



FUTURE OF THE FAMILY COMMISSION

Notes from Meeting #6 – November 2, 2016

The sixth and the final meeting of the Commission was held on November 2, 2016, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and was attended by the following members of the Commission:

1. Secretary Eloise Anderson, Chair
2. Dr. Sarah Campbell
3. Ms. Rachel Campos-Duffy (via phone)
4. Mr. Delvyn Crawford
5. Mr. Mikel Holt
6. Archbishop Jerome ListECKI
7. Ms. Alicia Manning
8. Ms. Greta Munns
9. Mr. Jeff Pralle
10. Mr. Jim Kacmarcik (via phone)

The meeting was conducted by staff from Credens LLC, and supported by staff from Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF).

Meeting agenda and other presentation slides and material handed out separately are incorporated here as reference, but have not been appended to these notes, which are organized as:

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Opening Remarks

DCF Secretary Eloise Anderson officially opened the 5th meeting with the following remarks:

1. This meeting is subject to Wisconsin's open records law.
2. The Secretary is thankful to the Commissioners, and her expectations have been exceeded; she has been impressed and excited by the experience of chairing this Commission. She hopes that the time spent on this Commission has been valuable and educational for all.
3. Today, the Commission will prioritize and finalize its recommendations to the Governor through a facilitated process to condense the currently identified 40 recommendations to about 12 final recommendations. The Commissioners will prioritize three recommendations for each of the four Focus Areas through a series of votes.
4. The final report to the Governor's Office will include all the proposed recommendations generated by the Commissioners, including those not in the top 12 (i.e., assigned a lower priority by the Commissioners).
5. Today's plan is build consensus among the Commissioners. Secretary Anderson reminded everyone about the statement of consensus that the Commissioners finalized in the first meeting.

Process

The facilitator reviewed the day's agenda and the upcoming steps leading to issuance of the final report; recommendations are due to the Governor's Office by December 1st.

The facilitator reminded the Commissioners that the focus of discussion should be on the "What" of specific recommendations, and not on "How" those recommendations would be implemented. The Commissioners were also reminded that identifying "Who" would implement their recommendations was outside the scope of the Commission.

- At the August meeting, the Commissioners had finalized the content for Focus Areas #1 and #2 included in the draft Recommendations Blueprint.
- Between the August and the November meetings, Commissioners were asked to provide their feedback on the updated Blueprint draft and on the Key Themes and Challenges document from notes of meetings #1 through 5, via email. The document also included summaries of expert presentations, and organized the Reflections, Barriers/Challenges, Potential Solutions from the first five meetings into Key Themes.
- Today, the Commissioners will finalize the content for Focus Areas #3 and #4 in the Recommendations Blueprint document.

Discussion

One Commissioner expressed a desire to include specific recommendations in Focus Area #1 re: LARCs (Long-Acting Reversible Contraceptives). The response of others was that the Recommendations Blueprint offers summarized recommendations, and not specific ways of implementing the recommendations (see Process above). LARCs are one of multiple ways to get to the "Success Sequence" and to address Focus Area #1, and would be captured in the detailed notes included in the final report.

The Commissioners then reviewed the content for Focus Areas #3 and #4 in the draft Recommendations Blueprint, and modified the language for some recommendations. The final version of the Blueprint will reflect those modifications. The discussion covered topics such as:

1. Balancing solutions that address the needs of both employers and the workforce in both urban and rural areas.
2. The need to assist offenders to re-enter society in a meaningful way after incarceration, and balancing this with the desire of the employers to be able to know about any past incarceration of prospective employees as it relates to the job they would be doing.
3. Encouraging men to be positive roles models in areas with high rates of absent fathers.
4. Encouraging community-based social support networks for families as defined by the Commissioners in the first meeting, for the purpose of this Commission.
5. State-wide vs. local availability of school choice.

Voting

There were two rounds of voting. In the first round, the Commissioners were each given colored dots to vote for their top three recommendations in each of the four Focus Areas as defined up to that point. In total, each Commissioner was able to vote for 12 recommendations, 3 in each Focus Area.

Following the first round, each Commissioner had an opportunity to make oral arguments to convince other Commissioners to change their votes; Commissioners were not obligated to try to convince other Commissioners if they were satisfied with the results of the first round of voting. The second round of voting took place following these arguments. As part of this discussion, some of the recommendations were consolidated, some removed, and some moved from one Focus Area to another. For example, in Focus Area #3, the Commissioners agreed to replace the initial recommendation regarding childcare subsidies with a recommendation regarding childcare that appeared in Focus Area #1 but did not make the top three in that voting process. This resorting changed the reference numbers assigned to each recommendation. For the second round of voting, each Commissioner received 12 additional dots, 3 for each Focus Area, and voted again. Where the second round of voting resulted in a tie for third place, all Commissioners had to agree on a tie-breaker solution. For example, Focus Area #2 had a tie for the 3rd place after two rounds of voting; following further discussion, the Commissioners voted by acclamation to prioritize the eventual #3 over #4.

The table below provides the updated content for each Focus Area and voting results; the recommended strategies in each Focus Area have been sorted by Round 2 votes.

Theoretically, each Focus Area would have 30 votes (3 votes each for 10 Commissioners); however, Focus Area #1 has 25 votes because one recommendation was moved from Focus Area #1 to Focus Area #3 (which now has 35 votes). The total number of votes across all 4 Focus Areas is correct. The final top 3 recommendations in each Focus Area are reflected by placement and shading.

Focus Area	Recommended Strategies	Round 1	Round 2
1. Parenting Stability	1. Increase the “demand” for marriage: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove government barriers such as marriage penalty (e.g., marriage license fees, tax law related to low income / dual income households) • Redirect resources from policies designed to cope with declining state of marriage and toward policies focused on developing, strengthening and building families. Consider marriage and child tax credits • Develop healthy marriage formation/ readiness programs, since marriage is a learned behavior • Reframe marriage for teens and young adults • Provide divorce intervention services with opportunities to repair damaged/at-risk marriages (enforce divorce attorney code of ethics) 	8	8
	2. Inform youths, young adults and married couples, focusing on highest-risk youth, e.g. those in or aging out of foster care, about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevention of unplanned pregnancy through support/encouragement of family planning, awareness among providers, and opportunities available by delaying sexual activity, and • Consequences of sexual activity disconnected to a committed / monogamous relationship, e.g., financial and other consequences 	5	7
	3. Provide in-home education programs for new fathers similar to the home visiting program for new moms; include relationship formation	2	6
	4. Mitigate negative impacts of family complexity by supporting parents and children in complex families to build positive childhood experiences and views on marriage and work	2	2
	5. Increase availability and retention of qualified foster homes	3	2
	6. Mitigate impacts of mental and physical health issues by offering mental, medical and other wraparound services in schools and helping families to build social capital	2	0
	7. Assist both mothers and fathers to become strong role models for their children	2	0
	8. De-stigmatize adoption as an alternative for unplanned pregnancy	1	0
	9. Assist children and youth in foster care to learn more about family stability, including age-appropriate relationships	0	0
2. Economic Stability through Education and Training	1. Teach financial and life skills in high school, including but not limited to the Success Sequence, awareness of child support laws	6	9
	2. Increase high school exposure to technical fields, especially in at-risk rural and urban communities	6	7
	3. Promote school choice/vouchers to provide poor children with equal access to better schools	6	6

Focus Area	Recommended Strategies	Round 1	Round 2
	4. Develop strategies for employers to be more accepting of formerly incarcerated men as potential employees - see beyond the tattoos	3	6
	5. Focus on rehabilitation not just punishment for offenders while incarcerated – mandate programs that will improve their employability, such as skills certification programs	1	1
	6. Explore new models for high school vocational education including those that link families, students and industry to remove stigma of vocational training	2	1
	7. Improve access to affordable, high quality early childhood education for high-risk populations	3	0
	8. Explore options for replicating successful schools serving high-risk populations	2	0
	9. Work with employers to determine needed technical and vocational skills	0	0
	10. Improve rates of adult functional and financial literacy and math skills	0	0
	11. Improve awareness of financial aid available to foster youth	0	0
	12. Better prepare foster youth for the transition to adulthood	0	0
	13. Improve adaptability to newer technologies	0	0
3. Economic Stability through Jobs and Work Supports	1. Consider solutions that address rural and urban needs of employers and the workforce. Align geographic mobility incentives, infrastructure and transportation resources, and available jobs.	8	9
	2. Provide supports/opportunities for offenders to re-enter society in a meaningful way after incarceration, including removing obstacles to success and civic engagement, and by improving community connections.	7	8
	3. Provide parents with support, including reducing economic stress by increasing access to affordable, quality early childhood education. (This recommendation replaced the original #1, which read “Offer/increase availability of subsidies for quality childcare, and review income eligibility thresholds to better align with family resources.”)	5	7
	4. Provide parents with support, including reducing economic stress by increasing access to affordable, quality early childhood education	4	5
	5. Promote job opportunities in skilled labor and trades for those with less than a high school diploma	2	3
	6. Support efforts that facilitate matching of employers with potential workers who have requisite skills	6	3
	7. Assess eligibility of non-custodial parents for partial access to income support programs and review related child support policies	2	0
4. Social and	1. Develop and promote positive cultural messages for both men	9	8

Focus Area	Recommended Strategies	Round 1	Round 2
Cultural Support for Marriage	and women about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healthy relationships • The “Success Sequence” • The key role of fathers in forming and sustaining families (including in custody cases) • Male youth/young men’s need for social and other supports 		
	2. Provide incarcerated men with programs that build skills in areas of parenting, marriage and finance (in addition to job skills)	7	8
	3. Encourage community-based social support networks for families.	5	8
	4. Encourage / support positive role models in media/entertainment for parenting, fatherhood, marriage	4	4
	5. Encourage men to be positive role models in areas with high rates of absent fathers	5	2

Reflections

Following the voting, the Commissioners were asked to reflect on their overall participation in the Commission, and to identify what went well and what could have been done differently.

What went well (verbatim):

1. The demeanor and direction of Secretary Anderson and DCF staff
2. Interactions with concerned community members; respectful attitude toward diverse opinions
3. Expert presentations
4. The process, voting
5. Informative dialogue among Commissioners
6. Speakers gave broad-based views, were well-rounded, enabling the Commission to come up with broad recommendations
7. Can build on knowledge from this commission at other forums; more sensitized to key issues
8. Structure, notes, emails; staff available when needed
9. Opportunity to be ourselves without opposition or prejudice; respect for one another
10. Respectful dialogue; Commissioners coming to consensus
11. Ability to bring our whole selves—bringing together work and personal perspectives
12. Commissioners with different views could collaborate
13. Had real conversations; did not demonstrate “tokenism”
14. Diversity of speakers and discussion
15. Facilitation; came together really well today
16. New information/perspectives from speakers and reflection
17. The best thing I said “yes” to
18. Phenomenal selection of speakers
19. Organization, whole team—restored faith in government; made it easy for Commissioners to participate
20. Commission reflected the diversity of Wisconsin
21. Contributions of other Commissioners

22. Delvyn's poetry
23. Eloise Anderson's wisdom and leadership
24. Commission was exceptionally well-run
25. Always felt like meaningful work; it was real, not "make work"
26. Hard work of the DCF staff
27. Balanced perspectives and experiences of Commissioners, for example, areas of state, poverty, experiences, etc.
28. Allowing Commissioners' experiences and values to be present
29. Respect for each other
30. Eloise's guidance
31. Appreciate what Governor did by not prescribing the outcome nor filling the Commission. Appreciate that the Governor let DCF staff put together a diverse Commission. Trusted in the thoughtful outcome.
32. Bravo to the DCF technical team!

What could be done differently (verbatim):

1. More emphasis on tangible goals in light of political realities; an outline of the Governor's platform or philosophy might have saved discussion time
2. Clarify what we really wanted from this process?
3. What can actually move the needle in Wisconsin?
4. There are certain directions that the Governor will not go. Could this report stimulate local discussions? This makes a good journalistic story.
Response: The Governor asked for input from the Commission, since he wanted diverse recommendations
5. Would have been helpful to have an educator on the Commission
6. More time for interaction
7. More information on the governmental programs in existence now on the Commission's topics
8. Hear from individuals going through circumstances rather than statistics
9. Having more information about what government is doing right now, what already exists, are we suggesting duplicates? Are we recommending things that have been tried and failed?
10. Meetings up North
11. Integrate the voices of either practitioners or community members who might have been helped by our decisions; a lot of time spent talking about, rather than to, poor people
12. Would have loved to go to other parts of the state, especially the North and West
Response: Logistics of having meetings around the State were very difficult.

Steps to Completion

- Commissioners received a rough first draft of the report at this meeting. The 2nd draft will be sent by the DCF staff to the Commissioners by November 18, 2016.
- Commissioners will provide feedback via email to the DCF staff between November 18-23.
- DCF staff will make any final edits and reviews between November 23 and December 1.
- The Executive Summary and final recommendations from the report will be submitted to the Governor's Office by December 1, 2016.
- The complete report with supporting documentation will be submitted to the Governor's Office by December 12, 2016.