

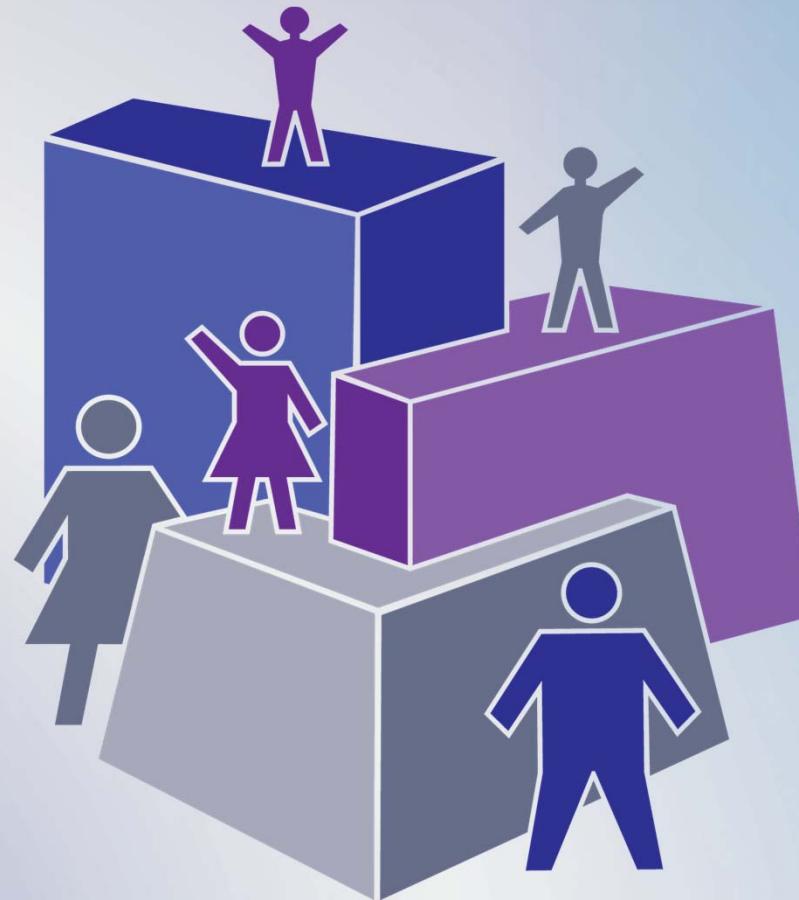


# **Family Impact Seminar Best Practices: Using Research and Analysis to Build Better Public Policy for Families**

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# **Families are the Cornerstone of a Strong Society and a Sound Economy**



# Many Families Are Struggling Today

Public policy has the potential to support families in dealing with stressful conditions:

- The inability to find a job,
- Afford health insurance,
- Secure quality child care, or
- Send their kids to good schools.



# What Today's Talk Will Cover

- (1) What would it take to make public policy work better for families?
- (2) Are policymakers interested in using research and analysis to guide their decisions?
- (3) What is the track record of the Family Impact Seminars in communicating research and analysis to policymakers?
- (4) What theory can guide efforts to connect research and policy?
- (5) What best practices can advance research-based, family-focused policy?



**(1) What would it take  
to make  
public policy work better  
for families?**



# How Public Policy Could Be Better

Policymaking could be better  
if it leveraged  
the contributions that  
families make to society.



# Leveraging the Contributions Families Make to Society

- Families are a fundamental foundation for generating productive workers.



# Leveraging the Contributions Families Make to Productive Workers

- Families are a fundamental foundation for generating productive workers.
  - Based on the quality of care up to about age 4, researchers in the USA can predict which kids will drop out of school 11 to 14 years later.



# Policies That Leverage Family Contributions to Productive Workers

- Chile made a major investment in access to and the quality of child care.
- Belgium, France, Iceland, Italy, and Spain support public preschool for 95% of their children.
- In studies in Canada and the United States, supplementing parents who work at low-wage jobs improves children's school performance and sometimes their social development.



# Leveraging the Contributions Families Make to Society

- Families are a fundamental foundation for generating productive workers.
- Families contribute to the rearing of caring, committed citizens.



# Policies That Leverage Family Contributions to Committed Citizens

- Families contribute to the rearing of caring, committed citizens.
  - When a mother and child were securely attached during infancy, children had several qualities at ages 15 and 16 that many societies value—competent problem solving, involvement, leadership, and self-confidence.



# Policies That Leverage Family Contributions to Committed Citizens

- Most countries in Europe provide paid maternity leave from 14 to 20 weeks with 70% to 100% wage replacement.
- In Belgium, children receive home visits from healthcare workers.
- In Belgium, mothers and infants visit a healthcare center that provide checkups for babies, and an opportunity for mothers to learn from each other.



# Public Policymaking Could Be Better If It:

- Leveraged the contributions that families make to society
- Was informed by hard evidence drawn from rigorous research and dispassionate analysis



# Closing the Gap Between Research and Policy

We believe it is possible  
to bring  
policymakers and experts together  
to build  
better public policy for families.



## **(2) Are Policymakers Interested in Using Research and Analysis to Guide Their Decisions?**



# **So Policymakers Say They Want Research, But Can Researchers and Experts Deliver it?**



**(3) What is the Track Record of  
the Family Impact Seminars  
in Communicating  
Research and Analysis  
to Policymakers?**



# **The Family Impact Seminars are a Series of Presentations, Discussion Sessions, and Briefing Reports for:**

- State Legislators
- Legislative Aides
- The Governor's Office
- Legislative Service Agency Personnel
- State Agency Representatives
- University Faculty
- **Lobbyists and the Press are not Invited.**



# The Family Impact Seminars

## Aim To:

- Build greater respect for and use of research in policy decisions
- Encourage policymakers to examine policies and programs through the lens of family impacts
- Provide neutral, nonpartisan opportunities for legislators to engage in open dialogue for fostering relationships and finding common ground

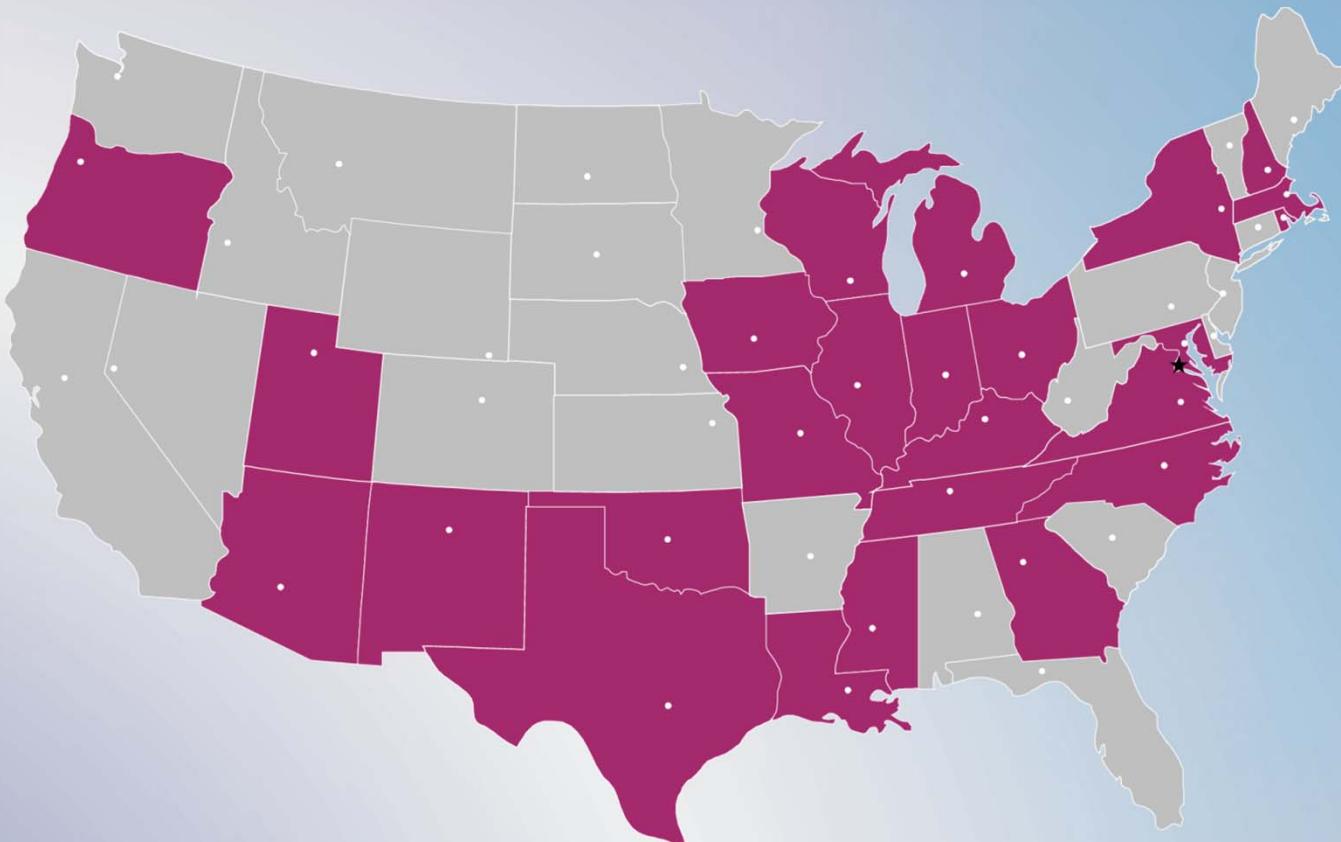


# The Family Impact Seminar Methodology

- Two-hour seminar
- Round table luncheon for legislators and speakers
- Discussion session for high-ranking state agency officials
- Briefing report
- Audios and videos of the presentations on our website
- CDs of presentations



# The Family Impact Institute



# Since 1993, 190 Seminars Have Been Conducted On:

Topics that improve parenting and family functioning

- Home visiting
- Parenting
- Strengthening families

Topics that support parenting and family functioning

- Early childhood education and care
- Jobs
- Poverty
- Schooling



# Do Policymakers Attend the Family Impact Seminars?

- Of the 132 Wisconsin legislators currently in office, 79 attended at least one seminar activity during their time in office and another 12 offices sent an aide.
- The seminars reached almost 7 in 10 offices in the Wisconsin state legislature.

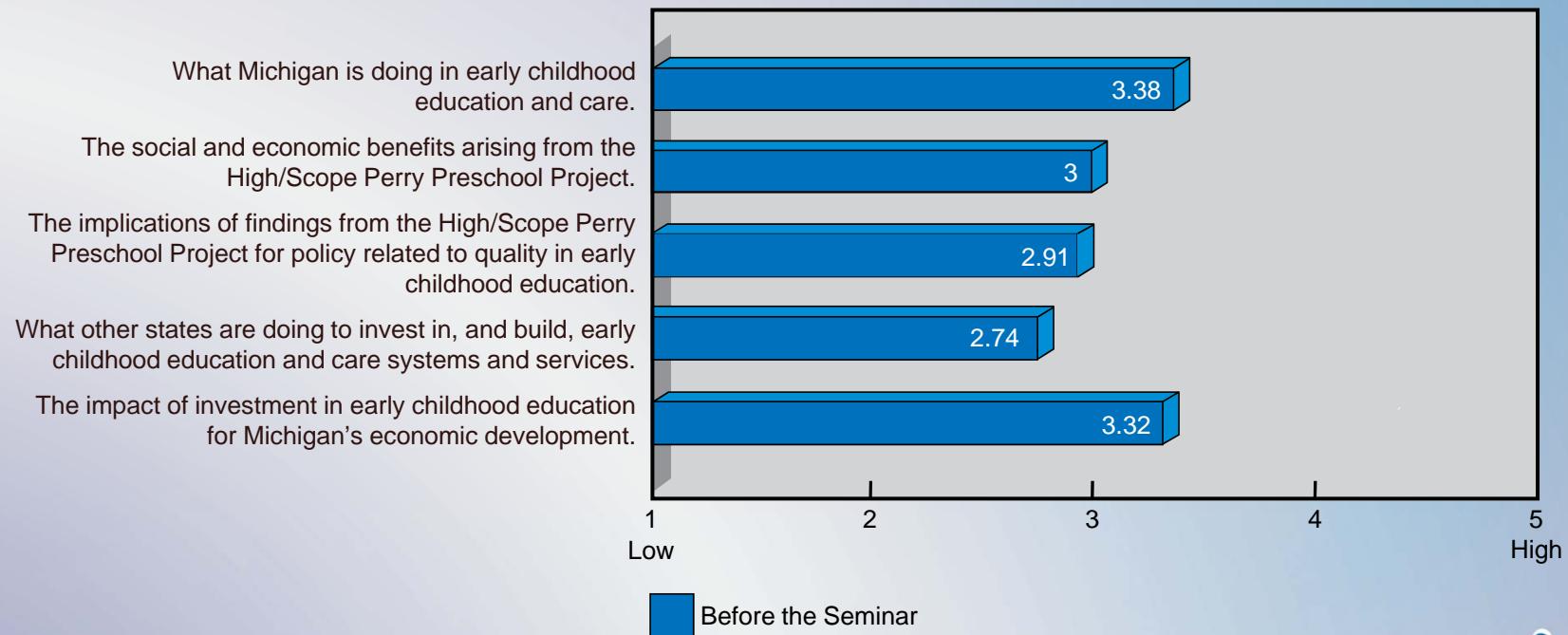
(Bogenschneider, 2014)



# How Much Do Family Impact Seminar Participants Learn?

## How much Participants Learned at Michigan's Early Childhood Education & Care Seminar

How Participants Rated Their Understanding of:



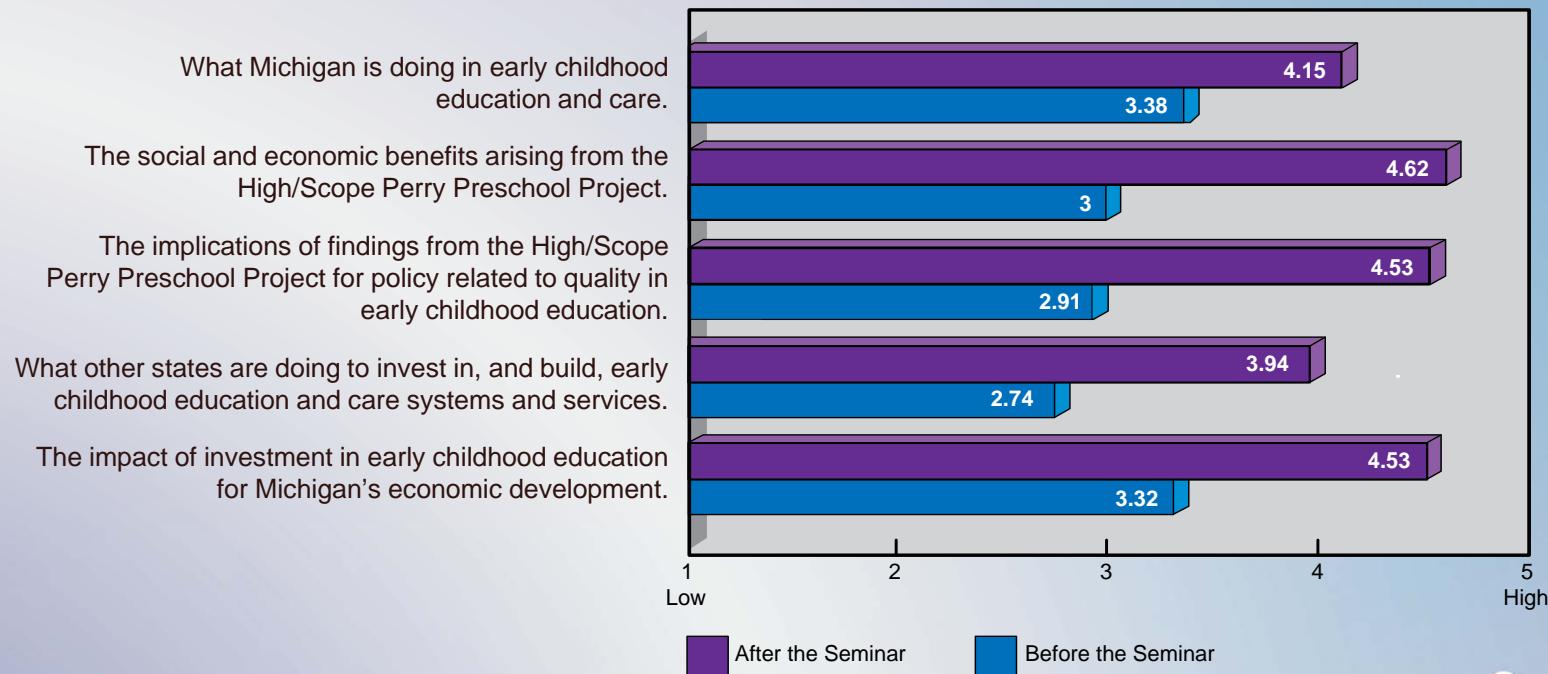
Note. Based on responses from 34 participants (65% response rate).



# How Much Do Family Impact Seminar Participants Learn?

## How much Participants Learned at Michigan's Early Childhood Education & Care Seminar

How Participants Rated Their Understanding of:



Note. Each difference between the pre- and post-test means is significant at  $p < .01$ ; based on responses from 34 participants (65% response rate).



# Do the Family Impact Seminars Change Legislator's Attitudes?

**Because of the Family Impact Seminars,  
I am more likely to:**

Consider how pending legislation might affect families.

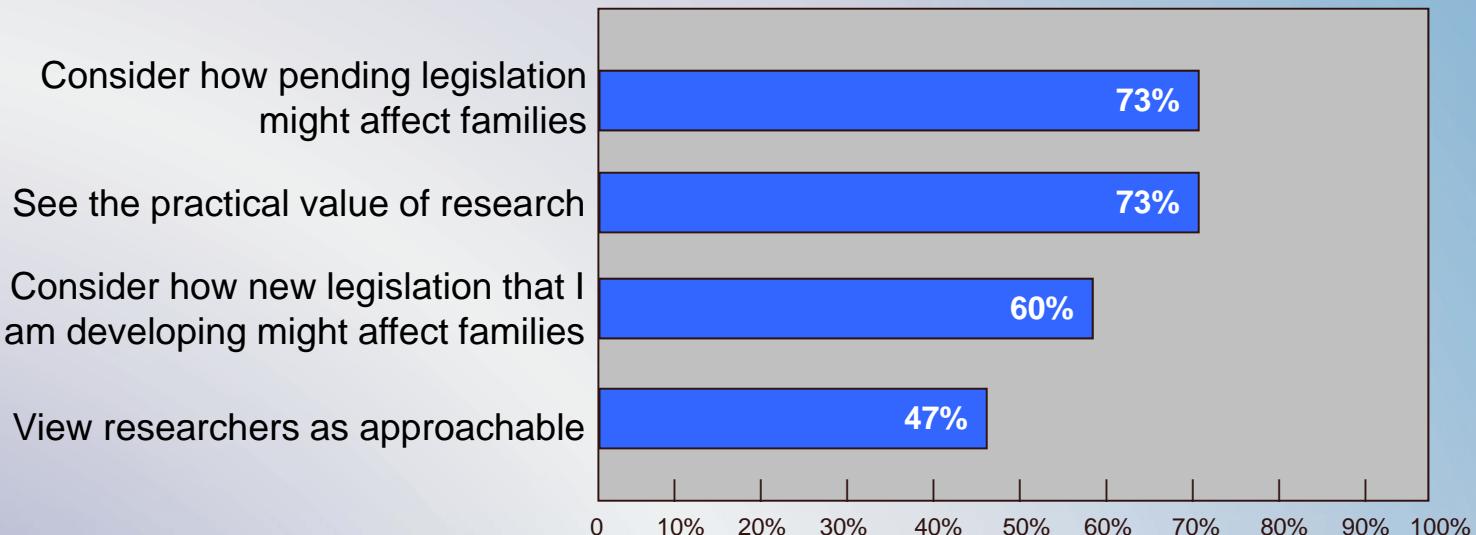
Consider how new legislation that I am developing might affect families.

Not at All	A Little	Quite a Bit



# Do the Family Impact Seminars Change Legislator's Attitudes?

Because of the Family Impact Seminars, legislators are “quite a bit” more likely to:



Note. Based on phone interviews of 15 Wisconsin legislators (88% response rate) following the 2006 long-term care seminar.



# Do Legislators Use Research Presented at the Seminars?

- 100% used it to evaluate legislation
- 82% incorporated the information into speeches or presentations
- 80% identified references for further information
- 78% shared it with colleagues
- 64% helped identify others interested in the issue
- 30% contacted researchers with questions
- 2 drafted legislation

(N=11, 55% response rate following two seminars on prescription drugs)



# How Have Legislators Used Seminar Information?

In Oregon, following their first seminar, a refundable child care tax credit was adopted.

- In 2003, the credit was claimed by almost 26,000 taxpayers.

In Nebraska, after a health care seminar, a state children's health insurance (SCHIP) law was passed.

- In 2009, over 48,000 children were served sometime during the year.

In Wisconsin, four features of other states' prescription drug programs discussed at the Seminar were incorporated into a new law.

- In March of 2012, enrollment was over 87,000 seniors.



# **(4) What Theory Can Guide Efforts to Connect Research and Policy?**





“As an anthropologist, I’ve been to tropic jungles and frozen tundras. I’ve seen primitive cultures and sophisticated societies. But this is the only place where I’ve been unable to figure out what is going on.”



# Theoretical Basis for Research-Based Family Policy

## Community Dissonance Theory

The underutilization of research is attributed to a communication gap between researchers and policymakers

- who belong to different communities,
- come from different professional and institutional cultures, and
- have divergent goals, information needs, reward systems, and languages.

(Bogenschneider & Corbett, 2010a)



# If Behavioral Factors Underlie Research Underutilization

Careful attention to several pragmatic processes and procedures can:

- improve communication between the two cultures, and
- increase the use of research in policymaking.



# **(5) What Best Practices Can Advance Research-Based, Family-Focused Policy?**



# Study of Researchers Who Communicate Effectively with Policymakers

- Exemplar speakers from the 17 Family Impact Seminars based on assessments by experts and evaluations by policymakers
- 14 phone or face-to-face interviews of speakers in 2003 (73% response rate)
- 11 men and 3 women, mostly White
- Primarily university-employed
- Average of 20 years experience



# Sample Like a “Who’s Who” of Policy Communicators

- Member, team analyzing family policy in Australia, Canada, U.K., and U.S.
- Two presidents of national family and policy professional societies
- Worked for the U.S. Treasury to change the official poverty measure

(Friese & Bogenschneider, 2009)



# Best Practices for Building Research-Based, Family-Focused Policy

- (1) Conceptualize policy work, not as disseminating information to policymakers, but as developing relationships with them.



# The New Paradigm

We need to move away from expert models of disseminating information to policymakers to developing more collaborative, reciprocal relationships with them that result in a two-way flow of information.



# Best Practices for Building Research-Based, Family-Focused Policy

- (2) Provide seminars on timely topics identified by legislators.



# Best Practices for Building Research-Based, Family-Focused Policy

- (3) Provide research in the formats that policymakers prefer.



# Nutley, Walter, & Davies in *Using Evidence* (2007)

“Seminars or workshops that enable some discussion of research findings with their potential users, or which adopt a more collaborative approach, seem to be the most effective method of dissemination for policymakers.” (p. 135)



# Best Practices for Building Research-Based, Family-Focused Policy

- (4) Approach policy work as an educator, not an advocate.



# Policy Advocacy

To campaign for an underrepresented group or a particular policy alternative that may potentially help you reach a specific goal or outcome

(Bogenschneider & Corbett, 2010a)



# The Intent of the Policy Advocate is to *Persuade*

The aim is self-consciously to shape and influence the debate in line with a preconceived set of ideas or principles rather than simply to pursue research questions in whatever direction they may lead.

(Smith, 1991, p. 206)



# Two Types of Advocacy

- “advocacy” with a small “a” is working on behalf of a particular population (e.g., families) or working to advance evidence-based policy in general.
- “Advocacy” with a capital “A” is lobbying for a specific bill or a particular policy option.



# Policy Alternatives Education

- Informs policy discourse by clarifying the potential consequences of various policy alternatives.
- The value judgments and ultimate decisions are entrusted to policymakers elected to make these decisions.



# **The Intent of the Policy Educator Is to Inform**

By presenting research findings objectively  
without relaying personal preferences.

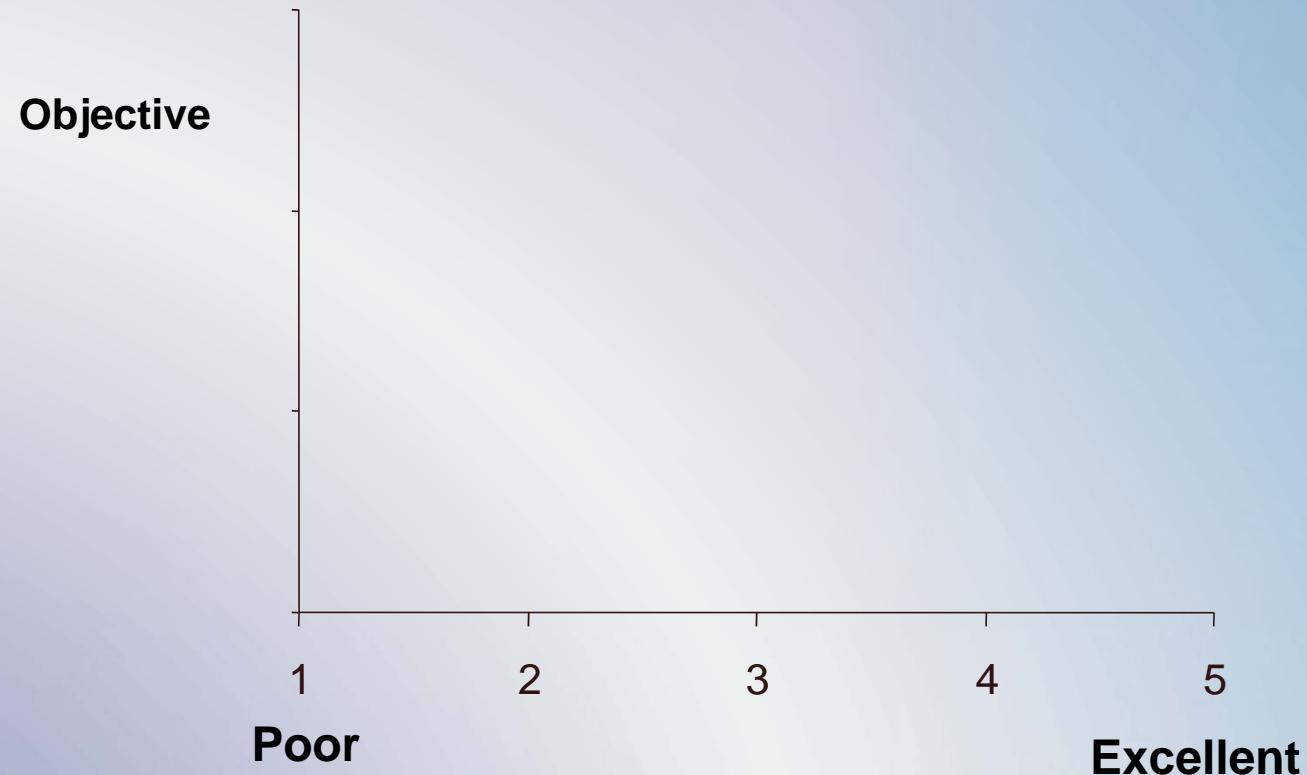


# The Educational Approach is Effective in the Policy Process Because it is:

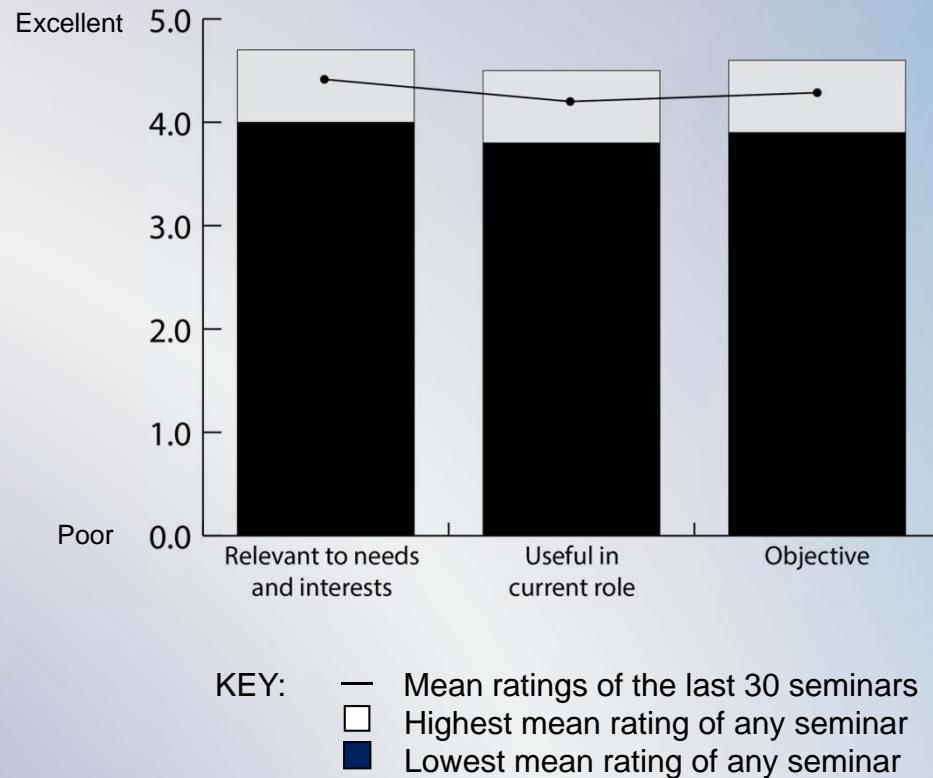
- Responsive to what policymakers say they need and want—not more information, but more objective and reliable information



# How do Legislators Rate the Objectivity of the Seminars?



# How Relevant, Useful, and Objective Do Participants Find the Wisconsin Seminars?



# The Educational Approach is Effective in the Policy Process Because it is:

- Responsive to what policymakers say they need and want—not more information, but more objective and reliable information
- Representative of a personal commitment to the principles of a democracy



# Best Practices for Building Research-Based, Family-Focused Policy

- 1) Leverage the contributions families make to society by providing policy options to both support and improve parenting and family functioning.
- 2) Instead of thinking of disseminating research *to* policymakers, focus on developing relationships *with* them.
- 3) Provide information on timely topics identified by policymakers.
- 4) Provide information in the oral format policymakers prefer—presentations & discussions.
- 5) Approach policy work as an educator, not an advocate.



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