

OPEN MEETING MINUTES

Instructions: [F-01922A](#)

Name of Governmental Body: Governor's Task Force on Caregiving			Attending: Jason Endres, Helen Marks Dicks, Anne Rabin, Rep. Chuck Wichgers, Laverne Jaros, Mo Thao-Lee, Jane Bushnell, Beth Swedeen, Jane Mahoney, Deb Kolste, Lisa Schneider, Todd Costello, Mike Pochowski, John Sauer, Bill Crowley, Susan Rosa, Lisa Pugh, Stephanie Birmingham, Adien Igoni, Elsa Diaz Bautista, Delores Sallis, Sen. Kathleen Brenier, Michael Lauer; Ted Behnke Absent: Irma Perez, Michael Lauer, Carol Bogda State Staff: Lynn Gall, DHS; Faith Russell, DHS; Carrie Molke, DHS; Andrew Evenson, DWD Guests: Erin Fabrizius, Kira Grosenick, Amy, WTMJ, David Wahlberg, verstkmgao, Kerry Winkler, Tony Langenohl, Kimberly Larson, Lizzy LeMere, Lisa Davidson, Jenn Crosbie
Date: 2/25/2021	Time Started: 10:00 a.m.	Time Ended: 12:30 pm	
Location: Virtual meeting via Zoom			Presiding Officer: Todd Costello and Lisa Pugh

Minutes

Governor’s Task Force on Caregiving
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, February 25, 2021
10:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

I. Welcome & Agenda Overview – Carrie Molke, DHS Bureau of Aging and Disability Resources

II. Approved minutes from 10/30/20
 Stephanie Birmingham moved to approve
 Jane Bushnell second
 Approved

III. Comments from DHS Interim Secretary Karen Timberlake

Secretary Timberlake thanked members for serving on the Governor’s Task Force and for giving time to the important issues facing family caregivers and the paid caregiving workforce. She recognized Task Force members’ hard work and how they lifted important issues effectively with the Governor’s Office. Twelve of 16 recommendations made have been advanced as part of the Governor’s budget proposal. The reason this Task Force did extremely well was because they brought forward issues that they, as experts, know are important to people all across the state. The Governor wanted to build a Wisconsin budget that works well for everyone, and this Task Force’s recommendations were an important part of that.

The current budget that Governor Evers has proposed was done so on behalf of working people across our state. In addition to caregiving issues, there are proposals that prioritize Fast Forward training grants at the Department of Workforce Development for worker training. Today we have a lot of people who thought they were going down one career path who are now going to need to go down a different path. Investment in Wisconsin’s nurse educator shortages is addressed, which is a critical gap we have to close. There are also investments in an earned income tax credit and internet broadband access and affordability. We have to move those initiatives forward as a matter of health equity. Access to online education and other resources is a critical piece of our state’s infrastructure. The Governor’s budget includes a whole package of initiatives for

health care access and affordability, including creating Wisconsin's own health insurance exchange. All of these ideas have wide support across our state.

As good as the budget proposal is, the Governor's budget will not sell itself. The administration really does need support, engagement and storytelling from people like Task Force members, including the examples, personal stories, research methodologies and rationale that was used by the Task Force. We all need to convey this information to our state legislators to make sure they understand all of the arguments that support advancing the specific proposals the Task Force included. The Governor's budget is the first of many steps on the journey to making Task Force recommendations become reality. Secretary Timberlake said she looks forward to partnering with stakeholders on the path ahead.

The Secretary also thanked DHS and DWD employees who staffed the Task Force, expressing gratitude to be able to participate in what is the last official meeting of the Task Force. The good news is there will be many other opportunities to continue discussion on these issues. The Secretary wants to make sure that DHS continues to discuss caregiving issues at the Wisconsin Department of Health Services, and she is excited to move Task Force work forward.

Lisa Pugh: We are very proud that many of our proposals made it into the Governor's budget. Is the department planning to do some education in the Legislature as well? What will that look like? Our organizations are trying as well but what are your plans?

Secretary Timberlake: We want to make sure that all of our legislative partners have the opportunity to understand what is in the Governor's budget. Typically, there is an opportunity for an agency to present its budget in a formal way to the Joint Finance Committee and other opportunities to interact with the Legislature. It's typical for Joint Finance to hold public hearings and listening sessions similar to how the Governor held listening sessions before he built this and the prior budget. She encouraged that Task Force members participate in those hearings, and appreciates the education organizations are doing at the local level.

John Sauer: It has been a really dark year as we've all struggled through the pandemic and seen how it's taken a toll on caregivers, but there are very bright lights ahead of us because the recommendations of the Task Force were supported by the Governor. Thanks to the administration for listening to the work we did. What came through is really encouraging and we now have more hope than we've had in a long time. Some of the struggles with the Family Care program and MCOs efforts to reduce rates is antithetical to the purpose of the Task Force. For them to impose rate cuts is really the wrong thing to be doing right now.

Lisa Pugh: Regarding the Governor's town halls that many of us participated in and shared their personal stories about the business impact and effects on family life: has there been any outreach to those people who shared their stories? Some of those people could be some of our best champions.

Secretary Timberlake asked members to make recommendations about how to spread the word. She is happy to take those ideas to Governor Evers' office to learn how his office is interacting with the people who participated in listening sessions.

Deb Kolste: This was a really diverse group with a lot of opinions. But by consensus we came to these recommendations, and that's important for all of us to remember.

Stephanie Birmingham: I think the consequences that impact "COVID long-haulers" will be important in future conversations about caregiving needs.

- IV. **Carrie Molke provided a review of the Governor's Caregiving Proposals** (*PowerPoint attached*)
- V. **Discussion about key issues to highlight during budget deliberations**

- Question: Is the \$634 million in estimated savings from Medicaid expansion over the biennium? And should we assume that these savings would be ongoing?
- Question: How will the items without funding be able to be implemented? Carrie Molke said it would be a challenge. The department will do its best.
- Often times items without funding get stripped from the budget by the Joint Finance Committee. They could be removed from what is addressed during public hearings. If you want to keep an unfunded item in the budget, make an effort to explain the importance of that piece of policy to legislators.
- Question: Are there federal grants or other funds that the state can secure for these initiatives, especially the paid caregiver worker training? Being able to say there are other funding sources would be an incentive to argue to keep it in the budget.
- DHS is always looking for federal grant opportunities
- Todd Costello hopes the current Fast Forward grant opportunity, which is due by April 8, will be one way to address the training and career ladder recommendations. His group is also looking for other grant opportunities.
- Question: Were the few recommendations that were not included in the Governor's budget left out because there was no money requested, or was it that it wasn't considered something likely to pass? Faith Russell explained that the Governor makes choices about what to include, and that DHS staff are not privy to what all the considerations are.
- Question: Part of the federal COVID relief bill being discussed could increase the financial incentive for states to expand Medicaid. If that passes, would the current budget proposal be amended to reflect the new potential savings?
- Jason Endres was very disappointed to see that a standard background check for all LTC programs was not included. He would have liked to see the same background checks for all workers so they can go from company to company more easily.
- Question: Is DHS still moving to make changes on what is required for background checks of workers paid by different programs?
Faith Russell said there hasn't been much talk lately, since much of the department's focus has been on COVID-19. But it is an issue that makes sense to bring to the table internally, as the Secretary mentioned in her remarks.
- Jane Bushnell: I wonder if background check recommendations were not included because DHS has been talking about addressing it. It probably isn't off the table. It's rather a matter of when it will be addressed given everything else that is going on.
- Todd Costello: When we initially had this discussion it was mainly related to IRIS participants. I'm wondering if there are concerns beyond IRIS participants. We do not know. But we would like to have a standard background check for all in LTC programs.
- Questions: Has DHS given thought on the process it will follow to develop rate bands and if an outside contractor will be engaged to help develop the rate bands? Could DHS start working on this now and not wait for the budget to pass?
- Question: If items specific to DHS that do not include funding are included in the budget, does that signal that the governor would still like the state agency to make progress on those issues?

Carrie Molke: If it's in the budget directing the department to do it, we are expected to make progress on the issue. Some requests are harder to complete than others without funding. But any agency is obligated to do what we can to move things forward.

- Elsa Diaz Bautista requested that discussion switch to how to advocate for Task Force recommendations - both items that made it into the budget and the ones that did not.

VI. Collective Communication and Individual Member Action

- It is going to be important for people in the legislature to understand Task Force recommendations and not see them as partisan issues. The more individual and organizational meetings Task Force members can have with the 16 members of the Joint Finance Committee the better. Your own plans as an individual, family member or as an organization are going to be crucial. Some organizations are moving recommendations forward as separate items, but we need to remember that these recommendations were submitted as a package because so many of them depend on the success of other recommendations that were also made.
- Question: Is there a way to know what initiatives are being pursued as individual bills so we can understand this from a strategy standpoint and know where to put our energy?
- Lisa Pugh has been trying to advance issues around the ADRC proposal and the TCare proposal, which she began working on before it was known that they were going to be included in the Governor's budget.
- Helen Marks Dicks is doing her first round of visits with Joint Finance. Caregiving is one of five major buckets receiving AARP advocacy. She is dividing caregiving issues into three groups: 1) Those that have immediate effect on caregivers; 2) Those that affect caregiving programs; 3) Those that affect providers and paid caregivers. But there are going to be others on the Task Force who will put their priorities in different buckets and order. We should all at least acknowledge that these recommendations cover the whole field and we support all of them in their entirety, even if one is more specific to your organization.
- Laverne Jaros is trying to target issues for different audiences. Caregiving, mental health, etc. and her local long term workforce alliance will be putting together a paper with talking points. Any talking points coming from this committee would be helpful. She is also working with Disability Rights and will participate in a listening session for provisions in the budget. There will also be an editorial for the local newspaper.
- Todd Costello: The Wisconsin Personal Services Association (WPSA) and the LTC Workforce Alliance are having a conference on March 18 where they will create post cards and discuss reaching out to different legislators. They will also be promoting that as a constituent, one really does have a voice. The rates and training recommendations will be highlighted, and efforts will be made to coordinate for their passage.
- Question: When will JFC be holding hearings?
Helen Marks Dicks: They want to do a road show, but she been lobbying and sent a written proposal to the chairs of Joint Finance explaining how they could do virtual hearings. She's not sure which way they will choose.
- John Sauer's association is having its Legislative Week next week. They will be focusing on the nursing home payments, direct care work force, and rate bands proposals, including concerns about MCOs cutting rates. LTC providers aren't going to be showing up in person, so virtual testimony would be best.

- Question: Is there a way to use the SharePoint site, or something similar, to report if members see something happening or want to check what others are reporting?
- Helen Marks Dicks does do something like that for AARP. It was suggested that the Task Force talk about how members may informally keep in touch.
- The Survival Coalition will be tracking most of the Task Force recommendations and is another organization to reach out to for information.
- Lisa Pugh said she would like to know members' top two concerns so that if she hears that something is being removed from the budget, then she would know who to contact. (*members listed their priorities in chat, which is included at the end of meeting minutes.*)
- Elsa Diaz Bautista said that BPPD does a very good job of flagging what is happening with the biennial budget process and letting people know. She suggested using that group as well.
- Question: Who would coordinate legislative budget process information sharing? Members who are lobbyists would probably know what is going on.
- Lisa Schneider volunteered to do a simple color-coded tracking form that alert\indicates when advocacy is needed.
- Helen said people will want to know in real time if something was taken out or if a vote is scheduled. Members need to know ahead of when the vote is taken and to see option papers that are put forth for legislative members to consider. She doesn't think an after action report would be useful.
- Starting a Facebook group or a listserve was suggested.
- Helen Marks Dicks advocated for using "good old fashioned email" to which action alerts or fiscal bureau papers can be attached. She is not as tech savvy as some and said, "If you're relying on me because I will know what is going on, keep it as simple as possible if you want me to help."
- Lisa Schneider will set up a listserve, and members can opt out if it's not of interest to them.
- Questions: Is it appropriate, and is there any weight, to say that as a member of the former Governor's Task Force on Caregiving I support x, y, and z? Are others going to speak to that experience as well, or only with regard to their individual organization or employment? How do we carry the recognition of the Task Force's work forward?
- Helen Marks Dicks said she always identifies herself as the AARP advocacy director AND that she also served as a member of the Task Force. Involvement in the Task Force broadens her credibility on paid caregiving issues – Mentioning being on the Task Force will broaden anyone's credibility.
- Question: How dependent are these proposals on Medicaid expansion?
- Lisa Pugh: She and Todd asked that question of the Governor's Office because two years ago there were a lot of budget items that were dependent on MA expansion. It is different this time because many of our caregiving recommendations have GPR earmarked as the funding source.
- Helen: AARP is advocating for Medicaid expansion separate from caregiver issues. She doesn't want to tie them together because MA expansion is such a partisan issue.
- Budgets are about priorities. Ask each legislator what he/she prioritizes.
- Deb Kolste: I served on many task forces and study committees, and never have I ever been involved in one that has been so intellectually and emotionally engaged as this one. The person we have to get

to is the Assembly Speaker because that is going to be the director of any opposition to what is in the budget. She suggested talking to legislators who you suspect will be against it.

- There was an informal agreement among members to share information as recommendations move forward.
- John Sauer: I think we all know that Medicaid expansion is going to be a really difficult issue in the Legislature. I don't think services to older adults and people with disabilities is a partisan issue. We have all been touched. Our best advice is to grab-on to those recommendations you feel most passionately about and bring those to legislators. If Medicaid expansion is pulled out of the budget, that doesn't mean the issues facing older adults and people with disabilities are going away. Our discussions never smacked of politics, ever. I think if we all just lead with the caregiver shortage problem, what we are recommending, and then remind members that it is the responsibility of those elected to deal with our caregiver shortage, that can be effective.
- Todd Costello also suggested sharing the public input and comments that the Task Force collected, as well as recognizing that the COVID pandemic shed even more light on caregiving issues. The stories shared by members of the public and stakeholders are powerful, and they are TRUE. They hold their own power.
- Stephanie Birmingham agreed. We are all only temporarily able-bodied. Everyone is only one accident, injury or diagnosis away from needing caregiving. It's a matter of human dignity. It's about honoring life. It's not about red or blue (politics).
- Rep. Chuck Wichgers thanked former Rep. Deb Kolste, calling her a class act and wonderful person. He also thanked the full Task Force. He doesn't agree that Medicaid expansion is the elephant in the room, in part because the largest item in the state budget is education. He suggested that Task Force members could lobby the Governor for CARES Act funding that has not yet been spent. Each budget cycle has multiple pots of money that dominate the process, and you have to be more convincing in more avenues (Governor, Senate, Assembly) to make it happen. He believes that there is a lot of waste in the health budget, and it takes both political parties to identify it and use it for some of these initiatives. He suggested that DHS could find the money in its budget.
- Mo Thao-Lee: It is important for the Task Force to continue to communicate. Not every one of us is out there informed of what is happening, but the majority of us would participate in one way or another. We didn't work so hard so we can just sit back now and say, "Oh well, that didn't pass." It is important for us to stay connected and work together as a group of interests. We are all affected by the success of each of these proposals affecting the other. We all have to continue the momentum and see this through as a team for the benefit of the state.
- Sue Rosa expressed thanks to everyone from DHS for their work to support this Task Force. She recognized that DHS had no budget for doing Task Force work, and they did it all on top of dealing with the COVID-19 epidemic. She has been so impressed with the quality of work, knowing all that goes into it.

BREAK

- Question: Do we want to limit the listserv to Task Force members, or should we open it to the general public?
- Stephanie Birmingham: If it were open to the public it could get difficult to coordinate and follow. I don't know what our obligation is to continue to receive public feedback, but it is important to keep providing public feedback and information to interested parties. She is not sure how to do that.

Perhaps if there is someone who wants to take the lead on a specific topic, they could create a separate public listserv.

- Laverne Jaros agreed that the Task Force needs a members-only line of communication because members have a shared experience that others may not understand.
- Bill Crowley agreed. Members can disseminate information and updates to outside groups on our own.
- Jason Endres: Agreed.

VII. Options for Maintaining Focus on Caregiving Issues

LTC Advisory Council – A 20-member council appointed by the DHS Secretary with a broad LTC focus, but also tackles unique issues for Medicaid participants. One of the council's [five charges](#) is specific to workforce issues. The LTC meets six times per year – John Sauer and Beth Swedeen, are on the Council, and GWAAR and AARP are represented as well.

Question: Would the Secretary be open to adding a couple of additional members from this task force?

John and Beth were asked to comment on how they think using the LTC Advisory Council to address paid and family caregiving issues might work. Lisa Pugh said her experience is that council is focused on other things, whereas there is concern on the Task Force for people served by the IRIS program and care workers who operate outside of the publicly funded LTC system.

Beth Swedeen: It is true that the workforce has been a topic that the LTC Advisory Council has looked at. There are five charges, so there is a lot of ground to cover. The council has not traditionally had much discussion about unpaid family caregivers but recently there has been more attention than in the past to IRIS. It's not all about Family Care. There is an IRIS representative on the Council. Personal care has not been an issue that has received a lot of attention so she was unsure if that would change. She would like to see the charge of the council change if this were going to happen. The Advisory Council has not done as much work to make specific recommendations or do workgroup work as the Task Force has. It has been reacting to information that the Department brings forward, which is very different in nature from the Task Force. The council has recently spent a lot of time on health equity and things like that. Members of the LTC serve at the pleasure of the DHS Secretary, and each Secretary one has their own priorities. If Secretary Timberlake is interested in focusing on caregiving, Beth cannot think of another existing committee where this work would more squarely land.

Question: Are these caregiving issues big enough to warrant its own advisory committee within DHS?

John Sauer: My observation is that in some respects the LTC Advisory Council operates pretty well on the two extremes in terms of looking at big picture global approaches to access, and then other times we'll be asked to review the nitty gritty details of what a contract might look like. But it's not fundamental issues we deal with. It's more tweaking or considering geographic service regions and the number of MCOs. What we don't do is spend time on things like we did on this Task Force. Questions like "Is managing care really managed care, or is it managing costs?" or looking at how the system we have now impacts the workers and providers we have. I think if we interject more about the system we have now, how it rewards providers who pay their staff closer to a living wage and have lower turnover, then it might be more of a continuation of the Task Force.

Question: Is it a possible to have an interdepartmental committee that blends DHS and DWD? We don't want to over medicalize caregiving issues. If it just sits with DHS, what limitations are there? If we brought in DWD there might get more attention paid to workforce issues.

Carrie Molke: The DHS Secretary and Governor are not in favor of creating a new council or committee because there are so many already. BADR currently provides support to nine consumer councils, some of which have members from other state departments. At LTC Council, workforce issues will be discussed.

Lisa Pugh: I think it's a great opportunity to jump on this invitation to make this a permanent charge of the Long Term Care Advisory Council. Could this particular charge, at least for the next year, be a standing issue on the LTC Council agenda because so many issues are moving forward in the Governor's budget and then can be discussed in a public way?

Faith Russell shared another idea from DHS is to begin offering a biannual Home Care Services Forum to encompass the following services:

- HCBS Home Providers
- Supportive Home Care
- Personal Care Services
- Home Health Services
- Respite Care Services (provided outside of licensed assisted living facilities)

The Forum model would provide an opportunity to continue discussions that took place during Task Force meetings. Home Care Services Forum will likely be held twice-per-year beginning in June 2021.

Lisa Schneider: There are also existing groups, alliances and coalitions that don't require appointment, such as WPSA, WLCWA, WFACSA, etc. that could adopt certain charges/issues from the Governor's Task Force policy recommendations. Make use of some of the infrastructure that we have. Many of the early ideas for the Task Force came from the Family and Caregiver Support Alliance. She encouraged people to join and get on the WFACSA listserv. Info here: <http://wisconsincaregiver.org/alliance>

VIII. Public Comments

- **Lynne from Mukwonago, WI:** She has been her sister's caregiver since May 2019. The sister owns two homes so she isn't eligible for payments for the care she provides. Is there anything on the horizon to change that?

IX. Closing Remarks from Co-Chairs: Todd Costello and Lisa Pugh thanked everyone. Members returned their thanks to the co-chairs and to each other.

X. Adjourned

Chat Comments:

- From Stephanie Birmingham: I think the consequences that impact "COVID long-haulers" will be important in future conversations.
- From Bill Crowley: I understand that part of the federal COVID relief being discussed could increase the financial incentive for states to expand Medicaid. If that indeed passes, would the current proposal be amended to reflect the new potential savings?
- From Jason Endres: Very disappointed to see a standard background check for all LTC programs.
- From John Sauer, LeadingAge Wisconsin: Has DHS given thought on the process it will follow to develop rate bands and if an outside contractor will be engaged to help develop the rate bands? Could DHS start working on this change now and not wait for the budget to pass?

- From Stephanie Birmingham: If there was enough public support for something in the budget that doesn't have funding associated with it, could the Joint Finance Committee make a change to add funding?
- From Beth Swedeen: To John's point on rate bands evaluation, can we discuss options for moving forward with other potential types of funding? For instance, Money Follows the Person might be a source of funding for moving forward on evaluation of current rates.
- From Faith Russel: Yes, the Finance Committee could add funding if it wants to.
- From Stephanie Birmingham: A somewhat technical question - When speaking with legislators, do we say that we are members of the TF, or were members? In other words, is there a Phase 2 in the future? It might seem "in the weeds", but does the collective of the TF carry any weight as we move forward?
- From Mo: I am interested in the direct care funding, FMLA, caregiver tax credit, home care provider registry, Alzheimer's family caregivers, home and community based services, medical expansion, earning disregard, direct support professional training,
- From Bill Crowley: I would be interested in either a Facebook group or email group
- From Jane Mahoney: A listserv would be preferable over a FB group
- From Sue: My particular interest is ADRC expansion and TCARE
- From Jane Bushnell: I would agree with a listserv
- From Stephanie Birmingham: I'm interested in the training of DSP/caregivers
- From Bill Crowley: I am interested in direct care funding, Medicaid expansion, HCBS services, ADRCs
- From John Sauer, LeadingAge Wisconsin: Our top issue: Nursing Home Rate Increases
- From Mo: I feel that we definitely should create a group so we can stay connected with the updates so we can participate in the issues we really want to support. I believe that all members are interested in the proposals we put forth.
- From John Sauer, LeadingAge Wisconsin: Family Care Direct Care Workforce funds; Rate bands are the top 3 for us
- From Mike Pochowski: Family Care Direct Care Workforce Funds and Rate bands are our top issues
- From tbehncke: I will be working the DCFI and rate bands/market based wages. I have met with some legislators of the JFC and our family support groups have been contacting the same with our issues. The Lakeland MCO rate cut of 9% has set some conditions for bipartisan support of our initiatives.
- From Bill Crowley: Training for me as well
- From Faith Russell: Denise Richter, Senator Bernier's legislative aide, has let me know that the JFC is planning for public hearings to be held on UW campuses who have offered their facilities for meetings.
- From Jane Bushnell: Will advocate for all proposals brought forth from the GTFC. Priorities are rate bands, direct care funding for family care and home care registry.
- From Jane Mahoney: My focus is on Helen's first bucket - things that directly affect families: ADRC expansion, TCARE, FMLA, Caregiver Tax Credit, AFCSP, registry
- From Jason Endres: I am a member of the Task Force, but I am an advocate for what affects my family and friends.
- From Stephanie Birmingham: I'll say this until I'm blue in the face - We are all one accident, injury, illness or dx away from needing caregiving. And if you live long enough, you'll likely need some degree of caregiving. So, these matters really are for ALL. I think this is our greatest point.

- From Todd Costello: My focus through WPSA will be: Earning Disregard, Medicaid expansion, Direct care funding for Personal Care, Direct Care funding for Family Care, DSP Training, Home and community based services program rate bands.

Prepared by: Lynn Gall, DHS Office on Aging on 3/3/2021.

