

A photograph of two young girls swinging happily on a swing set in a grassy park. The girl in the foreground is wearing a striped shirt and denim shorts, smiling broadly with her eyes closed. The girl behind her is wearing a pink shirt and also smiling. The background is a lush green lawn with some fallen leaves.

Wisconsin Council on Children & Families 2009 Annual Report



WISCONSIN COUNCIL ON

**children
& families**

Raising Voices to Make Every Kid Count



> Letter from the director

Dear Friends,

It is a bit strange for me to be writing the introductory letter for the WCCF 2009 Annual Report; after all, I only assumed my position as executive director with a few weeks left in the year. Though the work described in this document occurred prior to my arrival, I am very happy to report WCCF's accomplishments and challenges for the year. Being chosen to lead an organization with the history and unique role of WCCF is humbling. I am very aware of the organization's strengths and the important voice WCCF brings to discussions pertaining to improving outcomes for children and families. We really do raise voices to make every kid count.

It is no secret that the recession has made our job harder, just as it has made life harder for so many Wisconsin families. Like them, we find ourselves in the position of having to do more with less. Like them, we can't undertake all of the projects we think are important. But also like them, we remain hopeful that we will emerge from difficult economic times strong and in an excellent position to tackle the challenges that lie before us. For WCCF, those challenges have not changed. We remain committed to researching and promoting policies and practices that bring Wisconsin closer to the goal of making sure that every child grows up in a safe and healthy home and community.

Arriving at the Council in December, I found a remarkably dedicated and resilient organization poised to protect important gains already achieved and to press for further success on key new initiatives. But we do not take these earlier gains or pending victories for granted. We know that in the current fiscal climate, everything we accomplish is tenuous and must be protected. Nor do we take for granted the support of the individuals, foundations, and other partners who make our work possible. We simply continue doing our work as diligently, responsibly and effectively as we can in order to justify the confidence our supporters and allies have shown in us.

Please do not hesitate to call on me if you have any questions, kudos or concerns about anything we do here at the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families.

All the best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ken Taylor". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "K" and "T".

Ken Taylor
Executive Director

> WCCF: Rising to the Challenge



Introduction

If you are reading this, you are likely a friend of WCCF and support our vision of a state where every child grows up in a just and nurturing family and community. But as you will read in the following pages, there is significant distance between our vision and the reality for many of Wisconsin's children and families. There are many things that need to happen to rectify this, and WCCF's piece of the puzzle is advocacy. We represent the interests of children who don't have their own voice in the policy making process.

In many ways 2009 was a trying year, a year that presented fiscal challenges the likes of which most of us have never seen before. We could look at the budget that was signed into law and the variety of other policy developments that took place, pat ourselves on the back and say, "It could have been a lot worse." And that would be true. The same goes for Wisconsin's experience with rising unemployment and poverty, and even for our own organizational bottom line; things were tough, and it would be easy to emit a sigh of relief that things did not turn out as poorly as they could have.

But at WCCF, we aim higher than that. Our mission is not to keep conditions for children and families from getting worse; it is to improve outcomes—to proactively seek changes that will enhance the chances of kids and families to thrive economically, physically and socially. In 2009 more families faced deeper economic struggles than at any time in recent history and the state budget was more challenging than usual. Within WCCF we experienced the departure of Executive Director Charity Elson, the loss of some key funding sources and

the resulting loss of the staff they supported. And yet in the face of these and other challenges, important gains were made in a number of areas. The state programs we care about the most were largely spared from devastating budget cuts. Genuine improvements were made in our health care safety net. The Council continued to develop new tools for communicating with our friends and allies around the state, including our first forays into blogging and webinar production.

The reality is that WCCF does not have the luxury of being satisfied with conditions that “could be worse.” Consider these facts:

- About 172,000 Wisconsin children lived at or below poverty in 2008, more than in 2000.
- According to National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) scores, 67% of Wisconsin 4th graders read at below proficient levels.
- Over 70 percent of all children under 6 have all parents in the workforce, yet the majority of early childhood programs lack the capacity to offer well-educated teachers, small group sizes and a developmentally appropriate curriculum, all of which are known to produce better outcomes for young kids.
- Over 30,000 17-year-olds are arrested every year, leading to thousands of kids ending up in adult jails or prisons. A wealth of evidence has shown that treating adolescents as adults

in the justice system is counterproductive; it neither makes communities safer nor helps youth develop into responsible adults capable of contributing to their communities.

- 5,600 Wisconsin children were abused or neglected in 2008.
- The number of lead-poisoned children in Wisconsin has been declining significantly in recent years, yet in 2008 over 1,600 kids in the state suffered from lead poisoning, a totally preventable health hazard.
- There is a significant level of racial disproportionality in many public programs and in outcomes for children of color. Wisconsin’s rates of disproportionality are some of the worst in the nation.

This reality is a call to action. The reason we engage in the work we do is because we feel an obligation to all the children of Wisconsin, to invest in them to ensure a brighter future for them and for our state. Regardless of how many successes and failures we can count at the end of a given year, ultimately we know that it could have been better. So we continue in our efforts to make it so.

One of WCCF’s challenges is to explain exactly what we do to support our vision of a state where every child grows up in a safe and nurturing family and community. Below is a diagram that attempts to lay that out. ■



> 2009: The Year in Review

Budget and Taxes

The state of the state budget is a critical factor in nearly everything the Council tries to accomplish. Our call to invest in the things that improve conditions for kids and families can only be heeded if the resources to make those investments exist. With the nation mired in recession, such resources have become exceedingly scarce. Our work on state fiscal policy has focused on maximizing available revenue, and making sure policy makers consider all options as they work to patch together a budget that protects children while laying the groundwork for a fiscally sound future.

In the face of immense challenges, WCCF and its allies were able to celebrate a number of important successes in 2009. A budget repair bill passed in February included a policy called combined reporting, which closed a major loophole that allowed corporations to legally dodge taxes for years. That bill also contained a hospital assessment that allowed the state to draw millions of additional federal dollars into the state. The biennial budget passed later in the year reduced the amount of capital gains income excluded from taxation. Other 2009 tax changes that improved the state's tax system included creation of a new upper income tax bracket and indexing of the Homestead Tax Credit for inflation.

WCCF played a leadership role in mustering the support that made these positive changes possible. The Council was the chief organizer of an informal coalition that pushed for these changes and provided a comprehensive menu of revenue options to legislators during the budget debate. Our

outreach activities on budget issues also included a new tool: We conducted two webinars on budget-related topics.

Early Care and Education

The Council was extremely active on early care and education (ECE) in 2009. In light of the severe budget gap facing the state, the most significant development may have been something that DID NOT happen: No significant spending cuts were made to a wide range of ECE programs. WCCF and its allies successfully advocated for sufficient funding for Wisconsin Shares, which received a \$67 million increase in the budget, and continued start-up grants for 4-year-old Kindergarten (4K). The budget bill that ultimately passed also included creation of a child care quality rating and improvement system (QRIS), which had been proposed numerous times but never before survived the budget process. While funding to actually start a QRIS remained a battle yet to be won, its inclusion in the budget bill represented a huge victory.

In addition to our state-level achievements, WCCF was active on the local and federal levels as well. Council staff facilitated the Madison Metropolitan School District's 4K planning team, leading to an agreement to begin 4K in Madison in 2010-11. On the federal level, we mobilized support for legislation related to ECE, Head Start, and home visiting programs.

The Council worked hard over the course of the year to expand the early childhood advocacy base, particularly through work with business and



philanthropy leaders, whose support meshes well with our research and analysis related to the economic benefits of early investment as we work toward creation of a coherent statewide ECE system.

Health Care

WCCF worked hard to help Wisconsin sustain its forward movement toward the ultimate goal of health care coverage for every child in the state—no easy task in the current fiscal climate. We succeeded in protecting funding for key health care safety net programs in the biennial budget. But we did better than just protecting what was in place; BadgerCare Plus was expanded to include legal immigrant kids and childless adults.

There was considerable focus on the federal level with regard to health care as well. We supported reauthorization of the Children's Health In-

urance Program, which provides much of the funding for BadgerCare Plus, and we analyzed and disseminated information across the state about key provisions in and opportunities created by the Children's Health Insurance Reauthorization Act (CHIPRA).

Kids Count

WCCF's WisKids Count project can boast of many achievements in 2009. Our Advocacy Camp was a big success, with approximately 40 individuals receiving training on advocacy skills over the Camp's two days of presentations and workshops. Advocacy Camp was conducted in tandem with our Kids Advocacy Day, which featured Gov. Jim Doyle as keynote speaker and attracted 120 attendees.

But as always, the bread and butter of Kids Count is compilation and organization of data on

indicators of child well-being, and the Council made significant strides in that area in 2009. We updated and expanded the range of data available via the Kids Count Data Center, and completed most of the work on our 2009-10 WisKids Count Data Book (which was ultimately published in January 2010). Our other significant Kids Count publication of 2009 was “Building on Our Success: Achieving Equity in Health Outcomes for Children and Families in Wisconsin,” which examined the state’s race-based disparities in a wide range of outcome measures and outlined strategies for addressing these gaps.

Work, Economic Support, and Poverty Reduction

Our Vision 2020 Campaign to End Child Poverty made significant gains during 2009, though the campaign also suffered a setback with the departure of the project’s key staff person from the Council. We published a new edition of the Vision 2020 Report Card, which assessed the state’s progress toward the goals outlined at the launch of the campaign. Vision 2020 was a major theme of the Poverty Matters Conference hosted by WISCAP, and WCCF was a partner in organizing this year’s conference. By the end of the year, Vision 2020 had local partners in Lacrosse, Rock Co., the Fox Valley, the Northwoods, Waushara Co., Stevens Point, Dane Co., Sheboygan and Eau Claire.

The Council’s work on jobs and economic security was limited by funding constraints, as we were unable to obtain new resources to support or efforts on access to jobs and training throughout the entire year. Nevertheless, we were able to contribute to several positive policy developments in these areas, including extension of W-2 benefits for women in at-risk pregnancies, improvements in W-2 time limit policies, expansion of W-2’s transitional jobs component, and increased funding in

the biennial budget for financial aid to technical college students.

Juvenile Justice

It was a disappointing year for the Council with regard to our main juvenile justice issue, returning 17-year-olds to the juvenile system. We worked diligently with policy makers on legislation that would have made this change, and were led to expect that it would be written into the state budget bill at some point in the process. However, that did not occur.

WCCF was active on other juvenile justice matters as well. Council staff participated on a Legislative Council Study Committee proposing changes to Chapter 938 related to waiving youth to adult court, leading to the introduction of bills that were approved in committee but did not ultimately make it through the legislative process.

Thank You

As noted earlier, 2009 was challenging internally due to the departure of a number of key staff members. Departures included Charity Eleson (executive director), Wendy Henderson (juvenile justice analyst), John Keckhaver (economic security analyst), and Vicky Selkove (mobilization strategies manager). Their contributions to WCCF and to Wisconsin’s children and families have been significant. They are all continuing to drive policy change to better support children and families from different venues, and we wish them all the best in the future.

> 2009 Supporters

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 Campaign 4 Youth Justice
 Center on Budget and Policy Priorities
 Charles D. Jacobus Family Foundation
 David and Lucile Packard Foundation
 Early Care and Education Consortium
 Open Society Institute
 Oscar and Elsa Mayer Foundation
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WCCF thanks the foundations, organizations, corporations and individuals who generously support our work, helping to ensure that we are able to provide a strong and vibrant voice for children and families in the state.

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Financial Information

2009 Statement of Activities

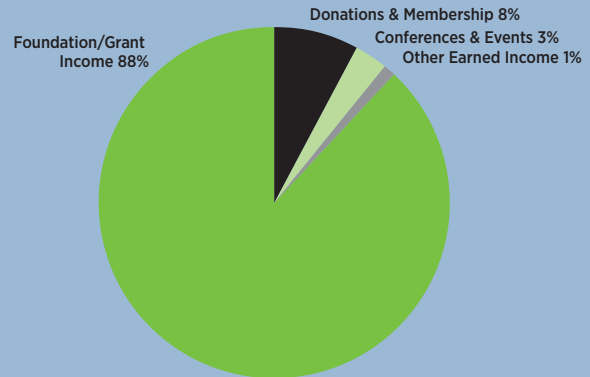
Income	
Foundation/Grant Income	963,821
Donations & Membership	92,747
Conferences & Events	37,052
Other Earned Income	8,342
Total Income	1,101,962
Expense	
Program Expense	989,312
Management & General	66,866
Development	17,737
Total Expense	1,073,914
Loss on Disposal of Equipment	
Increase (Decrease) in Net Assets	28,048

Statement of Financial Position

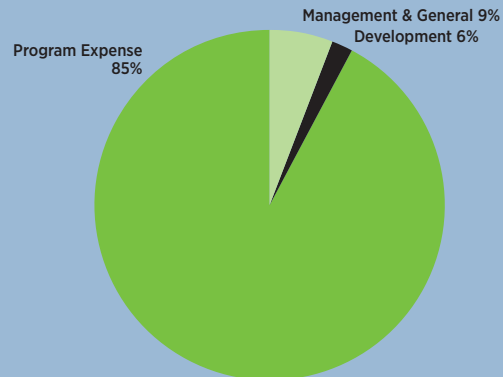
As of December 31, 2009

Assets	
Current Assets	
Cash	355,237
Receivables	136,254
Promises to give	1,711
Inventory	1,320
Prepaid expenses	19,192
Prepaid grant awards	0
Equipment - net	3,485
Unemployment reserve fund	12,699
Investments	251,051
Total Assets	780,949
Liabilities and Net Assets	
Current Liabilities	
Accounts payable	42,044
Provision for UC claims	21,743
Accrued vacation and related liabilities	11,918
Deferred revenue	365,722
Custodial account	0
Total Liabilities	441,427
Net Assets	
Total unrestricted net assets	322,522
Temporarily restricted	17,000
Total Net Assets	339,522
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	780,949

2009 Income



2009 Expenses





WISCONSIN COUNCIL ON

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