WSCC 2010 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

PRINCIPLES

Policies on taxes, work, divorce, immigration, and welfare should help families stay together and should reward responsibility and sacrifice for children….Children are to be valued, protected, and nurtured. As a Church, we affirm our commitment to the protection and well-being of children in our own institutions and in all of society.

Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship, USCCB, 2007

CHILD WELFARE: Children who are in danger of entering the child welfare system, and those who are in the system deserve society's full attention and protection. The goals are to prevent children from entering the system, and to ensure a stable placement, if needed. The first priority is placement with relatives. DSHS and agencies across the state are working to reform the child welfare system to improve the outcomes for families and children.

AGENCIES: Child placing agencies in the state have been faced with increasing responsibilities, but fewer financial resources to provide adequate support to foster families in need of assistance. A national study recently reported that Washington's reimbursement rates to child placing agencies are well below the resources required to provide a minimum level of service.

DEPENDENCY PROCEEDINGS: Families and children who find themselves involved in court proceedings such as child welfare hearings, dependencies, or terminations are often without adequate knowledge of the legal system. Key improvements are necessary to ensure a just process including well-trained court personnel, legal representation for parents and children, and prevention programs directed to families at risk of dependency proceedings.

INTERVENTION PROGRAMS: The home is the first and most important learning environment for children, and parents are their child's most influential teachers. Qualifying families in need may be offered home visitation, which is an effective, research-based and cost-efficient way to bring families and resources together to ensure that children grow up ready to learn. Washington has programming designed to give many more children a quality early childhood experience. Home visitation programs such as Parents As Teachers, deliver parent education and family support services directly to parents with young children. They can provide guidance on how parents can enhance their children's development from birth through entry into kindergarten.

RECOMMENDATIONS

WSCC SUPPORTS:

- Maintaining prevention programs, kinship placement, wrap-around programs, and child welfare system improvements
- Maintaining child welfare vendor rates for agencies that contract with the state
- Broadening representation programs for children in dependency cases
- Maintaining early intervention programs for eligible families, e.g. home visitation