



WISCONSIN LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

STRENGTHENING WISCONSIN FAMILIES

Legislative Council Conference Room
One East Main Street, Suite 401
Madison, Wisconsin

August 12, 2008
10:00 a.m. – 1:45 p.m.

[The following is a summary of the August 12, 2008 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

Co-Chair Kestell called the meeting to order. The roll was called and it was determined that a quorum was present.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Sen. Lena Taylor, Co-Chair; Rep. Steve Kestell, Co-Chair; Sen. Dale Schultz; Rep. Sheryl Albers; and Public Members Jon Angeli, John Burgess, Gary Erdmann, Debra Fields, Terrence Ray, Lucille Rosenberg, Mary Jo Tittl, and Jack Westman.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS EXCUSED: Rep. Tamara Grigsby; and Public Member Undraye Howard.

COUNCIL STAFF PRESENT: Anne Sappenfield, Senior Staff Attorney; and Jessica Karls, Staff Attorney.

APPEARANCES: Terry C. Anderson, Director, Legislative Council Staff; and Senator Fred A. Risser, Co-Chair, Joint Legislative Council.

Opening Remarks

Senator Fred A. Risser, Senate Co-Chair of the Joint Legislative Council, gave a brief summary of the Joint Legislative Council and its history. He explained that the Joint Legislative Council is required by statute to create the Special Committee on Strengthening Wisconsin Families for three biennia. He discussed the rules for voting and the higher rate of passage for legislation developed by

study committees. Senator Risser welcomed members of the Special Committee and thanked them for agreeing to serve on the committee.

Terry C. Anderson welcomed the committee and introduced the Legislative Council staff members assigned to work with the committee. He explained the role of study committees and described the process of reimbursement of expenses. He noted that the committee has a webpage on the Legislative Council website, where information about the committee may be found.

Introduction of Committee Members

Co-Chair Kestell introduced himself and welcomed the committee. At the request of Co-Chair Kestell, committee members then introduced themselves.

Discussion of Committee Scope of Study and Timeline

Jessica Karls, Legislative Council Staff Attorney, provided background information on the Special Committee on Strengthening Wisconsin Families and the Department of Children and Families (DCF). She explained that the Joint Legislative Council created the Special Committee and the scope of study for the Special Committee. In addition, she stated that DCF was created by the 2007 Biennial Budget Act and that Memo No. 1 lists the divisions in DCF and the programs that were transferred to DCF from the Department of Health Services and Department of Workforce Development (DWD).

Co-Chair Taylor asked committee members to provide ideas about what would promote the integration of services for DCF.

Co-Chair Kestell indicated that the scope statement provides that the Special Committee should advise DCF, which is broader than the integration of services.

Committee members exchanged ideas about what that the committee should focus on. The following is the categorized list of ideas created by committee members:

Early Identification to Help Children and Families

- Intervention for families and children who are struggling due to issues such as mental illness or domestic abuse and violence.
 - Respond to early warning signs.
 - Create a rapid response system.
 - Integrate human and social services with the education system (Department of Public Instruction (DPI)).
- Prevention.

Funding

- Integrate and coordinate funding.
- Broad spectrum of funding sources to fund prevention.
- Structure funding so that counties are motivated to provide prevention services.
- Be aware of incentives and disincentives that may be created by funding structures.

Staff

- Cross-training so that staff has a broad knowledge about services that may be available to an individual.
- Provide staff with information and resources to help with basic necessities (e.g., housing, food, transportation, and clothing).
- Train staff to use an empowerment model.
- Address high staff turnover.

System

- Stop program “silos” so that there is a broad spectrum of supports in the community.
- Unified assessment system or tool to assess an individual’s or family’s strengths and needs.
- Support and encourage best practices around the state and disseminate information on best practices.
 - County and state best practices - by county.
 - County and state best practices - by model.
 - Analysis of best practices to determine what is effective.
 - Urban versus rural.
 - Build on effective models.
 - Be cognizant of trends in best practices in Wisconsin and nationwide.
- Use models that empower clients, providers, and staff.
- Solicit feedback on outcomes and client satisfaction.
- Create efficiencies to make the best use of all available resources through collaboration.
- Utilize family-centered programming that is inclusive of all fathers.
- Create incentives for agencies, staff, clients, and others.
 - Identify what formal and informal incentives and disincentives exist.
 - Identify incentives to motivate agencies to provide the best possible care to families and children.
 - Create motivation for agencies to be involved and clients to participate with incentives that may or may not include financial incentives.
- Create efficiencies, such as reducing the amounts of paperwork that staff must complete.
- Create a DCF publication that includes best practices and success stories.
 - Example: school safety program uses website, blog, and assessment tool (collaboration between police department, schools, and school counselors for school safety).
 - Resource guide.
 - Build on 2-1-1 resource.
- Address the needs of all families and all children.
- Involve consumers in the process.
- Support clients and staff. Help with basic necessities (e.g., housing, food, transportation, and clothing).
- Review the delivery of W-2 services, the emphasis on custodial parents, and efficiencies that may be gained by reorganizing how W-2 is delivered.
- Utilize university resources.
 - Use resources at the University of Wisconsin (UW) System and UW-Extension, including Ann Keim and David Riley.

Coordination with Other State Agencies

- Engage other state agencies that administer youth and family-related programs (e.g., DWD and DPI).
- Create a shared, embraced vision between DCF and other state agencies.
- Organize an in-service day for agencies to share information.
- Create an assessment tool for courts.
- Integrate DCF resources with education resources (DPI) and promote early childhood education.
- Work with the education system to engage families.
- Create a bridge between DCF and other agencies to mesh the goals of W-2 with the federal Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) requirements and other employment programs administered by DWD.

Collaboration with Community

- Build on broad-based community involvement.
- Coordinate schools and county human or social services to identify a family's needs and provide resources to the family.
- Encourage professional development and collaboration among professionals from various disciplines. For example, introduce members of groups (e.g., social service agencies, schools) in less formal setting.

Other Business

There was no other business brought before the committee.

Plans for Future Meetings

The next meeting of the Special Committee will be on ***Monday, August 25, 2008, at 11:00 a.m., in Room 411 South, State Capitol, Madison.***

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 1:45 p.m.

JK:jal