



Wisconsin Family Ties

WFT Guiding Principles

1. Children belong at home with their families.
2. Families have the right to make decisions for their children and to pursue their own identities and destinies. Families that include children with emotional or behavioral disorders do not forfeit these rights.
3. Parents are the experts on their children and should be equal partners in planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating services.
4. Children with mental health needs have intrinsic value, possess unique talents, gifts and strengths, and may require individualized services consistent with best practices to achieve their full potential.
5. Children with mental health needs deserve the same education as all children – one which, through the discovery and development of each child’s individual abilities, prepares him or her for life.
6. Every child deserves a school which is safe from physical or emotional harm and harassment at the hands of peers or adults. Schools should have programs that effectively deal with bullying, be free from seclusion, and use restraint only in emergency situations when not to do so would result in imminent, serious harm to an individual.
7. All children deserve communities which recognize and plan for their needs. Communities should understand, accept and support families that include children with mental, emotional or behavioral disorders.
8. Service systems should be strengths-based, family-driven and include measures that will ensure early detection of mental health disorders, provide care and treatment, and deliver such services, supports and training so our children may become assets to society. Expenses of these services should be borne publicly where they cannot be privately met.
9. Every child who is in conflict with society has the right to be dealt with intelligently as society’s charge, not society’s outcast, with the home, the school, the religious community, the courts and the institution when needed, shaped to return him or her whenever possible to the normal stream of life.
10. In all we do, we should respect families, acknowledge their strengths and needs without judgment, collaborate with individuals and agencies that work with or care for our children, and be accountable to those we serve and those who fund our work.
11. Parents don’t have to be perfect.

(Numbers 5, 7, 8, and 9 adapted in part from *The Children’s Charter*, White House Conference on Child Health and Protection, November 22, 1930)

Wisconsin’s family voice for children’s mental health

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