

A PARENTHOOD PLEDGE

A PARENTHOOD PLEDGE WOULD:

- ◆ *RECOGNIZE NEWBORN BABIES AS HUMAN BEINGS WITH THE RIGHT TO AN OPPORTUNITY TO SUCCEED IN LIFE*
- ◆ *PROVIDE A FORMAL BASIS FOR AWARDED PARENTAL RIGHTS*
- ◆ *EXPLICITLY DEFINE THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARENTHOOD*
- ◆ *ESTABLISH A MINIMUM STANDARD FOR ELIGIBILITY TO ASSUME THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARENTHOOD*
- ◆ *HELP TO ENSURE THAT NEWBORN BABIES HAVE PARENTS WHO CAN CARE FOR AND RAISE THEM*

AND RESULT IN

STRONGER FAMILIES

LOWER PUBLIC COSTS

**STRONGER ECONOMY
STRONGER NATION**



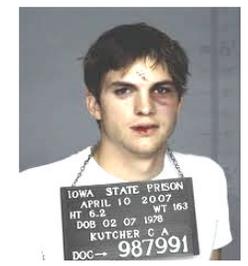
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A PARENTHOOD PLEDGE



Thriving
Family

Struggling
Family



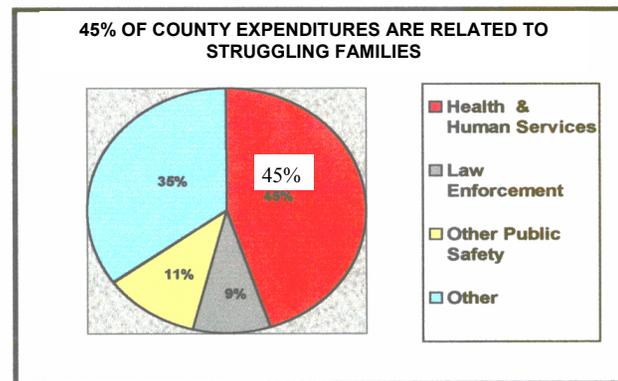
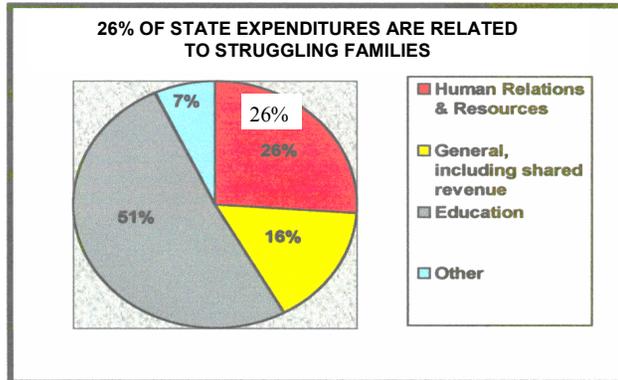
**TO STRENGTHEN
WISCONSIN FAMILIES**

A PARENTHOOD PLEDGE

WHY DOES WISCONSIN NEED A PARENTHOOD PLEDGE?

There are solid economic and humanitarian reasons for strengthening families:

1) 26% of Wisconsin state expenditures and 45% of county expenditures are related to struggling families. Strengthening families is the best way to reduce these costs.



2) Failing to intervene until children are damaged by abuse and/or neglect is inhumane and increases the costs of crime and welfare dependency that are burdensome for everyone.

WHAT ARE PARENTAL RIGHTS?

Parental rights actually are rights to the legal and physical custody of a child. These custodial rights permit parents to assume the responsibilities of parenthood.

WHAT ARE THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARENTHOOD?

The responsibilities of parenthood are commonly defined in family courts as follows:

- ◆ Provide or arrange for sufficient income for a child's clothing, shelter, education, health care, and social and recreational activities.
- ◆ Provide the love, security, and emotional support necessary for the healthy development of the child.
- ◆ Foster the intellectual, social, and moral development of the child.
- ◆ Socialize the child by setting limits and encouraging civil behavior.
- ◆ Protect the child from physical, emotional, and social harm.

HOW WOULD A PARENTHOOD PLEDGE WORK?

The birth certificate application would be expanded to include the responsibilities of parenthood and a signed pledge by the mother and/or father or their custodians to carry out those responsibilities to the best of one's ability.

The Parenthood Pledge would concretely establish society's intention to set minimum standards for parenthood and to ensure that children have an opportunity to succeed in life. It would set the stage for Parenthood Planning Counseling when the pregnancy of a dependent person is diagnosed.

WHAT IS PARENTHOOD PLANNING COUNSELING?

Parenthood Planning Counseling can be performed by existing prenatal counseling and coordinated services teams during a pregnancy before a child is born. It would be activated whenever a person who has a legal and physical custodian or a guardian or has been adjudicated as an unfit parent becomes pregnant and chooses to continue the pregnancy to childbirth.

If a mother or father is in the custody of another person, that person will be presumed custodian of the dependent person's baby unless she or he declines to acknowledge this responsibility. (Already grandparents have financial responsibilities for the children of their children without parental rights in Wisconsin.) This will continue until the mother and/or father is qualified for parenthood and makes a parenthood pledge unless that presumption is rebutted by: i) adoption of the child; ii) a Child in Need of Protective Services determination; iii) legal determination of incompetence of the parent; or iv) the parent is under the long-term custody of the state.

If a parent has been adjudicated as unfit, the applicable pre-emptive child abuse and neglect statute would apply.

If qualified legal and physical custodians decline to accept the responsibilities of parenthood or if the parent already is under the custody of the state, a guardian *ad litem* for the unborn child would be added to the Parenthood Planning Counseling Team. Custody of the newborn child would be assumed by the state. An adoption plan likely would be made for the newborn child prior to birth.