

FINAL REPORT

**IOWA FAMILIES IN THE 1990s
STUDY COMMITTEE**

Presented to the Legislative Council
and the Iowa General Assembly
January 1991

Prepared by the Legislative Service Bureau

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AUTHORIZATION AND APPOINTMENT

The Iowa Families in the 1990s Study Committee was established by the Legislative Council and charged with studying the changing nature of Iowa families and making recommendations to strengthen the family structure. In addition, the Committee was to review the pressures on caregivers, latchkey children, child care, elderly care, and other related issues.

Members serving on the Study Committee included:

Senator Beverly Hannon, Co-chairperson
Representative Mark Haverland, Co-chairperson
Senator Joy Corning
Senator William Dieleman
Senator Kay Hedge
Senator Wally Horn
Representative Ron Corbett
Representative Johnie Hammond
Representative Janet Metcalf
Representative Joyce Nielsen

COMMITTEE PROCEEDINGS

The Study Committee was authorized for two meeting days, which were held on Wednesday, July 18, 1990, and Wednesday, September 5, 1990.

MEETING - JULY 18, 1990

The first meeting of the Study Committee was held on Wednesday, July 18, 1990, in the Speaker's Conference Room of the State House. Senator Charles Bruner appeared in his capacity as a member of the Child and Family Policy Center and presented a summary of national and Iowa trend data. Senator Bruner suggested that the Committee work to ensure that family issues become a priority

for the next legislative session and recommended that several steps be undertaken to improve the conditions and services offered to Iowa families. The most important of these, he said, is utilizing an integrative approach to breaking down categorical barriers and offering family support services with a multitude of programs. In addition, he suggested that schools should be more supportive to the family relationship rather than measuring success in terms of educational achievement. Finally, he stressed the need for family programs to help pregnant women and children from birth to three years of age.

Ms. Diane Quinn McKibben presented information from the Iowa Commission on Children, Youth and Families Division of the Department of Human Rights. Ms. McKibben identified three critical issues for legislative consideration:

1. An increasing number of children and youth are growing up "at risk" of failure to reach their full potential.
2. Resources need to be redirected at prevention rather than intervention.
3. The changing nature of the world requires new and innovative approaches to supports and services.

The afternoon speakers were representatives from area businesses and groups and were asked to discuss their policies and views regarding parental leave. Ms. Gerry Mullane and Ms. Eleanore Levy represented the National Association of Women Business Owners (NAWBO) and discussed their experiences as small business owners. Ms. Mullane and Ms. Levy both stressed the detrimental effect that mandated health care benefits and parental leave would have on small businesses.

Mr. Terry Penniman, Vice President of Human Resources for Casey's General Stores, discussed employee policies and benefits offered by Casey's from the perspective of a large corporation operating hundreds of small businesses. He recommended that the government should not mandate employee benefits, should provide businesses with the incentives and initiatives to develop cost-effective benefit packages for employees, should provide incentives and initiatives to individuals on welfare to work, should help to reduce the legal exposure faced by businesses in the areas of workers' compensation, unemployment insurance, and frivolous discrimination suits, should assist in the establishment of incubation periods for employee programs, should use existing agencies and community-based resources to establish long-term plans at local levels to address their unique needs, and should support the development of the community education model in this effort.

The final speaker for the July 18, 1990, meeting was Mr. Donald Keown, who is Vice President of Human Resources for Principal Financial Group. Mr. Keown represented the interests of a large urban business and reviewed the policies and

benefits which Principal offers its employees. Mr. Keown identified child care as the major concern of working parents and business. He suggested that the state allow an income tax offset for working parents at certain income levels for child care expenses and that businesses be allowed a tax credit for providing on-site child care facilities or direct subsidies to parents for reimbursement of child care costs. He concluded by stating that the Committee should not recommend that businesses be mandated to offer certain benefits to employees in Iowa.

MEETING - SEPTEMBER 5, 1990

The second and final meeting of the Study Committee was held on Wednesday, September 5, 1990, in Room 22 of the State House. Ms. Barbara Bosch from the Department of Human Services, Division of Adult, Children, and Family Services discussed child day care standards and regulations, and provisional licensure for day care providers who do not meet standards. The Committee held a general discussion regarding the different licensing standards and the need to coordinate the licensure requirements for conducting a child care program.

Ms. Kris Hensley, the Director of the Des Moines YWCA, discussed three programs operated by the YWCA; child care, housing, and literacy/job training. Ms. Hensley suggested that the Committee consider expanding the county child care subsidy program to allow more entry-level participation, consider a gradual sliding scale for persons no longer receiving federal/state Aid to Families with Dependent Children ADC so that there is an incentive to continue working after the first year of the subsidy, and develop incentives to encourage employers to provide flexible benefit plans for employees which would allow employees to treat child care like other tax-favored benefits such as group health, dental, and life insurance. On the topic of housing, Ms. Hensley suggested that the Committee consider increasing state funding for support services, reevaluate the federal/state AFDC system, consider what action can be taken to decrease problems related to housing youth, consider incentives to move women off welfare, and assist women with child care and transportation needs. After discussing the literacy and job training program developed by the YWCA and the Des Moines Register, Ms. Hensley suggested that the federal/state Promise/JOBS Program, an employment training and education, be streamlined and simplified.

Dr. Kathleen Opdebeeck, a Developmental Pediatrician at the Child Protection Center at St. Luke's Hospital in Cedar Rapids, discussed the importance of parent/child bonding within the first six months of life. She stated her belief that the American family is in a state of crisis and recommended that the Committee consider using the school systems to provide more quality sex education, parenting skills training which should include information on infant bonding, the effects of drug use, and self-esteem and assertiveness training, as well as vocational evaluations and training for all single-parent families needing financial support. She

stressed that early and appropriate intervention is needed for problem families, increased funding is needed for foster care and adoption evaluations, and that better training is needed for all persons who work in this area.

The next presenter was Ms. Betty Grandquist, Director of the Department of Elder Affairs. She discussed one of the major issues of the meeting, the problems of the elderly and their caregivers. She stressed the inequity in the system where there is no financial support for custodial and support services in the community, while the long-term care system pays for acute and long-term medical care in skilled and intermediate nursing care facilities through Medicare and Medicaid. She stated that the lack of community and in-home supportive services leads to the unnecessary institutionalization of older persons in order to obtain the nonmedical services, and she expressed concern over the burdens of informal caregivers. In addition, she discussed existing adult day care and respite care services and stressed the need to expand upon the present programs.

Ms. Donna Speece, Ms. Pat Nichols, Ms. Marge Dennison, Ms. Marie Crowley, and Ms. Dorothy Betterton, members of the Knoxville Caregivers Support Group testified about their personal experiences and struggles to care for their elderly spouses. Ms. Speece, the spokesperson for the group, made the following proposals to the Committee:

1. Allow an additional \$1,200 personal tax deduction for the disabled.
2. Change the method of computation on earned interest, IRAs, pensions, and other personal savings or annuities being held for the purpose of providing for the disabled and the caregiving spouse.
3. Continue health and dental insurance coverage beyond the time period provided by federal COBRA Act to cover that period of time, the employed spouse becomes disabled until full-time employment of the disabled spouse occurs or until requirements for Medicare coverage are reached, with any premiums to be paid by the insured.
4. Provide transportation for the handicapped and disabled.

The final speaker for the morning portion of the meeting was Ms. Gina Ebel from the YWCA in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Ms. Ebel is Director of the YWCA's Neutral Exchange and Visitation Program and Drop-in Nursery. The Neutral Exchange and Visitation Program provides a neutral and nonconfrontational environment for the exchange of children from one parent to the other in situations where the family is divorced or separated. The drop-in nursery provides care for children while parents are out for up to three hours, are using the YWCA facilities, and for children who are at risk of abuse. Ms. Ebel described the attributes of the programs offered by the YWCA and suggested that the Committee consider funding

programs similar to the Neutral Exchange and Visitation Program and the Drop-in Nursery, that day care guidelines should be more flexible, and that separate guidelines should be developed for drop-in care.

Following lunch the Committee heard from Ms. Carol Phillips, Department of Education. Ms. Phillips explained that President Bush would be attending the "World Summit for Children" and suggested that in accordance with the national focus, the Committee support the holding of town meetings to focus local attention on the needs of children.

The Committee next watched a video which depicts the Cedar Rapids Area Community Action Program's HACAP's Project for Young Parents program. On behalf of the program, Representative Neilsen read the following recommendations to the Committee:

1. Active referral and follow-up programs are needed to assist teen parents.
2. In-depth, hands-on nutrition experience is needed for teen parents and their children.
3. Activities to enhance parents' skills as health care consumers are needed .
4. Programs are needed to develop teen parents' problem-solving skills that can be used in their personal lives.

The final speaker was Ms. Lynn Engen, Director of People Place Family Life Enrichment, Inc., in Ames. She described her agency as a family resource center, staffed primarily by volunteers. Ms. Engen recommended family resource centers as the most inexpensive, positive, and productive way to nurture family development. She said that the advantage of such programs is that they are comprehensive in nature.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee makes the following recommendations:

1. That the state adopt a program for caregivers similar to the existing family support program.
2. That the Committee support and encourage care of disabled spouses in their homes.
3. That state tax policies be reviewed with the goal of eliminating disincentives to caring for a disabled spouse at home.
4. That information be gathered and, if warranted, a study conducted to determine the effectiveness of case management programs for the elderly.



5. That Mr. John Fairweather from the Department of Human Services provide the Committee with a written transcription of his testimony regarding the potential for exploitation of ADC funds by recipients.
6. That an analysis be conducted of current child care licensing regulations to increase the flexibility of the system.
7. That the state develop standards for the certification of parenting classes and recognize persons who have attended 10 hours of certified classes.
8. That the state implement a program for early childhood and family education similar to the Minnesota Early Childhood Education Program.
9. That a subcommittee of a standing committee be appointed which would consider all legislation relating to "Iowa families."
10. That the state expand the existing Transitional Child Care Program which subsidizes child care costs for up to 12 months following departure from the AFDC program due to earned income so that from 12 to 18 months following employment the state would pay 50% of child care costs; from 18 to 24 months of employment, the state would pay 25%; and after 24 months of employment and enrollment in the transitional child care program the state would no longer pay a portion of child care costs.
11. That a person receiving transitional Medicaid, which provides medicaid following departure from AFDC, whose employer has an open enrollment period during the 12-month period of the program be required to transfer to the employer's health insurance program with the state paying the employee's share for the remainder of the 12-month period.

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