

# strengthening families

THROUGH EARLY CARE & EDUCATION

**Strengthening Families–Wisconsin  
State Committee Meeting  
Thursday, July 12, 2007  
1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.  
GEF 3 Building, 125 S. Webster St., Room 349**

Attending: Lisa Alden, Palmer Bell, Ruth Chvoicjek, Bonnie Geyer, Jill Haglund, Linda Hurst, Linda Leonhart, Lana Nenide, Kath McGurk, Cailin O'Connor, Teressa Pellett, Mary Peters, Jane Robinson, Suzy Rodriguez, Sue Saeger, Laura Saterfield, Dick Schlimm

## Welcome and charge for this new committee

Cailin O'Connor welcomed the members of this new committee within the Early Childhood Collaborating Partners structure, created when Collaborating Partners became the new Strengthening Families State Leadership Team. Several participants were new to Strengthening Families through Early Care and Education (SF) or new to participating in leading the initiative at the state level. This committee will be the driving force to keep SF moving in Wisconsin and it is anticipated that a number of workgroups will be created to accomplish specific tasks as needed.

## Report from the Strengthening Families National Leadership Summit

Members of Wisconsin's team at the SF Summit in San Diego in May shared their personal highlights from the Summit. All said it was a positive experience. Some of the highlights mentioned were making connections with Wisconsin partners and national counterparts; learning how SF is being implemented in other states (including using it as part of a Quality Ratings System, having high levels of parent involvement, and innovative strategies being used); learning about efforts to apply SF to settings beyond licensed group child care centers; the importance of the shift in perspective to thinking about ECE as a place for families; the thoroughly strength-based approach of both the initiative and the Summit itself; opportunities presented by parent engagement in planning and delivering programs; and the challenges posed in terms of the relationship between child welfare and early care and education and how to integrate this into child welfare training and professional development. (Update since the meeting – Graphic recordings, photos, and selected speakers' slides from the Summit are now available on the CSSP website: <http://www.cssp.org/sfsummit/>.) Meeting participants expressed an interest in learning more about what other states are doing with SF. A CD was distributed at the Summit summarizing pilot state approaches in different areas; these materials should soon be available on the CSSP website. Anyone wishing to see these materials please contact Cailin for a copy of the CD distributed in San Diego.

Cailin reported on directions for Strengthening Families nationally. The Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP) plans to launch a National Strengthening Families Network later this year.

The plans have changed somewhat from what Nilofer Ahsan had described at the last meeting of Wisconsin's SF State Leadership Team in March. It is not clear now whether there will be an application process for states to join the National Network or whether states will be invited as we were told previously. There may be tiered membership levels, in which case we hope that Wisconsin will be in the highest tier of states – working in partnership with CSSP to develop new knowledge and tools for SF implementation. Parent involvement is the only area where SF-Wisconsin may falter in terms of meeting the requirements for top-tier membership. We discussed several options for increasing parent involvement in SF-Wisconsin, for example through existing parent groups that committee members have connections to.

CSSP will also soon be launching an on-line version of the self-assessment that will allow centers to enter their data, generate reports on their strengths and weak areas, and create action plans to address weak areas. This data will then be available in aggregate at the county and state level. Since 186 ECE centers in Wisconsin already completed the self-assessment, we discussed whether there would be any way to upload their data (which UW-Extension entered into a database) to the database from the on-line assessment so that (a) centers would be able to enter a second self-assessment and show their progress from the first time and (b) we would be able to look at both old and new self-assessments for a county or for the state as a whole. Cailin will check with Nilofer about whether this is a possibility.

This led to a brief discussion about what centers in Wisconsin have done since completing the self-assessment. Aside from those who received mini-grants and reported on those activities in 2006, we do not have data about how centers have implemented SF. Linda Hurst reported that many students in her Child Care Administrator Credential classes have used the self-assessment for class projects and have made changes in their centers as a result. Jane Robinson pointed out that under the new licensing rules, more people will be required to take at least some of the courses for the Administrator Credential, so building SF into these courses would be one way to reach almost all centers in the state.

#### Updates on other recent activities and projects

Cailin reported that an action plan has been developed for SF-Wisconsin's work on the relationship between child welfare and ECE. (Included in the attached document.) Also connected to this work, Cailin mentioned that Jennifer Jones and Kim Eithun of the Department of Health and Family Services will both be active members of this committee but were not available to attend this meeting. CSSP is asking all three states receiving technical assistance on this work through a grant from the Mailman Foundation (Wisconsin, Illinois, and New Jersey) to use the same format for action plans. Cailin reported that SF pilot counties would be using the same template for county-level action plans and that this committee would use the same template for an overall state-level SF plan.

Cailin reported on the planned pilot county networking meeting scheduled for July 20. A representative of SF-New Jersey would share information about how SF is being implemented there (particularly in the area of relationships between child welfare and ECE). Pilot county teams would have time to work on their county action plans. The Division of Children and Family Services and the Children's Trust Fund would also be announcing plans at the meeting to

make grant funds available for the pilot counties to implement pieces of their action plans in the next year.

Cailin announced the availability of a new training, “Building Protective Factors with Families.” The training was designed to replace the SF overview that CCR&R trainers used during the SF pilot. Developed by Cailin, Jennifer Jones, Mary Roach, Joan Laurion, and Penny Chase, it is a 2-hour training that spends time on each of the protective factors and program strategies to support them. It can be used with family child care providers and others who work with children and families, not just with center-based providers. The training is available on a CD, in the form of a PowerPoint presentation with full script and activities to make it an interactive learning experience. Meeting participants expressed interest in attending either a training of trainers (TOT) or the training itself. This would also be a good way for other partners in Collaborating Partners to learn more about SF and the protective factors. Other ideas included a web-based TOT and possibly previewing the training in a Collaborating Partners videoconference. Cailin is working on making arrangements for a training or TOT in the fall; details will follow.

Palmer Bell reported that the new Supporting Families Together Association – a joint association for child care resource and referral (CCR&R) agencies and family resource centers – would be officially formed on July 26. Palmer is the executive director of the Association. This new association will take the place of the Wisconsin CCR&R Network with a restructured board and broader membership. The Association will administer DWD grants to the CCR&R agencies through a single source contract. Nilofer Ahsan from CSSP is a member of the new board.

#### Strengthening Families–Wisconsin: Developing an action plan

Participants broke into small groups to work on sections of the SF-Wisconsin action plan. We did not have enough time to finalize the sections of the action plan, areas of work, or workgroups that will be needed. This work will be continued at the committee’s next meeting. An incomplete draft based on the work done at this meeting is attached. (Note that the section on child welfare linkages was developed outside of this meeting; changes to that section are pending based on feedback from participants in the pilot county meeting July 20.)

Some participants expressed a need for more background information about the five content areas of the Early Childhood Comprehensive System. There will be time on the agenda at the next meeting to discuss this at the next meeting and materials may be sent in advance.

#### Future meetings

As a rule, SF Committee will meet quarterly, on the second Thursday of January, April, July, and October. The next meeting will be on **Thursday, October 11, from 1:30-3:30** in Madison. Location, agenda, and further details will be sent by email as the date approaches.