
Notes on the Fatherhood Collaboration Network Call – July 18, 2006

Thank you very much to the individuals who gave presentations during the Collaboration Network Call held on July 18, 2006: Ms. Joyce A. Thomas, Administrator, Region V, Administration for Children and Families (ACF); Sharon Pierce, President and CEO, Villages of Indiana; Dianna Durham-McCloud, President and CEO, Illiana Coalition for Family and Community Restoration; Shelley Hawver, Early Head Start Manager, Community Action Agency of Jackson Michigan; and Bob Pletcher, Head Start Male Involvement Educator, Community Action Agency of Jackson Michigan. We are pleased to announce that Ron Nichols, Director of Training, National Center on Fathering, Kansas City, Missouri, and Michelle Denise Rowell, Transitional Living Specialist, Project Oz, Bloomington, Illinois, will be joining Duane Wilson as presenters on the call.

Please save the date: The next Collaboration Network Call will be held on October 24, 2006, at 1:30 PM CT, 2:30 PM ET. Participants suggested several topics and interest was high for a discussion on staff training and development in relation to the fatherhood and healthy marriage initiatives. ACF Region V is proceeding with arrangements to send contact information for additional speaker(s). One of the call participants, Duane Wilson with the Michigan Department of Human Services, was recommended by a participant to be the speaker on the next call and Duane agreed to present on the call. You will see an announcement of the next call, along with more specific details and information on how to sign-up for the call, through the Fatherhood Listserv approximately one month prior to the call.

I. Welcome and Introductions

Kathleen Penak, Region V Head Start, welcomed the participants on the call and the participants introduced themselves.

Illinois Participants:

- Lockhart-White, Mary – Community Action Partnership of Lake County, Waukegan
- McCloud, Dianna Durham – Illiana Coalition, Hazel Crest
- Pargin, Shannon SIUC, Head Start, Carbondale, IL
- Rawn, Barbara – Prevent Child Abuse America, Chicago
- Reed, Cathy - SIUC, Head Start, Carbondale, IL
- Steele, Christopher – CEDA Head Start, PLCC, Maywood
- Uphoff, Janet – Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, Champaign

Indiana Participants

- Frame, Lori – Area Five Head Start, Logansport
- Lambert, Dr. Ruth - Indiana Marriage and Family Coalition, Inc.
- Kikendal, Phyllis - Healthy Families Indiana
- Lovell, Guy , Kokomo - Center School Head Start
- McLaughlin, Wallace - Fathers and Families Resource/Research Center Inc., Indianapolis

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- Moore, Thelzelda – Indiana Family and Social Services Administration, Indianapolis
- Moussou, Fey Fey - CANI/ Head Start, Fort Wayne
- Pierce, Sharon – Villages of Indiana
- Ripperger, Bob – Fathers and Families Resource/Research Center Inc., Indianapolis

Iowa Participants:

- Lacina, Barbara – Des Moines Region of Iowa Child Support Recovery Program

Michigan Participants:

- Castro, Jan - Eight CAP, Inc, Greenville
- DeKraker, Brian – Eight CAP, Inc., Greenville
- Durnan, Ellen – Michigan Office of Child Support, Lansing
- Hawver, Shelley – Community Action Agency of Jackson Michigan
- Pletcher, Bob – Community Action Agency of Jackson Michigan
- Wilson, Duane – Michigan Department of Human Services, Lansing

Minnesota Participants:

- Lockwood, Angie - Tri-Valley Head Start, Crookston

Ohio Participants:

- Pack, Pat – Child Focus, Inc/Clermont County Head Start, Cincinnati
- Rose, Rachel -Coshocton County Head Start, Coshocton,
- Smith, Terry - Child Development Council of Franklin County, Columbus Ohio

Virginia Participants:

- Burke, Dr. J. Elisha – Baptist General Convention of Virginia, Richmond

Wisconsin Participants:

- May, Rebecca – Center for Family Policy and Practice, Madison

Region V Participants:

- Erb, Heather – Head Start
- Hurey, Ivan – Head Start
- Miller, Constance – Child Welfare
- Miller, Gena – Child Care/DD
- Neal, Katrina – Head Start
- Niewoehner, Gene – TANF
- Patterson, Argussie – Head Start
- Penak, Kathleen – Head Start
- Schindler, Tom – TANF
- Thigpen, Sharon – Head Start
- Thomas, Joyce – ACF Administrator, Region V

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- Vicars, Mike – Child Support
- Walker, Estelle – Head Start
- Weiser, Jenny – Runaway and Homeless Youth
- Wilcox, Kent – Director, Office of Family Self Sufficiency
- Williams, Katie – Head Start
- Willmoth, Kay – Director, Office of Family and Child Development

Booz Allen Hamilton Participants:

- Bragg, George – Senior Consultant
- Green, Vander – Content Expert
- Rakov, Lois – Associate
- Seneviratne, Rosie – Consultant

* There were other participants whose names or organization names were not captured clearly on the call and we would like to add you to the participant list. Please e-mail rakov_lois@bah.com with this information. Thank you.

Introduction of Speakers

Kathleen Penak, Region V, introduced each presenter, starting with Ms. Joyce Thomas.

II. Presentation/Discussion

The first presenter was Ms. Joyce A. Thomas, Administrator, ACF Region V. Ms. Thomas thanked Kathy Penak, Lois Rakov, the Fatherhood Workgroup, and all of the co-presenters for their involvement in strengthening the fatherhood initiatives and goals. ACF's priority is working to keep these initiatives in the forefront, where they need to be. She emphasized the importance of moving forward and bringing together fatherhood and healthy marriage initiatives on the local level. For the past six years, ACF has had nine priority areas and two of those areas have been fatherhood and healthy marriage. ACF's relationship with these areas has been strong and will continue to be strong in the future. The past work that has been done in the fatherhood field has helped sustain the relationships that are now evident and necessary for healthy marriage as well.

There have been fatherhood Head Start and Early Head Start planning grants awarded and training courses available. ACF sponsored a Fatherhood Training in Dallas in which 3,000 people participated to help agencies build responsible fatherhood supportive programs working toward positive outcomes for children. Ms. Thomas stressed that responsible fatherhood is about building relationships, and it is also about the outcomes for the children.

Currently, 175 grants and 60 million dollars have been awarded for healthy marriage activities. These activities have been funded through many ACF programs (e.g., Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Refugee Resettlement, and the Children's Bureau) in addition to the most recent funding opportunity under the Deficit

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Reduction Act. Within Region V, there are five federal waiver HMI grants. Moreover, there are also the Hispanic and African American Healthy Marriage Initiatives.

ACF has been working with welfare and child support agencies. Recognizing that many children have parents who are incarcerated, ACF has been funding programs that will mentor these children. In addition to the welfare program and the initiatives it supports, there is a special focus on case management. For example, there is an ACF supported mentoring program for children of incarcerated parents.

Region V has a Fatherhood Strategic Plan - that has been worked on by the Fatherhood Workgroup - to make sure that all the programs at ACF have a father-friendly component. Presently, Region V is working on a new partnership with the Midwest Center for Workforce and Family Development. The first part of the strategy is to initiate state forums in each of the five states in Region V. The second part of the strategy is to convene a Regional Fatherhood Council.

Ms. Thomas emphasized the importance of bridging the gap in fatherhood and healthy marriage. She referenced the WinShape Report, "Framing the Future: A Fatherhood and Healthy Marriage Forum" released by ACF following a conference in May 2005 in Rome, Georgia, at the WinShape Center. This conference brought together leaders from the Fatherhood Initiative and from the Healthy Marriage Initiative to discuss how to foster the well-being of children. Participants who developed this report wanted to highlight the importance of not only bridging the two areas but enhancing the outreach for both initiatives. One of the main purposes of this call is to bring together leaders in the fatherhood and the healthy marriage initiatives to talk about the issues, concerns, and activities that the initiatives have in common and to look at models that are successfully in place.

It has been recognized that not every couple should be a married couple, but research indicates that at the time a baby is born, many low-income couples are together and have an interest in marriage. Two years later, these couples are often not together. Thus, the most important time to intervene for discussions of both responsible fatherhood and healthy marriage is close to the time of conception. Joint statements of purpose and working together on memorandums of understanding will assist all of us, but it is at the local level where service providers can reach out to each other and to those they serve, and look to provide joint services. Agencies and departments can work together on many things - from communication and outreach to assisting with applications and recruitment. Fatherhood and healthy marriage are areas for which resources will be available, and Region V will continue to look at building sustainable partnerships to enhance these two important areas.

Ms. Thomas explained the importance of working with the faith-based community and announced that there is a conference on August 7, 2006 in Cincinnati, Ohio, at the Convention Center, that will focus on how partners can work together to strengthen their relationships. The conference, entitled, "A Family Affair," is sponsored by the Progressive National Baptist Women's Department in collaboration with the National

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Council of Churches' Justice and Advocacy Commission and the Education and Leadership Ministries Commission. At the conference, presenters will give information on best practice models for relationship education, premarital and marriage counseling, and other family counseling services designed to meet the needs of African American congregations.

Ms. Thomas also announced a September 12-14, 2006, conference entitled, "Connecting Marriage Research to Practice" at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. More information is available by visiting the website, www.aahmi.net, or calling 919-883-0700.

In conclusion, Ms. Thomas stressed that agencies should not reinvent the wheel when planning for fatherhood and healthy marriage; they should use their local and national resources and contacts on this call. Furthermore, the agencies should not let the lack of funding stop them from tackling the key issue of healthy marriage and fatherhood. In order to assist in further outreach and information, the ACF fatherhood website was referenced to be included in the meeting notes which are sent out on the listserv, as well as the credited referenced WinShape report. (The Fatherhood website referenced is: <http://fatherhood.hhs.gov/Partners/regions.shtml> and the WinShape report can be viewed at www.acf.hhs.gov/healthymarriage/pdf/winshape_report_final.pdf)

The next presenter was Ms. Sharon Pierce, President and CEO, Villages of Indiana. Villages of Indiana started 28 years ago. Villages has "reinvented themselves" during the last five years to include children who are within their own family settings. The organization found that the children who were in the group homes the Villages of Indiana supported grew and flourished in them. One of the ways that Villages of Indiana bridges fatherhood and healthy marriage is by working with first time parents. Ms. Pierce emphasized the difficulty in filling the parental role, how parents need support, and how fathers often need motivation to get excited about their role as new fathers. She mentioned their program's active involvement with Kinship Care and that they have nearly 50,000 grandparents and kin raising grandchildren. They work to engage fathers in all their programming. They also work to get private funding for "respite trips" to assist parents since many marriages are often under stress. They are usually working in a challenging environment in which to engage fathers, striving to get fathers involved with the mothers of their children, and helping mothers feel more emotionally supported. They are working in Indiana on a prevention program with community partners that will be an alternate response to removing children from the home. The activities focus on drawing in fathers to get more involved. The kinship care programs serve to engage fathers while the educational field trips serve to help the children understand their heritage.

The next presenter was Dianna Durham-McCloud, CEO of the Illiana Coalition for Family and Community Restoration. Ms. Durham-McCloud questioned whether the two areas, fatherhood and healthy marriage, should ever be separated. She explained that when reviewing the services provided in the two areas, the goals and activities of the two initiatives correlate. In the Illiana Coalition, they place the two topics in the context of the

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actual work they do with parents. For example, in pre-marriage counseling you will find information related to parenting. The degree of consistency between fatherhood and marriage goals is very high. In the Illiana Coalition, both programs work on parenting training for fathers and mothers, work to build relationships, emphasize conflict resolution and improve communication skills. She emphasized that when one looks at the “gap” between the two initiatives, this is mainly an issue for program providers more than it is an issue for the participants. Interested participants are not necessarily looking for a “Healthy Marriage Program.”

Ms. McLoud emphasized how important it is to have the ability to keep participants engaged in the program. The Illiana Coalition has been able to have an 85% participation success rate with males. The men do stay involved in their eight week program. She suggests that instead of talking about and planning for “Fatherhood” and “Healthy Marriage,” the way to proceed is to work under a framework of “Family Strengthening.” She emphasized how on-going “maintenance work” needs to occur to foster relationships. More importantly, assistance needs to be available to provide family strengthening in the very beginning rather than waiting until the marriage is weak. Ms. McLoud also gave information about an after-school program where children as young as kindergarten can begin to pay attention to avoiding conflict, building positive relationships, and learning about the roles and responsibilities of men and women in a family.

The next presenters were Shelley Hawver, Early Head Start Manager, and Bob Pletcher, Head Start Male Involvement Educator, from the Community Action Agency of Jackson Michigan (CAA of Jackson). Ms. Hawver emphasized the family holistic approach used by CAA of Jackson. Their agency received one of 26 Early Head Start fatherhood demonstration grants that were awarded in 2001, and this led CAA of Jackson to look at how father-friendly their agency was in Head Start and Early Head Start. They also received a Fatherhood Special Initiative grant and a Michigan grant and are part of the Michigan Proud Fathers-Proud Parents (PFPP) program, the state’s Responsible Fatherhood and Healthy Marriage Initiatives. Agency staff have attended training on fatherhood, analyzed the literature being disseminated by the Agency, looked at how father friendly the building was, and how inclusive the forms utilized were. Moving forward, the Agency took part in additional training. Ms. Hawver emphasized the importance of the question, “What does it mean to be a father in today’s society” and how discussions and staff training are affected by this. One of the most important pieces examined by CAA of Jackson involves staff attitudes on fatherhood, especially among female staff, and how attitude affects the staffs’ relationships with agency clients.

Ms. Hawver offered some very significant advice:

- “Make sure, you are really working with staff.” Look at staff attitudes. Female staff relationships with their fathers or other males can be “hot button” issues. They discuss the ways in which a person’s upbringing can either aid or impede how one works with parents and participants in their programs.

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- “Be open and yet sensible.” When staff or participants come up with a new idea, listen to it even if it is something you have not tried before and it sounds challenging.

Mr. Pletcher noted how mothers often hold the key to when and how much the fathers are involved with their children. CAA of Jackson organizes family activities, with the largest being a Father Fair, an annual, nationally- promoted event to bring together the community to look at the importance of fatherhood. After training for Father/Male Involvement, Mr. Pletcher has also attended and received training at the annual Smart Marriage conferences. He suggested participants visit the *Smart Marriage* website and sign-up to become listserv members, so they can receive information on a wide variety of programs related to healthy marriage. He noted that in their program, they serve married and unmarried participants and are working to give couples the relationship skills they need and want. He explained that many basic skills can be taught. They use the PREP curriculum and participants were excited to go home with concrete tools and information from this program.

IV. Presentation Conclusion

The question was asked whether the agencies have noticed a difference in developmental gains and outcomes with regard to children. Ms. Hawver noted that individual child outcomes have not been studied with regard to their bridged fatherhood/healthy marriage initiative, but the CAA of Jackson has seen that children from more stable home environments do appear to do better in areas of development that are studied.

V. Future Calls

Lois Rakov continued the collaboration network call by asking the participants if they had any ideas for future calls. Ms. Rakov read a list of topics, which have been continuously requested. The topics included:

- ✓ rural fatherhood programs,
- ✓ Hispanic fatherhood groups/unique and multi-ethnic groups,
- ✓ fathers and the child welfare system,
- ✓ in-service training and staff roles in father/male programs,
- ✓ “Fatherhood” curricula,
- ✓ grandparents and kinfolk in parenting young children,
- ✓ access and visitation - what is happening in the six states,
- ✓ fathers with children with special needs, and
- ✓ the explanation of the Deficit Reduction Act and how it impacts fathers and families.

Participants suggested that since we are discussing ways to bridge healthy marriage and fatherhood and how agency staff can initiate the process in reaching out to the

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community in those areas, we should discuss staff training and development in relation to the two initiatives.

A participant recommended that Duane Wilson be a presenter on the next call. When asked, Mr. Wilson accepted the request. Call participants and workgroup members will proceed with arrangements for additional speaker(s) and to gather contact information from speakers.

Participants mentioned several possible dates for the next call and **October 24, 2006 at 1:30 PM CT, 2:30 PM ET** is the date and time designated.

Kathleen Penak concluded the meeting by thanking the co-presenters and everyone for joining the call and hoped everyone would be available to join the next call.