

STRENGTHENING WISCONSIN FAMILIES

**A PLAN FOR STRENGTHENING
WISCONSIN FAMILIES**



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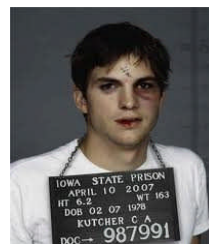
**A RIGHT OF NEWBORN BABIES:
THE OPPORTUNITY
TO SUCCEED IN LIFE**



Thriving Family
with
Coordinated
Family Resource
System



Struggling Family
without
Coordinated
Family Resource
System



**A PROPOSAL FOR AFFIRMING PARENTAL
RESPONSIBILITIES AND FOR A PUBLIC
FAMILY RESOURCE SYSTEM**

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INTRODUCTION

Without question, children are our nation's most precious resource, a resource that is vulnerable and under stress. In order to meet this threat, to ensure that our children will be able to compete successfully in the future, and to reduce the costs of government, we need to rethink the basic relationship between children and their parents and between parents and the private and public resources available to help them raise their children. In short, we need a new social contract among children, their parents, and the larger society in which both live.

This document lays out the rudiments of such a new contract. It articulates a set of simple propositions to address three facts: 1) one-third of America's children are in trouble; 2) one-quarter of state and almost one-half of county expenditures are the result of struggling families; and 3) our nation's future depends more than ever before on the next generation meeting the challenges of an increasingly competitive world.

As we enter a future where our national wealth and well-being will be determined by how we cope with the demands of the information era, we surely need a citizenry that is cognitively capable and behaviorally disciplined enough to thrive in a highly competitive world. In our global economy, personal success will not be forthcoming by just having the good fortune of being a citizen of the United States.

For our children to become competitive adults in the global economy, a larger public role is essential in this country to ensure two fundamental opportunities for newborns. First, we must ensure that every newborn has access to competent parenting. No public effort can offset the deleterious effects of incompetent parents that result in the *cradle to prison pipeline* so well documented by the Children's Defense Fund. For this reason, ensuring that parents of newborns understand and are capable of assuming the responsibilities of parenthood is task number one. Toward that end, Wisconsin Cares proposes the first initiative for a parenthood pledge (pages 16-19). This initiative introduces a set of simple protocols to determine whether or not a genetic parent is eligible to make a parenthood pledge. These protocols can be used to determine whether genetic parents are minimally capable of carrying out the responsibilities of parenthood and to intervene in those situations where there is reason to believe that problems will arise without preventive intervention.

Second, all parents require a family resource system. Most parents create such a system informally by organizing private and public resources around their families. Some require additional public assistance in order to do so. For all parents, we must ensure that public resources are comprehensive, competent, coherent, and effective. Moreover, we must focus on preventing social problems in the first place and not just on responding when they occur. Our second initiative, laid out in

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pages 19-34, articulates a model for moving toward a preventive human services architecture for the 21st century—a state-wide family resource system.

This document has five parts. Part I overviews selected evidence that America's children are not faring well when international comparisons or any reasonable standard of well-being are employed. Part II is a dialogue on how we view parenthood and lays out basic principles that support our proposals for change. Part III further delves into how we think about children, how we conceptualize the risks children face, and how we can use fundamental American values in addressing these risks. Part IV lays out our first proposal—namely, to ensure that newborns have minimally competent and responsible parents. Part V introduces our ideas on how resources for families with children can be enhanced through improvements in the way these resources are designed and managed through a state Family Policy Integration Board and local Family Resource Network Collaboratives. Finally, part VI is a call for action.

Our aim is to stimulate thinking about how we can prepare our children for productive adulthoods. How should we think of childhood, of parenthood, and of the public role in ensuring that all families have a coordinated family resource system? Any journey toward fundamental change must start somewhere. We believe that Wisconsin is the place and now is the time to start that journey.

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PART I

We Are Failing Our Children

...the most prosperous nation in the world seems to be failing its children.

*Beyond rhetoric: A New American agenda
for Children and Families: Final Report.
National Commission on Children, 1991*

The test of any nation is how it treats its vulnerable members—the old and the young. In 1991, the National Commission on Children concluded that America seemed to be failing its children. Thirty years later, ample data and the daily news show that America is, in fact, failing its children. As a result, the future of our nation and our economy are in jeopardy.

The United States ranks a dismal 18th of 21 Western countries in overall child well-being. Intellectually, our children clearly are falling short. We rank 23rd in science, 17th in reading, and 31st in math achievement of 32 Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development countries, including Shanghai, China (1st in all), Finland (1st, 2nd, & 6th), South Korea (6th, 2nd, & 4th), Canada (8th, 6th, & 10th), Germany (13th, 20th, & 16th), and Poland (19th, 15th, & 25th).¹

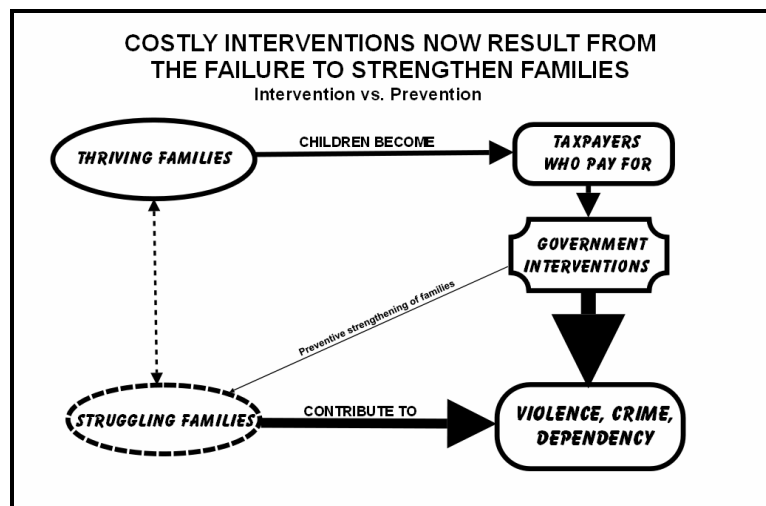
We must join forces as a nation to ensure that our young people are prepared for our changing, increasingly sophisticated world. Raising successful adults just does not happen by chance. We must make prudent investments in our children's futures now that will result in short-term and long-term reductions in the costs of government and not simply stand idly by and hope for the best. The reality is that too many children are exposed to family instability, safety hazards, violent virtual realities, sexual stimulation, materialism, and commercial exploitation. The following statistics reveal the challenges they face:²

1. One-third of our children are failing in some aspect of their lives.
2. Eleven million have been substantiated as seriously abused and/or neglected; twice as many have been reported to child welfare agencies.
3. Forty percent of babies are born out-of-wedlock.
4. Marriage no longer has an inherent commitment to childrearing.
5. Fully one-half of children and youth live in one-parent homes at some time, and half do not live with their genetic fathers at some time.
6. Sixty percent were directly or indirectly exposed to violence during the past year.

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7. Almost half were assaulted at least once during the past year.
8. The average age for the onset of menstruation has dropped to 12, leaving girls vulnerable to adolescent pregnancy for a longer time.
9. 145,000 babies are born each year to school-age mothers of which 6,000 plus are fourteen or younger.

Beyond the personal suffering incurred by failure in school and consequent crime and welfare dependency are the enormous social and economic costs to our society and, thus, to all of us as taxpayers. Over one quarter of state and almost one-half of county expenditures are incurred by struggling families, most of whom can be identified before childbirth.³



Olivia Golden, senior fellow at the Urban Institute, concluded that the child welfare system is overwhelmed.⁴ The absence of a national investment in proven prevention and treatment services for parents and children leaves the nation's child welfare system unprepared to ensure that all children grow up in stable homes. As a result, the local and state political context for child welfare reform is often turbulent, reactive to crisis or tragedy, and ill-suited to improving performance over the long haul.

Because we only react after children born in vulnerable circumstances have been damaged, we spend billions inefficiently and ineffectively on efforts to rescue them from abusive and neglectful parents, on attempts to educate unresponsive children and adolescents in our schools, and on systems that provide economic support to vulnerable families. The best of these efforts—home visitation programs—are beneficial but only if well designed and applied intensively.⁵ For example, Child Trends found that:

1. Fully six of every seven weekly home visitation programs for the parents of newborns had a positive effect on at least one outcome variable.

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2. In contrast, less intensive programs proved ineffective; of four monthly home visitation programs, none had a positive effect on the key outcomes of interest.
3. Of eight programs teaching parenting skills, less than half had a positive effect on one variable.

Interventions intended to reduce adolescent pregnancies subsequent to the first childbirth have had unsuccessful or disappointing outcomes.⁶ Most observers argue that modest outcomes, at best, flow from modest efforts that are applied too late--long after serious problems emerge and become entrenched. Clearly, the prevention of child abuse and neglect begins before the birth of the first child.

Our challenge is to shift from reacting to our social problems to preventing them in the first place.

Our Responses to Social Problems. Our instinctive reactions to social problems in this country go a long way toward determining how we respond to societal challenges. So, how do we react to crime, welfare dependency, and under-productivity resulting from the abuse and neglect of our children? In our judgment, we too often tend to blame someone or something else:

1. We blame individuals – get tough on crime, zero tolerance.
("I made it – others should too. The lazy sponge off me.")
2. We blame society – racism, sexism, elder ageism, poverty.
("The cards are stacked against them.")
3. We blame government – schools, social services, law enforcement.
("Government doesn't do enough. Government does too much.")
4. We blame parents – divorce, drug and alcohol addicts, irresponsibility.
("Kids are out of control. Kids get too much.")

Too often, we fail to see how ***we all bear responsibility for our social problems.*** Too often, we stand by and ignore other people's children and the circumstances in which they grow up. We do not see how we ignore the basic right of children to have competent parents who will raise them to become productive citizens. We do not commit ourselves to creating a society in which children are raised in stable families in safe neighborhoods with good schools and supportive community resources.

In the face of compelling evidence to the contrary, we still believe that we care about children. Most likely, we don't have a framework for thinking about our children. On the one hand, we generally do respond protectively to those who are abused and spend large sums of money on them. Yet, the evidence clearly shows that we ignore their human and civil rights. Some of us even believe that they have no rights. Strikingly, the

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United States and Somalia are the only members of the United Nations that did not ratify its Convention on the Rights of the Child. One rationalization given for not ratifying the Convention was that our federal government does not have jurisdiction over children—only the states do.

Slowly, things have been improving. Without question, children fare better in the Western World today than in previous generations when extreme discrimination against them in the form of blatant "juvenile ageism" prevailed. From earlier times in which children were barely recognized as more than miniature adults, we have come to appreciate childhood as a period of growth during which personalities and abilities are shaped. Beginning in the last century with the efforts of "child savers" to free children from oppressive labor and to provide public education, we have reached a time in which we can consider ways of assuring them fulfilling childhoods.

Furthermore, we know that strengthening families will improve the lives of children, reduce our society's problems, and increase both the economic productivity and moral stature of later generations. Although some inevitable conflicts exist between the interests of older and younger generations, it seems clear that America's will is to promote the healthy development of our children. The problem lies less in the lack of desire than in overcoming ideologies that stand in the way of doing so. The political far right holds that the privacy of the family is inviolable, and the political far left holds that the rights of parents, especially mothers, are paramount. Both ideologies view newborn babies as the personal property of their parents. Some people, including professionals and especially researchers, believe that little can be done without further research.

In spite of these obstacles, we have a pretty good idea of what would help children now. We know which childrearing patterns are effective and which will fail. Yet, we do not systematically apply that knowledge. We do not have a clear vision for our nation's children or a consensus on how to support them through prudent public policies during their growing years.

In 2006, the National Academy of Sciences, our most prestigious scientific voice, called for a comprehensive federal effort to bolster our competitiveness so that we will gain, rather than lose, from globalization.⁷

In a 2011 Woodrow Wilson Center document *A National Strategic Narrative* Wayne Porter and Mark Mykleby make a strong case that our national security depends first and foremost on investing our resources domestically in our youth and our natural resources.⁸

For the sake of its present and future well-being, America must articulate a vision for the future of the public's role in raising productive citizens, its ideals for parents and how they should act as parents, and, specifically, a set of set of concepts for thinking about newborn babies.

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PART II

ARE NEWBORNS PROPERTY OR PERSONS (with rights)?

Rethinking how we raise competent and successful children starts by reconsidering how we conceptualize our children when they are born. Are they the mere property of their genetic parents who can do as they please with them or do children enjoy certain rights as citizens of this country?

We trace our claim for individual rights to the essential documents that created our Republic. In the Unanimous Declaration of the thirteen colonies to independence the following assertion can be found, "*We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.*" Similarly, we find sentiments inscribed in the U.S. Constitution adopted in 1787. "*We the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure [domestic Tranquility](#), provide for the common [defence](#), promote the general [Welfare](#) welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our [Posterity](#), do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.*"

These "unalienable rights to life, liberty and the *pursuit of happiness*" originally were intended for free men in the United States, but these rights reflect the basic needs of all human beings.⁹ Through great effort and travail, these basic needs were recognized as rights and were granted to slaves, who were the property of their owners. Later, they were applied to give voting privileges to women, who often were regarded as the property of their husbands. Then the right to the *pursuit of happiness* was applied to children, who were regarded as the property of their parents. Although fundamental in our nation, these rights continue to be compromised by the forces of racism, sexism, and ageism to this day.

For children, the crucial question now is: when does the right to the *pursuit of happiness* begin? At the present time, it does not apply to newborn babies, who still are generally regarded as the personal property of their parents. If newborn babies are regarded as property, government is excluded from the formation of families. It has no direct interest in private property. But if newborn babies are regarded as persons, they are human beings with human rights.

Of course, the birth of a baby is primarily celebrated by parents, families, and religious ceremonies. But it is far more than a private event. It is the most important and absolutely essential human contribution to our society's future—to our nation's *posterity*. We all have an interest in the future of every newborn.

Childbirth is essential to the future of our society. The state celebrates it by issuing a birth certificate—the most important document held by a citizen of this country, as

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anyone living in the United States without one knows. A birth certificate does far more than record a birth. It establishes an identity for a newborn baby as a citizen of our nation with all the rights and privileges attached to citizenship and as a member of a family. It also includes health and family information. By establishing citizenship in the United States, it opens the door for a newborn child to all the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, including an opportunity for the *pursuit of happiness*—an opportunity to become a productive citizen.

The future of our nation depends upon newborn babies becoming productive citizens. We all have a stake in ensuring they all have competent parents who can provide the nurturance and sustenance they need to fulfill their potentials in life. Gary Melton, professor of Law at Clemson University, points out that we should strive to create a web of supportive relationships for families—a private-public family resource system.¹⁰ For these reasons, parenthood is an implicit social contract between parents and society.

Parenthood as a Social Contract. Childrearing is far more than a private family affair; It is a societal responsibility as well. This is true even in subgroups of our society that prize separateness and privacy, such as the Amish. Parenthood truly is a social contract between parents and their society. The parental side of the contract is rearing a child to become an adult member of that society. The societal side of the contract is ensuring that parents have the resources to successfully meet that responsibility—jobs, safe neighborhoods, schools, health care, and supportive communities.

In this social contract, a birth certificate creates a legal parent-child relationship: recognizing the fact that the parent(s) possess the legal and physical custody of the child. Genetic parents take their newborns home from hospitals because the state confers legal and physical custody of their babies upon them through a birth certificate. Without this legal conferral of custody, genetic parents would have no legal basis for parental rights. When parents seek to enforce their parental rights, they involve courts in doing so based on their legal and custodial rights implicitly granted at childbirth.

In the social contract of parenthood, society expects parents to discharge the responsibilities of parenthood, which flow from their legal and physical custody of their children. Their parental rights are based on their duties as custodians. These rights can be terminated by the state. As a part of this social contract, our society has an obligation to prevent child maltreatment by ensuring that parents are capable of being the legal and physical custodians of their children and of taking advantage of the resources our society provides for them.

Wisconsin statutes permit preventive interventions during the pregnancies of genetic mothers for the well-being of newborn babies.¹¹ Funds are even to be designated for services related to unborn child abuse prevention.¹² Unfortunately, despite federal legislation intended to induce a proactive and preventive approach to child maltreatment, action seldom takes place to protect newborn babies at-risk before they are abused and/or neglected.¹³ Instead, states confer parental rights on genetic parents without regard for circumstances that render them unable to assume the legal and

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physical custody of a child. Genetic mothers who are unfit for parenthood now take newborn babies home from the hospital with little or no monitoring.

The following table depicts examples of the private and public resources needed by families in order to carry out their side of the social contract to provide income, health care, education, care-giving, and stability for their children and youth as they rear our society's next generation:

A FAMILY RESOURCE SYSTEM

<i>FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES</i>	<i>PRIVATE RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES</i>	<i>PUBLIC RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES</i>
INCOME	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-Employed • Employment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dependent-Tax Deductions • Welfare-To-Work Payments
HEALTH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-Payment • Insurance or HMO 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical Assistance • Badger Care • Social Security Insurance
EDUCATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private Schools • Home Schooling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Schools • School Vouchers
CAREGIVING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relative Childcare • Home Childcare • Center Childcare • Workplace Childcare 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tax Deductions • Welfare-To-Work Subsidies
FAMILY STABILITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grandparents • Private Family Services • Friends and Relatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family Resource Networks • Child Protective Services • Temporary Out-of-Home Care

The state-issued birth certificate registers both the baby and the known parents and establishes the social contract of parenthood. It does not, however, indicate whether or not a parent is capable of assuming the responsibilities of the legal and physical custody of a newborn baby. This failure is the root cause of the intergenerational transmission of social dysfunction in our society. It is a tragic injustice to newborn babies. This failure causes an immense, unnecessary burden for taxpayers.

There Are No Standards for Parenthood Now. James Dwyer, professor of law at William and Mary, points out that our legal rules governing assignment of legal parents to children at birth pay no direct attention to the welfare of the children and

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cannot plausibly be explained or justified in terms of the children's interests.¹⁴ These rules automatically bestow legal parenthood on a child's genetic parents regardless of how unprepared they are to raise the child. Only after attempting, too often with futility, to "rehabilitate" those genetic parents who predictably turn out to be abusive and/or neglectful do we attempt to find suitable parents for their offspring. This only occurs after the offspring have been damaged through a lengthy process that protects the interests and the due process rights of the genetic parents, giving them every opportunity to show some improvement and, thereby, reclaim "their" children.

As it now stands, anyone regardless of age, disability, or legal status who conceives a child has full parental rights and is presumed to be capable of assuming the responsibilities of parenthood, possibly with support, until they demonstrate that they are not capable of doing so by seriously damaging the child through legally adjudicated determination of neglect and/or abuse. This situation has two devastating but inevitable consequences for our children and for our society. First, anyone is regarded as capable of assuming the responsibilities of parenthood by simply conceiving a baby. Second, a newborn's right to freedom from abuse and neglect is not legally recognized until the child has already been abused or neglected and, in effect, has already lost that precious freedom from the fear and fact of being hurt.

Overlooked as well is the moral and constitutional right under the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment against the state placing newborn babies in a legal relationship with genetic parents the state knows to be unfit.¹⁵ For example, if the state terminates parental rights for one child because the parent abused that child and failed to respond to rehabilitative efforts, and if the same adult gives birth to another child, the state violates that newborn baby's fundamental rights by forcing her or him to be the legal child of that adult, just as it would violate an adult woman's fundamental rights by forcing her to remarry a man known to be an un-rehabilitated spousal abuser. For the state to force any person into intimate relationships that are likely to be seriously detrimental to them is an unconstitutional abuse of state power, and never more so than when these persons are in the developmentally critical early years of life. The following case illustrates the extent to which the rights of a newborn child can be ignored:¹⁶

Michael was a 6-month-old baby in a permanent vegetative state because of profound brain damage due to birth asphyxia caused by severe blood loss during an unattended delivery after his mother signed out of the birthing unit of a hospital against medical advice. Her parental rights had been terminated for all of her five previous children due to neglect. The first was born when she was 16. She showed little interest in Michael, rarely visiting or interacting with him, but she continued to have decision making authority and insisted that "everything be done" to extend Michael's life as long as possible.

Unlike all other activities that can adversely affect others or oneself, such as driving a motor vehicle, voting, entering the military service, marriage, smoking tobacco or drinking alcoholic beverages, and practicing one of the healing professions (among

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many other trades), there are no standards for entering parenthood for genetic parents. Parenthood entails far greater responsibilities than any of the aforementioned privileges of citizenship. Yet, there are no age or capacity standards for genetic parenthood, such as we have for foster parents, adoptive parents, teachers, and child care workers.

We know that children from thriving families are likely to do well in life and that children from struggling families are likely to fail. We believe that every newborn should have an opportunity to succeed in life. We know that babies born with parents who cannot care for them are destined to fail in life. In spite of this knowledge, we stop short of any action that would infringe upon the presumed right of parents to possess and control their children as personal property, especially newborn babies. So nothing is done to protect the right of a newborn to have an opportunity to succeed in life until that child is seriously damaged by abuse and/or neglect. This means that governmental intervention is necessarily limited to after the abuse and/or neglect has taken place. Such a tardy response then typically requires that government take over responsibility for affected children with unfortunate and costly results for all concerned.

If we are to reduce the involvement of government in family life, it is useful to consider the way we act upon risks and costs to our society. As with many policy questions, ironies abound. We would actually decrease the extent to which government involves itself in families by increasing its preventive involvement through intervening at the right time and in a smarter way. We expand on this conundrum in part III.

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PART III

Developing a Framework for Thinking about our Children

We start this section by considering the concept of societal risk and how we prioritize those risks.

How We Prioritize Risks With the growing interest in preventing environment pollution and diseases, attention is being devoted to risk reduction. As our ability to detect risks to the quality of our lives improves, our opportunities for reducing those risks have increased as well.¹⁷

Up to this point, unfortunately, we as a society have proceeded haphazardly, responding to each risk as it is identified without prioritizing it. For example, the range of unacceptable risks is from 1 in 10,000 for federally regulated drugs to 3 in 100 for factory-work injuries to 1 in 10 for lung cancer for smokers. In comparison, the risk of serious damage to children by vulnerable parents is at least 1 in 3. In this light, the risk created by incompetent parents to society is the greatest hazard of all, yet it is unrecognized.¹⁸

Each child who has been abused and neglected by incompetent parents costs our economy \$2.8 million. Each child raised to become a productive citizen by competent parents contributes \$1.4 million to our economy.¹⁹ A high-risk youth who becomes a chronic offender costs society between \$4.2 and \$7.2 million in police, court, and correctional outlays; property losses; and medical, mental health and human service costs.²⁰ The benefits of fostering competent parenthood are reductions in crime, child abuse and neglect, welfare dependency, and unemployment. Beyond these measurable financial benefits are incalculable gains in personal fulfillment and happiness and national productivity. These facts must be recognized in our social policies and workplaces.

We have the choice of continuing to react ineffectively to the devastating consequences of incompetent parents or of preventing this tragic waste of human and economic resources by ensuring competent parents for all of our children. How we do this depends upon how we view children.

How Do We View Children? Most important is how childhood is conceived. If we regard children as objects (brains) to be shaped by the latest technology, we look to science and more research for guidance in childrearing techniques. This is not wrong, but it is an incomplete basis for thinking about how to raise children. Cultural values are even more important inputs.

If we see children as the next generation of our culture, we must necessarily look to that very culture for values to guide childrearing. Our present dilemma appears to result from reliance on science for childrearing methods that can only be defined and articulated by culture. Nothing is context-free. It makes no more sense to base childrearing on the latest

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experimental findings in the social sciences than it does to base our adult lives on them. We can use science to enhance aspects of our lives but not to provide meaning and purpose for our lives.

What's more, the dehumanizing tendency of our modern technological society and our adulation of celebrities depletes adults' lives of meaning and erodes the foundations of our humanity as children lack positive role models.

One of the reasons science has overshadowed culture in childrearing has been the tendency to regard the United States as such a heterogeneous nation that an American culture does not exist. Recognizing an American culture has even been construed as denying the existence of multi-cultural minorities through an unwelcome emphasis on "the majority." In fact, there are truly unique American values that form the substrate of our American culture and its subcultures that are not antisocial.

Our American culture is most obvious to those who view the United States from the outside and seek to live here and least evident to Americans ourselves. The essence of our culture points us in the direction of taking constructive action to give all of our children an opportunity to succeed in life.

What Is the Essence of American Culture? *Personal competence* is the essence of our American culture—the “can do” spirit that created the United States and propelled this nation into global leadership. We expect that systems and products will work. We expect workers to be proficient in their jobs. We expect contracts to be honored. We expect fairness in business dealings. We expect that laws will be obeyed. We expect that competence will be rewarded. In essence, we expect people to competently assume and discharge their responsibilities to others. We also do expect, at least in our rhetoric, that everyone will have opportunities to become competent citizens.

The ingredients of personal competence are: social skills, self-control, the ability to learn, moral values, self-identity, self-esteem, and decision-making ability. We know that acquiring personal competence depends largely upon stable parent-child relationships. Gifted individuals may survive adversity during their early lives and even flourish later; however, this is not true for the vast majority of children. We know that each child needs dependable, intimate relationships with adults as models for developing the capacity to relate intimately to other persons—the foundation of success and gratification in life. Each child needs relationships with peers to develop the capacity for cooperative relationships with others. Each child needs adults who model competent living. When children have had these opportunities, they achieve personal competence.

We also know where we have gone wrong. There is much evidence that disrupted and disturbed parent-child relationships have deprived far too many children of models of competence. At least one-third of our children have not developed the skills needed for competent living and suffer from a range of vulnerabilities with accompanying lack of self-respect and respect for others. We know that a variety of biological, family, and social factors interact to convert these vulnerabilities into handicaps.

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We know that we have not identified vulnerable children soon enough. We have inflicted greater disabilities on many whom we have callously labeled as disabled, deviant, or delinquent. We have ignored the fact that newborn babies cannot choose their parents. Even worse, we have not provided effective remedies for those we have tried to help. The fragmentation and discontinuity of services for children and families have made it necessary to call national attention to our disregard of the most fundamental human right of children to simply have competent parents.

All systems that deal with children have built-in mechanisms that make it possible for professionals to insulate themselves from the painful dilemmas encountered in the course of their work. A health worker can be absorbed in the treatment of disease, a lawyer in courtroom procedures, a social worker in administrative policies, an educator in the mechanics of teaching, and a parent in childrearing techniques. While these defenses maintain the homeostasis of each system, they themselves deserve critical analysis since these systems can be self-serving and antithetical to the interests of children. Some, such as the prison industry, depend upon the neglect and abuse of children. The systems in which these professionals work also compete for limited financial resources.

In promoting the interests of children, the economic costs of childrearing also must be faced. The value of children has changed as our society has evolved from stable-rural to unstable-urban families and from a labor to a technological economy. Children are no longer economic assets for their parents. Increases in the cost of raising children cause parents in particular, and society more generally, to view childrearing as an economic liability in competition with other priorities. Moreover, the satisfactions of parenthood have been downgraded in favor of the satisfactions of work away from home.

On the other hand, in a less tangible but more important sense, children enrich the lives of adults. Children do not really need parents with specialized expertise. Although technical aid may be required in raising certain children, the day-to-day needs of children, whether they are troubled or not, can be met by compassionate and competent adults. To be a parent and raise a child requires more in the way of common sense and less in the way of technical knowledge. Unfortunately, too many parents encounter seemingly insurmountable barriers to involvement in their children's lives because they are overwhelmed by their personal problems or their vocational lives.

From this, it follows that promoting the well-being of families is the most important thrust of fulfilling the right of children to have an opportunity to succeed in life. Income maintenance, parental leaves, homemaker services, adequate housing, recreational facilities, and marital counseling to bolster family integrity are vital to the development of children. Family planning also is essential because an unwanted or an additional child can lead to family disintegration. For children with mothers in the workforce, adequate childcare and after-school programs are essential. In general, the realistic rewards of family living need emphasis to counteract misconceptions about the onerous burdens of childrearing.

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All of these ways to promote healthy families signal the importance of a public health approach to our social and health problems generated by vulnerable families.

Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary Prevention/Intervention. Next, we introduce concepts that are critical to our proposed plan of action. Primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention are public health concepts that can be productively applied to social problems, especially potentially abusive and/or neglectful parents. Primary prevention means the prevention of a condition, as through immunization or through the early detection of, and intervention with, at-risk families. Secondary prevention/intervention means treating a condition or problem after it emerges and becomes a visible issue. Finally, tertiary prevention/intervention attempts to mitigate any larger consequences resulting from conditions or problems left unattended.

Applied to vulnerable parents, primary prevention includes preventing adolescent pregnancies, the adoption of the newborns of incompetent parents, and home visitation for the parents of all firstborns. Secondary prevention is intervening with struggling parents and assisting them with parenting skills and resources. Tertiary prevention is intervening when child abuse and neglect have occurred to minimize the consequent damage to children.

Most human services resources are devoted to secondary and tertiary prevention/interventions with a growing interest in secondary prevention, which has a lower priority when funding is curtailed. As a result, primary prevention, which is the most cost-effective, is sacrificed to less cost-effective secondary and tertiary interventions.

Unfortunately for newborn babies, their mothers, and for society, primary prevention efforts to prevent adolescent and other vulnerable pregnancies stop when these mothers elect to continue to childbirth. This shift from preventing their pregnancies to supporting dependent mothers omits the primary prevention intervention of adoption. As a result, the majority of pregnant dependent mothers choose to become parents, and over 15% actually chose to become pregnant in the first place because of the status and support they receive from becoming parents.²¹

Even in this light, the thought that coercion may be necessary in primary prevention efforts runs against our grain. We live in a society that is allergic to anything that evokes the images of paternalism or of "big brother."

But there are times when persuasion and education are not enough. Adults are free to harm themselves short of suicide as long as they do not harm others in the process. Different standards apply when we deal with children. Both moral and legal considerations presume that, unlike adults, children are not free to harm themselves and that parents are not free to harm their children. We turn to the legal system when parents refuse essential treatment for their children and when they neglect or abuse them. But we are reluctant to apply the principles of primary prevention to child abuse and neglect.

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Still, the moral climate in the United States is shifting away from adult freedoms and family privacy overriding the interests of children. William Galston, professor at the University of Maryland School of Public Affairs, points out that²²

"the revitalization of our communities requires some restraint on unfettered choice and some restoration of an all-but-vanished authority. But how can choice be restricted in a manner consistent with our historical commitment to liberty, and how can authority be strengthened without risking repression? ...while we are for the most part free to act in ways that damage our own interests, we are not similarly free to act in ways that impose costs on others or on society as a whole without their consent. Call this the principle of responsibility."

Seen in this light, we all have a responsibility, if not an obligation, to bring the principles of public health to bear on child abuse and neglect. We require the prevention of contagious illnesses in children through immunization. We can take the even more important step of preventing the epidemic of child neglect and abuse that underlies the violence, habitual crime, and welfare dependency afflicting our nation. This can be done by setting minimum standards for parenthood and mobilizing public support for them.

Moving in the direction of insuring competent parenting for every child in our nation would be an assertion of each child's civil right to not be neglected or abused. It would not be inappropriately coercive. It would encourage parents to take their responsibilities more seriously. It would identify parents who are unresponsive to persuasion and education and need to have expectations set for them. It would identify those who are unfit to parent and who need to be relieved from the responsibilities of childrearing.

We also need to increase the competence of professionals who work with children. We do not need new professionals to find children at risk; this can be done by sensitizing those already on the scene. We do not need more research to know what children need; our present knowledge can simply be disseminated more broadly. Existing professionals can be trained and organized more effectively by deploying them in interdisciplinary teams to protect children's rights and coordinate resources for children and families.

In a broader sense, a social policy committed to conserving our nation's developmental potential by promoting personal competence in children and in their parents is urgently needed. America must place a high priority on childrearing or face an uncertain future.²³ As our nation's largest permanent minority, our children depend upon us to make a commitment to ensuring that all of them are on a level playing field at the beginning of their lives by having competent parents. We need to set minimum standards for parenthood. We can begin to do so by incorporating a parenthood pledge into the birth record and thereby creating an explicit legal contract between parents and our society.

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PART IV

Initiative 1: A Parenthood Pledge

Our first initiative focuses on ensuring that newborns have access to competent parents and have parents who are fully cognizant of the challenges they are undertaking. Today, genetic mothers and fathers have no way of acknowledging the responsibilities of parenthood other than through baptism in a religious setting. In the Netherlands, an "upbringing pledge" has been proposed as a social institution and as a legal framework through which the commitment of parents to raise their children to become productive citizens can be expressed.²⁴

In the United States, the failure of millions of parents to meet their parenthood responsibilities results in the enormous public costs of governmental involvement in family life that could be dramatically reduced by two simple requirements:

- 1) no one who requires a legal and physical custodian or a guardian will be allowed to assume the responsibilities of parenthood (i.e., become the legal and physical custodian of a newborn baby), and
- 2) all qualified parents of newborns will acknowledge acceptance of the responsibilities of parenthood.

We can take a significant step toward ensuring that every newborn has a chance to succeed in life by making the following legal presumptions:

- 1) *A person is presumed to be qualified to assume the responsibilities of parenthood if:*
 - a) that person is the genetic parent of a child and is legally competent to manage her or his affairs (i.e., is not under the legal and physical custody or guardianship of another person or of the state) or
 - b) that person is the legal and physical custodian of the genetic parent.
- 2) *By making a pledge (the Parenthood Pledge) to assume parental responsibilities for her or his child that qualified person is presumed to be the legal and physical custodian of his or her child until and unless that presumption is rebutted by clear and convincing evidence.*

These principles can be implemented by using existing prenatal counseling and coordinated services teams during a pregnancy before a child is born and by modifying the birth certification process as follows:

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- 1) *Activating parenthood planning counseling whenever a person who has a legal and/or physical custodian or a guardian or has been adjudicated as an unfit parent becomes pregnant and chooses to continue the pregnancy to childbirth.*
 - a) If a mother or father is in the custody of another person, that person will be presumed custodian of the dependent person's baby unless she or he declines to acknowledge this responsibility. (Already grandparents have financial responsibilities for the children of their children without guardianship rights in Wisconsin.²⁵) This will continue until the mother (father) is qualified for parenthood and makes a parenthood pledge unless that presumption is rebutted by:
 - i) adoption of the child,
 - ii) Child in Need of Protective Services determination,
 - iii) legal determination of incompetence of the parent, or
 - iv) the parent is under the long-term custody of the state.
 - b) If a parent has been adjudicated as unfit, the applicable preemptive child abuse and neglect statute will be followed.
 - c) If all available and qualified legal and physical custodians decline to accept these responsibilities or if the parent already is under the custody of the state, legal and physical custodianship of the newborn child will be assumed by the state, and an adoption plan will be made for the newborn child prior to birth by the parenthood planning counseling team by adding a guardian *ad litem* for the unborn child.
- 2) *Modifying the Hospital Birth Worksheet to include a Parenthood Pledge.* Any person eligible for custody of a newborn will be informed of her or his custodianship duties as part of the documentation of birth. Just as non-marital fathers are now informed about and legally acknowledge their financial support obligations, all persons eligible for custodianship will acknowledge their custodial duties to the child as commonly defined in family courts:
 - Provide or arrange for sufficient income for the child's clothing, shelter, education, health care, and social and recreational activities.
 - Provide the love, security, and emotional support necessary for the healthy development of the child.
 - Foster the intellectual, social, and moral development of the child.
 - Socialize the child by setting limits and encouraging civil behavior.
 - Protect the child from physical, emotional, and social harm.

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The form will include a pledge “*to accept the responsibilities of parenthood for ‘Jane Doe’ and discharge them to the best of my ability.*” By signing this pledge that person will be automatically awarded legal and physical custody of the newborn baby.

- 3) *In the event a mother or father of a newborn child is a person who has a custodian or guardian, the custodian or guardian of that person will sign the Pledge.* In the absence of such a person or if the mother or father is under the custody of a state, the newborn baby will be presumed to be without a custodian, and that state will arrange for legal and physical custody of the baby through an adoption plan.
- 4) *Modifying the birth certificate to include certification of parenthood.* The birth certificate now certifies that there is a record of a baby’s birth. It also will certify that a mother or father has made a parenthood pledge.

If any custodian subsequently fails to meet the responsibilities of parenthood—as he or she pledged to do—by substantiated child abuse and/or neglect, that person would be in default of the social contract of parenthood established by the Parenthood Pledge.

Implementing a Parenthood Pledge in Wisconsin. Wisconsin is strategically placed to implement *parenthood planning counseling* through Planned Parenthood Counseling, Adoption Awareness Counseling, Prenatal Care Coordination, and prenatal health care services. The preventive mission of Wisconsin’s Collaborative Systems of Care makes it possible to bring expectant mothers and their families involved in other systems into Coordinated Services Teams that include child welfare.

Wisconsin Statute Chapter 48 already provides for jurisdiction over children alleged to be in need of protection or services through 48.13 (1) “for any child without a parent.” By defining “parent” as any genetic mother or father who is not under the legal and physical custody or guardianship of another person or the state, newborns of those mothers and fathers who are under such custody or guardianship do not have a legal “parent.” Chapter 48.135 (1) can be modified to bring expectant mothers under jurisdiction of the court under Chapter 51 if they do not qualify under 48.13 (1) as a “parent.”

Societal expectations of parenthood and the Parenthood Pledge can be added to existing birth worksheets. They already exist for unmarried fathers in the Voluntary Paternity Acknowledgement form. We could easily amend the birth worksheets to encompass what we envision here.

The Wisconsin Vital Records Office of the Division of Public Health of the Department of Health Services would certify that the parenthood pledge was made on the birth certificate as it now certifies a record of a child’s birth has been submitted to the Office.

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PART V

Initiative 2: Integrating a State Family Resource System

Our society develops systems to meet human needs. Examples are our food production and delivery system, financial system, transportation system, law enforcement system, and educational system. These systems are not formal structures. They are informally related subsystems united by a common vision and purpose.

We need a vision for a *family resource system* that strengthens families by integrating resources for children, youth, and families. Such a family resource system would have corresponding state and local boards that facilitate communication and collaboration and that guide funding for programs and services for children, youth, and families.

We can prevent social problems and reduce costly public interventions through fostering thriving families through a family resource system that:

- (1) *Focuses resources for children, youth, and adults on families rather than on individuals as if they did not live in families.*
- (2) *Reinforces state, local, private, and public collaboration between resources for children, youth, and families through family resource systems, and*
- (3) *Integrates resources through Wraparound/Coordinated Services teams.*

Background. The idea of integrating a *family resource system* has been germinating over the last twenty years in Wisconsin and continues to be advanced by *Wisconsin Cares*. Our support is motivated by the loss of human potential and the higher tax burden resulting from child neglect and abuse. Fully 27% of state and 45% of county expenditures are directly related to struggling families. (Appendix 1)

Families need supportive infrastructures to fulfill their responsibilities to rear our next generation. Our nation and state recognize their responsibilities to provide these infrastructures through resources for families, such as public education; tax deductions and credits; family leaves; and a variety of human services for children, youth, and families. But we do not have a public/private infrastructure of coordinated resources for families like our public/private educational infrastructure for children and youth.

The focus of *Wisconsin Cares* on preventing social, health, and educational problems led us first to review the literature on prevention. We then surveyed existing resources for children, youth, and families in Wisconsin and found they vary greatly in scope, overlap, and efficacy. Most of them target individuals rather than families. More

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attention has been devoted to parental employment, childcare, and children’s education than to family stability and well-being—the essential preconditions for successful education, a responsible citizenry, and a productive workforce.

Existing resources for children, youth, and families often:

- cannot focus on prevention because of competing demands for interventions;
- must spend too much time on paper work and seeking short-term categorical grants;
- are hampered by changing specific rather than holistic mandates;
- are restricted by regulations and barriers to collaboration;
- lack reliable outcome and cost effectiveness data;
- would be improved by more partnering, collaboration, and integration; and
- do not involve families in planning and implementing programs and services.

The *Wisconsin Cares’* survey inspired a vision for children, youth, and families in Wisconsin. This vision is based upon the moral and legal rights of parents and children, federal and state legislation that affects children and families, and recent national and state developments in advocacy for children and families.

We concluded that we need a system that strengthens families rather than waits until families are in trouble, as usually is the case now. We need a system named for “families” rather than for “children” to discourage focusing separately on the child(ren) and the parent(s). We need a family resource system that includes family supportive elements of the educational system by uniting existing programs for children, youth, and families through Family Resource Networks. Our state government needs to follow the lead of communities that already have and are developing these Networks.

Home Visitation for the Parents Of Newborns & Corrections Funding (Per Capita Expenditures FY 2001)			
<u>Home Visitation</u>		<u>Corrections</u>	
1) Minnesota	\$ 9.90	1) Wisconsin	\$ 173.00
2) Indiana	\$ 7.03	2) Michigan	\$ 158.00
3) Michigan	\$ 5.00	3) Illinois	\$ 102.00
4) Illinois	\$ 3.79	4) Indiana	\$ 96.00
5) Iowa	\$ 3.48	5) Minnesota	\$ 92.00
6) Wisconsin	\$ 1.10	6) Iowa	\$ 89.00

The time is right for developing efficacious and cost-effective private/public Family Resource Networks throughout Wisconsin. Although Wisconsin ranks higher than most states on child well-being indicators as published in *Kids Count* by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Wisconsin trails other Midwestern states in preventing child abuse and neglect through home support for the parents of newborns and, at the

same time, tops those states in spending on correctional facilities for offenders, most of whom are the products of struggling families. Instead, Wisconsin should lead other states in integrating family resources as it did in welfare reform.

Problems Addressed by a Family Resource System. A family resource system includes all of the elements families need in order to effectively rear our next generation: income opportunities, education, childcare, health care, and family-oriented human resources.

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One of the fundamental flaws in our public policies and funding streams is the focus on children as independent units. By definition, a child is at the least a part of a two-person dyadic unit: *child-parent*. Child-oriented programs that do not take the parent side of this dyad into account, and parent-oriented programs that ignore the child side are conceptually and programmatically deficient. Such programs can unintentionally increase stress on parents and children. Programs should focus primarily on families and not just on individual child, youth, or adult family members as if they did not live in families.

In order to achieve the quantity and quality of resources our children, youth, families, and the professionals who work with them deserve, we need a paradigm shift from regarding children, youth, and adults as independent units to recognizing them as members of intergenerational families. Focusing services and funding solely on individual family members has a long history of weakening families, for example:

- Aid to the Families of Dependent children focused on individual children in a family and unintentionally encouraged childbearing and discouraged marriage.
- A focus solely on the employment of parents overlooks the needs for developing attachment bonds between children and parents, childcare, and parenting resources.
- Spending limits, reporting requirements, and eligibility criteria of federal and state categorical programs often create barriers to the effective use of resources.
- The disconnection of, rather than collaboration between, parents and the human service and educational systems.
- While child abuse or neglect allegations are being investigated, children are placed in foster care rather than providing in-home crisis intervention to protect the child while helping their families before resorting to costly out-of-home placements.
- Prevention programs that focus on specific symptoms rather than causes.
- Imprisoning fathers and mothers for non-violent offenses deprives their children of parenting and often unnecessarily adds the costs of foster care to the costs of incarceration.
- Health insurance designated as only for children overlooks the equal importance of health insurance for their parents or guardians.
- When health insurance does not cover family therapy, psychiatric diagnoses for the children and parents often need to be used to justify coverage for out-patient treatment in order to avoid more costly out-of-home placement.

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- Costly residential mental health and juvenile correctional placements are necessitated by both the lack of community resources and the lack of coordination between existing resources.
- Different judges may direct services, impose sanctions, and place requirements on defendants involved in the criminal, civil, and juvenile systems without coordination within the criminal justice and between the criminal justice and human service and mental health systems. For example, a judge ordered an in-patient psychiatric evaluation costing \$16,000 that duplicated an existing community evaluation.
- Because different agencies collect specific data on family members, there is no data for evaluating family outcomes.
- Field workers already with excessive caseloads are overburdened with paperwork necessitated by different requirements for reporting.
- Special education that focuses only on individual children overlooks the ways thriving families can help their own children and the ways struggling families contribute to the numbers of children who are placed in special education programs.
- Rigid conformity to confidentiality rules creates barriers between professionals who need to share information in order to collaborate with professionals from different agencies and with other relevant persons.

Interdisciplinary prevention & intervention teams produce immediate and long-term cost reductions. Costs of institutional placement of children and youth drop 50% to 100% in counties when Coordinated Services Teams that integrate Family Resource Networks around specific families are implemented. The following are examples of cost savings in Wisconsin Counties:²⁶

Locality	Cost Savings
Calumet County	Saved over \$1.2 million in out-of-home and health care costs between 1999 and 2002.
Lacrosse County	Diversion of children and youth who received crisis support services from institutional placement rose from 51% in 2003 to 87% in 2007.
Manitowoc County	From 2002 to 2007, foster care placements dropped from 113 to 104, group home placements from 11 to 0, and residential care placements from 20 to 0, saving over \$2 million in 2007.
Marquette County	Out-of-home-placements dropped from 24 in 2004 to 2 in 2007.
Waupaca County	Saved \$440,000 in out-of-home placements in 2004.

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As it now stands, well intentioned but overburdened professionals often deliver limited, targeted services from agencies far removed from the neighborhoods of their clients. The most successful programs treat individuals' problems in the context of their families, offer a broad spectrum of services, flexibly use resources, and have staff trained in cross-system collaboration in order to broker necessary services to fully meet a family's needs. A Family Resource Network organizes neighborhoods and communities to provide programs and services delivered by a team centered on each family with ready access to a single point of contact for referral. This team also involves families in planning and implementing programs that affect them. Its ultimate aim is for families to develop their own supportive networks.

We need to recognize that parents bear the primary responsibility for raising our society's young. In so doing, they require private and public resources. Our nation and state do recognize this responsibility by providing resources for families: public education; dependent tax deductions and credits; and a variety of services for children, youth, and families. A private/public family resource system complements our private/public educational system to the benefit of families and taxpayers.

Basic Principles for a Family Resource System. *Wisconsin Cares* embraces the following principles for a family resource system that would enhance the comprehensiveness, coherence, and continuity of resources for families and thus improve their effectiveness.

- Childrearing families are the foundation of our society and our economy. A family that raises a child to become a productive citizen contributes over \$1.4 million to our economy. A family that neglects and abuses a child costs over \$2.8 million in lost wealth and in tax outlays for special education, health, mental health, and correction services.
- A primary responsibility of our society is to create, maintain, and enhance infrastructures that fulfill its social contract with childrearing families.
- Community resources for children and youth, such as schools, libraries, recreational facilities, human services, physical and mental health services, courts, and law enforcement are essential infrastructures for childrearing families.
- Federal and state laws and policies should focus less on categories of problems and more on strengthening families.
- Child advocacy and youth advocacy are components of family advocacy.
- Education is a function that families delegate to public or private schools or that they carry out themselves through home schooling.

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- Problems arising from unhealthy interactions in families and communities are better treated by fostering healthy family and community relationships than by “deep-end” services necessitated by those family and community problems.
- State and local family policy making should be made by corresponding management structures located at each of these governmental levels.
- Workforce development resources should be viewed as a strategy for strengthening families by fostering financial self-sufficiency.
- Workplaces should recognize and accommodate the family responsibilities of employees.
- The impact of incarceration of parents on their children and youth should be considered in law enforcement.
- Human services for children and youth should be oriented around their families rather than individual family members.
- Professionals and volunteers serving a family should function in a Wraparound/ Coordinated Services Team to ensure coordination and continuity of resources.
- Parents and youth should participate in decisions about interventions that affect them where practicable.
- All parents should have access to child development resources starting at birth.

National Trends. At the national level, the professional approach to child welfare has shifted from an ineffective child-saver/child-protection model to an effective family strengthening model. In the process, recognition that a thriving family is the most important factor in a child’s life has led to transforming *child welfare* into *family welfare* and to integrating resources for children and families.

Federal legislation over the last 30 years has emphasized family resource integration and the timely termination of parental rights and adoption. The theme *strengthening families* has emerged as the most effective prevention and intervention approach to struggling families.

The *Government Performance and Results Act* of 1993 has moved the nation toward a results-based accountability system. Twenty states have created structures to represent families in state governments, as originally documented in the Family Impact Seminar’s publication *Coming Together for Children and Families* circulated by the National Governor’s Association. The states of Washington, Oregon, Minnesota, Ohio, Michigan, Iowa, Georgia, Alabama, and North Carolina in particular have had considerable

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experience with developing corresponding structures at the state and local levels to coordinate a family resource system. (Appendix 2)

The National Governor's Association funded programs for Building Public and Political Will for Early Childhood Care and Education through State Teams. The focus of the Wisconsin State Core Team was on identifying and addressing state-level barriers to collaboration in order to better serve young children in families where parents are employed. The Core Team operated on the assumption that a comprehensive early childhood care and education system should include childcare, education, health, nutrition, social services, and support for all families.

Prevent Child Abuse America's mission is to affect change at the federal, state, and local levels in systems to support the full range of resources needed to strengthen families and promote child development.

Wisconsin State Trends. The short-term nature of federal and state legislation creates specific initiatives to address social problems based on the availability of limited funds and on accountability requirements. The unintended, though inevitable, result is a succession of statutes and regulations that often create administrative barriers to the coordination and collaboration needed to achieve the original goals of the legislation. For this reason, Wisconsin Statute Chapter 15 mandates that the executive branch should be reorganized on a continuing basis in order to respond to changing public needs. Monitoring and adapting state government agencies to meet the needs of families are particularly important in Wisconsin because the Executive Branch, the Department of Public Instruction, the Attorney General, and the court system under the Supreme Court are separate entities, and their chief executives are elected separately.

In 1985, the Wisconsin Strategic Development Commission recognized the importance of state and local family supportive mechanisms in the economic development of the state. The Governor's Task Force on Children and Families recommended in 1990 that a state Commission on Children and Youth be created to coordinate programs between state departments and model coordination efforts for local governments. In 1995, the Commission for the Study of Administrative Value and Efficiency advocated greater cooperation between state and local governments to reduce "wasteful turf feuds and protectionism." The 1996 Legislative Audit Bureau report on prevention programs for children, youth, and families in state departments found extensive overlap.

In 1997, the Governor's Blue Ribbon Commission on Mental Health advised incorporating prevention and early intervention practices into the public mental health system. In 1999, the Joint Legislative Council introduced a bill to create a Prevention Coordination Council to enhance prevention services for children, youth, and families. In 2000, the Turning Point Initiative under the Wisconsin Division of Public Health found that categorical funding streams often are not linked to local priorities and suggested better coordination of state and local public health system partnerships. As a result of all of these initiatives, state departments are seeking better ways to coordinate their activities at both the state and local levels.

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In 2001, the Governor's Blue-Ribbon Commission on State-Local Partnerships for the 21st Century (the Kettl Commission) concluded that Wisconsin should make government more productive and grow the economy by aggressively strengthening state/local partnerships. The Commission emphasized creating incentives for collaboration for local governments and for state and local programs. The Commission also advised a "top-to-bottom performance scrub" of Wisconsin's government to encourage accountability by managing for results. This performance review, christened *Renew Wisconsin*, aimed to identify opportunities for improving governments' responsiveness and reducing their cost. *Renew Wisconsin* was a citizen-based, bottom-up effort. It combined a team of state and local officials with citizens to devise strategies and tactics for performance improvement. Its mission was to create teams in every jurisdiction to conduct a performance evaluation of every state and local agency. The evaluation included:

- Performance management and electronic data systems for state government.
- "Best practices" that could reduce governments' costs and increase their responsiveness to citizens.
- Launch a "search and destroy" mission to remove regulations that have outlived their usefulness.

The Brighter Futures Initiative was expanded to strengthen families, neighborhoods, and communities. The Brighter Futures, the Milwaukee Family Services Coordination, Community Action Programs, and the Family Care Initiatives are examples of state/local programs to consolidate services and funding streams in order to achieve greater efficiency and effectiveness.

The Safe and Stable Families program allocates fully half of its funding for family strengthening services. Wisconsin's welfare reform legislation requires Children's Service Networks across state departments. Since 1991, Wisconsin Collaborative Systems of Care and Coordinated Services/Wraparound Teams have fostered integrated services.

In 2003, Wisconsin's National Governor's Association Core Team brought state departments, private organizations, and community representatives together to develop local service coordination models around a *Kids-First Initiative* for Wisconsin's children. In 2006, Wisconsin Cares, Inc., proposed a *Families-First Initiative* that would expand the focus of the *Kids-First Initiative* to their families, neighborhoods, and communities. In 2008, the *Children's Trust Fund State Plan* called for integrating programs for families.

Wisconsin Community Trends. At the local level in Wisconsin, there is a strong current flowing toward coordinating diverse programs and resources for children, youth, and their families. It is being led by the Collaborative Systems of Care movement. Most innovations are taking place in the management of programs and resources through strategic alliances and mergers in the public and nonprofit sectors. The trend is toward

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integrating human services from coordinating programs and organizations to the physical co-location of family resources.

Many counties have formed collaborative structures. For example, Marathon County has the Start Right Community Partnership; Dane County has Start Smart and Joining Forces for Families; Sheboygan County has a Prevention Policy Board; La Crosse County has a Family Policy Board; Eau Claire County has the Healthy Families and Communities Board; and Milwaukee County has the Youth and Family Development Alliance as a steering group for the Milwaukee Brighter Futures Initiative whose mission is to strengthen families, neighborhoods, and communities. All of these local collaborative efforts would benefit from a concerted state-level initiative to foster integration as well as incentives aimed at the removal of barriers to local collaboration. They reveal a compelling need for greater communication between state and local coordinating entities.

A Wisconsin State Family Policy Integration Board. Wisconsin lags behind many other states in state/local coordination of programs and services. We could lead the nation as we did in welfare reform by linking local Family Resource Networks to state agencies through expanding the impact of our existing Children's Trust Fund through a Family Policy Integration Board.

We propose that the Collaborative Systems of Care movement be expanded so that each county, tribe, or service area has a collaborative structure with an operational agreement created by an Executive Committee composed of public and private stakeholders as now exist in over 55 counties and tribes. We propose that the Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Board be expanded to become a Family Policy Integration Board to relate to these local collaboratives; to facilitate collaboration and integration between state agencies; to evaluate the impact of legislation on families; and to recommend legislative initiatives. The Children's Trust Fund would become the administrative structure for the Board. Reallocated and realigned state department resources, personnel, private funding, and in-kind services could be used to mitigate any Board expenses. The Family Policy Integration Board would be in an improved position to fulfill the Children's Trust Fund's basic mission of strengthening families.

Family Resource Networks cannot be designed or competently administered absent policy and management coordination at both the state and local levels. The Family Policy Integration Board model originally developed by the *Right From The Start Coalition of Wisconsin* is a paradigm for strengthening families through family resource networks. It discourages viewing children and adults as if they are not parts of families. It accords childrearing families representation in the structure of state government, as the Wisconsin Natural Resources Board does for natural resources and the University of Wisconsin Board of Regents and Wisconsin Technical College System do for advanced education.

The Family Policy Integration Board model aligns state agencies and organizations with localities in state family policymaking. It provides a platform for reinforcing and

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expanding private/public collaboration that now only takes place around specific projects and programs. It utilizes existing personnel and structures and requires no additional state funding.

<p>THE WAY IT IS</p> <p>NOW</p> <p><i>Programs for children and families now...</i></p>	<p>THE WAY IT COULD BE</p> <p><i>By reinforcing state/local communication and collaboration</i></p> <p><i>A Family Policy Integration Board would...</i></p>
<p>Focus on targeted programs and services for categories of identified problems experienced by individuals.</p> <p>Are “top-down” in operation and rely on mandated programs and court-ordered services for particular population categories and individuals.</p> <p>Rely on separate state and county departments, divisions, and bureaus to administer funding for specific mandated health, human, and educational services, each with their own policies, nomenclature, and reporting requirements.</p> <p><u>Serve</u> clients / customers / consumers.</p>	<p>Focus on reducing the need for treatment programs and services for individual children and adults by strengthening families.</p> <p>Foster community ownership of health and human services and provide incentives for thinking and acting “outside the box” to promote accountability by managing for results.</p> <p>Enable communities to pool public/private resources and streamline programs and resources across agencies and jurisdictions to achieve jointly agreed upon performance goals with an emphasis on minimizing duplicative reporting requirements and on removing barriers to collaboration.</p> <p><u>Empower</u> individuals, families, neighborhoods, and communities.</p>

In order to implement this model, a Family Policy Integration Board would be created by statute. The Board would assess the impact of legislation on families and facilitate communication, coordination, and collaboration between state and local programs and services. Each county, tribe, or service region would have a corresponding collaborative structure formed by agreements between local stake-holders. The local and state family entities would directly communicate with each other in order to bring local concerns to the attention of state officials to enhance their ability to meet the needs of families.

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Ideally, a Family Policy Integration Board would consist of the Governor, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Attorney General, selected legislators, relevant state department heads, pertinent state organizations, appointed citizens and local officials. (Appendices 4 and 5) The Board would stimulate and enhance ongoing collaboration between state agencies. Members of the Board from the Departments of Health, Children and Families, Public Instruction, Corrections, Workforce Development, Justice, Administration, and other related state agencies would be able to link related components of state agencies and programs.

A Family Policy Integration Board would, among other things, implement the work of the Governor's Blue-Ribbon Commission on State/Local Partnerships for the 21st Century (the Kettl Commission). It would carry out the visions of the Brighter Futures Initiative and the Call to Action of the 2004 Governor's Summit on the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect to ensure that every child has the opportunity to become a responsible and productive citizen. It would be a platform for facilitating collaboration between state agencies and between the state and localities.

The powers and duties of a Family Policy Integration Board would be to formulate and recommend policies, to advise the Governor and state agency heads on rule making, and to initiate legislation. The Board would have the authority to recommend interdepartmental agreements for waiving state rules and regulations that impede coordinated service delivery and for linking funding within and between state agency budgets. It would:

- Promote a climate in the state that recognizes the importance of the well-being of childrearing families to all citizens.
- Assess the impact of policies and legislation on families.
- Act upon recommendations from local Family Resource Network Collaboratives.
- Collate and promulgate information about state and local programs for children, youth, and families.
- Formulate policies for an expanded, holistic Brighter Futures Initiative that consolidates funding streams for related state programs for children, youth, and families.
- Recommend incentives that reinforce collaboration at the state and local levels by configuring revenue streams and removing barriers to pooling money.
- Introduce legislation.
- Establish guidelines for block grant funding for children, youth, and families that implement the policies of the Brighter Futures Initiative to counties and local districts.

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- Encourage “managing by results” by establishing outcome benchmarks so that evaluation information is collected from the outset of programs.
- Encourage the formation of local family collaboratives.
- Report achievements of the Board to the governor and the legislature.

Local Family Resource Network Collaboratives. The present intervention paradigm of waiting to support families until child neglect and abuse are investigated by professionals from public agencies should give way to a prevention and intervention paradigm implemented by a Family Resource Network Collaborative that functions as a local board or standing committee in coordinating the components of a Family Resource Network.

FAMILY RESOURCE NETWORK

Faith communities; businesses; public health nursing; teen pregnancy prevention; home newborn support; early child care & education; family resource centers; schools; health, mental health & dental care; learning centers; human services; respite services; workforce development services; smoking, alcohol, & drug abuse prevention and treatment; domestic abuse services; housing services; recreation sites; intergenerational programs; environmental health; juvenile & family courts; child protection services; law enforcement.

A family resource system is implemented by a local Family Resource Network Collaborative that is a venue for communication and collaboration between unconnected and discontinuous programs and services. It maintains a process for organizing Wrap-around/Coordinated Services Teams according to the needs of each family in order to enable “front line” workers to better serve families. (Appendix 6)

Each local service area would have a Family Resource Network Collaborative with an operational agreement formed by county, regional, or tribal council stakeholders. The actual name of the entities would vary depending upon local circumstances. These local collaboratives would be charged with developing agreements to coordinate strategies for systemic improvements and methods for evaluating the results of local public and privately contracted resources. The collaboratives would make recommendations to a state Family Policy Integration Board. Private funding and in-kind resources would support administrative assistance and collaborative expenses.

The membership of a Family Resource Collaborative would represent the diverse spectrum of the target population and would be generally be responsible for the following:

- Educating the public about the resources families need.

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- Promoting intergenerational education devoted to the health and well-being of childrearing families.
- Assessing local programs and services to identify gaps and barriers through open meetings, focus groups, and sub-committees.
- Creating incentives that eliminate duplication and promote collaboration between local programs and resources.
- Promoting preparation for parenthood and support for the parents of newborns.
- Soliciting information about state and community regulations and policies that pose barriers to collaboration and providing needed resources for families.
- Making recommendations to the state Family Policy Integration Board for changes in state regulations, policies, and legislation that affect families.
- Leveraging resources, identifying new funding sources, and guiding the flow of federal, state, and local funds designated for families, children, and youth.
- Promulgating best practice standards for family support programs and services to ensure that direct communication takes place between representatives of agencies serving a particular family so that professionals function as a team.
- Promoting the development of uniform local and state data collection systems.
- Reviewing demographic and outcome reports from community programs.

The Family Living Division of the University of Wisconsin Extension can provide technical assistance in forming and expanding local collaboratives through its strategic planning function.

Establishing a process for organizing Wraparound/Coordinated Services Teams around specific families is a primary responsibility of Family Resource Network Collaboratives. (Appendix 7)

Wraparound/Coordinated Services Teams. The aim of the Family Policy Integration Board is the integration of resources at the prevention and intervention levels. Patricia Miles and John Franz of the consulting firm *Paper Boat* describe three models for service integration: the alliance, agency, and network models.²⁷ The common theme found across these models is making more efficient and effective usage of resources for children, youth, and families through collaboration at the local level. Corbett and Noyes have expanded on this work in their own research to articulate six of what they term generic integration prototypes: (1) Communication-Based models; (2) Proximity-Based models; (3) Alliance-Based models; (4) Dedicated Unit-Based models; (5) Network-Based models; and (6) Fully-Integrated Cross-Systems models²⁸ The

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common theme found across these models is making more efficient and effective usage of resources for children, youth, and families through collaboration at the local level.

The common denominator of these models is the Wraparound/Coordinated Services Team. The Wraparound process initially was designed to be applied at the intervention level for children with serious mental illnesses, as illustrated by the Wisconsin Children Come First Coordinated Services Teams. This wraparound process entails utilizing resources in a family's community generated from an interagency meeting that considers the strengths and needs of family members in planning a treatment approach that is implemented by an interdisciplinary team that includes parents and draws upon relevant resources. The focus of the wraparound process is on a family rather than on individual family members. Wraparound Milwaukee has been accorded national recognition.

Community Action Programs also operate collaboratively at the prevention level by helping communities grow and nurture their economic health.

Sustainability. Establishing these systems is one challenge. Sustaining them, and particularly maintaining their relevance and visibility is quite another. At least four factors have been found by other states to be vital in establishing and, in particular, sustaining a state family resource system over time:

- 1) endorsement of the concept by state and local stakeholders in the public and private sectors;
- 2) developing a sound resource-base;
- 3) ongoing communication between levels of the system; and
- 4) realistic short-term and long-term out-come measures that take political cycles into account.

The first factor of endorsement is drawing upon the knowledge and skill of existing personnel. State and county workers have first-hand experience with statutes, departmental resources, and administrative issues. Local governments and power brokers know the needs and resources of their communities. Ideally, there should be little difficulty in obtaining support for the concept of a family resource system. Everyone in the field is aware of the problems, and creative minds are working on solutions, but the devil lies in the details where turf and personnel issues abound.

This proposal does not call for eliminating positions or reducing funding for family resources. Titles, salaries, contracts, duties, and authority issues would be negotiated within existing personnel policies and practices. (Appendix 8) Programs and services would be expanded through more efficient use of funds and personnel. The key to success is drawing upon the expertise and unleashing the creativity of workers in state and county departments, the University of Wisconsin Extension, and community programs and services.

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The second factor of funding influence is essential to provide the incentives needed to establish a family resource system and to encourage program and service partnerships, collaboration, and integration. Many years of experience with coordinating efforts have demonstrated that the best way for state and community collaboratives to increase the efficient and cost-effective use of federal, state, and local funds is to create the ability of the system to exercise some 'influence' over their resource-base. For this reason, state and local collaboratives should include elected officials or their designees.

The third factor of intrasystem communication is vital for exchanging information and formulating, interpreting, and implementing policies. Regular ongoing interactive channels for communication are necessary. A key purpose of state and community collaboratives is to provide an open channel for communication between users of resources and state units. Newsletters and an annual conference for the members of state and local collaboratives help to spark and disseminate innovative ideas and practices. Conferences can be connected to annual meetings of organizations, such as the Wisconsin Counties Association. Education and training opportunities for the members of local and state collaboratives and stake-holders are be important as well.

The fourth factor is developing realistic outcome criteria with appropriate timelines. Short-term outcomes could relate to: 1) establishing the viability and utility of the family resource system with appropriate stakeholders; 2) bringing in and involving new stakeholders; 3) expanding the number of success in establishing local collaboratives; and 4) heightening public awareness of family needs. Long-term outcomes could be reductions in rates of child, youth, and family problems and improvements in benchmarks of child and family well-being. The key is judging the success of the initiative by realistic rather than overly ambitious goals.

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PART VI

A Call to Action

The fundamental values of any culture are encoded in a nation's laws. Value-based legislation is necessitated by the fact that good intentions, persuasion, and education are insufficient to ensure that basic human rights are respected and that personal competence is the foundation of social order and productivity.

One-hundred-and-thirty-five years of the "child saver" movement that began with the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children have been productive only when the movement has resulted in the passage of laws. Examples are treating children as juveniles in courts; mandatory education; child abuse and neglect statutes; the "best interests" standard for minors; family support policies; adoption facilitation; and, most recently, establishing different outcomes for minors convicted in adult courts. Still, even some of these actions presumably on their behalf have had adverse effects on children.²⁹

Absent a fundamental commitment to the rights of newborn babies, efforts to protect children have not prevented the current unconscionable plight of our children. If we do not set a basic standard for genetic parenthood—the capacity to be a legal and physical custodian of another person—we will continue to neglect and fail our most vulnerable citizens: newborn babies. The short- and long-term devastating consequences of this failure are evident in the current state of our nation and our concerns about how well our next generation of adults will compete in an increasingly competitive and demanding world.

Child advocacy organizations and state child welfare agencies have an obligation to call public attention to the connection between newborns without competent parents and our social problems and to potential solutions for this situation. The Children's Defense Fund is doing this through its *Cradle to Prison Pipeline Report*.³⁰ We certainly need to improve our schools, but the more important need is to strengthen our nation's families so that children are prepared to learn in school and are supported in doing so. Everything starts with strong and competent families, public institutions play a critical but supportive role.

Whereas the traditional prevention response to child maltreatment aims to prevent a recurrence once it already has occurred, the child welfare system must focus on preventing maltreatment before it takes place.³¹ The urgency to act preventively before birth stems from the extreme vulnerability of newborns and from the crucial importance during the first months of life for babies to form secure attachment bonds to permanent, competent parents. Adoption immediately after birth does not disrupt a family relationship. Newborns have not yet established a relationship with their genetic mothers and fathers that needs to be maintained. It is a misnomer to characterize efforts to rehabilitate unfit genetic mothers of newborns in foster care as "reunification."

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If we would honor the right of all of our newborn citizens to have competent parents, we would take a giant step toward fulfilling the basic civil rights of all children in the United States to be free of neglect or abuse and to have a legitimate opportunity to succeed in life. In the process, we would take a giant step toward improving the productivity of our nation.

Our failure to set standards for parenthood makes it seem like Americans do not care about other peoples' children. It seems like the only children who matter to us are our own. *Wisconsin Cares* believes that most Americans do have compassion for children in general and are willing to help them. Simply look at how communities are galvanized into action when a child goes missing. We doubt that anyone would rationally oppose anything that would prevent school failures and subsequent crime and welfare dependency. If fully aware of the facts, we believe most Americans would favor preventive action to correct the present situation.

We especially need to reduce costly government involvement in family life and to make our investments much more productive and effective. We can do this by setting a simple and straightforward standard for parenthood. Since parenthood and parental rights are based on the legal and physical custody of a child, a person who requires a custodian or a guardian cannot be the custodian of another person. Applying this standard would mean that at birth every baby would have a legal and physical custodian—usually the genetic or adoptive adult parent. If a mother or father has a custodian or guardian oneself, a temporary (usually a relative) or permanent (adoptive) legal and physical custodian would be arranged by a parenthood planning counseling team.

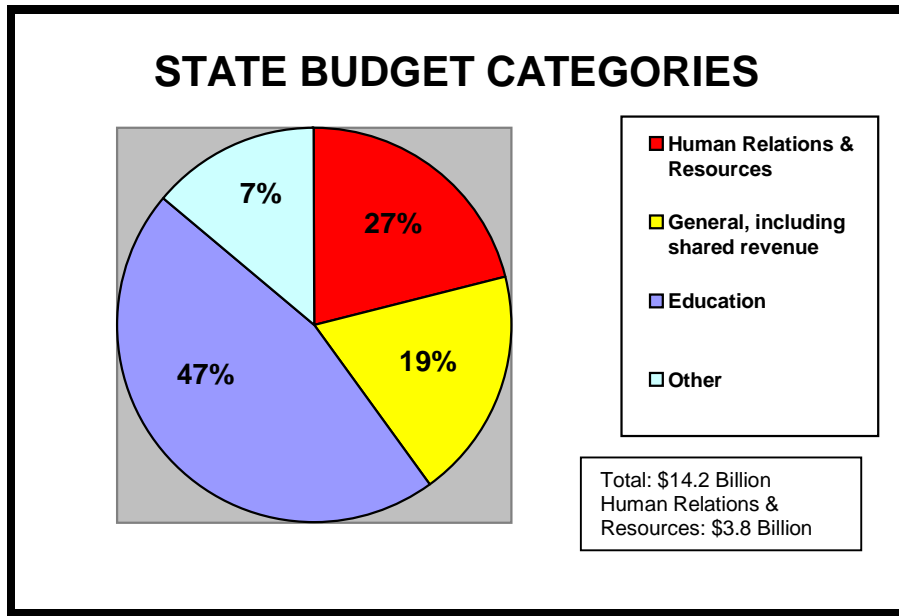
The Humane Society only awards the custody of animals to adults who are able to care for them. We should at the very least apply the same criterion to newborn babies. Yet, we appreciate that even competent parents, in themselves, will not ensure that newborns will evolve into productive adults. Our public resources for families must be improved and enhanced in several fundamental ways. The focus of social assistance to families should shift from remediation to prevention. The target population should shift from the individual to the family unit. The design and delivery of services and resources should be organized around a family and not the administrative considerations of a bureaucracy. Of utmost importance, the management of public assistance must be coherent and collaborative. Doing all of this would create an integrated family resource system.

In the aftermath of World War II, it was recognized that our efforts in that conflict were inhibited by the lack of coordination across the various military services. In response, the notion of a Joint Chiefs of Staff emerged. Our contemporary effort to raise the next generation of Americans is just as vital to the future of this country as was that military conflict. Surely, it deserves the same, thoughtful coordination.

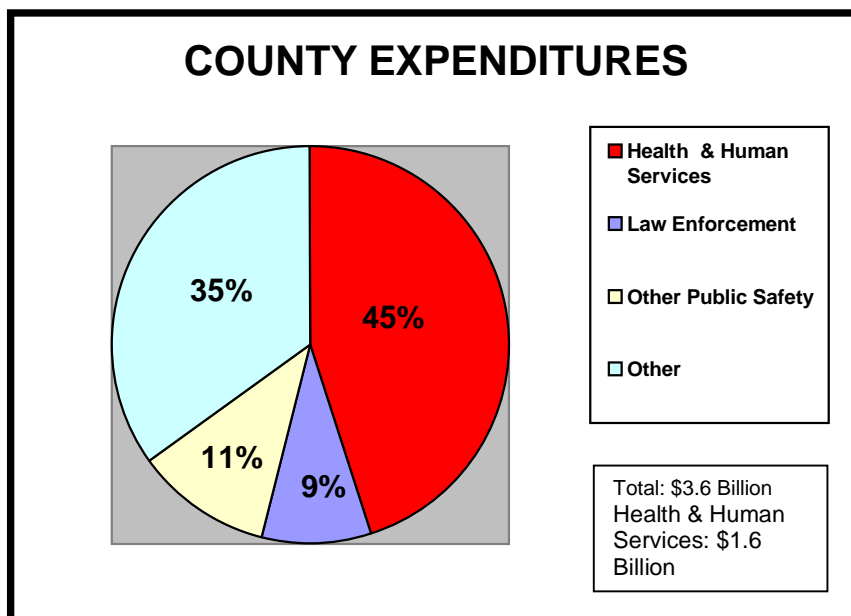
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APPENDIX 1

WISCONSIN STATE AND COUNTY EXPENDITURES RELATED TO STRUGGLING FAMILIES 2011 Budget \$3.8 Billion



Human Relations & Resources = Corrections, Workforce Development, Health & Family Services, etc.



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APPENDIX 2

Examples of State/Local Collaborative Systems in Other States

In 1991, the Governor of Georgia created Family Connection codified by statute in 1996 as the Policy Council for Children and Families to improve the results of services for children and families. These structures evolved into the Family Connection Partnership, Inc., a non-profit corporation with some 41 board members from the public and private sectors. There now are Family Connection Collaboratives in 156 counties divided into 12 regions. Extensive outcome data on uniform benchmarks is available.

In 1992, the Washington State Legislature enacted the Family Policy Initiative, which created the Family Policy Council to design and carry out principle-centered, systemic reforms to improve outcomes for children, youth, and families. There now are 53 Community Public Health and Safety Networks with documented improvements in the effectiveness of resources for children, youth, and family court cases and in community collaboration.

In 1992, the Minnesota legislature established a Children's Cabinet consisting of state department heads housed in the Department of Human Services in order to promote collaboration between state departments and local service delivery systems. There are now 95 local and regional collaborative boards. Demographic, and case outcome data are available.

In 1992, the Governor of Ohio created a Family and Children First Cabinet Council composed of department heads in the Governor's office and codified by statute in 1995. There now are 88 local Family and Children First Councils. Data is available documenting system improvements.

In 1993, the Oregon legislature created the public/private Oregon Commission on Children and Families. In 1999, the legislature empowered state and local Commissions on Children and Families to facilitate comprehensive community planning. The state Commission's role is to provide a framework for comprehensive community planning; statewide policy development; systems consultation and technical assistance; and outcome evaluation.

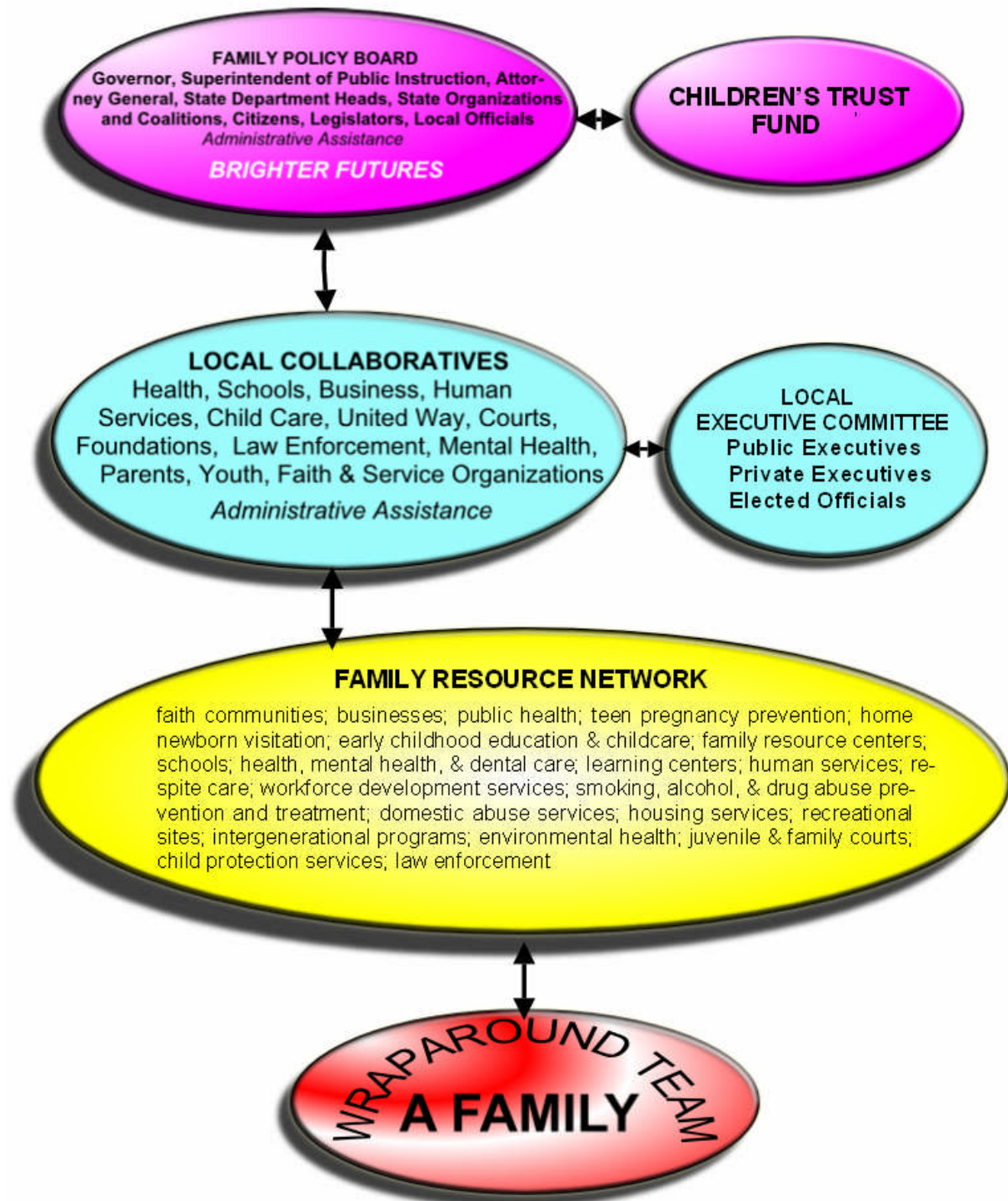
In 1993, North Carolina was the first state to fund a statewide early childhood system (Smart Start) that offers a wide range of health, education, parent-support, and childcare services to promote school and life success for all children. Smart Start is administered by the public/private North Carolina Partnership for Children and Families that serves as an umbrella for 81 local Smart Start Partnerships and includes a National Technical Assistance Center.

In 1995, Putting It Together with Michigan Families was formed to promote family-centered human service, mental health, and education practices with leadership rotating between state departments in response to local organizing efforts. There now are 76 local Multipurpose Collaborative Bodies that have the power to initiate and approve state requests for proposals.

In 1998, the Iowa Empowerment Board was established in the Department of Management by statute to create state and local partnerships to improve the well-being of families with young children. There now are 58 Community Empowerment Boards related to fiscal agents with disbursement control over family-related funds.

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APPENDIX 3 A STRUCTURAL MODEL TO STRENGTHEN WISCONSIN FAMILIES



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APPENDIX 4

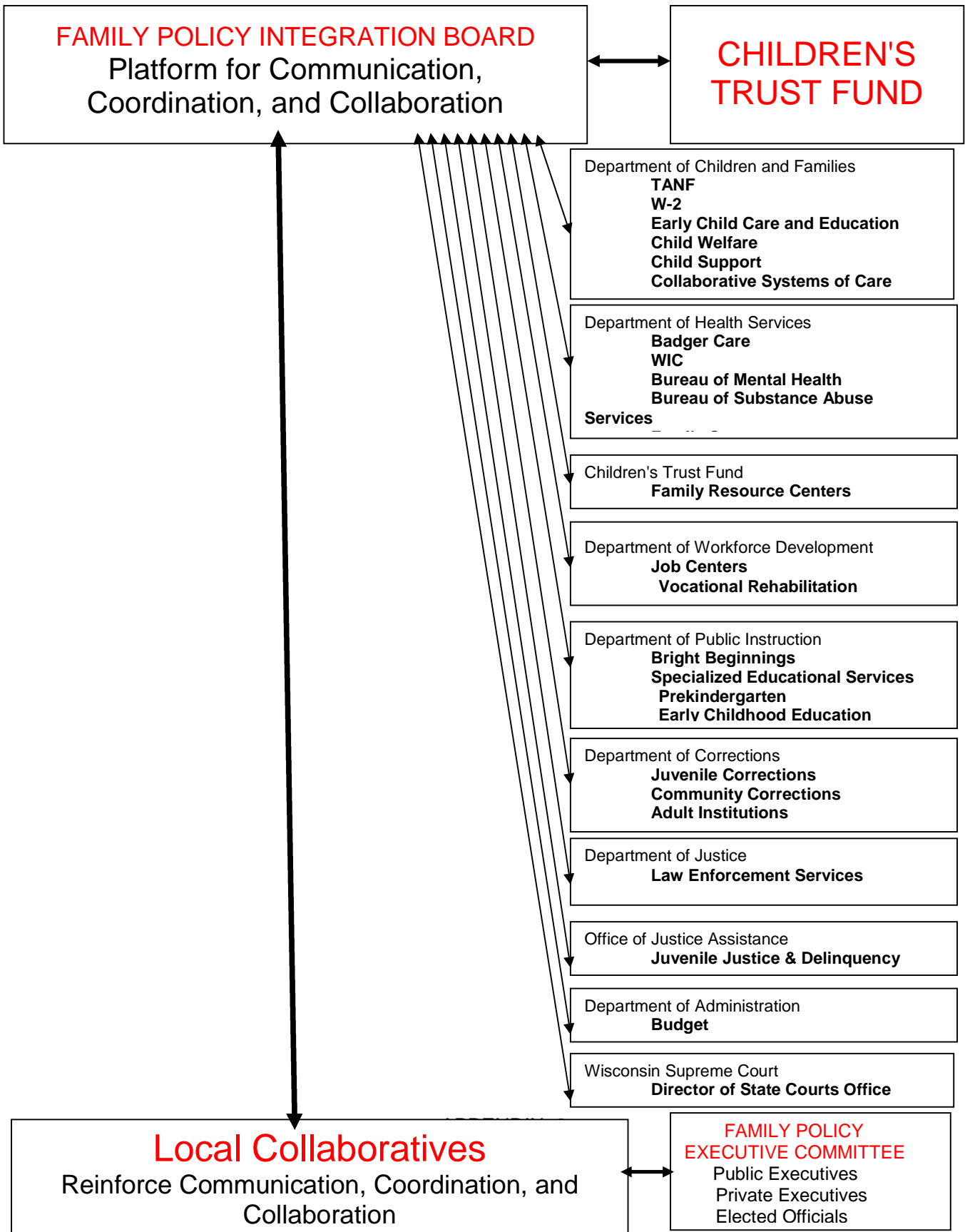
Possible Composition of a State Family Policy Integration Board

A state Family Policy Board whose chair is the Governor or Lieutenant Governor might consist of the following members:

- 1) The State Superintendent of Public Instruction or designee.
- 2) The Attorney General or designee.
- 3) The Secretary of Children and Families or designee.
- 4) The Secretary of Administration or designee
- 5) The Secretary of Workforce Development or designee.
- 6) The Secretary of Corrections or designee.
- 7) The Executive Director of the Office of Justice Assistance.
- 8) The Dean of University of Wisconsin Cooperative Extension or designee.
- 9) One majority party representative of the assembly appointed as are the members of assembly standing committees.
- 10) One minority party representative appointed as are the members of assembly standing committees.
- 11) One majority party senator appointed as are the members of senate standing committees.
- 11) One minority party senator appointed as are the members of senate standing committees.
- 13) Thirteen public members appointed by the governor for staggered three-year terms:
 - a. One member representing county government
 - b. One member representing private business.
 - c. One member representing organized labor
 - d. One member representing intergenerational aging groups
 - e. One member representing youth.
 - f. One member representing nonprofit service organizations.
 - g. One member with experience and expertise in public health.
 - h. One member with experience and expertise in child and family mental health.
 - i. One member with experience and expertise in human services.
 - j. One member with experience with special education.
 - k. One member with experience with child day care.
 - l. One member who represents users of family resources.
 - m. One member who represents judges in juvenile and family matters.

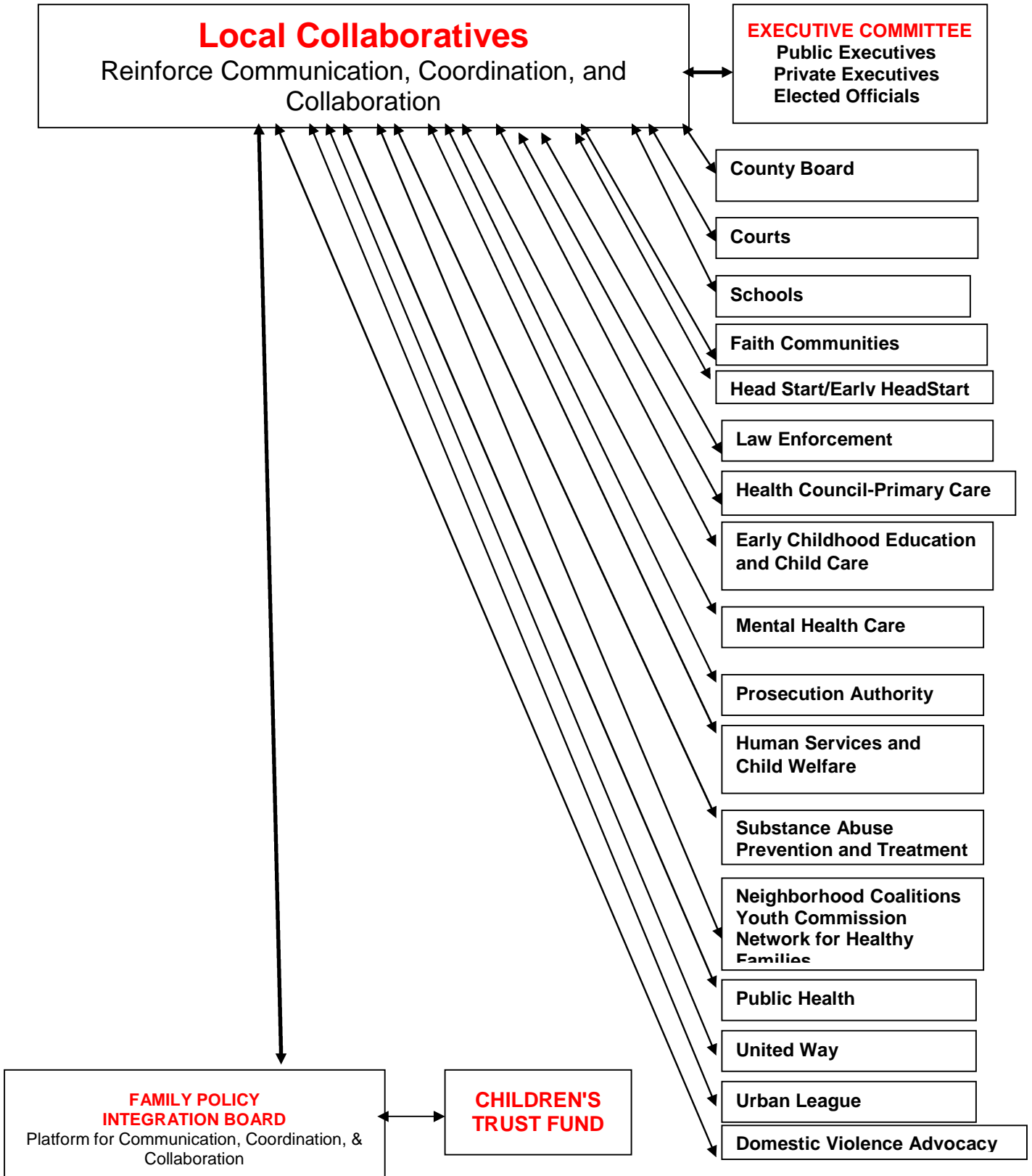
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APPENDIX 5



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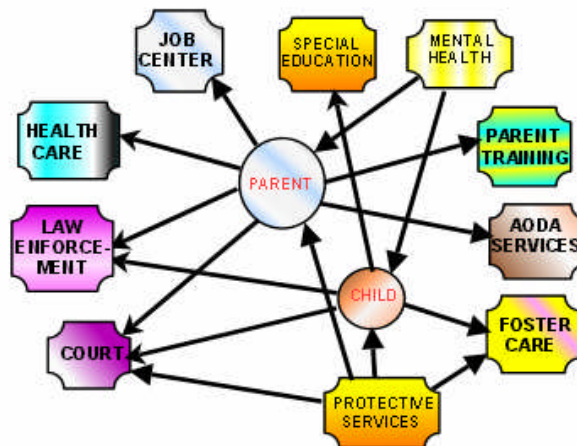
APPENDIX 6



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APPENDIX 7

INDIVIDUALLY vs. FAMILY ORIENTED SERVICES INDIVIDUALLY ORIENTED SERVICES



FAMILY ORIENTED SERVICES

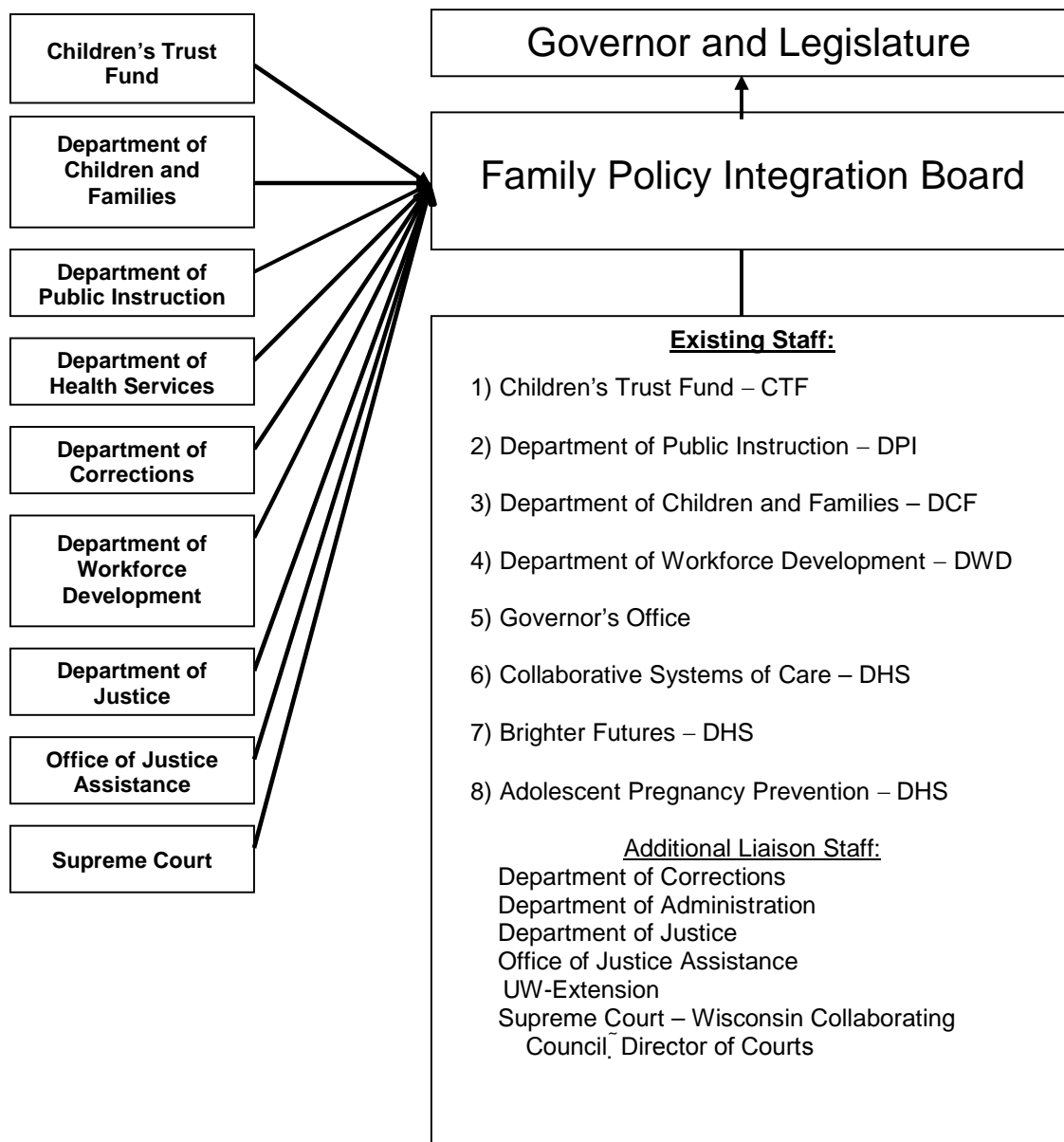
More and better communication, coordination, and collaboration



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APPENDIX 8

Staffing Considerations for a Family Policy Integration Board



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