



OPNFF

Ohio Practitioners' Network for Fathers and Families

www.ohiofathers.org

**January 2010
Newsletter**

Moving Forward Together

By James McDonald, OPNFF President

Henry Ford said, "If everyone is moving forward together, then success takes care of itself." Mr. Ford perfected the assembly line. Collaborative synergy is the best way to achieve our goals. For those of us in the family-connection business, collaborative synergy gives us the best opportunity to achieve our goals. This issue highlights three examples of collaborative work at the national and state levels. OPNFF has begun partnerships with key organizations to move fatherhood work forward in Ohio.

One such organization is Ohio Commission on Fatherhood. We will highlight their incredible grant-making work through the Ohio Fatherhood Initiative in our next newsletter. OCF Executive Director Tracy Robinson recently presented a proposal that would unite

OFC, OPNFF, the Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (DRC) and the National Fatherhood Initiative in a project to serve incarcerated fathers throughout Ohio. That's team work!

Another emerging partner is with University of Akron where David Witt, Ph.D. and OPNFF have developed an on-line survey to ascertain the scope of fatherhood work in Ohio, and to develop a data base for referral and networking among family practitioners. Please go to www.ohiofathers.org and complete the Survey of Social and Health Services for Fathers.

Vander Green of the Administration for Families and Children – Region V Office is joining the OPNFF Advocacy and Network Taskforce, one of whose goals is to seek methods to establish cre-

dentiaing and professionalism among fatherhood practitioners.

Monica Mahoney, Policy Director of the Ohio Commission on Fatherhood has assembled a strong Legislative Sub-Committee for the Commission that is focusing on policy initiatives related to fatherhood. The Chairs of the OPNFF Public Policy Task Force, Steve Killpack and Scott Neely, serve on the sub-committee and work closely with Monica Mahoney's committee to advance father-friendly public policy in Ohio.

I want to thank the chairs of OPNFF Task Forces for initiating and sustaining the work of these partnerships.

Henry Ford also said, "Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success."

The mission of the Ohio Practitioners' Network for Fathers and Families is to enhance the outcomes of children, families and communities by providing information, training and encouragement to father and family-serving practitioners.

www.ohiofathers.org info@ohiofathers.org

2010 Officers: James McDonald, President
Reverend Dr. B. A. Moore, Vice-President
Steve Killpack, Secretary-Treasurer



Pictured above right: J. Tracy Robinson, Executive Director of Ohio Commission on Fatherhood speaking on A National Survey of Mothers' Attitudes on Fathering at the Brookings Institute, Monday December 4, 2009 with Barbara Dafoe Whitehead, Rutgers University; Kathryn Edin, Professor of Public Policy and Management, Harvard University; Nisa Muhammad, Executive Director, Wedded Bliss Foundation

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D.C. Program on “Mama Says” Survey features Tracy Robinson, Executive Director of Ohio Commission on Fatherhood

On December 1, the National Fatherhood Initiative released, “Mama Says: A National Survey of Moms’ Attitudes on Fathering” at an event sponsored by the Center on Children and Families of the Brookings Institution. The National Fatherhood Initiative sponsored this event and featured the report’s authors Barbara Dafoe Whitehead of Rutgers University and Norval Glenn of the University of Texas. A panel of practitioners, administration officials, and scholars offered their views on these and other findings of the survey. Roland C. Warren, President, National Fatherhood Initiative moderated the panel.

Panelists included Ron Haskins, Co-Director, Center on Children and Families, Senior Fellow, The Brookings Institution; Kathryn Edin, Professor of Public Policy and Management, Harvard University; Nisa Muhammad, Executive Director, Wedded Bliss Foundation; J. Tracy Robinson, Executive Director, Ohio Commission on Fatherhood.

1. Marital status and residency had major impact

- The mothers’ appraisals of the performance of fathers differed greatly according to whether or not the mother lived with the father. The mothers who lived with the fathers, including those cohabiting but not married, gave overwhelmingly high marks to the fathers, while those mothers not living with the fathers reported, on average, extremely negative views.

- The mothers not living with the fathers reported very low satisfaction with the fathers who had taken on new romantic, marital, or stepfather relationships. With each additional relationship or responsibility, the survey shows, these mothers were progressively less satisfied with the fathers’ parenting.

2. Values and Religious Beliefs

- The survey yielded evidence that strong religious beliefs, values, and commitments are conducive to good fathering whether or not the father lives with the mother.

- Asked to rate the importance of six possible places that might help fathers be better dads, the respondents as a whole placed the most importance on “churches and other communities of faith,” followed closely by schools, then by “community-based organizations.” The highest rating (“very important”) was given frequently to “churches...” even by those respondents who said that they were “not at

all religious” (58 percent) and “not very religious” (72 percent).

3. Unfortunately They Believe Fathers are Replaceable

- A majority of the mothers agreed that

a mother or another man could be an adequate substitute for an absent or uninvolved father, with twice as large a percentage of the mothers not living with the fathers agreeing that fathers are replaceable. It is not clear, however, whether these respondents thought that adequate substitution for fathers is likely or common.

These findings, considered along with other information, lead to the following major conclusions:

- Stable well-functioning marriages are extremely important for good fathering and responsible fatherhood, and thus public policies and private efforts that successfully promote healthy marriages will also contribute to good fathering.

- The large proportion of mothers who think that mothers or other males can adequately substitute for absent or uninvolved fathers is cause for concern, because those beliefs are likely to contribute to father absence and lack of involvement.

- In view of the evidence that work-family conflicts are ubiquitous obstacles to good fathering, afflicting even many fathers in subpopulations in which obstacles to good fathering are generally rather weak, promoters of responsible fatherhood should give major attention to work-family conflicts.

A central conclusion of the survey is that stable, well-functioning marriages are extremely important to good fathering but that over half of mothers say fathers are replaceable by single mothers and nearly two-thirds of mothers say that fathers are replaceable by other men. The report also reveals the important role played by work/family balance in shaping modern fatherhood.

A link to the entire report can be found on the Fatherhood News page of www.ohiofathers.org



A national survey of 1,533 American mothers, age 18 and older, asked a series of questions concerning attitudes about fatherhood and the parenting performance of fathers. This survey yielded the following key findings:

President's Advisory Council Releases Ten Recommendations for Advancing Fatherhood in America

excerpts from the report of the Fatherhood and Healthy Families Task Force

The Fatherhood and Healthy Families Taskforce of the President's Advisory Council is proud to submit ten recommendations for advancing fatherhood in America. We do so in full recognition of the fact that when fathers are present in the lives of their children, the foundations of our families are stronger and our communities are more robust. As President Obama so powerfully stated in a memorable speech delivered in 2008 at the Apostolic Church of God in Chicago on Father's Day, We need fathers to realize that responsibility does not end at conception. We need them to realize that what makes you a man is not the ability to have a child it is the courage to raise one. The speech powerfully advocated both responsible behavior and responsible policies, a perspective the Taskforce fully shares.

We believe this nation must support the capacity of fathers to raise their children, to stay actively engaged with them, and to be steady, positive and loving models of commitment and support throughout their children's lives. Through innovative, strategic partnerships; partnerships that work with fatherhood organizations, programs and experts the Administration can advance it's commitment to helping fathers be beacons of hope, stability and leadership in their own families and communities .

This report identifies a wide variety of opportunities in the public and private sectors for collaboration and action that can be promoted by the federal government to support responsible fatherhood. We highlight ideas for reducing violence in general and domestic violence, in particular. We advocate for better education, job training and overall employment policies. We are in favor of programs that help fa-

thers with parenting skills, financial skills, navigating the child support system, family planning and maintaining healthy marriages and other strong, positive relationships. We encourage expanded opportunities for volunteering and community service and suggest that community partners that support fatherhood initiatives should include women's organizations and children and family-center organizations as well. And we urge that influential sports figures and celebrities, among others, be enlisted to help.

The charge of the Taskforce was to develop recommendations for partnership and program opportunities that will strengthen the Administration's commitment to promote fatherhood and the role of fathers in supporting healthy families. As such, this report does not address or compare the unique needs of mothers in strengthening healthy families, and the recommendations presented here are not intended to disadvantage or diminish the funding and promotion of programs that serve women and mothers.

Core Concepts

A single over-arching conviction shaped our deliberations: Responsible, engaged fathers are critical to the financial, emotional, intellectual and spiritual well being of children, and therefore to the strength and health of American families and communities. Fathers are not just nice to have around; they are profoundly valuable and often irreplaceable in the lives of their children.

Additionally, these recommendations are grounded in the clear understanding that children's well-being is materially advanced by strong, high quality relationships between their parents. Supporting such relationships, healthy

marriages and other stable, supportive relationships advances the well being of children and families.

These recommendations are also informed by the recognition that responsible fatherhood not only requires deep dedication to one's children and family, but also the determination to postpone becoming a father until one is adequately prepared to accept the full responsibilities of fatherhood. This perspective can also include fathers choosing to postpone having additional children if they are struggling to meet their responsibilities to their current children and families.

OVERVIEW OF DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1 : Convene quarterly White House Roundtables to encourage a broad variety of sectors, including private foundations and corporations, to form partnerships with existing fatherhood groups and experts to address specific areas where father involvement offers the greatest potential to improve the well-being of children in America .

Recommendation 2 : Host an annual Father's Day Celebration at the White House to honor exemplary fathers and to highlight advances in father involvement resulting from the government's interdepartmental working groups and the strategic partnerships formed at the quarterly Roundtables.

Recommendation 3 : Continue to personally affirm the important role of fathers and continue to model the life of a committed husband and father.

Recommendation 4 : Challenge government departments and agen-

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OPNFF provides high quality professional training and technical assistance for agencies, communities and regions. Visit our website, www.ohiofathers.org and click on "Technical Assistance and Training" to view our menu. Then contact us at info@ohiofathers.org and we will help you begin planning today!

www.opnff.net



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for Fathers and Families

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JOIN US! And be part of a growing network of nearly 800 fatherhood advocates & practitioners.

**Membership in OPNFF is FREE: Join Online Today
www.ohiofathers.org**

White House and Department of Justice Host Third Fatherhood Forum

On December 22nd, 2009, the White House Office of Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships and the Department of Justice co-hosted an exciting Fatherhood Forum at Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia. This was the latest stop in President Obama's National Conversation on Responsible Fatherhood.

The day's events began with a community roundtable with local policymakers, fatherhood organizations and community leaders focused on the intersection of fatherhood and criminal justice issues:

- The connection between fatherhood and reentry programs,
- Supporting families with incarcerated parents,
- Child support and family courts,
- Coordination between law enforcement & fatherhood programs, and
- The intersection of fatherhood and domestic violence.

In the evening, the event featured a public forum featuring the Attorney General Eric Holder, basketball all-star Allan Houston and other key leaders. The Attorney General addressed many challenges facing communities across the country, pointing out that over 1.5 million American children have fathers in prison. The Department of Justice has led the way in supporting families with incarcerated parents and encouraging responsible ex-offender reentry. Sport, being involved in the life of children takes added commitment to go the extra mile.

The President's National Conversation on Fatherhood is intended to address the challenge of father absence in many communities by encouraging personal responsibility among dads across the country and assessing how we can all work together – individuals, community and faith-based organizations, and the government – to strengthen families and support father involvement. - *originally published by Joshua DuBois on <http://www.whitehouse.gov>*

More information on the President's National Conversation on Fatherhood can be found on www.ohiofathers.org, Fatherhood News link

Ten Recommendations

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cies to cross departmental lines and create working groups to assess and address their policies that affect fathers' involvement in the lives of children.

Recommendation 5: Increase participation of federal agencies in the funding of fatherhood programming, with a focus on areas of critical importance to success.

Recommendation 6: Invest in high quality program evaluation in order to help the fatherhood field define and increase its impact on specific measures and in so doing, increase public understanding of and support for this critical work.

Recommendation 7: Develop tools and products that are culturally and linguistically relevant.

Recommendation 8: Work with the Department of Education should urge the academic community to develop curricula to train aspiring health and human service professionals to better meet the needs of fathers

Recommendation 9: Ensure that programming for couples' employment training, job placement and financial literacy are allowable activities under federally funded fatherhood, healthy relationship and healthy marriage grants.

Recommendation 10: Increasing Father Involvement through Partnerships

These recommendations share a framing vision that encourages federal government agencies to be infused with responsible fatherhood as a means to more effectively achieve their respective missions. We believe that emphasizing responsible fatherhood as a core message of this Administration offers an opportunity to dramatically improve the impact of many of its policies and to create a legacy that will be felt for generations to come.

A link to the entire report of the Fatherhood and Healthy Families Task Force of the President's Advisory Council on Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships can be found in the "What's New" section on the Home Page of www.ohiofathers.org

The next issue of the OPNFF Newsletter will feature information the programs funded by the Ohio Commission on Fatherhood in 2010-11 as part of their Ohio Fatherhood Initiative.

The Board of Directors of OPNFF wishes a Happy New Year to all fathers, families and children across the Great State of Ohio