The concept of family-oriented education for policymakers originated with the Family Impact Seminar (FIS), founded in 1976. FIS was an independent, nonpartisan policy institute headquartered in Washington, D.C. More than forty seminars have been held for federal policymakers. In 1999, the federal FIS changed administration and location. It is now called The Policy Institute for Family Impact Seminars and is located in Madison, Wisconsin under the direction of Dr. Karen Bogenschneider, Associate Professor, Human Development and Family Studies, and Family Policy Specialist, UW-Extension. Since 1993, Family Impact Seminars have been held in Madison for state policymakers on topics such as child support, welfare reform, education, juvenile crime, parenting and long-term care.

Jefferson County is one of several counties in Wisconsin conducting Family Impact Seminars for local policymakers, including local government officials; county agency representatives; school officials; clergy; business leaders; and other community leaders. The annual seminars in Jefferson County have been titled “Put Families First” and have addressed the following subjects:

- Promising Approaches for Addressing Juvenile Crime, March 1996
- How Can Communities Promote Competent Parenting?, March 1997
- Programs and Policies to Prevent Youth Smoking and Substance Abuse: What Works?, May 1998
- Strengthening Parent-Child Relationships and Community Partnerships, March 1999
- Building Community Based Systems of Support, March 2000
- Meeting The Needs of Our Youngest Children, March 2001
- Connecting Youth to Our Communities, March 2002
- Promoting Mental Health in the Workplace and At Home, May 2003
- Supporting and Strengthening Children and Families Affected by Poverty, March 2004
- Community and Employer Strategies to Support Family Caregivers, May, 2005
- Policies and Best Practices to End Hunger Close to Home, March 2006
- Strategies for Addressing Domestic Violence in Jefferson County, March 2007

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The goals of Family Impact Seminars are:

1. **To Inform Policymakers** - Expose policymakers to objective, nonpartisan and state-of-the-art information on current family issues.

2. **To Bring a Family Perspective to Policymaking** - Develop sensitivity to the need for and feasibility of analyzing policies for their impact on family well-being.

3. **To Facilitate Communication** - Provide open discussion of policy options among local policymakers, community-based organizations and professionals who educate families or deliver programs at the local level.

4. **To Provide Networking Opportunities** - Establish linkages among policymakers, family professionals, and UW-Extension educators that will provide a foundation for continuing dialogue, policy analysis, and policy change.

Family Impact Seminars are unique in a couple ways. These seminars are policy forums designed to bring a family focus to policymaking. Based on the growing realization that one of the best ways to help individuals is by strengthening their families, Family Impact Seminars analyze the consequences an issue, policy or program may have for families. The seminars do not lobby for particular policies. The half-day seminars include presentations by three or four researchers, policy analysts or service providers. Seminar participants discuss policy options and identify common ground where it exists.

A Jefferson County Family Impact Seminar advisory committee plans, conducts and evaluates the local seminars. For more information on Family Impact Seminars, contact Kathleen Eisenmann, Family Living Agent, University of Wisconsin –Extension, Jefferson County, 864 Collins Road, Jefferson, WI 53549-1976. Phone: (920) 674-7296; e-mail: kathy.eisenmann@ces.uwex.edu. For more information on the Policy Institute, see www.uwex.edu/ces/familyimpact.