



WISCONSIN LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

STRENGTHENING WISCONSIN FAMILIES

Legislative Council Conference Room
Madison, Wisconsin

October 24, 2006
10:00 a.m. – 2:55 p.m.

[The following is a summary of the October 24, 2006 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 10:00 a.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, John Burgess, Charity Eleson, Carol Kelso, Paul Minkus, Kenneth Munson, Jodi Roberts, Paula Roberts, and Jack Westman.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS EXCUSED: Public Members Norm Brickl and Lisa Boyd-Gonzalez.

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

Approval of the Minutes of the September 26, 2006 Meeting

Jon Angeli moved, seconded by Jodi Roberts, to approve the minutes of the September 26, 2006 meeting of the Special Committee. The motion was approved by a voice vote.

Description of Materials Distributed

Scott Grosz, Legislative Council Staff Attorney, noted the distribution of Memo No. 1, *Distribution of Materials Requested at the September 26, 2006 Meeting* (October 17, 2006). Mr. Grosz discussed the two papers that accompanied Memo No. 1. The first, *Welfare Reform's Effect on Child Welfare Caseloads*, describes a study in which the impact of welfare reform on child welfare caseloads was found to be minimal. The second paper, *A Vision for Eliminating Poverty and Family Violence: Transforming Child Welfare and TANF in El Paso County, Colorado*, describes the efforts to integrate child welfare and TANF in El Paso County, Colorado.

Laura Rose, Legislative Council Deputy Director, noted the distribution of Memo No. 2, *Home Visitation Program Evaluations* (October 17, 2006) as well as a Handout, *Wisconsin Supporting Families*, and a Memorandum from Helene Nelson, Secretary, Department of Health and Family Services (DHFS). The DHFS memorandum related to an interim report on Milwaukee County child welfare submitted to the Joint Legislative Audit Committee by DHFS. Ms. Rose described the two papers that accompanied Memo No. 2. Both papers discussed Home Visitation Programs. The first, *Evaluation of Hawaii's Healthy Start Program*, related to Hawaii's nationally-regarded home visitation model. The second paper, *Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (POCAN) Final Evaluation Report*, evaluated POCAN, now called Family Foundations, a home visitation program instituted by nine counties and one tribe in Wisconsin.

Discussion of Committee Assignment

Chair Kestell invited the committee members to share ideas related to the committee assignment. To facilitate the discussion, Chair Kestell distributed a brief outline of comments by several committee members. He encouraged all members to share their ideas and to bring proposals to the next meeting based on the results of the discussion.

Representative Pridemore began the discussion with a suggestion to shift W-2 work requirements in a direction that reflects a more realistic workweek. Senator Taylor emphasized the need to let existing programs work and to provide opportunities for W-2 participants to gain skills and training.

Charity Eleson offered the idea of building pathways for parents to gain skills and be competitive through cross-collaboration between W-2 agencies, the technical college system, and the Department of Workforce Development. She suggested shifting adult basic skills funding to support contextualized skills programs and a bridge program that prepares participants for technical college enrollment. The committee then discussed Ms. Eleson's suggestions.

The committee discussed the committee charge and the general goals of the committee. The committee discussed the need to characterize a "struggling" family, to consider existing programs, and to identify current and future trends. The committee noted the difficulties of these tasks.

Laura Rose noted the comments of Lisa Boyd-Gonzalez, who was excused from attending the meeting. Those comments related to the role of transportation in creating employment opportunities and the affect of driver's license suspensions on access to transportation.

John Burgess discussed his support for intensive home visitation and the critical elements of successful home visitation programs. The committee discussed those topics as well as the role of the neighborhood in a family's success. The committee also discussed the differences in neighborhood assets and infrastructure between various areas of the state. The committee therefore noted that the nature of successful programs varies across the state. The committee discussed the need for statistics that indicate the strength of families and gave examples of those statistics.

Paula Roberts expressed concerns that many program participants feel frustrated by the piecemeal nature of support they receive.

Chair Kestell noted recurring themes regarding the need for communication and cooperation between agencies.

Jon Angeli discussed his perception that family issues receive disproportionately little attention in Wisconsin. He described ideas on job attachment and advancement, noting the need to teach people how to compete. He also noted that poverty and feelings of helplessness are as high in Grant County as they are in other areas of concern in the state.

Jack Westman provided a handout that suggested core principles to guide the committee. The committee discussed the handout and continued its discussion on the statistics that indicate thriving and struggling families. The concept of personal motivation and drive was of particular interest to the committee. Issues that arose before the committee and that were discussed included differences in culture, support for prevention and intervention programs, communication between agencies and participants, avoidance of duplicative efforts by the committee, and the need for information on existing programs.

Chair Kestell ended the discussion by issuing instructions to the committee to bring proposals and suggested definitions of key concepts to the next meeting. Laura Rose asked the committee to clarify its information requests. Two handouts were distributed. The first, *History of Efforts to Improve State/Local Collaboration*, detailed the history of collaboration in Wisconsin. The second, *Wisconsin's State Plan to Prevent Child Maltreatment*, contains recommendations arising from the Wisconsin State Call to Action, a public-private partnership focused on child abuse and neglect.

Other Business

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

Plans for Future Meetings

The committee has a scheduled meetings for *Tuesday, November 21, 2006, at 10:00 a.m., in the Legislative Council Conference Room, and Tuesday, December 12, 2006, at 10:00 a.m., in Room 411 South, State Capitol.*

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 2:55 p.m.

SG:tlu