



What's right with this picture?

What's wrong with public policy affecting fathers and families?

By Calvin L. Williams, President of the Board of Directors, OPNFF

Look carefully at the picture contained in this article.

Now, with no right or wrong answers, tell yourself what you see. What do you think is happening in the picture? Good. Know that if we could reproduce this scene in every neighborhood in every community in Ohio all of our lives



would be significantly better. Less juvenile crime, more children successfully completing school, fewer teen pregnancies, decreased rates of incarceration, more stable families; the possibilities are endless.

What's right with this picture is that it's of thirteen men taking a class on how to be better fathers. Between them, these men have over forty children.

The Ohio Practitioners' Network for Fathers and Families (OPNFF) exists to strengthen the professionals that do this important work. Our efforts are about replicating what's happening in the picture so that thousands of fathers and hundreds of thousands of children can be part of healthy,

thriving families that feed the strength of our great State.

As a part of our mission, we have an obligation to

inform public policy, to speak to issues that hinder and even prevent men from being present and involved in the lives of their children.

In this issue of our newsletter, we present the OPNFF Public Policy Agenda. This document is a product of the best thinking about children, fathers and families, supported by research, trends and analysis in five key areas:

- Child Support
- Job Training and Employment
- Welfare Reform/TANF
- Fathers, Families and Professional Support
- Incarceration & Reentry

Thankfully, more public and private sector leaders, policy makers, foundations and community-based non-profits are aware of and reacting to the crisis that is fatherless Ohio. Yet we are still only nipping at the edges of the problem. For the sake of families and children in Ohio, it is time to vigorously reengineer the application of policy, practice and resources in the key areas contained in the Public Policy Agenda.

The primary target of these renewed efforts are low-income fathers. These men and their children suffer the most when we don't get it right with policy development and implementation around supporting families. They have fewer resources and options when we fail them.

Most low-income and poor fathers are survivors of absent, neglectful or abusive fathers themselves; experiences that render them virtually helpless

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Popular Compassionate Parenting Workshop comes to Ohio

OPNFF proudly brings to Ohio the nation's leading expert on the causes and management of resentment and anger. Dr Steven Stosny will deliver a two-day workshop "Compassionate Parenting" October 10th and 11th,

2006 at the Holiday Inn in Zanesville.

Throughout the centuries two primary roles of men have been to hunt and protect because males have a biological predisposition for aggression.

Sometimes that proclivity leads to belligerence against people we love. As fathers, we can confuse our children about when and when not to use aggression.

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We welcome our new members!

- Eli Williams
- Alex Roseborough
- Jan King
- Kathie DeMuesy
- Janet Irwin
- Deb McKee
- Shari Kuhn
- Kurt Looper
- Cynthia Myricks
- Pastor Cory Pariseau
- Steven Napier
- Jim Mason
- Chandra Mathews-Smith
- Jennifer Sharma
- Dave Brewer
- Rickale Weaver
- Margaret Jones
- Laticia Ivey
- Harold Howard Sr
- Loyce Page
- Paul Davis
- Melvin Marshall
- Winifred Payne
- Cory Coleman
- Dan and Gretchen Mahan
- Brenda Madison
- Felicia Thames
- Jeffery Rayford
- Theresa Falletta
- Vince T Durant
- Joan Burge
- Nicole Haberman
- James Jordan
- Jeanne Kamiab RN
- Linda Gray
- Cynthia Ramsey
- Hope Helbert
- Nancy Liptak
- Anne and Dave Roesch
- Laura Hutter
- Nicole Haberman
- Dianne Solembro
- Nick Kerosky
- Cheri Jones
- James Jordan
- Joan Burge
- Pat Smith
- Elizabeth Davi
- Janice Davis
- Judy Wood
- Lief Noll
- Barbara M Curl
- Jennifer Rucker
- Doris Clary
- Burl Lemon
- Jean Montgomery
- Mary Anne Nelson
- Darrell Guest
- Jim Williams

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Welcome New Members!

Lin D Hayes
 Marsha Gates
 Jon Freeman
 Veronica Adamski
 Wynida Searcy
 Dianna Crockett
 Kimberly Hettel
 Rhonda Davenport
 Heather Rice
 Dr Negero Djaleta
 Brenda Kay Phillips
 Herbert Ross
 Andy Ellinger
 LaWanda Harvey
 Katie Gladwell
 Amanda Bornwell
 Paula Duplessis
 Anne Risch
 Timothy W Green
 David A Yokum
 Latesha Jones
 Valerie Swayne
 Trina Ardister-Smith
 Coleen Backman
 Kristin Dillard
 Yvonne Howard
 Kandace Cooper
 Cheri Lee
 Mari Sunami
 Carl Christopher
 Hollie Ashworth

**JOIN US online today
 at www.opnff.net
 Membership is free!**

What's Right with this Picture?

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but to carry the wound forward into their lives, their children, our communities and society.

The men in the picture have prior incarceration, drug abuse, poor or incomplete educations, difficulty getting jobs, mental health challenges, child support issues, and difficulty gaining

access to their children. But they show up, every class session, seeking help, hope; wanting desperately the same thing you want for yourself with your children – to be an involved, loving and nurturing presence in their lives. We must help, really help, without bias, prejudice or hesitancy.

As you read the OPNFF Public Policy Agenda, I urge you to be thoughtful and consider how you can support the ideas and strategies outlined. If you are an OPNFF member, thank you. If not, please fill out the simple membership form in this newsletter.

There is no charge except to your heart.

Steven Stosny in Zanesville, October 10&11

Resentment anger, and abuse are infections of the heart, according to Stosny, founder and director of Compassion Power. "We want to have better relationships with our children, enjoy them, guide them, and learn from them. The regular practice of Compassionate Parenting is guaranteed to increase cooperation, self esteem, and self-discipline, while simultaneously reducing anger, resentment, and hostility in children and parents".

Compassionate Parenting raises emotional intelligence through heavy emphasis on before-the-fact emotional motivation of behavior, rather than after-the-fact consequences. The result is much more effective discipline that does nothing to detract from the crucial relationship between fathers and their children.

This workshop is for practitioners; CEU's have been

approved for counselors, social workers and chemical dependence professionals.

To Register for the workshop contact Nancy Geiger at 740-588-6214 or ngeiger@sixcounty.org or download a workshop brochure from the Calendar page of the OPNFF website and complete the registration form following the "Reserve Your Seat" instructions.

OPNFF Releases Public Policy Agenda

The Ohio Practitioners' Network for Fathers and Families (OPNFF) is committed to the well being, stability, and strengthening of all families in Ohio. As such, we recognize the crucial role of fathers as integral parts of each family and as essential to the social and emotional development of their children.

OPNFF has developed this public policy agenda for the purpose of informing public officials, human service professionals, and other interested individuals and groups, about the problems facing fathers and the public policies that are needed to address these problems. The following five areas represent some of the key issues and policies identified by fatherhood and

family leaders in Ohio

Child Support

Reforms needed include:

- higher legal standards to be met before incarcerating fathers;
- ending arrears accumulation during incarceration;
- a state-owed arrears forgiveness program;
- a meaningful child support arrearage forgiveness program linked to participation in OPNFF-certified responsible fatherhood training programs;
- greater allowance for child support modifications that take into consideration the totality of family circumstances.

What this amounts to is that the state needs to adopt a

more supportive set of policies to replace the enforcement and punitive policies that now exist. We believe that leadership at the highest levels of state government is needed to change the direction of child support policies in ways that will strengthen fathers and the relationships they have with family members, especially with their children.

Job Training and Employment

Reforms that are needed include:

- More funding for job training so that men can gain the skills needed to obtain and retain gainful employment.
- Addressing the problems and challenges created by the child support and crimi-

nal justice systems for fathers in becoming gainfully employed so that they can contribute to their family's financial well being.

- Incarcerated men should be given job training and help with job attainment as part of their reentry into society and into the lives of their families.
- Policies should be developed that will alleviate the restrictions placed on ex-offenders in attaining jobs.
- All working men and women in the state of Ohio should receive a "living wage."
- Ohio government – both the legislature and the executive branch – should focus attention on the disproportionately high

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unemployment rates among low-income minority males.

- A goal should be set to reduce unemployment in this population to less than 10 percent within three years.

Welfare Reform/TANF

The state of Ohio needs to take full advantage of reforms in national welfare policy that has made responsible fatherhood into a federally funded program. Policy recommendations include attention to these areas:

- State and local governments in Ohio should be actively pursuing demonstration and other grant opportunities through the federal Responsible Fatherhood program that is part of the recent TANF reauthorization.
- More TANF funds should be used for fatherhood and cooperative parenting programs, as was proposed in Ohio SB 241.
- Federal TANF policy allows funding for two-parent families and non-custodial fathers. Yet, Ohio has done little to take advantage of these policies, even though there is nearly a billion dollar TANF surplus.
- State officials should recognize the potential of pro-family policies and use available resources to implement programs that will benefit low-income families.
- Public officials must recognize that there needs to be a shift away from the past bias toward single mothers in welfare and family-related programs. In designing and funding programs, they must rec-

ognize the key role that fathers play in strengthening families.

Fathers, Families and Professional Support

Policy proposals:

- The Ohio legislature should appropriate \$20 million annually during fiscal years 2007-2009 to support local fatherhood programs.
- The legislature should appropriate \$500,000 annually during fiscal years 2007-2009 for the Ohio Commission on Fatherhood.
- Additional funding should be provided for fatherhood training so that young men will understand the need for accepting social and financial responsibility when they have children
- Mentoring programs should be established for boys who themselves are fatherless; these programs would help to lessen the likelihood that they will continue this pattern of the absent father.
- Adequate funding should be provided for the training of qualified professional fatherhood trainers and service providers.

Incarceration and Reentry

In its mission statement, *The Ohio Plan for Productive Offender Reentry and Recidivism Reduction*, states that the goals of reentry and recidivism involve a joint effort to be "accomplished through associations with community partners, families, justice professionals and victims of crime." Among the report's recommendations are for additional family visitation in the rehabilitative process. The plan's slogan "Going Home to Stay" makes clear the central role of family in the entire reentry process. (8)

In large urban areas, like Cuyahoga County and particularly the city of Cleveland, the ex-offender population is disproport-

tionately high. It is forecast that approximately 4,000 ex-offenders will be returning to Cleveland on an annual basis. Many of them are fathers who want to return to their families. But in order to give them the opportunity to reenter the community and be able to provide financial support for their wives or partners, and children, re-entry services, especially help in obtaining employment, are needed. Policy recommendations:

- The state legislature should provide adequate authorization and funding to implement key recommendations of the ODRC Ohio Plan for Productive Offender Reentry and Recidivism Reduction.
- Programs and services should be established to help individuals make a positive adjustment that gives them the opportunity to remain out of the criminal justice system. These programs should include mentoring, coaching, and self-sufficiency training that will help men understand their past actions,

accept responsibility for these actions and learn from them.

- Families should play a central role in the lives of incarcerated fathers through increased child visitation and family involvement in the rehabilitation process.
- Funding should be provided for job training and job placement services to help ex-offenders who want to become legitimate wage earners, enabling them to be supportive of their families.
- The Ohio Fatherhood Commission should play a key role in reentry policies.

Conclusion

In this Public Policy Agenda, the Ohio Practitioners Network for Fathers and Families has focused on some of the key issues and policies facing fathers and families in Ohio. This is not an exclusive list. But it is representative of the issue and policy priorities of leaders in the fatherhood and family field in Ohio.

This Report was prepared for the Ohio Practitioners' Network for Fathers and Families by Roger P. Kingsley, Ph.D.



OPNFF Board Members Michelle Robinson, James McDonald and Calvin William speak in Columbus at Prevent Child Abuse Ohio statewide network meeting

**Ohio Practitioners' Network
for Fathers and Families**



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**Ohio Practitioners' Network
for Fathers and Families**

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Dear Dad: Fatherhood Programs and Child Abuse

Everyone knows that moms and dads aren't the same. Now research proves it.

The May 19th Prevent Child Abuse Ohio statewide network meeting focused on fatherhood and child abuse prevention. PCAO invited OPNFF to present at the meeting. The meeting featured training presentations by three OPNFF Board Members: James McDonald of the Fatherhood Resource Center in Zanesville, Michelle Robinson of the LACCA Head Start in Lima and Calvin Williams from Services United for Mothers and Adolescents (SUMA) in Cincinnati. The speakers offered guidance and wisdom based upon years of working with fathers to participants:

"Mothers hold their infants towards them, while fathers hold them away," James McDonald explained to PCAO network members at their summer meeting. "It's (the child's) past and future." Mothers explain. Fathers command. Both are needed in our culture to form a balance. "As a community we need to be able to strengthen fathers," says McDonald, "and we haven't been very good at it. You can't do it in a traditional office (social services) setting. They've found that the most debilitating emotion for women is anxiety, (but) for men it is shame. Men will not ask for help. It's embarrassing (for them). You can't structure a program the same way you offer it for women."

"At the heart of it all is (helping develop) a loving, involved father," says Calvin Williams. "The challenges men face in meeting the challenges (of being a good father) are more prevalent for those with lower incomes," Williams explains. "Whether it's poor support, no positive fathering role models, an anti-male bias, substance abuse or legal barriers," men often have an uphill battle. But, Williams continues, "I think it goes without saying that committed, responsible men who are in a position: financially, emotionally, mentally, to deliver love to their children and families are at the heart of where our communities can heal and grow. So we needed to do some things differently. Fathers make a unique and irreplaceable contribution to their child's life."

OPNFF is proud of their association with Prevent Child Abuse Ohio, whose mission is to help prevent the abuse and neglect of Ohio's children, by serving as an expert resource for collaboration, information, and education

Learn more about Prevent Child Abuse Ohio at www.preventchildabuseohio.org