



wisconsin department of  
**children & families**

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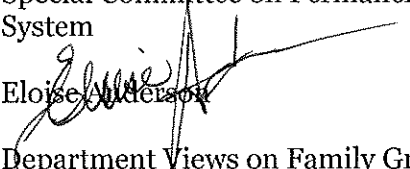
Governor Scott Walker  
Secretary Eloise Anderson

Secretary's Office

## MEMORANDUM

Date: December 18, 2012

To: Special Committee on Permanency for Young Children in the Child Welfare System

From: Eloise Anderson 

Re: Department Views on Family Group Decision-Making Program

As requested by the Committee, I am providing the Department's views on the Family Group Decision-Making Program described in the Committee Memo No. 7.

In collaboration with counties, the Department is currently implementing a number of initiatives that establish national best practices and are designed to improve outcomes for children and families in the child welfare system. These initiatives include Alternative Response, which applies a family-focused, strengths-based and more collaborative approach to families in the child welfare system; the revision of the Ongoing Standards used by child welfare workers throughout the state; and Permanency Round Tables, which is a process to expedite permanency for complex cases through creative problem-solving. All of these initiatives strengthen family engagement and permanency in our child welfare system.

A few counties in Wisconsin have in the past used the Family Group Conferencing model, which follows the same approach as the Minnesota Family Group Decision-Making Program. These counties discontinued the program due to lack of funding.

The Department views that implementation of a Family Group Decision-Making approach is a matter of practice, within the current administrative discretion of counties and the Department. For this reason, the Department views that statutory changes related to this issue are not needed and would not be appropriate. Once the implementation of current initiatives, including those described above, have been completed, the Department and counties can assess whether implementation of the Family Group Decision-Making Program would be feasible and would further strengthen the outcomes of the child welfare system.

Thank you for inviting the Department to comment on this issue.