



WISCONSIN LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL STAFF MEMORANDUM

Memo No. 1

TO: MEMBERS OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON STRENGTHENING WISCONSIN FAMILIES

FROM: Jessica L. Karls, Staff Attorney

RE: Overview of the Special Committee on Strengthening Wisconsin Families and the Department of Children and Families

DATE: August 5, 2008

This Memo describes the Special Committee on Strengthening Wisconsin Families, which was created by the Joint Legislative Council and directed to study the administration and integration of programs by the newly created Department of Children and Families (DCF). In addition, this Memo provides a brief overview of DCF, including a description of DCF's organization and the programs administered by DCF.

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON STRENGTHENING WISCONSIN FAMILIES

Under current law, the Joint Legislative Council is required to create the Special Committee on Strengthening Wisconsin Families each biennium until December 31, 2010. The Joint Legislative Council must direct the Special Committee to study issues related to strengthening Wisconsin's families and to develop legislative proposals and specific recommendations relating to these issues. [s. 13.83 (4) (a) (intro.), Stats.]

For the 2008 interim, the Special Committee is directed to develop recommendations to advise the new DCF on the administration of programs administered by DCF to promote the integration of family services formerly administered by multiple departments.

In addition, the Special Committee must advise the secretaries of the Department of Administration, Department of Workforce Development (DWD), and Department of Health Services (DHS) (formerly, the Department of Health and Family Services) in planning and implementing the creation of DCF. [2007 Wisconsin Act 20, SEC. 9130.]

DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

DCF was created by 2007 Wisconsin Act 20, the Biennial Budget Act, effective July 1, 2008. The purpose of DCF is to focus on integrating child care, child support, and child welfare services provided in Wisconsin and services provided under the Wisconsin Works (W-2) program and on increasing efficiency and collaboration in providing those services. [s. 48.468, Stats.]

DCF is divided into four divisions: (1) Division of Early Care and Education; (2) Division of Enterprise Solutions; (3) Division of Family and Economic Security; and (4) Division of Safety and Permanence. DCF also contains the Division of Prevention and Service Integration and the Office of Performance and Quality Assurance. The Secretary of DCF is Reggie Bicha, and the following individuals are the administrators of DCF's divisions:

- Dan Harris, Administrator, Division of Early Care and Education
- Ron Hunt, Administrator, Division of Enterprise Solutions
- Julie Kerksick, Administrator, Division of Family and Economic Security
- Cyrus Behroozi, Administrator, Division of Safety and Permanence
- Lisa Patrick, Administrator, Division of Prevention and Service Integration

DCF administers a number of programs that were previously administered by DHS and DWD. The programs administered by DCF include the following: (1) adoption programs; (2) Brighter Futures Initiative; (3) child care licensing, certification, and regulation and the Wisconsin Shares Child Care Subsidy Program; (4) child protective services; (5) child support enforcement; (6) child welfare in Milwaukee County; (7) domestic violence and abuse programs; (8) foster care licensing; (9) the kinship care program; and (10) the W-2 program.

JK:jal