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The Strong Families Commission Report Calls for Statewide Action to Increase Father Involvement Through Service and Policy Inclusion

Recommendations for Pennsylvania Government Branches Aim to Remove Systemic Barriers

State College, PA—March 29, 2019— A final report concerning the unintended and adverse consequences of father absence or non-involvement in the lives of Pennsylvania's children and families, "From Practitioners to Policy Makers: A Statewide Call to Action for Greater Father Involvement in the Lives of Pennsylvania's Children and Families", was released Wednesday, March 27th at a Pennsylvania Capitol Building event.

The culmination of a three-year effort spearheaded by The Strong Families Commission, Incorporated (THE COMMISSION), the report incorporates input from an inter-disciplinary group of national, state, and local practitioners and scholars concerned with improving outcomes for children and families through the provision of father-inclusive services and policies. The group, convened as the Symposium Organizing Committee (SOC), developed recommendations for all three branches of Pennsylvania's government based on the urgent need to remove systemic barriers that impede fathers' greater involvement in the lives of children and families.

"This report is the spearhead to a journey of working with Commonwealth leaders to elevate fathers' standing in family life and in our service delivery systems," says Dr. Rufus Sylvester Lynch, ACSW Facilitator Pennsylvania Citizens Policy Team and statewide facilitator of the SOC. "SOC's call to action is to fully support the wellbeing of our children, while harnessing all available resources that promote stronger outcomes for society, including a commonly overlooked resource: fathers. Our next mission is to build a statewide coalition of fatherhood advocates that through time and dedication can achieve great things on behalf of Pennsylvania's children."

Out of the 2.6 million children residing in Pennsylvania, over 886,000 are living in single-parent households (mother-headed: 690,230; father-headed: 196,410.) While many single-parent children undoubtedly can and often do become exceptional adults, far too many other children are denied the critical financial, emotional, and social support by not having access to one of their parents – typically fathers.

The report cites this situation is exacerbated when public service systems established to help those in need fail to include fathers as an important factor in child and family well-being programs and policies, and that child well-being outcomes can be greatly improved by increasing and supporting father involvement in the lives of their children through a "systems integration approach".

Major report recommendations include: the introduction of proposed legislation to establish the Commonwealth's policy to promote greater father involvement in the lives of children and families; creation of the Pennsylvania Commission on Greater Father Family Involvement to implement said policy; establishing the Commission in the Office of the Governor; defining its functions, powers, duties, and membership; and making an appropriation.

The overarching goal of SOC is to encourage each branch of Pennsylvania's state government to adopt and institutionalize a father-friendly posture toward men within families that ensures the inclusion of funding for father-supportive outreach policies, services and practices. This inclusion will enable fathers to become more involved in the lives of their children; assume greater emotional, social, physical, intellectual, spiritual, and financial responsibility for them; and positively influence their well-being outcomes.

It was also announced that Dr. Joel N. Myers, founder, chairman and chief executive officer of AccuWeather, and founder and chairman of Dads' Resource Center, has accepted the appointment as advocate and champion of the 2019 launch of the statewide campaign for greater father involvement in the lives of Pennsylvania's children and families.

"THE COMMISSION and the SOC are proud to partner with Dr. Myers, who is considered one of the greatest entrepreneurs in American history," said Dr. Lynch. "Equally important to us is his philanthropic work at Penn State University, American Cancer Society, and most of all his commitment to the Dads' Resource Center in Centre County Pennsylvania, an organization he founded to provide education, resources and advocacy for single fathers."

"We are fortunate for the opportunity to align the Dads' Resource Center with The Strong Families Commission," states Dr. Joel Myers. "The commission's final report is impressively holistic in identifying every aspect of the system that directly or unintentionally creates barriers to fathers' involvement in the lives of their children. We are thrilled to lend our support to the comprehensive reforms it proposes, while further strengthening the elements that more directly align with the focus of the Dads' Resource Center."

Featured speakers at the event included The Reverend Dr. W. Wilson Goode, Sr., President AMACHI, Inc., former Mayor of Philadelphia for Early Childhood; David A. Wyher, President/CEO, Delta Community Supports, Inc; Dr. Joel N. Myers, founder, chief executive officer and chairman of AccuWeather and founder/chairman, Dads' Resource Center; and legislative supporters:

- State Representative Austin A. Davis, City of Pittsburgh, Allegheny County
- State Representative Edward C. Gainey, City of Pittsburgh, Allegheny County
- State Representative Joanna McClinton, Philadelphia County

Copies of the *From Practioners to Policymakers: A Statewide Call to Action for Greater Father Involvement in the Lives of Pennsylvania's Children and Families* report is available [here](#).

About Strong Families Commission

The mission of [The Strong Families Commission](#), a private, nonprofit 501 (c)(3) organization based in Philadelphia, is to strengthen families and improve developmental outcomes for children by advocating for greater father involvement in the lives of children and families and the systems that serve them. THE COMMISSION's vision is that children and youth in Philadelphia, across

the state of Pennsylvania, and around the country will benefit from and grow up with the support of both of their parents in a healthy and supportive environment.

About Symposium Organizing Committee

[Symposium Organizing Committee](#) (SOC) works with Commonwealth leaders to eliminate systemic barriers that impede greater father involvement and their contributions to the wellbeing of their children and families. SOC encourages executive opinion leaders, policy makers, and child and family service providers to embrace and support the contributions that fathers can make to their children, families and communities.

About Dads' Resource Center

[The Dads' Resource Center](#) was founded in 2015 by Dr. Joel N. Myers, AccuWeather founder, chief executive officer and chairman in 2015. Its mission is to provide education, resources and advocacy for single fathers so they are able to fulfill their vital role in the well-being and healthy development of their children. At the heart, Dads' Resource Center is a children's advocacy organization that aims to ensure that each child has the appropriate involvement and contributions from both of their parents.

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