



WISCONSIN LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

STRENGTHENING WISCONSIN FAMILIES

Room 411 South, State Capitol
Madison, Wisconsin

October 16, 2008
10:00 a.m. – 3:40 p.m.

[The following is a summary of the October 16, 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 Taylor called the meeting to order. The roll was called and it was determined that a quorum was present.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Sen. Lena Taylor and Rep. Steve Kestell, Co-Chairs; Reps. Sheryl Albers and Tamara Grigsby; and Public Members John Burgess, Gary Erdmann, Debra Fields, Lucille Rosenberg, Mary Jo Tittl, and Jack Westman.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS EXCUSED: Sen. Dale Schultz; and Public Members Jon Angeli, Undraye Howard, and Terence Ray.

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

APPEARANCES: Jane Penner-Hoppe, Policy Advisor, Department of Children and Families; Dick Schlimm, Executive Director, Wisconsin Community Action Program; Dr. Howard Garber, President, Milwaukee Center for Independence; Mike D'Amato, Wisconsin Director, and Cheye Calvo, Director of Expansion, The SEED School Initiative.

Approval of the Minutes of the Committee's September 26, 2008 Meeting

Mr. Westman moved, seconded by Ms. Rosenberg, to approve the minutes of the September 26, 2008 meeting. The motion was adopted unanimously.

Discussion of Materials Distributed

- ***Letter to Governor Jim Doyle, regarding the inclusion of 2007 Assembly Bill 700 in the Executive Budget Bill (October 1, 2008)***

Co-Chair Taylor explained that the letter to Governor Doyle requested that the provisions of 2007 Assembly Bill 700, relating to coordinated services initiatives, be included in the Biennial Budget Bill and was sent on October 1, 2008.

Update from the Department of Children and Families

- ***Jane Penner-Hoppe, Policy Advisor, Department of Children and Families (DCF)***

Jane Penner-Hoppe updated the committee on the DCF's work. She said that DCF is facing several challenges, including a poor economy and flat or declining resources.

She said that DCF is interested in creating a more balanced system of intervention and prevention, integrating early childhood education with employment, and coordinating services better.

She listed several provisions of DCF's 100-day agenda, including releasing a community response request for proposals in early fall, hiring 11 initial assessment workers for the Bureau of Milwaukee Child Welfare, creating a fatherhood office, and creating a high-cost pool for Indian child welfare cases.

She said that DCF, with the Governor, has received a grant to host a summit on poverty and economic opportunity which will take place this spring. She said that DCF will look to the Special Committee for assistance in planning the conference and creating a shared vision for the state.

She distributed a list of dates on which Dan Harris, Administrator, Division of Early Care and Education, will be holding listening sessions in several locations in Wisconsin.

She said that DCF is very interested in WLC: 0125/1 and noted that the draft has impact on children who are served by both DCF and the Department of Health Services. She said that both agencies should review the draft.

Co-Chair Kestell said that, when DCF was created, there were concerns that there would be increased costs, but the Legislature was assured that there would be efficiencies to prevent costs from increasing. Ms. Penner-Hoppe said that she would discuss this issue with the DCF budget director.

Mr. Erdmann asked about DCF's response to the Federal Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act, specifically provisions relating to education vouchers for foster children. Ms.

Penner-Hoppe said that DCF staff is looking at the legislation and that she would provide a summary of the act.

Presentations by Invited Speakers

- ***Dick Schlimm, Executive Director, Wisconsin Community Action Program***

Mr. Schlimm provided an overview of Wisconsin Community Action Program Association (WISCAP). WISCAP includes 16 Community Action Agencies (CAAs) and three statewide special purpose organizations. He described collaborative work that is being done by the CAAs to address poverty and create opportunities for economic self-sufficiency.

Mr. Schlimm encouraged the committee to promote and support local collaboration by creating the vision of collaboration and setting goals for collaboration. He said that he would suggest using the goal of the Vision 2020 campaign to end child poverty in Wisconsin by 2020.

Co-Chair Kestell asked about WISCAP's Skills Enhancement Program and said that the key to ending poverty is enabling people to qualify for better paying jobs. He asked about the completion rate of program participants. Mr. Schlimm responded that funding for the program ended suddenly, so some participants were unable to complete the classes under the program.

In response to a question from Ms. Fields, Co-Chair Taylor asked Mr. Schlimm to provide information to the committee on the connection between poverty and domestic violence.

- ***Dr. Howard Garber, President, Milwaukee Center for Independence***

Dr. Garber said that there is an increased demand for services for children with disabilities in Milwaukee. He said that increased numbers of children with disabilities is a cost to schools and that many of these children do not find employment as adults.

Dr. Garber said that he believes early intervention for high-risk children and children with disabilities is very important. He said that there must be coordination among services to build a system to respond to the needs of these children and their families.

He discussed data that indicates that the current system of addressing childhood disabilities is not producing long-term outcomes. For example, he said that 50% to 70% of children with a disability who finish school will not find employment.

He said that services need to be coordinated on behalf of the family. Otherwise, there is a waste of human lives and human potential. He said that he believes that, if resources are put into communication and a process to take a family through services, many of the current issues will be solved.

Co-Chair Taylor asked about Dr. Garber's center for children with disabilities and asked whether the center could be a model that could be implemented statewide. Dr. Garber responded that parents need to understand the nature and extent of a child's disability at the community level. He said that he supports parents having one place to find services and have treatment monitored. He said that,

currently, parents are left to figure out services and treatment on their own. He also said that parents need help to nurture independence in children with disabilities.

Representative Albers said that, in rural areas, all responsibility for children with disabilities falls on the school and that services are not available. She said she does not know how to achieve the concept Dr. Garber describes in a rural area. Dr. Garber said that there are countries with rural areas that have successfully addressed distribution of services.

Ms. Tittl said that it is important to include parents and to train them to advocate for coordinated services. She said that they are the only constant in a child's life and they need to be empowered to speak up for their children. Dr. Garber said that he does work with parents and noted that he has a charter preschool in which parents are very involved.

Ms. Rosenberg said that there should be one pot of money that follows each child. She also said that school and preschool teachers should be educated in special education and identifying disabilities.

- ***Mike D'Amato, Wisconsin Director, and Cheye Calvo, Director of Expansion, The SEED School Initiative***

Mr. D'Amato described the history of the SEED boarding school initiative and the SEED Foundation. He also discussed efforts to establish a SEED school in Milwaukee for low-income students in Wisconsin.

He said that fewer than half of Milwaukee ninth graders graduate from high school, and that African American eighth graders in Wisconsin rank the lowest in the country in standardized test scores based on combined writing, reading, and math test scores. He noted several challenges in Milwaukee including homelessness, poverty, and mobility among students.

He said that a SEED boarding school can help students who are not succeeding in the current educational system, who have greater needs, or who live in a less supportive environment.

Mr. D'Amato discussed the SEED principles. These include a college-bound culture, 24-hour learning environment, positive culture of high expectations, integrated and engaging programming to foster a lifelong love of learning, individual student support, focus on data and continuous improvement, recruiting and nurturing outstanding educators, family and school partnership, and community partnership.

Mr. Calvo described the SEED schools in Washington, D.C. and Baltimore, MD, and the successful outcomes for the students in the Washington, D.C. school. He also discussed the costs of poor education and stated that investing in SEED makes sense.

Ms. Tittl asked whether a SEED school in Milwaukee would be a charter school. Mr. Calvo said that the school in Baltimore is a public school and the school in Washington is a charter school.

In response to questions from Ms. Tittl, Mr. Calvo said that students go home on weekends to keep school costs lower and because the students are still young. He also said that programming is provided for parents so that the students are supported and the school's values are reinforced at home.

In response to questions from Representative Grigsby, Mr. Calvo described a typical day for a SEED school student and noted that every child has an individualized plan for his or her education. He also discussed the connection of the SEED school to the community in which it is located.

In response to a question from Representative Albers, Mr. Calvo said that financial aid and scholarships are available for students to attend college upon graduation from the SEED school.

Co-Chair Kestell asked how families who would like their child to attend a SEED school but who are not chosen feel about the school. Mr. Calvo said that other schools have used a lottery system to choose students and that it is very painful. He said, though, that the community has accepted the lottery system and that children who are accepted to the school do very well.

Discussion of Committee Assignment

- ***WLC: 0125/1, relating to children with severe disabilities or who are involved in multiple systems of care, or both, and their families***

Ms. Sappenfield described WLC: 0125/1. She discussed the comments that were raised in the draft and there was committee consensus to make changes to address those comments. Ms. Sappenfield noted that Dan Naylor, Coordinated Services Team Specialist, White Pines Consulting, had contacted staff to request modifications to the language permitting a juvenile court to order participation in a coordinated services initiative in a child or juvenile in need of protection or services case. Ms. Sappenfield said that she would propose language that reflects a desire to have that option in those cases for families that are willing to participate and will likely succeed in such a process.

Representative Albers stated that she would work with other committee members to estimate cost saving to counties if the draft is enacted into law.

Ms. Sappenfield said that she will prepare a memorandum for the next meeting describing the changes made to the draft.

- ***Memo No. 3, Current Law Related to Home Visitation Programs (October 9, 2008)***

Ms. Karls described Memo No. 3. Co-Chair Taylor said that there will be testimony relating to home visitation at the next committee meeting.

- ***Recently enacted federal legislation relating to foster care and kinship care***

Ms. Sappenfield stated that there is recently enacted federal legislation that may provide additional federal resources for children aging out of foster care and relative caregivers.

Plans for Future Meetings

The next meeting of the Special Committee will be on ***Friday, November 14, 2008, at 10:00 a.m., in Room 411 South, State Capitol, Madison.***

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 3:40 p.m.

AS:jal