the draft creates a new mandate on county government. Mr. Angeli said that the draft applies only to two departments—DHFS and the Department of Workforce Development (DWD). He said that the training could be incorporated into training that DHFS is currently developing relating to out-of-home placements. He also said that he believes that the training is important for Wisconsin Works (W-2) workers because W-2 is not working for the current participants.

Mr. Munson said that he believes the idea of the training is good but thinks that the committee should consult with DHFS before mandating it. Ms. Wright said that family systems theory is important and needs to be one of many focuses of training. She noted that current training requirements have cost counties a lot of time and money.

Chair Kestell suggested that staff and committee members discuss the draft with DHFS and DWD to develop consensus on requiring the additional training.

Continued Discussion of Committee Assignment

- ***Memo No. 6, Options For Legislation on Strengthening Wisconsin Families (March 12, 2007)***

Ms. Rose described the portions of Memo No. 6 that contain items for which the committee has not developed proposals. There were no requests to prepare drafts on any of the remaining items.

Mr. Burgess requested that the committee discuss pursuing a federal Medicaid waiver and blending funding sources for home visitation at the next meeting. He asked that staff invite a speaker from DHFS to discuss this topic.

Mr. Westman said that, if the new Department of Children and Families has been created by the time of the next meeting, the committee should discuss it at the meeting.

Description of Material Distributed

Ms. Rose noted that committee members had received the following materials:

- Report, *A Science-Based Framework for Early Childhood Policy*, Center on the Developing Child, distributed at the request of Chair Kestell.
- Handout, *Department of Health & Family Services Summary of Children's Integrated Service Programs and Coordinated Service Teams*, submitted by the Department of Health and Family Services (September 20, 2007).
- Handout, *2007 County ISP and CST Allocations and Funding Revenue*, submitted by the Department of Health and Family Services (undated).
- Handout, *Funding Parameters for Revenue Funding Coordinated Services Team*, submitted by the Department of Health and Family Services (undated).

Other Business

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

Plans for Future Meetings

The next meeting of the Special Committee will be held on *Monday, November 5, 2007, at 10:00 a.m., in Room 411 South, State Capitol, Madison.*

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 3:00 p.m.

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