
Snapshots of Wisconsin Family Support and Parent Education Programs

The Children's Trust Fund

The Children's Trust Fund is a public-private partnership created by the Wisconsin State Legislature in 1983. The Children's Trust Fund is administered by a 16-member Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Board, which includes eight governmental members and eight public members chosen by the Governor for their interest and expertise in child abuse and neglect issues.

Goals

The goal of the Children's Trust Fund is to reduce child abuse and neglect in Wisconsin and protect our state's greatest resource—its children.

In attempting to achieve that goal, the Children's Trust Fund supports a strong and balanced prevention agenda by

- ❖ Developing public information campaigns and educational materials that promote awareness and understanding of child abuse and neglect prevention;
- ❖ Advising national, state and local policy makers on child abuse and neglect prevention statutes and policies.

Services for Parents

The Children's Trust Fund currently funds 17 Family Resource Centers throughout the state that provide a combination of these core services:

- ❖ Group services include parent-education courses, workshops, support groups, drop-in programs, child care while parents use the Center, and play groups;
- ❖ Individual center-based services provide parents with personal consultations and support at the Family Resource Center;
- ❖ Outreach and family visiting services reach out to parents with new children at their home and at other locations convenient for families;
- ❖ Community resource referral and follow-up services offer a reliable link to public and private agencies and provide strong family advocacy within local communities. Families can receive referrals to other community programs and assistance with transportation to attend programs.

In addition, the Children's Trust Fund provides funding to 21 community-based family resource and support programs. These programs develop diverse approaches to meet local needs for parent education and support. Community-based child abuse and neglect prevention programs use a variety of prevention strategies including

- ❖ Comprehensive educational programs for both parents and children
- ❖ Child sexual abuse prevention programs
- ❖ Respite care or crisis care nurseries
- ❖ Programs for homeless families
- ❖ Programs for families with children who have disabilities

Funding

Nearly \$1.9 million is distributed annually to 35 different agencies throughout Wisconsin, focusing on prevention of child abuse and neglect. The majority of the Children’s Trust Fund annual budget comes from a charge on duplicate birth certificates. It also receives federal matching funds and gifts from private individuals, corporations and foundations.

Evidence of Effectiveness

The Children’s Trust Fund sponsors programs that provide effective services and support systems to emphasize and build on family strengths. The philosophy is one of universal access, encouraging all families to use any programs and support services provided. Nearly 6,000 adults and their children will participate in Family Resource Center programs this fiscal year. This does not include the thousands of others reached with public information materials, newsletters, and conference sponsorships.

Participant feedback demonstrates that parents appreciate the support they receive from staff and from the other families. They enjoy coming to the center and learning new ideas and techniques to be the best parents they can be. Comments include “...the Center is a peaceful, fun-filled home away from home,” “...the Center has become a place to go to keep my spirits up and surround myself with positive people,” and “...a place that offers good help, good advice, and a shoulder to lean on.”

For More Information

For more information about the Children’s Trust Fund or about family support programs and services, contact:

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University of Wisconsin-Extension Family Living Programs

Goals

University of Wisconsin-Extension, Family Living Programs provide education promoting family strengths and help communities become positive environments for family life. Programs respond to community needs with research-based education and partnerships that support Wisconsin families and communities.

Services for Parents

Family Living programs teach family members to:

- ❖ Become more effective parents or caregivers;
- ❖ Make healthy choices about diet, exercise and food safety;
- ❖ Assess local child care needs;
- ❖ Manage family finances;
- ❖ Maintain independence and economic security for older adults; and
- ❖ Evaluate access to and quality of health care in their own communities.

Family Living Programs offer a variety of educational opportunities that strengthen both families and communities. Faculty and staff build community partnerships and provide family policy education.

Evidence of Effectiveness

UW-Extension Family Living Programs employ research to create educational programs that teach family members to become more effective parents and caregivers, make more healthy choices, and create supportive communities. A sample of program highlights include:

- ❖ UW-Extension county offices in 70 counties coordinate distribution of “Parenting the First Year” newsletter in partnership with Kiwanis Clubs, maternity hospitals, city or county health departments and others partners. Parents receiving “Parenting the First Year” rated the series “very useful as a source of childrearing advice.” Parents said reading the newsletter caused them to give their babies more stimulation, to hug and talk to them more, and to be less angry when the baby was difficult. They report spanking or slapping their babies significantly less often than comparable parents who do not receive the newsletters.
- ❖ Local collaborations including the UW-Extension School Readiness Project have led to more available and better integrated services for children in 10 communities. Community projects have greatly increased the participation of parents of infants, Spanish-speaking parents, fathers, teen parents, and low-income parents. The number of parent education options available also has increased.

Parents who read the “Parenting the First Year” newsletters reported spanking or slapping their babies less often.

- ❖ UW-Extension, working in partnership with the Wisconsin Association for Home and Community Education, brought the First Book Project to 25 counties where 130 volunteer mentors read to 1,374 children and provided more than 16,000 books.
- ❖ Through home visiting programs such as Healthy Families Walworth County, parents and their babies participate in programs that teach child development. Participating mothers breast fed longer, interacted with infants in stimulating ways, made better use of preventative health care, and reported greater formal social support from community resources.
- ❖ More than 6,000 Wisconsin parents of 5th to 12th graders in 17 communities have completed the Tapping into Parenting (TIP) survey assessing parents' perceptions of their children, families, schools and communities. Results from the project include individual reports to participating communities, parent education newsletters, and a statewide report of the views of 4,435 Wisconsin parents. Compared to a control group, parents who read TIP newsletters monitored their teens more closely, were more responsive and available to their adolescents, and engaged in more discussions of risky behaviors.
- ❖ Teenage Assessment Project (TAP) surveys have been conducted in more than 280 Wisconsin communities since 1989. These projects have resulted in new programs for teens and their families, and communities have formed coalitions to address youth issues. The surveys help communities understand how they can support positive youth development and discourage problem behaviors.

Funding

University of Wisconsin-Extension is funded by county, state and federal government, by participant fees, and by gifts, grants and contracts from public and private sectors.

For More Information

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Wisconsin Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Program

1997 Wisconsin Act 293

Goals

This program is intended to decrease the incidence of child abuse and neglect, improve family functioning and parenting skills, increase the effectiveness of systems in responding to families in crisis, and make families more self-sufficient and less reliant on programs and services.

Services of the Program

The Wisconsin Child Abuse and Neglect prevention program provides support for a program of child abuse and neglect prevention services which includes home visiting to first time parents eligible for Medicaid and a flexible fund for those receiving home visitation program services. The program also includes a flexible fund for individuals or families who have either been the subject of a child abuse or neglect report or who have asked for assistance to prevent abuse, who are willing to cooperate with an informal plan of services, and for whom there will be no court involvement.

This program is intended to decrease the incidence of child abuse and neglect.

Number of sites

Ten awards to the following sites were made effective January 1, 1999:

- Brown County Human Services
- Door County Department of Social Services
- Fond du Lac County Department of Social Services
- Lac Courte Oreilles Tribal Government
- Manitowoc County Health Department
- Marathon County Health Department
- Portage County Health and Human Services
- Vernon County Health Department
- Waukesha County Department of Health and Human Services
- Waupaca County Department of Health and Human Services –
Health Division

Evidence of Effectiveness

The legislation requires an evaluation of the home visitation program, which is under the direction of the Department of Health and Family Services, Office of Strategic Finance. The criteria that must be evaluated include the number and the result of substantiated reports of child abuse and neglect; the number of emergency room visits for injuries to children, the nature of the injury, and frequency of visits; the number of out-of-home placements of children, the type of

placements, and length of placements; the up-to-date immunization rates of children; the number of comprehensive HealthCheck services received according to the recommended guidelines; the number of families who remain in the program for the time recommended in their case plan; criteria determined by DHFS that evaluate strengthening family functioning; criteria determined by DHFS that evaluate enhanced family development; and criteria determined by DHFS that evaluate positive parenting practices. A report of the findings is expected in spring, 2001.

Funding Sources

Legislated in May 1998 by 1997 Wisconsin Act 293 in the amount of \$995,700 of state general purpose revenue for each year of the biennium.

For More Information

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