



2020 SOC SYMPOSIUM

BETTER FUTURES FOR OUR CHILDREN...THROUGH
GREATER FATHER FAMILY INVOLVEMENT
PENNSYLVANIA'S JOURNEY -
A THREE PART SERIES VIRTUAL PRESENTATION

DECEMBER 1, 8, 15 • 2020
2-4PM EST

PENNSYLVANIA'S JOURNEY TO ENSURE CHILD WELL-
BEING, SAFETY, AND PERMANENCY THROUGH GREATER
FATHER FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES?

OUR CALL TO ACTION

PRESENTED BY

**THE PENNSYLVANIA
SYMPOSIUM ORGANIZING
COMMITTEE**



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Section I. Introduction

- **Animated Symposium Introduction Campaign Video**
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- **Welcome from The Strong Families Commission (THE COMMISSION) Chair**

INTRODUCTION





 THE LAW CENTER

LEGAL INFORMATION RESOURCE CENTER

www.TheLawCenter.net



PAGFFIC Campaign Video Developer
G. LAWRENCE DEMARCO, LLM
COMMISSION FELLOW

In Remembrance of



1933-2020

*This year's Symposium wishes to remember the words of Ruth Bader Ginsberg, former United States Supreme Court Justice, that "**Women will have achieved true equality when men share with them the responsibility of bringing up the next generation**", and is dedicated to recognizing all Fathers who struggle every day to be a positive influence in the lives of their children and families, while acknowledging that the modern day father comes in various shapes and forms.*

"Today's father is no longer always the traditional married breadwinner and disciplinarian in the family. He can be single or married; externally employed or stay-at-home; gay or straight; an adoptive or a step-parent; and a more than capable caregiver to children facing physical or psychological challenges. Psychological research across families from all ethnic backgrounds suggest that father's affection and increased family involvement help promote children's social and emotional development.

American Psychological Association

<https://www.apa.org/pi/families/resources/changing-father>

AMACHI

People of Faith Mentoring Children of Promise

January 2021

Greetings,

I am W. Wilson Goode, Sr., President and CEO, Amachi, Inc., former Mayor of the City of Philadelphia, and Chair of the Pennsylvania Symposium Organizing Committee (SOC). On behalf of the SOC, it gives me great pleasure to welcome you to this year's printed rendition of our virtual 2020 SOC Three Part Symposium, held on December 1st, 8th, & 15th of last year, to further discuss "Better Futures for Our Children...Through Greater Father Family Involvement.

Notwithstanding Covid-19 and the Coronavirus Pandemic, the Executive Leadership of SOC decided mid-year 2020 that we could not afford to go an entire year and miss the opportunity of continuing to share the message of the urgent need for greater father involvement in the life of children, families and communities. In that regard, I say to you, I am honored to present to you, especially if you missed the video rendition of last years' SOC Symposium, where over 30 individuals came together to tell the story of a group of Pennsylvania citizens who are dedicated to ensuring better futures for our children through greater father family involvement, by raising the consciousness of Pennsylvanians, that fathers are also needed, and of value, when it comes to raising and supporting families.

In 2020 the Annie E. Casey Foundation reported that Pennsylvania, like the nation had 35% of its children living in single parent households. Ethnically speaking, this percentage of children living in single parent households was higher for both Latinos and African Americans, i.e. 54% and 71% respectively. As a State and as a Nation, we must do better.

In closing, I am proud to continue serving at the helm of the SOC, partnering with The Strong Families Commission, Incorporated (THE COMMISSION) in Philadelphia, the Allegheny County Intermediate Unit in Western Pennsylvania, and the Dads Resource Center in State College Pennsylvania, to launch and support the 2021 Pennsylvania Greater Father Family Involvement Campaign (PAGFFIC).

I ask that you each seriously consider joining the Campaign by contacting your Pennsylvania State Representative or State Senator asking him or her to support legislation that will establish a Pennsylvania Commission to promote greater father family involvement in the lives of children and families, throughout the Commonwealth.

I look forward to meeting you all during the Campaign.

Sincerely,

W. Wilson Goode, Sr.





January 2021.

According to the Pew Research Institute the United States has the world's highest percentage of children living in single-parent households. Of children under the age of 18, twenty three percent live with one parent and no other adult. This is more than three times the average of seven percent for the rest of the world. In 2020 the Annie E. Casey Foundation reported that Pennsylvania had 35% of its children living in single parent households, most often with their mothers.

Although for the most part our laws look upon mothers and fathers as equals, the reality is that in many situations fathers who want to be involved in their children's lives often face much greater obstacles to secure custody rights and custody time because of entrenched biases. Unfortunately, many judges, lawyers, guardian ad litem, state agencies such as children and youth, other county and state agencies, the welfare system, are all culpable in creating or at least exasperating this cultural, humanitarian and economic crisis.

Whatever their intentions might be, they play big roles in maintaining a system that discourages, inhibits or flat out denies children's access to their fathers. This is why I established the Dads' Resource Center in 2015 to provide education, resources and advocacy for single fathers.

It has been my extraordinary honor to serve as the Chair of the Pennsylvania Greater Father Family Involvement Campaign alongside our leadership team of former Mayor of Philadelphia Rev. Dr. W. Wilson Goode Sr., President and CEO Delta Community Supports Inc. David Wyher, Allegheny Intermediate Unit Assistant Executive Director Dr. Catherine Lobaugh and our Campaign Architect and Manager Dr. Rufus Sylvester Lynch. On their behalf I extend our deepest gratitude and thanks for the many passionate individuals who have lent their time and efforts toward our cause over the last few years.

On the behalf of our leadership team I also want to recognize the members of the General Assembly who understand the importance of improving this situation and have stepped forward and joined our efforts to do something about this crisis. In particular I want to salute our champions who are the primary sponsors of the bills to create a fatherhood commission on greater father family involvement – Senator Anthony Hardy Williams and Representative Lori Mizgorski. Because of them we have the opportunity to bring an end to this crisis and make Pennsylvania the model for father family engagement.

Study after study shows what we already know – children develop more fully and have a greater chance of being successful in life and become less of a drain on society when both parents are actively involved in their lives.

Because of the passion and dedication of so many in this effort we now have an opportunity to achieve great progress on behalf of the children of Pennsylvania. On their behalf I call on each and every one of you to join this worthy cause by reaching out to your State Representative and State Senator to ask him or her to support legislation to establish the Pennsylvania Commission on Greater Father Family Involvement.

Dr. Joel N. Myers

Dr. Joel N. Myers
Founder and Board Chair Dads' Resource Center
Founder and CEO AccuWeather

Welcome



January 2021

Welcome to our printed rendition of the 2020 SOC Virtual Symposium. This Program Booklet celebrates the Symposium Organizing Committee's (SOC) 4th Annual Statewide Conference addressing Child Well-Being in Pennsylvania and the Urgent Need for Father Involvement. This year's theme summarizes our collective effort to ensure "Better Futures for Our Children...Through Greater Father Family Involvement."

Our three part series is designed to briefly document the history and tell the story of a group of Pennsylvania citizens, from various parts of the Commonwealth, who are dedicated to ensuring better futures for our children through greater father family involvement, by raising the consciousness of Pennsylvanians, that fathers are also needed, and of value, when it comes to raising children and supporting families; educating the leaders of Pennsylvania's three branches of state government as to why adopting and institutionalizing a father inclusive posture, toward men within families is important, and, convincing the Pennsylvania General Assembly to establish in statue a Pennsylvania Commission that will promote greater father family involvement by encouraging and supporting the active participation of fathers in Commonwealth child and family programming.

Our collective vision is: 1) all men within the Commonwealth will and can benefit from a conscious raising campaign of the importance of fathers actively engaged in the lives of their children and families; 2) men within families, notwithstanding race, color, religion (creed), gender, gender expression, age, national origin (ancestry), sex, disability, sexual orientation, military status, political beliefs, or marital or family status, will come to realized that all fathers, regardless of income, education, geographic location, can in fact do more to ensure the well-being of children and families; and 3) Pennsylvania will become one of America's most father friendly states in the union.

In this regard, please enjoy reviewing this printed rendition of the 2020 SOC Virtual Symposium Program Booklet, and I look forward to sharing this movement with you, as we proceed together in 2021 to promote greater father family involvement within the Commonwealth.

Sincerely,

Rufus Sylvester Lynch

Dr. Rufus Sylvester Lynch, ACSW
NASW Social Work Pioneer ☞
Chair, The Strong Families Commission, Incorporated (THE COMMISSION)
CONVENER of the Pennsylvania Symposium Organizing Committee (SOC)
Architect & Manager, Pennsylvania Greater Father Family Involvement Campaign (PAGFFIC)



Section II. Program Overview

DAILY PROGRAM CONTENT

Day One Program Content - Where are We Now

- **Greetings & Opening Remarks** - **Dr. Raymond E. Petren**, Associate Professor, Human Development and Family Studies, Pennsylvania State University Scranton – “Envisioning Father’s Role in Child and Family Development.”
- **Brief Message from the National Fatherhood Initiative** - **Erik Vecere**, Chief Program Officer, NFI.
- **Welcome remarks & Program Introduction** regarding “Better Futures for Our Children...Through Greater Father Family Involvement – A Three Part Series Virtual Presentation – **David A. Wyher**, President & CEO, Delta Community Supports, Inc., and Vice Chair of the Pennsylvania Symposium Organizing Committee (SOC).
- **Pennsylvania’s Journey** to ensure child well-being, safety, and permanency – A look at Early Childhood Development – presented by **Dr. Catherine Lobaugh**, Assistant Executive Director, for Early Childhood, Family & Community Services at the Allegheny County Intermediate Unit.



PROGRAM OVERVIEW



- **Individual interviews with two Pennsylvania System Change Leaders for Greater Father Family Involvement: From Whence They Come –**
 - **Rev. Dr. W. Wilson Goode, Sr., Former Mayor**, City of Philadelphia, and Founder & President, AMACHI, Inc. Dr. Goode serves as Chair of The Pennsylvania Symposium Organizing Committee (SOC).
 - **Dr. Joel N. Myers**, Founder, CEO, and Chairman of AccuWeather, & Founder and Chair of Dad's Resource Center, State College Pennsylvania. Dr. Myers serves as the Chair of the Pennsylvania Greater Father Family Involvement Campaign (PAGFFIC).
- **Closing Remarks** by **Dr. Amy C. Sagen**, Chief Operating Officer for the National Association of Social Workers – Pennsylvania Chapter. Dr. Sagen highlights Part Two of the three part series which included an Expert Panel Discussion & Thoughts from a Judicial Leader, Members of the Pennsylvania General Assembly, and a Professor of Educational Leadership and Management.



PROGRAM OVERVIEW



Day Two Program Content - What are the Consequences

- **Program Begins with: Welcome** Statement & Remarks on “The Crisis of Fatherlessness: Where are the Business Leaders?” – By **William L. McCusker**, Founder and Executive Director, Fathers & Families, Inc.
- **Panel Discussion:** “Are Fathers intentionally included, or not, in Pennsylvania’s child and family services and programming that are designed to enhance well-being outcomes for both?” – **Jeffrey Scott Steiner**, Executive Director, Dads’ Resource Center, Moderates a Nine-Person Panel.
- **Greetings from** **Brother Melvin Hubbard EI**, Chief of Staff, State Representative Edward C. Gainey’ Office – who welcomed the remarks of State Senators Anthony Hardy Williams & Ryan Aument; State Representatives Lori A. Mizgorski & Edward C. Gainey; Pennsylvania Appellate Court Judge Doris A. Smith-Ribner, (Ret.); and Dr. Richard Jeffrey Rhodes, former Assistant Superintendent for the School District of Philadelphia.



Fathers&FamiliesInc



PROGRAM OVERVIEW



- **Closing Remarks** by **Michael J. Flott**, Founder and CEO, I CAN DADS, with program highlights of Part Three of the Three-Part-Series – *The Call to Action, Challenges Going Forward, How the public can help, and Why Pennsylvania must move forward now.*



Day Three Program Content - The Call to Action

- **Program Opened with Greetings** from **Dr. Erin McDonald**, Region III Administrator, The Administration for Children and Families (ACF), a division of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Dr. McDonald shared with the audience ACF's strategic initiatives and priorities to promote the economic well-being of children and families in the region.



ADMINISTRATION FOR
CHILDREN & FAMILIES

PROGRAM OVERVIEW



- **Thereafter a Welcome Statement, and Introduction of David A. Wyher**, was given by **George D. Mosee, Jr., Esq.**, Executive Director, Philadelphia Anti-Drug/Anti Violence Network (PAAN), and Vice Chair of The Strong Families Commission, Incorporated (THE COMMISSION).
- **David A. Wyher**, President & CEO, Delta Community Supports, Inc. & Vice Chair of the Pennsylvania Symposium Organizing Committee, presided over the day's event.
- **Ms. Cherri Gregg**, Community Affairs Reporter, KYW, News Radio, served as Moderator for the Press Conference and Discussion that included the call to action, challenges moving forward, how the public could help, and why Pennsylvania needed to proceed now.
- **Drs. Joel N. Myers & Rev. Dr. W. Wilson Goode, Sr.** delivers the Press Statement, Frames the Challenges of Going Forward, & makes the Appeal to the Public for Support, and Participates in the Media & Audience Q&A Session.





Subject Matter Content Expert Panel Members Included

- **Robert Hill**, *Former Vice Chancellor for Public Affairs at the University of Pittsburgh, Office of Public Affairs, & a Pittsburgh-based communications consultant.*
- **Ave Mulhern**, *Program Implementation Specialist, National Fatherhood Initiative (NFI).*
- **Paul Bennett**, *Editor/Publisher, The Spirit, Delaware County Pennsylvania's Award Winning Community Newspaper.*
- **Dr. Wade F. Horn**, *former Assistant Secretary for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, and Co-founder of the National Fatherhood Initiative, addresses why Pennsylvania should continue to support responsible fatherhood.*
- **Dr. Raymond E. Petren**, *Associate Professor, Human Development and Family Studies, Pennsylvania State University Scranton, summarizes themes from the Symposium, what's missing, and a vision for the future.*
- **End of Program Series and Closing Remarks, David A. Wyher**, *thanks all who made the Symposium a success, especially the agencies that were able to work together, notwithstanding social distance due to Covid- 19 and the Coronavirus Pandemic*



Section III. Pictorial Gallery of Speakers and Presenters

Day One Speakers and Presenters

- G. Lawrence DeMarco, LLM, Dr. Raymond E. Petren, Erik Vecere, David A. Wyher, Dr. Catherine Lobaugh, Rev. Dr. W. Wilson Goode, Sr., Dr. Joel N. Myers, & Dr. Amy C. Sagen.

Day Two Speakers and Presenters

- William L. McCusker, Jeffrey Scott Steiner, Dr. H. Jean Wright, Robert E. Patrick, David R. Fair, Dr. Jeffrey K. Shears, Thomas Washington, Jr., Larry L. Klinger, Angela Mclver, Anita Kellerman Kulick, Mother Nadine Blackwell, Brother Melvin Hubbard El, Senator Anthony Hardy Williams, Senator Ryan Aument, Representative Lori A. Mizgorski, Representative Edward C. Gainey, Judge Doris A. Smith-Ribner (Ret.), Dr. Richard Jeffrey Rhodes, & Michael J. Flott.

Day Three Program Highlights

- Dr. Erin McDonald, George D. Mosee, Jr., Esq., David A. Wyher, Cherri Gregg, Robert Hill, Ave Mulhern, Paul Bennett, Drs. Goode & Myers, Dr. Wade F. Horn, Dr. Raymond E. Petren, & David Wyher.

DAY 1



G. Lawrence DeMarco



Dr. Raymond E. Petren



Erik Vecere



David A. Wyher

Pictorial Gallery

G Lawrence DeMarco, LL.M

Commission Fellow, Inaugural Chair of Administration of Social Justice/Public Safety, & PAGFFIC Campaign Video Developer, and Founder of The Law Center.

Dr. Raymond E. Petren

Associate Professor, Human Development and Family Studies, Pennsylvania State University Scranton – “Envisioning Father’s Role in Child and Family Development. Dr. Petren’s research addresses parenting and family relationships across family structure, and transitions with a focus on co-parenting relationships and the role of fathers and stepfathers within families.

Erik Vecere

Chief Program Officer, National Fatherhood Initiative.

David A. Wyher

President & CEO, Delta Community Supports, Inc., and Vice Chair of the Pennsylvania Symposium Organizing Committee (SOC).



**Dr. Catherine
Lobaugh**

Dr. Catherine Lobaugh

Assistant Executive Director, for Early Childhood, Family & Community Services at the Allegheny County Intermediate Unit.



**Rev. Dr. W. Wilson
Goode, Sr.**

Rev. Dr. W. Wilson Goode, Sr.

Former Mayor, City of Philadelphia, and Founder & President, AMACHI, Inc. Dr. Goode serves as Chair of The Pennsylvania Symposium Organizing Committee (SOC).



Dr. Joel N. Myers

Dr. Joel N. Myers

Founder, CEO, and Chairman of AccuWeather, & Founder and Chair of Dad's Resource Center, State College Pennsylvania. Dr. Myers serves as the Chair of the Pennsylvania Greater Father Family Involvement Campaign (PAGFFIC).



Dr. Amy C. Sagen

Dr. Amy C. Sagen, LSW, ACSW, MSG

Chief Operating Officer for the National Association of Social Workers – Pennsylvania Chapter.

DAY 2



William L. McCusker

William L. McCusker

Founder and Executive Director, Fathers & Families, Inc.



**Jeffrey Scott
Steiner**

Jeffrey Scott Steiner

Executive Director, Dads' Resource Center, and Panel Moderator.

PANELISTS



Dr. H. Jean Wright

Dr. H. Jean Wright

Forensic Psychologist City of Philadelphia, System Area (s) of Expertise: Criminal and Juvenile Justice & Behavior Health.



Robert E. Patrick

Robert E. Patrick

Director, Pennsylvania Office of Child Support Enforcement, System Area of Expertise: Child Support Enforcement.



David R. Fair

David R. Fair

Deputy CEO, Turning Points for Children, System Area of Expertise: Child Welfare.



Dr. Jeffrey K. Shears

Dr. Jeffrey K. Shears

Commission Fellow, Inaugural Chair of Early Childhood Development. System Areas of Expertise: Fatherhood Research and Early Childhood Development.



**Thomas
Washington, Jr**

Thomas Washington, Jr

Homewood Children's Village, Community School Site Manager/Fatherhood Initiative, & Chair, Fathers Collaborative Council of Western Pennsylvania, System Area of Expertise: K-12 Education.



Larry L. Klinger, Jr.

Larry L. Klinger, Jr.

AIU Program Supervisor, System Area (s) of Expertise: Adult Education and Workforce Development.



Angela McIver

Angela McIver

Chief Executive Officer, Fair Housing Rights Center in Southeastern Pennsylvania, and Commission Fellow, Inaugural Chair of Housing Policy and Programs that protect Fair Housing Rights for all Americans. System Area(s) of Expertise: Housing and Behavioral Health.



**Anita Kellerman
Kulick**

Anita Kellerman Kulick

President & CEO, Educating Communities for Parenting, Board Chair of the Pennsylvania Parenting Coalition, and Commission Fellow, Inaugural Chair of Parent Education and Supportive Services. System Area(s) of Expertise: Parent Education and Supportive Services.



**Mother Nadine
Blackwell, RN**

Mother Nadine Blackwell, RN

Retired Educator, Nurse, and Low-Vision Specialist, System Area of Expertise: Community Public Health.



**Brother Melvin
Hubbard EI**

Brother Melvin Hubbard EI

Educator, Fatherhood Pioneer, Community Servant, and Co-Founder of the Coalition for Fathering Families.



**Senator Anthony
Hardy Williams**

**Pennsylvania State Senator
Anthony Hardy Williams**

Prime Sponsor S.B. 476
2019-2020 Legislative Session



**Senator
Ryan Aument**

**Pennsylvania State Senator
Ryan Aument**

Co-Sponsor S.B. 476
2019-2020 Legislative Session



**House of
Representatives
Lori A. Mizgorski**

**Pennsylvania State House of Representatives
Lori A. Mizgorski**

Prime Sponsor H.B. 2872
2019-2020 Legislative Session



**House of
Representatives
Edward C. Gainey**

**Pennsylvania State House of Representatives
Edward C. Gainey**

Co-Sponsor H.B. 2872
2019-2020 Legislative Session



**Judge Doris A.
Smith-Ribner, (Ret.),**

Judge Doris A. Smith-Ribner, (Ret.)

A Commonwealth Appeals Court Judge who is credited with creating the interest in and development of “At-Risk Children, Family & Communities Caucus” meetings held throughout Pennsylvania from 2013-2016.



**Dr. Richard Jeffrey
Rhodes**

Dr. Richard Jeffrey Rhodes

Director of School Improvement Services for an Education non-profit organization, Adjunct Professor of Educational Leadership and Management at Drexel University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.



Michael J. Flott

Michael J. Flott,

Founder and CEO, I CAN DADS Coaching.

DAY 3



Dr. Erin McDonald

Dr. Erin McDonald

Region III Administrator, The Administration for Children and Families (ACF), a division of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.



George D. Mosee, Jr.

George D. Mosee, Jr., Esq

Executive Director, Philadelphia Anti-Drug/Anti Violence Network (PAAN), and Vice Chair of The Strong Families Commission, Incorporated (THE COMMISSION).



David A. Wyher

David A. Wyher

Presided over Day 3

PANEL MODERATOR



Ms. Cherrie Gregg

Ms. Cherri Gregg

Community Affairs Reporter, KYW, News Radio. Moderator of Press Conference and Panel Discussion.

SUBJECT MATTER CONTENT EXPERT PANEL MEMBERS



Robert Hill

Robert Hill

Former Vice Chancellor for Public Affairs at the University of Pittsburgh, Office of Public Affairs, & a Pittsburgh-based communications consultant.



Ave Mulhern

Ave Mulhern

Program Implementation Specialist, National Fatherhood Initiative (NFI).



Paul Bennett

Paul Bennett

Editor/Publisher, The Spirit, Delaware County Pennsylvania's Award Wining Community Newspaper.



Drs. Joel N. Myers & Rev. Dr. W. Wilson Goode, Sr.



Dr. Wade F. Horn

Dr. Wade F. Horn

Former Assistant Secretary for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, and Co-founder of the National Fatherhood Initiative.



**Dr. Raymond E.
Petren**

Dr. Raymond E. Petren

Pennsylvania State University Scranton, summarizes the themes from the Symposium, i.e. what's missing, and a vision for the future.

End of Program Series and Closing Remarks



David Wyher

David A. Wyher

Thanking all who made the Symposium a success.



Section IV. Program Highlights

Day One

- *Brief History of Pennsylvania's Journey Through an Early Childhood Development Lens* - [Dr. Catherine Lobaugh](#)
- *Excerpts From an Interview with Rev. Dr. W. Wilson Goode, Sr.*
- *Excerpts from an Interview with Dr. Joel N. Myers*

Day Two

- **Panel Discussion**

"ARE FATHERS INTENTIONALLY INCLUDED, OR NOT, IN PENNSYLVANIA'S CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES AND PROGRAMMING THAT ARE DESIGNED TO ENHANCE WELL-BEING OUTCOMES FOR BOTH?"



PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Responses from Panel -

- **Dr. H. Jean Wright, II**, Forensic Psychologist City of Philadelphia
- **Robert E. Patrick**, Director of Pennsylvania Office of Child Support Enforcement
- **David R. Fair** - Deputy CEO, Turning Points for Children
- **Dr. Jeffrey K. Shears**, Professor of Social Work at North Carolina A&T & Commission Fellow
- **Thomas Washington, Jr.**, Homewood Children's Village, Community School Site Manager & Chair, Fathers Collaborative Council of Western Pennsylvania
- **Larry L. Klinger, Jr.**, AIU Program Supervisor
- **Angela McIver**, Chief Executive Officer, Fair Housing Rights Center in Southeastern Pennsylvania & Commission Fellow
- **Anita Kellerman Kulick**, President & CEO, Educating Communities for Parenting, Board Chair of the Pennsylvania Parenting Coalition, & Commission Fellow
- **Mother Nadine Blackwell**, RN, Retired Educator, Nurse, and Low-Vision Specialist

Day Three

- **Subject Matter Panel Discussion**
- **Media Alert**
- **2020 Multidimensional Call to Action**

DAY 1



DR. CATHERINE LOBAUGH

BRIEF HISTORY OF PENNSYLVANIA'S JOURNEY THROUGH AN EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT LENS

Dr. Lobaugh's presentation focused on the power behind father involvement, its impact on child development and life-long effects, and a brief history of the evolution of the Greater Father Family Involvement Campaign (PAGFFIC). She stated that research supports the positive impact a father can have on a child's life and into adulthood. Many programming efforts have focused on mothers as the primary caregivers and contacts for participating in activities to support children in their growth and development, but fathers also play a key role as well, as research has evidenced. Although efforts have been underway to include fathers in many aspects of child-rearing and opportunities to participate, there is still much to be done at both the grassroots and legislative levels. Thus, the establishment of a focused movement to embed the need for father involvement in and through child and family programming, as well as agency service delivery models that include outreach to fathers, are urgently needed.

In that regard, Dr. Lobaugh encouraged, on behalf of fathers, children and families throughout Western Pennsylvania, the continued cooperative agreement between the Allegheny County Intermediate Unit, the Fathers Collaborative Council of Western Pennsylvania, and the newly formed Pennsylvania Fathers, Families & Service Providers Network, to expand services to fathers helping to raise children.





REV. DR. W. WILSON GOODE, SR.

EXCERPTS FROM INTERVIEW WITH REV. DR. W. WILSON GOODE, SR.

The Rev. Dr. W. Wilson Goode Sr., is the Chair of the Pennsylvania Symposium Organizing Committee (SOC), and former Mayor of the City of Philadelphia, former chairman of the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission, and Founder and President of Amachi., Inc.

First Question – *“From where you sit as a leader who has worked in local and national settings, with knowledge of government and institutional systems, what brought you to this work ... advocating for greater father family involvement in the lives of children and families?”*

Response from Dr. Goode:

What brought me to this work is 82 years of observing what's gone on since I started out on a sharecropping farm in Seaboard North Carolina. It was a different time then, when fathers were more active in the lives of their children, because of the strong cultural system emphasizing men during that period of time. To this day, I remember my father's influence on me, in fact, I remember one day when I was in the field with my father (a man of few words) and he said to me as he looked at me, “Wilson you are not going to be a Farmer like me. You are going to be important one day.” Those are really the only words I remember that my father ever spoke to me. I'm sure he said other things but those were prophetic words and I never forgot them. It was as if he said to me, “You leave this farm and you go out and do something.” That single image of my father remained in my mind, and propelled me forward, despite future obstacles, that I faced throughout my life, including now.

Subsequent to that message from my father, he had a dispute with the landlord and assaulted him, and ended up going to jail. As a result, my father spent two years in prison, during which time, the family relocated from North Carolina to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. No doubt, he was a major missing element in my life. We moved to a community called Paschall

and joined the First Baptist Church of Paschall. While my father was still in prison, it was the men and the fathers in that church who mentored, and tutored me, when my high school counselor told me that I was not college material, they said to me, we are sending you to college and it was those men in that church, those fathers, that took up their nickels and Dimes and quarters and dollars and sent me off to Morgan State College.

To answer the question, my beginning was with my father in that field. Thus, from where I am, and what I've done, and what I've seen, including when I started the Amachi program (a mentoring program for children with incarcerated parents), it was really a god sent for me. So this topic of need for greater father family involvement, as opposed to father absence or non-involvement is very apparent today, given a large number of young men and women who are experiencing the lack of parental direction, especially from their fathers.

In short, I am inspired to do this work, because we have to be on this rescue mission. A rescue mission to involve fathers in helping their sons and daughters to achieve their full potential. Without the involvement of fathers in the lives of children, there is something missing and unless we can replace that and find a way to get fathers more involved in raising-up their children, we will continue to have a situation where young people are following their fathers into the prisons, where young people are beginning to go astray and/or kill one another, drop out of school and potentially destroy their lives forever.

When everything is said and done, the best equation for success for children born in America is a father and a mother in the house helping to raise them and put them where they should be.

Question Two – *“Can you talk a little more about your Amachi program?”*

Response from Dr. Goode:

The Amachi program was organized in 2000. I say organized because the idea of Amachi was not mine. In fact, it was the idea of Dr. John J. Dilulio, a professor of religion and government at the University of Pennsylvania. And he intentionally invited me to come and help organize it. I was a deputy assistant secretary of education in Washington at the time and I literally left that job and came back to Philadelphia not knowing anything about what could be done and he said we want to work with children of incarcerated parents. At that time, there were 10.7 million children in this country who had one or more parents who were either in prison or under some type of federal, state, or local supervision. It was believed, if nothing happened, 70% of those children will end up in prison themselves.

AMACHI, a Nigerian word of hope from the Ibo people, means “who knows but what God has brought us through this child.” Essentially, what we do is connect a loving and caring adult, who will spend one hour once a week, or two hours twice a month with a child for at least one year. What we've learned over the years is that one adult mentoring one child, had a positive impact on 2/3 of the children in our programming, e.g. Two/ thirds of the children improved their school attendance and 90 percent of the children improved their relationship with their peers, their siblings, and the adults in their lives.

One quick short story, my connection to children of incarcerated parents resonated with me one day, like never before, as I thought about my own father, who at one time was in prison, and that I too am the son of an incarcerated father. It never occurred to me until I had the opportunity to visit a group of men in prison that this work would become a life commitment for me – servicing children of incarcerated parents.

During a trip to a local prison, I found three generations of fathers. A grandfather, a father, and a grandson, all in the prison at the same time... they met for the first time in prison. And as I was about to leave, the grandson said to me, I have a son that I have never seen, I guess I will see him for the first time in prison too. So it hit me suddenly that in our time it is possible to have four generations of fathers in prison all at the same time, and for me preventing the absence of fathers from the family is one of the most important things that we can do to guarantee the livelihood of our city, state, and nation.

Third Question – *“How do you see government and institutional systems, if at all, taking on the challenge of intentionally including fathers within child and family Commonwealth programming?”*

Response from Dr. Goode:

I will say that I'm hopeful. I'm hopeful, but not very optimistic. I'm hopeful that they will do it. I think that the bad part about where we find ourselves is that we have government structures that in my opinion have intentionally left Fathers out. They have not focused on involving the fathers in the lives of their children. In fact, the systems that I have observed over my lifetime, both in and out of government (state, federal, and local), reveals at times, what seems intentional, the exclusion of fathers, believing that the fathers' do not play a vital role in the raising of children and nothing could be further from the truth. Consequently, we have a system which is either designed and/or has evolved into one that systematically excludes fathers in its designed program descriptions that ultimately exclude fathers and/or that make it kind of almost a crime for fathers to engage their children at so many levels. So once again, I am hopeful but not optimistic that it will happen. However, I believe that's why we're doing what we're doing, that's why we are where we are.

Question Four – *“So knowing what you're up against, you know the Commonwealth, and its programs that work to exclude fathers, and knowing that you've been Chairing the Pennsylvania Symposium Organizing Committee since 2016 for nearly five years now, what's next for this organization?”*

Response from Dr. Goode:

What's next is to go out there and have a real good rumble. A rumble with the people who want to reflect the status quo. A rumble with those people who do not believe fathers have a critical and necessary role in the lives of their children. A rumble with elected officials who refuse to do their job and make a change in the laws that exist so that fathers can have an essential and intentional role to play in their children life. We need to be as aggressive as we can be, as vocal as we can be, as bold as we can be, to confront the system that has in my opinion caused the absence of fathers in the lives of too many children, and have wrecked the lives of those children, because their fathers have not been there for them as children.

I believe that we can in the coming year or two establish a Pennsylvania Commission at the state level that becomes a model for local governments in the Commonwealth and then eventually become a model for the country. What this is all about is changing the direction of the policy that we have in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, that suggest that the father is unimportant in the lives of children, to one that says fathers are essential in the lives of children. Our role is to make sure that the latter happened, and the former is cut off at its knees and cannot continue to do what has been documented in this country over the last 50 years. I believe, although I'm not as optimistic as I normally am about things, that we can make this happen based on the progress we've made over the last five years. I'm convinced that we can make this work.

Final Question – *"What is your final message you would like to share with our listening audience?"*

Response from Dr. Goode:

My final message is we need the help of the citizens of this Commonwealth. When I ran for mayor of Philadelphia in 1983 I would travel all over the city and I would state a problem and at the end of that problem I would ask the audience will you help me? The problem that we're facing now (father absence or non-father involvement in the raising of children) is not much different than when I ran for office, in that, in both cases, the support of the public is so essential to make the change. We have a state government that seems not to be driven by our current lack of greater father involvement, demonstrated by what appears to be intentional actions of inactivity, when it comes to father inclusion in child and family programming in the Commonwealth. What we need to do now is to advocate for the dismantlement of any system that does not support father inclusion in child and family programming, and replace them with Strong policies and programs that will encourage and support fathers to become active in the lives of their children and families.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts.



W. Wilson Goode, Sr.



DR. JOEL N. MYERS

EXCERPTS FROM INTERVIEW WITH DR. JOEL N. MYERS

Dr. Joel N. Myers, the Founder and CEO of AccuWeather, Founder and Board Chair of Dad's Resource Center, Chair of the Pennsylvania Greater Father Family Involvement Campaign (PAGFFIC), and the recipient of The Strong Families Commission, Incorporated (THE COMMISSION) Inaugural Pennsylvania Fatherhood Award.

First Question – *“Can you talk about the creation of the Dads Resource Center?”*

Response from Dr. Myers:

Yes, I felt there was a need for an organization that would be an advocate for fathers and that would help fathers who wanted to play the important role of being a dad in their children's lives and who were running into roadblocks. They want to provide the support and contribute to the upbringing of their children and need to have that opportunity in the face of systemic resistance. The organization has evolved, I had no idea how the concept would be accepted but it's been amazing the support we've received and the comments we've heard throughout the Commonwealth and beyond about the need for such an organization to be an advocate on behalf of single fathers. And of course, in the end, this all is for the benefit of the children, that's what it's really all about.

Question Two – *“How has fatherhood changed over the years?”*

Response from Dr. Myers:

It really wasn't until World War II that women went into the workforce and the traditional role of mothers and fathers began to change. And of course, we've had many social changes of the last seventy-five years. Traditionally, the mother stayed at home, the father went into work and so the mother played a bigger role in the raising of the children. Fathers obviously were involved particularly on weekends and evenings, but clearly, over the last several decades it's been more of a partnership where many women have gone into the workforce. And so that has changed the family dynamic.

But the courts and the rules, and many of the agencies that make decisions about the roles that mothers and fathers get to play have not changed with the times.

Third question – *“There has been a lot of studies done pertaining to fatherhood and the importance of fathers in the lives of their children. Can you speak about the research and the important role that fathers play in the development of their children?”*

Response from Dr. Myers:

Clearly, when both parents are involved in their children’s lives, those children will likely be better developed and better adjusted, have more successful careers, personal lives, and so on. It’s just common sense. And with separated families where one of the parents in some cases doesn’t want to play that role, it’s unfortunate. But, when they do and don’t have a chance to play an important role for whatever reason that shortchanges the children.

I am a scientist, and I like to have the data. The Dads’ Resource Center just completed an analysis of the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997, which is a nationally representative survey of men and women born between 1980 and 1984 and living in the United States. We looked at the outcomes based on a family of origin and the results were truly remarkable. For example, Children raised in families without their father were 11% more likely to smoke 20% more likely to engage in hard drugs, 33% more likely to have intercourse before the age of 17, 15% more likely to need mental health treatment, 71% more likely to be convicted of a felony 94% more likely to use government programs such as WIC and SNAP, 7% less likely to graduate from high school, 43% less likely to graduate from college, 26% less likely to vote, 13% less likely to serve on a jury or report a crime and 11% less likely to volunteer their time in the community. And they made on average 26% less than wages than those who grew up with their fathers.

This has an incredible impact on society and is a drain on the taxpayers. It’s so overwhelming. The impact on the economy due to the lack of father involvement is many hundreds of billions of dollars a year, possibly approaching a trillion dollars. Upwards of 4% of the GDP of this nation is wasted because of a lack of involvement of fathers. And a lot of that occurs because of the system, outdated rules, and decisions by the courts and social welfare agencies.

So, in 2019 we conducted a study of the custody time that was awarded to fathers by Pennsylvania Courts of the Common Pleas, picking 50 cases at random in each of 14 counties, a total of 700 cases. Now, these were contested custody cases where both the father and mother were in court. Most often spending money on an attorney trying to get at least equal custody. On average, in these cases, 69% of the custody time went to the mothers and 31% of the custody time went to fathers. Mothers received full or primary custody in 496 of the cases and fathers in 100. And it was shared custody in only 104 cases.

We also did a study of the staffing for all of the 67 county offices of Children and Youth in Pennsylvania. We found that 82% of the staff were female and 18% were male for the supervisors 84% were female and 16% were male; a ratio of six to one. Now that by itself does not mean there’s any bias. But it’s a question of point of view. How does the father’s point of view get properly represented? Is it properly represented?

Another thing we looked at is Guardian ad Litem. Many judges appoint Guardian ad Litem when there's a custody case where there is divisiveness within the family and both parents want to be involved. The Guardian is supposed to be the advocate for the child in the case. In theory, this makes sense. But, it's important that the Guardian ad Litem are trained to be fair, unbiased, and always have the interest of the child at heart. We tried to look into this and see how the Guardians are trained. Are they men and women, or are they evenly split? What's the breakdown? So we sent a request to all 67 counties in the state under the right to know the law and asked for the information to assess how all of this works. Despite the law and the fact that we were within our rights 52 of the 67 counties refused to give us any data.

Now we don't know if they were stonewalling or if they didn't even have the data. In any case, this is unacceptable. This is our tax dollars at work. These are government agencies. We have a right to have this data so we can point it out if there's a problem and help improve the system. Further, we found out that there were no apparent guidelines for Guardians to follow and no best practices. They're just appointed as an attorney for the child, but they have no guidebook to follow. Some I am sure are doing a great job, and I know some are not.

Question Four – *“Can you speak to the way these systemic barriers occur, how does that impact the children?”*

Response from Dr. Myers:

Sure. If families break up and fathers want to be involved, if they're good dads and they genuinely want to stay active in their children's lives, they need to have the opportunity to do so. Thus, I think the responsibilities that come with parenthood need more attention. We teach sex education in schools, but we don't spend enough time teaching about your responsibility when you become a parent. One consequence of sex is that you might become a parent and that's a major responsibility, and also potentially a joy for the rest of your life. It's going to change your life. But education is failing in that regard.

But for fathers in separated families who are changing their lives, working around their business, their job, giving up some of their pleasures in life, doing everything they can to spend time with their sons or daughters, then to have to fight the courts and the agencies, the systematic bias in so many ways ... that's just not good for the child. It's also a lot for fathers, and not good for their health and wellbeing. AND, we want more fathers involved. We want to encourage fathers, not discourage fathers. Many lawyers tell you, “You're not going to win. Settle for dinner Wednesday night and every other weekend or one weekend a month. Why waste your money?” I've heard lawyers tell fathers that and they give up from the beginning.

Not that fathers wanted to do it, but they sometimes concluded, why fight city hall? And so it's entrenched throughout the system. We have to change that. We have to give those fathers that want to play an equal role as a parent the opportunity to do that. It's in the child's interest. It's in the mother's interest in the end.

Sure, when a family breaks up, there is animosity sometimes, and unfortunately, the children suffer the most. They experience the fighting they get caught in the tug of war between the other and father. They are sometimes used as a weapon.

And when they separate they have two households that the parents are struggling to maintain, and the standard of living of both mother and father goes down. The standard of living as a child has to go down and all those things contribute to the statistics I started with. We have to change that whole system.

Question Five – *“All right. So this brings us to your involvement with the Pennsylvania Greater Father Family Involvement Campaign (PAGFFIC). Can you talk about that a little bit?”*

Response from Dr. Myers:

In 2017, The Strong Families Commission, Incorporated (THE COMMISSION) organized the first statewide Symposium on Child Well-being in Pennsylvania and the Urgent Need for Father Involvement, in partnership with the Allegheny County Intermediate Unit (AIU), and the Fathers Collaborative Council of Western Pennsylvania. That is what got all of this started. In 2018, the Symposium Organizing Committee (SOC) was officially formed as an entity and called for the first statewide convening of father, child, and family advocates to come together as a bipartisan body of leaders to raise the consciousness of Pennsylvanians that fathers can make tremendous contributions to the well-being of children and families. In 2019, I accepted the invitation to serve as Chair of the Pennsylvania Greater Father Family Involvement Campaign (PAGFFIC) As the Chair of PAGFFIC, I want to say I have been extraordinarily impressed by the quality of the leadership of our campaign and the devotion to the cause by everyone involved. I want to call out a few of these folks because I've been so impressed by the SOC Chair and leader of the movement, Rev. Dr. W. Wilson Goode Sr., the former mayor of Philadelphia, and SOC Co-Chairs David A. Wyher and Dr. Catherine Lobaugh. And the tireless work of our campaign architect, Dr. Rufus Sylvester Lynch. I mean, these are great people that are making great sacrifices for a terrific and important cause, and they all deserve our thanks and gratitude.

The leadership is extremely grateful for, and I want to commend, everyone who has worked tirelessly and passionately on behalf of this important and meaningful endeavor to make Pennsylvania into a state that leads the country in advocating for the equal and critical rights and roles of both parents, to ensure that both parents are involved in the care and development of children. That's what this is all about. And the strategic partnership between The Strong Families Commission, the Allegheny Intermediate Unit, and the Dads' Resource, has amplified our strength many times over. So as I said in the beginning I have been gratified and pleased that there's been support for our effort across the board, including many of the women's advocate groups and so on as well. We're all in this together. We all want what's best for the children.

Clearly, we are looking for more people to support our cause. I think that's important and we have three objectives that we are working on. First, as you know, we want to raise the consciousness for all of Pennsylvania that fathers can and do make tremendous contributions to the wellbeing of children and to families. Second, to educate and urge each branch of the Pennsylvania state government to adopt and institutionalize a father-inclusive posture toward men, both with intact families and in separated families, and to support the active participation of fathers in Commonwealth, child, and family programming. Finally,

to urge the Pennsylvania General Assembly to establish by statute a Pennsylvania Commission that promotes greater father family involvement in the lives of children and families, and the removal of systematic impediments that work against greater father-child, and family involvement.

This past September, during what has clearly been the most challenging year we've had in a long time due to the Coronavirus; we were able to work with State Representative Lori A. Mizgorski to have her along with 12 co-sponsors introduce House Bill 2872, which would establish the Pennsylvania Advisory Commission on Greater Father Family Involvement. It was a great achievement to have been able to see the introduction of this house version of Senate Bill 476, which was sponsored by Senator Anthony Hardy Williams and introduced in the Senate on April 30, 2019.

Study after study shows what we already know, children develop more fully and have a greater chance of being successful in life and much less of a drain on society when both parents are actively involved in their upbringing. And it would remove some of the burden on the taxpayers, state government, and on the courts. Because of the time and dedication of so many in this effort, in such a short period of time, a matter of a few years, we have had an opportunity to achieve great progress on behalf of children.

Personally, being a present and involved dad was and is the most important job in my life. I have great, great kids, and they're a very important part of my life. The most important part. And I am so very grateful and pleased to be involved in this worthy cause and to witness the positive impact we are making. And I am even more optimistic about the progress we're going to make in the years to come.

Thank you.



Joel N. Myers

DAY 2

Panel Discussion Question

**“ARE FATHERS
INTENTIONALLY
INCLUDED, OR NOT,
IN PENNSYLVANIA’S
CHILD AND FAMILY
SERVICES AND
PROGRAMMING
THAT ARE
DESIGNED TO
ENHANCE WELL-
BEING OUTCOMES
FOR BOTH?”**



DAY 2

“Are Fathers intentionally included, or not, in Pennsylvania’s child and family services and programming that are designed to enhance well-being outcomes for both?”

My view is that Fathers are not intentionally included in Pennsylvania’s child and family service programming. This is especially true for men returning from incarceration. The vast majority of men returning to our communities from incarceration are fathers of at least two (2) children. Also, contrary to popular belief, the majority of these men maintained close and supportive relationships with their children prior to incarceration. Therefore, it speaks to the need in support of these fathers reentering the community and reintegrating back into the lives of their children. This effort of support needs to come from the Commonwealth (PA) to bring attention to, and acknowledge these men as essential to the continued healthy development of their children. Finally, related to the negative stereotypes perpetrated against fathers returning from jails/prisons; is the too often used term: “deadbeat dad;” when in fact, because of structural racism that exacerbates known social determinants (i.e. poverty, financial distress, disparities in access to healthcare, lack of housing, etc.); the more accurate term is: “dead-broke” dad. By not supporting fathers returning from jails/prisons with viable employment that consists of, not only a livable wage, but also a benefits package and room for professional growth, etc.; too often these fathers are left to desperate measures attempting to support their children’s financial, emotional, and social needs. Any legislation, programs, or strategic plans need to take seriously the social determinants that impact men of color in general, and exponentially impacts fathers returning from incarceration, specifically.

Dr. H. Jean Wright, II
Forensic Psychologist
City of Philadelphia
- Administration of
Justice / Public Safety
& Behavior Health

Robert E. Patrick,
Director
- Pennsylvania
Office of Child
Support
Enforcement -

The Pennsylvania Child Support Program is responsible for establishing, collecting, and distributing child support for over 500,000 children in Pennsylvania. Over the last several years the question we have explored is how to increase the input of fathers, mothers, and grandparents in the design of our service delivery. Beyond the participation of fathers as customers at a case level, we have intentionally increased the involvement of fathers in evaluating our services as a whole. With the formation of our Parents Advisory Board just before the pandemic and our ongoing discussions with fathers and fatherhood advocates, we have benefitted from this added perspective. This inclusion continues to inform our program decision making in areas such as establishing right sized orders, employment and training offerings, and the enforcement of child support orders in Pennsylvania. As we look to restart our board activities and build on our conversations with fathers and advocates, we expect to learn much more about the experiences of fathers in the program and how we can meet the needs of all the customers we serve. There is much work to be done, but fathers are now intentionally included in the child support program beyond the traditional customer experience and the value added from that inclusion is very clear to us.

“I would have to say that the child welfare system as a matter of principle “intends” to include fathers in its efforts to stabilize families and assure the safety and wellbeing of children, but falls far short on doing so in practice. Both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems have long struggled with how to engage fathers of the children in their care. While there has been more attention paid to this issue in recent years, we are hampered by ingrained anti-father biases of many case workers. We need to have a more intentional approach to try to overcome those biases and set a culture of not only reunifying the children with their mothers, but one in which fathers are equally valued.”

David R. Fair
- Deputy CEO,
Turning Points
for Children
- Child
Welfare

Dr. Jeffrey K. Shears
Professor of Social Work
at North Carolina A&T &
Commission Fellow
-Early Childhood
Development

“The question of intentionality of the Pennsylvania child and family services in involving fathers is not one that I can immediately address as intention can be difficult to determine. However, I can offer that the lack of father involvement in the Pennsylvania child and family services mirrors a recurring national issue. One of the major contributors to this phenomenon is that we do not offer an educational at secondary educational institutions that adequately train and educate students to work with men. This is further exacerbated as early career employees enter the workforce with negative ideas regarding fathers and men in general. This is coupled with very few men involved in child and family services that could provide an environment to support fathers. Lastly, there are too few training opportunities to address the bias that many of the female dominated workforces have towards fathers. So although not fully embracing fathers and their roles in the lives of children may not be intentional, the fact remains that for this to change, there needs to be a state wide effort to support fathers and their children.”

DAY 2

“Are Fathers intentionally included, or not, in Pennsylvania’s child and family services and programming that are designed to enhance well-being outcomes for both?”

“Within the question above, it inherits multiple sub-questions which attention is needed as well. Are fathers projected or looked at as part of the family unit? Are fathers viewed as a primary focal point of their children’s life? Are fathers distributed the same knowledge and information in cultivating their children? In my view all of the answers to these questions are no! Fathers are not considered as crucial as mothers. Fathers have been on the back burner of parenting and role modeling for their children for decades. Fathers haven’t been included as a part of the family unit, in turn this has added to the problem of fathers not being fully involved in their children’s lives. Fathers aren’t allotted the same knowledge and information as mothers to enhance self and their children. Not until legislation, programs, and society begins to change their perspectives of fathers as integral to the family unit and not an addition to, fathers could not be a mainstay with development, growth, and progression of their children’s opportunities in life.”

Thomas Washington,
Jr., Homewood
Children’s Village,
Community School Site
Manager & Chair,
Fathers Collaborative
Council of Western
Pennsylvania
-K-12 Education

Larry L. Klinger, Jr.,
AIU Program Supervisor
-Adult Education and
Workforce Development

“The good news is that the Pennsylvania Department of Education has several policies that speak directly towards parent engagement, but relies on local educational agencies to implement these policies. Likewise, The Federal Department of Education has released policy statements on the implementation of effective family engagement practices, but they are mostly written for early childhood learning programs. It is important to remember that raising the next generation is a shared responsibility, and that best practices need to be developed, based on research and policy to better engage fathers and families in the education of their children. What we know is when families, including fathers, and educational institutions where children learn to partner in meaningful ways, come together, our children have more positive attitudes toward school, stay in school longer, have better attendance, and experience more school success.”

DAY 2

“Are Fathers intentionally included, or not, in Pennsylvania’s child and family services and programming that are designed to enhance well-being outcomes for both?”

As it pertains to housing policies, fathers are not included, either intentionally or unintentionally, in Pennsylvania’s child and family services and programming that are designed to enhance well-being outcomes for both. Citizens ensuring that there is greater father-family involvement within the Department of Human Services is one way in which public and social policies can include remedial actions that end exclusionary practices against fathers. For example, the first step in securing the American Dream is to look for a home. However, when fathers are left out of child and family services and programming, their needs that are connected to health and well-being go unmet. This can impact a father’s ability to access housing, and in turn, can significantly decrease his chance of building and transferring wealth, as housing is the pathway to wealth in the U.S. To further explain, in the 1930s, the Roosevelt administration created both the Home Owners Loan Corporation to rescue existing mortgages that were subject to imminent foreclosure and the Federal Housing Administration which insured bank mortgages to cover 80 percent of the purchase price of a home. Both agencies enabled working- and middle-class homeowners to gain equity while their properties were still mortgaged. If a family with an amortized mortgage sold its home, the family would keep the equity (including any appreciation). There is a cascading effect in the lives of fathers, children, and families when fathers are disenfranchised by a system which does not offer him services and programming. In sum, excluding fathers from child and family services and programming lessens the likelihood that fathers needing human services can acquire and maintain housing as well as the benefits that accompany having property.

Angela McIver,
Chief Executive Officer,
Fair Housing Rights
Center in Southeastern
Pennsylvania &
Commission Fellow -
Content Expert on
Housing and Behavioral
Health

Anita Kellerman Kulick,
President & CEO,
Educating Communities
for Parenting, Board
Chair of the
Pennsylvania Parenting
Coalition, & Commission
Fellow
-Parent Education and
Supportive Services

As a parenting educator I find the issue of father inclusion in programs complex and based on long outdated stereotypes, with mothers viewed as primary caregivers and fathers as providing financial support. Parenting classes reflect this dichotomy and are often divided by gender. Those teaching parenting skills necessary for the healthy social, emotional, and cognitive development of children are considered “Mom” classes. Fathers are not overtly excluded from these groups but few, if any, enroll for a variety of reasons including being outnumbered, unwelcome, and misunderstood. Surviving in today’s world is very difficult. Raising healthy happy children in the midst of chaos is an onerous undertaking. For the sake of our children, both mothers and fathers need to work together and have access to high-quality parenting education programs that can provide the skills and supports essential to help them in this challenging lifelong journey. Our children are depending on it.

My experiences in my vocations and avocations, have lead me to unequivocally surmise, that Fathers have intentionally not been included in Pennsylvania’s Child and Family Services and programming (PCFSP). Although clearly, programs and paradigms have been developed and written into PCFSP manuals. Notwithstanding, there seems to be a lack of “Boots on the Ground,” e.g., an adequate implementation process or a holistic approach for a Fathers 23 chromosomes to be viewed as a vital component in the lives of their children. The knowledge that Fathers are vital in the healthy growth and development of their children; has been known long enough for the data to fill many tomes. Grant Programs have been implemented that had a fatherhood component, however, they more often than not turn out to be gender-neutral. In my experience there has been far too many Family Service Grant Programs where there was no way to capture detailed data on the Fathers; it seemed as though addressing the goals, needs, and wants of Fathers was just not as important to the Child Welfare System as addressing those of the Mothers. In other words, Fathers were excluded, or at the very least, not a priority. Educationally, teachers and administrators often times would ask the student, “Can I call your mother?” or “Ask mother to donate to the bake sale.” Really! Fathers can take calls and bake as well. During my practice in a “family” shelter where Mothers and Fathers resided, I found none of the programs were designed for the family included services for fathers. For example, no training for parenting, use of domestic violence resources, navigation of social service systems, enrolling children in school, housekeeping tips, best shopping practices, budgeting and money management, and the importance of scheduling and maintaining health appointments. To make matters worse, Incarcerated Fathers are a captive audience for the system, yet for many, their personal goals needs, and wants, upon their release, go un-addressed. The Family Resource Center at a male state prison in Montgomery County at one time instructed participants on child development, parenting, constructive play, and interacting with children. A question could be asked why these programs ended. As an RN in hospitals and clinics, I witnessed Fathers asked to have a seat as the medical professional escorted the Mother and child into the exam room, leaving Father in prenatal and pediatric offices without Father Friendly brochures and artwork to make them feel welcome. So you see the need is great and the responsibility for systems to be accountable to and respectful of Fathers by including Fathers in the health, and well-being of children, is sorely needed.

Mother Nadine Blackwell,
RN, Retired Educator,
Nurse, and Low-Vision
Specialist
- Community Public
Health

MEDIA ALERT

SUBJECT MATTER PANEL DISCUSSION

PARTICIPANTS

Presenters:

Drs. Joel N. Myers & W. Wilson Goode, Sr.

Moderator:

Cherri Gregg - Community Affairs Reporter KYW, News Radio

Subject Matter Expert Panel Members:

Robert Hill - A Pittsburgh-based communications consultant, and Former Vice Chancellor for Public Affairs at the University of Pittsburgh, Office of Public Affairs

Ave Mulhern - Program Implementation Specialist, National Fatherhood Initiative

Paul Bennett - Editor/Publisher, The Spirit, Delaware County Pennsylvania's Award Winning Community Newspaper



Media Alert!

CONTACT: Allison Epstein, (617) 269-7171
allison@teakmedia.com

2020 SOC Symposium: Better Futures for Our Children

Facilitated by the Symposium Organizing Committee and featuring former Mayor of Philadelphia Dr. W. Wilson Goode Sr. and Dads' Resource Center Founder and Chairman Dr. Joel N. Myers
Three-Day Virtual Event: Dec. 1, 8, 15 from 2 to 4 p.m.

WHAT: **VIRTUAL CONFERENCE:** The 2020 SOC Symposium, a three-day virtual event – Dec. 1st, 8th and 15th from 2 to 4 p.m. – will promote the benefits for youth and society as a whole when both parents are present in their children's lives.

Commonwealth residents and lawmakers will have the opportunity to learn about the academic, social-emotional and financial implications of father absence and/or Non-involvement for children, and to advocate for the General Assembly to create a Commission on Greater Father Family Involvement. Originated by the Philadelphia based Strong Families Commission, this is the fourth annual conference facilitated by the Symposium Organizing Committee (SOC).

Who: **Day 3: Cherri Gregg**, *KYWNewsradio* Community Affairs Reporter, will lead a Q&A discussion panel featuring former Vice Chancellor for Public Affairs for the University of Pittsburgh **Robert Hill**, National Fatherhood Initiative Program Implementation Specialist **Ave Marie Mulhern** and Delaware County's Editor and Publisher of *The Spirit* **Paul Bennett**, after statements from **Dr. Joel N. Myers**, Founder and Chair of AccuWeather, and Dads' Resource Center, Founder and Chairman; and **Rev Dr. W. Wilson Goode Sr.**, former Mayor of Philadelphia, President AMACHI, Inc., and Chair of the Pennsylvania Symposium Organizing Committee, including a call to action for the General Assembly to create a Fatherhood Commission on Greater Father Family Involvement.

WHEN: Dec. 15 from 2 to 4 p.m. EST
Best times to tune in:
2 to 4 p.m.: Dr. Joel N. Myers and Jeffrey Scott Steiner M.Ed. are available for 1:1 phone and zoom interviews

WHERE: Register at <https://www.nasw-pa.org/event/2020SOCsymposium>

WHY: Today, 1 in 3 Pennsylvania families are headed by a single parent. Research shows children reach their fullest potential when both of their parents actively participate in their lives.

Father absence is often the root cause of many societal problems, such as low high school and college graduation rates, teen pregnancy, juvenile incarceration and increased use of federal assistance programs, such as SNAP and WIC. However, there are many systemic challenges that leave behind fathers who want to be present for their families. Through its

participation in the 2020 SOC Symposium and the PAGFFIC the Dads' Resource Center is raising awareness for the importance of children having both parents active in their upbringing and calling on the General Assembly to create a Pennsylvania Commission on Greater Father Family Involvement.

SOCIAL: #2020SOCSymposium; #DADSRC; Dads' Resource Center on social media: Facebook ([@dadsrc.org](https://www.facebook.com/dadsrc.org)); Twitter ([@DADSRC_PA](https://twitter.com/DADSRC_PA)); LinkedIn ([Dads' Resource Center](https://www.linkedin.com/company/dads-resource-center/)). Pennsylvania Child Welfare Resource Center on social media: Facebook ([@PACWRC](https://www.facebook.com/PACWRC)); Twitter ([@ThePACWRC](https://twitter.com/ThePACWRC)).

HOW: For interviews, filming or photo opportunities call Allison Epstein at 617-269-7171 or email allison@teakmedia.com

About Dads' Resource Center

The Dads' Resource Center was established by AccuWeather Founder and CEO Dr. Joel N. Myers in 2015 and is the only statewide youth advocacy organization that promotes the well-being and healthy development of children from separated or divorced families in Pennsylvania. Through education, direct resources and government activism, the organization takes a holistic approach to fatherhood, supporting and encouraging dads to be fully and actively engaged in the lives of their sons and daughters. For more information, visit: dadsrc.org.

###

2020 CALL TO ACTION

From SOC & PAGFFIC Leadership

History - Connecting the Dots

Roughly five and a half years ago (June 23, 2015) The Strong Families Commission, Incorporated (THE COMMISSION) in partnership with the Child Welfare League of America; Region III – Administration for Children and Families; American Bar, Center on Children and the Law; Bryn Mawr College, Graduate School of Social Work and Social Research; and the Stoneleigh Foundation hosted a National Call to Action Symposium in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania to publicize the increase need for responsible father engagement across multiple systems of care, with a special focus on child welfare and juvenile justice. This public/private partnership came together to demonstrate the importance of working across systems and sectors at all levels (i.e. local, state, regional and national) in order to increase father engagement in various service systems and improve life outcomes for children. The Symposium motto was *"Serving Children by Engaging Fathers."*

Increasingly child welfare and juvenile justice service systems were beginning to openly acknowledge and discuss, that actively engaging fathers in their children's lives is an important aspect of advancing child well-being. By end of the day, the National Call to Action Symposium concluded that, not only child welfare and juvenile justice systems, but other systems as well, could do more to leverage the strengths and resources of fathers, primarily because these systems often serve the same children and families. Unfortunately, the fathers in these families were/are often inadvertently excluded from casework and disadvantaged by the lack of alignment and coordination between child and family service systems. Similarly, related systems of care like education, behavioral health, public health, child support enforcement programs, employment and training initiatives, housing services, early childhood development courses, parent education and supportive services, and the adult criminal justice system have the potential to either create barriers or provide increased opportunities for responsible fatherhood engagement.

National Call to Action Symposium Partners all re-committed before leaving the Symposium to raising awareness within their unique service or advocacy network, by identifying new strategies to mitigate any barriers to responsible father engagement, moving forward. The group recognized that the Symposium had presented an important opportunity for child welfare, juvenile justice, and other systems of care to begin thinking about synchronizing staff training, service delivery strategies, and lessons learned about improving children's life outcomes through responsible father engagement.

Fostering a united voice in favor of responsible fatherhood engagement was the call of action then, believing that raising awareness can trigger broad changes in how systems of care relate to fathers. Each partner took a non-binding oath to pursue within their network the changes that were needed to increase father involvement within the lives of children and families. THE COMMISSION took on the role of educating, organizing, and advocating for strengthening Pennsylvania families, and improving developmental outcomes for their children, by promoting greater father family involvement in the lives of both, and the intentional transformation of social service agencies and other systems of care to adopt and institutionalize a father inclusive posture, toward men within families.

Fast Forward...



One year later (2016), THE COMMISSION in collaboration with the Philadelphia Leadership Foundation, AMACHI, Inc. and Delta Community Supports, Inc., began the serious conversation of how best to go about educating, organizing, and advocating for strengthening Pennsylvania's child and family well-being, while promoting greater father family involvement. In that regard, with the support of the National Fatherhood Initiative (NFI), THE COMMISSION took on the responsibility of reaching out to Western Pennsylvania (Allegheny County Intermediate Unit [AIU] & the Fathers Collaborative Council of Western Pennsylvania [FCCWPA]) to explore their interest in becoming a former part of a statewide entity, later to be named the Pennsylvania Symposium Organizing Committee (SOC) for the explicit purpose of bringing into the light something that has been in the dark far too long, ... that is the Absence or Non-Involvement of too many Pennsylvania fathers in the care and involvement of their children and families" and to shine a spotlight on the consequences of such behavior.

Beginning in 2017, the SOC, convened by THE COMMISSION, and in partnership with the above entities joined forces to host the first statewide Symposium at the Pennsylvania Child Welfare Resource Center in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania titled, "Child Well-Being in Pennsylvania...and the Urgent Need for Father Involvement." In 2018, at the same location, the SOC held its second Symposium, which convened father, child & family advocates to further examine child well-being in Pennsylvania, and systemic barriers that impeded fathers' being more engaged in the dynamics of family life. Later that year, the SOC issued a 2017-2018 full comprehensive report, with proceedings, observations, research findings and recommendations addressed to the Governor of the Commonwealth, Members of the General Assembly, and Justices of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court.

In 2019, SOC leadership selected Dr. Joel N. Myers, Founder, Chairman, and CEO of AccuWeather, with global headquarters in State College, Pennsylvania, as its Statewide Advocate and Champion for the Pennsylvania Greater Father Family Involvement Campaign (PAGFFIC), primarily because of his dedication to fathers in the care of their children, as exemplified by his Founding and Chairing of the Dads' Resource Center, also headquartered in State College. **March of 2019, SOC & PAGFFIC Leadership, as well as Father, Child & Family Advocates from across the Commonwealth, all gathered together in the main rotunda of the State Capital, in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania to call on the Governor of the State to:** "... issue an Executive Order that directs all Commonwealth departments and agencies to acknowledge the value of fathers and to be inclusive of fathers in the development and administration of children and family programs; **the Justices of the Supreme Court to promulgate rules and procedures for the unified judicial system to ensure that fathers' rights receive equal consideration and review in determining the best interests of the child and family, including family relations; and Members of the General Assembly to consider adoption of a Concurrent Resolution agreeing that prospective legislation regarding children and families will recognize, foster and promote the value of fathers' contribution to the well-being of their children.**" By year-end, SOC in collaboration with the School District of Philadelphia, held its third statewide Symposium titled "From the Beginning Early Childhood Development and the Role of Fathers."



2020 Covid-19 and the Coronavirus Pandemic



This year, the SOC determined, notwithstanding Covid-19 and the Coronavirus Pandemic, we could not afford to go an entire year and miss the opportunity of continuing to share the message of the urgent need for greater father family involvement in the life of children, families and communities. In that regard, we changed our Symposium format to a virtual event allowing for greater participation, and respect for social distancing policies that were and are still in place, due to the spread of the coronavirus.

We also decided to move beyond our request for a Concurrent Resolution, when Senator Anthony Hardy Williams agreed to sponsor legislation in the Senate, which would establish a Pennsylvania Commission to promote Greater Father Family Involvement, and active participation of fathers in Commonwealth child and family programming.

This year's Symposium, titled "Better Futures for our Children...Through Greater Father Family Involvement," was designed as a three-part-series-gathering, to introduce to some, and to remind others of Pennsylvania's journey toward father inclusiveness within child and family policies and programming. Our vision is clear, today's children are tomorrow's leaders, and our mission is to advocate for their well-being in the context of family.

The 2020 Call to Action is Multidimensional, as it involves different activities to support and sustain the achievement of our overarching goal of having the Pennsylvania General Assembly establish in status a Pennsylvania Commission to promote greater father family involvement.

In this regard we need:

- Help in continuing to bring to light something that has been in the dark, far too long, that is the Absence or Non-involvement of too many fathers in the care of their children and families, and to shine a spotlight on the resulting consequences of same. Therefore, we need human service professionals (Independent or Agency Based) with knowledge and experience working with families, where the father is absent or non-involved, and have evidence of the negative consequences of such absence or non-involvement, to stand up and share their stories regarding the impact that children and families are experiencing as a result of father absence and/or non-involvement, with their children;
- Help to elevate at the state level the discussion of the value of father involvement in the lives of children and families, thus, every Pennsylvania voter is encouraged to write to their State Legislator and State Senator asking them their position on the creation of a Pennsylvania Commission to promote greater father family involvement in the lives of children and families. By so doing they can also direct their representative to the following website links that provide educational information about the value of father involvement, and what is occurring across Pennsylvania: <https://pagffic.org/> and <https://www.thestrongfamiliescommission.com/>;

- Help recruiting and educating philanthropic, private, public, business, and corporate, as well as community stakeholders of the importance of fathers' contribution to the well-being of children and families, and encouraging their willingness to become involved in this 21st Century increasingly important issue;
- Help organizing those public/private, philanthropic, business, and corporate, as well as community civic organizations that already believe that fathers can take tremendous contributions to a child and family well-being, and who are willing to invite local father, child and / or family advocates, to speak with them and their constituent groups about what is happening on the ground regarding fathers, children and families;
- Help in re-designing and sustaining the Pennsylvania Fathers, Families, & Service Providers Network (PFFSPN), developed to serve communities throughout Pennsylvania that are eager for education and training opportunities, and seek ways to become involved in supporting greater father family involvement;
- Help maintaining, what SOC has already begun to build, bipartisan support to promote an increase in the Commonwealth's investment in every child's developmental growth, and the elimination of all systemic barriers that impede a father's desire to contribute more to his child's well-being. Citizens can help by being willing to engage their representatives regardless of their party affiliation, and be receptive of their willingness to work across the aisle;
- Help to identify Pennsylvania Policies and Programs that work against greater father family involvement and the contributions that a father can provide to a child that enhances their well-being. Such practices can be submitted directly to The Strong Families Commission, Incorporated by email at drslsynchtsfc@iawfpa.com, with a subject title "System Impediment Review/Public Education and Advocacy Initiative (SIR/PEAI);
- Help with the creation of a fatherhood statewide citizens' oversight policy team to ensure that a fathers' contributions to the well-being of children and youth will be recognized as an added protective factor when considering "What is in the best interest of the child";
- Help from those who believe in collaboration and are willing to work with local, state and national government leaders to remove systemic barriers that impede greater father family involvement, thereby demonstrating state and national commitment to both maternal and paternal involvement in the well-being of children; and,
- Help in appealing to the National Association of Social Workers, Council on Social Work Education and other local, state and national human service organizations to embrace Fatherhood as a legitimate area of inclusion when preparing professionals to serve the needs of America's children and families.

For those who want to know more, or join the Campaign, contact PAGFFIC's Campaign Manager, Dr. Rufus Sylvester Lynch at PAGFFIC@IAWFPA.COM.

AS WE LOOK BACK ON 2020, IT IS CLEAR THAT "WE HAVE TO KEEP AT IT... WE ARE ON A GOOD PATH... SUCCESS IS AROUND THE CORNER, LET'S RUN TO THE FINISH LINE."



Section V. Messages From Child and Family Thought Leaders

Message One -

- *Never Forget to Tell the Story: The Power of Story Sharing and the Voice of Our Fathers* - **Dr. Richard Jeffrey Rhodes**

Message two -

- *192 Fathers and Grandfathers Can't Be Wrong!* - **Allan Shedlin**

Message Three -

- *The Crisis of Fatherlessness: Where are the Business Leaders?*
- **William L. McCusker**

Message Four -

- *Recapitulation of the 2020 SOC Virtual Symposium*
- **Dr. Raymond E. Petren**

Message Five -

- *Acknowledgment Letter of Thanks on behalf of the SOC*
- **David A. Wyher**

Never Forget to tell the Story: The Power of Story Sharing and the Voice of Our Fathers

Not too long ago I had the honor and privilege of having an article, with a topic near and dear to my heart, published in the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education's online journal, Perspectives in Urban Education. The article entitled, Personal Story Sharing as an Engagement Strategy to Promote Student Learning, tells about the power of story and utilizing story sharing in urban schools as a way to build relationships and community between, with and amongst students and staff. As a story lover, I find that this approach not only has relevance in urban schools but, in fact, stories and story sharing should also be how humans engage with one another. We should take the time to inquire into and listen to each other's story of who we are, who we are becoming and why? Moreover, as an involved and engaged father and advocate for the involvement of fathers in the lives and overall well-being of their children, personal story sharing is especially poignant.

What would change if you could listen to the stories of children talking about their fathers and the impact of having them in, or out of, their lives, while speaking on who they are, who they are becoming and why? Could you imagine, in turn, if we also listened to our fathers as they shared their stories of not being involved and/or having limited engagement in the lives and well-being of their children? If we could listen to their why? Indeed, there are many stories to be heard, directly from the source and not through the interpreted lens of subjective observers. There is an adage that says, "the Lion's story will never be told, as long as the Hunter is the one to tell it" It is about time that we listen to our proud Lions, our Fathers, and give them audience to share their stories of frustration and success while we manage, listen and learn.

Just like our students, our fathers also have a voice. We need to create and allow space for the telling of their stories. Though we are not often able to "walk in our father's shoes" we certainly can give them the opportunity to share about the journey their feet have taken them. For some of our fathers, they have had to walk far and long until they arrived at the space where they are ready to be both dad and father. For some fathers, the role of father was like the saying, "if the shoe fits..." and being an involved and engaged father came naturally.

In the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, I urge our fellow Pennsylvanians to recognize that regardless of their story, all fathers have a story and they need to be heard. I am confident that our father's stories are authentically compelling and deserving of the respectful attention necessary to listen and learn.

My online article reminds me that we need to be careful of casting judgment based upon stereotypes:

“I have witnessed some teachers who act as if they already know their students’ stories because of the socioeconomic status of the neighborhood from where the students come or the casual slang that some students speak. As a result, they often do not make the time to ask or listen to their student’s experiences and/or perspectives.”

The PA legislators and policymakers engaged in the decision to grant fathers in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania lawful and morally appropriate (i.e., equity exemplified) levels of involvement and engagement in the life and well-being of their children should take heed to not limit our fathers through their own lens but rather see fathers through the clarity of listening to their voice – to their story. The stories of our children are not fully complete without the version that involves their fathers. We can help to make that version the best it could be by recognizing its value and facilitating its actualization. Let’s listen to those stories and do right by them. Let’s make sure that all Pennsylvania fathers have the legal, political and equitable right to be involved and engaged in the lives and well-being of their children. Let us share a story that fully affirms our fathers.

Dr. Richard Jeffrey "Jeff" Rhodes
Professor of Educational Leadership and Management

192 FATHERS AND GRANDFATHERS CAN'T BE WRONG

Be aware that if you embrace the opportunity to become a genuinely and exuberantly involved dad, you will never be alone in your heart.

Mirroring the 4th Annual Strong Families Commission Symposium itself, this booklet is rife with documentation of the importance to children's overall well-being when fathers are positively involved in their children's lives, and the negative consequences when fathers are absent. In previous Symposiums, the critical importance and benefits that accrue to fathers when they are positively involved in their children's lives and when children are positively involved in their lives is a critical topic that, unfortunately, has been left essentially unaddressed. This absence of attention is also true in the general research on fatherhood.

Overlooking the recognition of the importance to fathers of father-child involvement deprives the fatherhood field of a fundamental opportunity to increase motivation for increased father involvement and to expand the view of men as nurturing, sensitive, and vulnerable people. Appreciating this aspect of fathers can encourage a rethinking of what it means to be "manly" and thus acknowledge that it is the key to a fuller definition of fatherhood – what I refer to as *daddying*.

I view the lifelong process of daddying, as distinct from the one-time biological act of fathering. Daddying is the place where fathering and nurturing intersect to benefit children and dads alike. In turn, this also benefits families and the community.

A DADDY'S PRAYER®

("A PARENT'S PRAYER")

by Allan Shedlin

At the end of my days may my child be able to conclude with honesty, conviction, and enthusiasm that I did the best I could...and then some.

May I become the dad of my yearning, the one I might have dreamed for if I dared.

May I be mindful that when I dare, reality may present challenges to test my seriousness of intent and purpose.

At those times, may I remain mindful of my intentions and "daddy on" as if my child's life depends on it – as might mine.

Let the ideal of a "perfect parent" be my lodestar, humbled by the realization that there is no such thing. Just as there is no such thing as a "perfect child"...rather, a child who is perfectly who they are.

During my 20 years of individual interviews with 192 fathers and grandfathers (16-104 years old) from 20 countries, more than 94 percent of the men responded that being a dad enriched their lives. As a matter of fact, most wondered why I even asked that question since they believed the answer was self-evident.

With more men deciding not to keep the dad they most want to be waiting, and the idea that being a positively involved dad enriches fathers, grandfathers, and father figures, let's consider the following thoughts as we think about our own parenting and the parenting of others:

- Dads matter to kids and kids matter to dads (in their presence and in their absence).
- Daddying and mommying don't take place in a vacuum. They occur in a dynamic social system known as "family."
- Parents have an opportunity to encourage and/or discourage each other's daddying/mommying.
- Daddying is more than just who you are, it's something you do!
- There is no such thing as a "perfect" parent and you don't need to be perfect to be a successful parent.
- Dads have the power to become the dad they and their children want and need them to be; and it is often not as daunting as one thinks.
- We must do everything we can to provide opportunities for fathers to move from an "understudy" to a co-starring parenting role.
- As you consider the dad YOU most want to be, ask yourself how you want your child to describe you as a parent 5, 10, 15+ years from now.
- The qualities kids most want in their dad are the ones most dads want to cultivate AND that child development experts agree are needed to lead fulfilled and fulfilling lives.
- Daddying is one of life's rare opportunities to make a direct connection to your heart.

DADvocacy

CONSULTING GROUP



The SOC is most grateful for receiving a planning grant award from the Dadvocracy Consulting Group's Daddy Applesed Fund that assisted us in producing this year's SOC Symposium Program Booklet.

The Crisis of Fatherlessness: Where are the Business Leaders?

This year's SOC Symposium again assembles an impressive array of leaders representing the social services, non-profit, government, and academic worlds seeking to improve the lives of children by enhancing the family involvement of their fathers. Unfortunately, one group not well-represented is business leaders. Why is this? After all, businesses align with numerous social, civic, and charitable causes including health, education, the arts, the environment, poverty, and equality. They devote an impressive amount of time, talent, and treasure to these causes, and they enthusiastically bring their strategic, financial, planning, managerial, and executional skills to bear on them. But why not fatherlessness? Why are business leaders MIA on arguably the biggest social issue we face?

If pressed, I believe business leaders would answer that fatherlessness is an issue pertaining to men, that their companies are all in on the advancement of women (look at their ads and websites), and thus anything associated with men would be perceived as a drag on this commitment to gender equality.

They might also admit they view fatherlessness through a racial lens, and they have no interest in engaging on something so controversial. Not that they avoid racial issues per se. Many business leaders support BLM, loudly condemn white privilege, and pledge to end bias and systemic racism in the workplace (again, look at their ads and websites). But I sense they view matters involving fatherhood as conflicting - politically, culturally, or ideologically - with their cultivated positions on racial equality.

I would like to see business leaders take a deeper dive on gender equality. Businesses want to keep their employees focused on the business instead of being absorbed with other problems. That is why companies invest in EAP programs where employees can get confidential assistance on a host of issues. Women are twice as likely to use EAP services as are men. Aside from health and substance abuse, the biggest EAP issues concern finances, relationships, and children. Might business leaders see a connection between these issues and fatherlessness? Is it a stretch to say that by addressing fatherlessness businesspeople could help a significant part of their workforce, namely women raising children?

I also would invite business leaders to rethink the nature of their commitment to racial equality, perhaps by recognizing that half of kids living with single moms are living in poverty. Or by realizing that kids without dads have a far greater risk of joining gangs, committing crime, being arrested, going to jail, dropping out of school, getting pregnant, doing drugs, suffering from loneliness, and committing suicide. Equality? I cannot think of two groups, kids with dads vs. kids without dads, which are less equal.

Business leaders have a lot to offer. My hope is that they begin to steer some of their time, talent, and treasure towards fatherlessness. But it is not happening yet. Businesspeople need help in understanding this crisis. They need help in understanding that there is a critical role for them to play in this large and complex challenge. And they need permission, particularly of women, to engage in fatherhood, to create a Win-Win, and to dispel the false assumption that helping fathers means stealing from their commitments to the advancement of women.

Bill McCusker
Business executive (retired)
Founder & CEO of Fathers & Families, Inc.
info@fathersfamilies.com


THE DAD LINK
for a little fatherly advice

Recapitulation of the 2020 SOC Virtual Symposium

It was my pleasure to bear witness to this year's symposium and I am glad to summarize some essential themes. The title of this year's symposium, "Better Futures for Our Children through Greater Father Family Involvement" is certainly appropriate. As decades of research now shows, when fathers are positively involved with children and families, children do experience better futures. Fathers can enhance family sustainability and child development through warm engagement with children, cooperative relationships with co-parents, and financial support to families. Also implied in this year's theme is the notion that father involvement is not simply something that fathers do, alone. Father involvement is family involvement. Fathers' negotiate their involvement with family members, and all family members can benefit from their positive involvement.

Despite the social, emotional, and financial benefits that fathers can provide for children, many fathers experience challenges to engaging with families and children. Speakers at this year's symposium noted a number of persistent systemic challenges in promoting father inclusiveness and engagement in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Comments of practitioners and policy makers, alike, suggested that government and social service systems often do not see fathers as part of the family picture. Accounts of symposium speakers also suggested that policies of some institutions may recognize the importance of fathers, but fall short in effectively engaging them or fostering their involvement. Even when fathers are included, their potential contributions are routinely underestimated, relative to those mothers.

Undergirding these systemic issues seems to be a cultural ethos that suggests mothers are primary caregivers while fathers are "secondary parents." Accounts of speakers from both private and public sectors at this year's symposium attest the pervasiveness of this bias within social service, legal, political, and academic systems that either devalue fathers or inadequately address their unique needs and motivations. As considerable research attests, fathers are certainly aware of the biases of these systems and the individuals who serve families. It is no wonder that many fathers, feeling undervalued and misunderstood, often distrust these systems and, in the worst of cases, give up on parenting when they ultimately internalize the message that their contributions to children are irrelevant.

Perhaps no one can be blamed for this bias as mothers have, indeed, typically functioned as primary parents for many years. However, this is no reason to conclude that the burden of parenting is for mothers to carry. Fathers can and should take an equal proportion of the parenting load, and they are capable of taking on even more when it is needed. However, systemic change is likely required to affirm to all that fathers are valued as caregivers at the family table.

The potential for systemic change is what has made this year's symposium so special. During this three-day event, stakeholders from multiple systems – social services, law, policy, and academia – united with the purpose of working toward greater father family involvement. Clearly, this work will take an “all hands on deck” approach, and both the Strong Families Commission and the Symposium Organizing committee have worked admirably to convene so many essential voices in the service of this issue. While the progress made through these efforts is promising, it is clear that the work of fostering greater father family involvement in Pennsylvania will require sustained commitments and collaboration among leaders from all of these systems. To be effective, this work will require clarity of purpose and rigorous research-based practices and evaluation. Perhaps most importantly, this work should privilege the voices of children, fathers, and families in Pennsylvania. Ultimately, the most effective solutions will enhance fathers' contributions with sources of resilience, needs, and concerns of families in mind.

*Raymond E. Petren, PhD, Associate Professor
Human Development and Family Studies
Pennsylvania State University Scranton*



Letter of Acknowledgement

I would like to salute and give special recognition to the Leadership of The Strong Families Commission, Incorporated (THE COMMISSION), and the Pennsylvania Symposium Organizing Committee (SOC), for its steadfast position, notwithstanding Covid-19 and the Coronavirus Pandemic, not to go an entire year and miss the opportunity of continuing to share the message of the urgent need for greater father family involvement in the life of children, families and communities.

In addition, we are grateful to the many individuals who gave of their time and talent to ensure the success of this year's 2020 SOC Symposium: "*Better Futures for Our Children...Through Greater Father Family Involvement.*" All of those who were brought together in this forum have contributed momentum to the action essential to bringing positive change in the involvement of fathers with their families. This month's three part virtual series presentation was a culmination of dedicated work; love of family; and the belief in our collective mission and vision that today's children are tomorrow's leaders, and that we must advocate for their well-being in the context of family. It is in this regard, that the following individuals and organizations are being uplifted:

- **Dr. Joel N. Myers**, Founder, Chairman & CEO, **AccuWeather**, and Founder and Chair, Dad's Resource Center, is a corporate giant willing to leave, for periods of time, the comforts of his corporate world and mirror behavioral that will undoubtedly draw other corporate philanthropic leaders to the struggle of men who want to care for their children and families, but face far too many systemic barriers that impede them from doing so. Dr. Myers, Chair of the Pennsylvania Greater Father Family Involvement Campaign (PAGFFIC), is the person that the SOC looks to help make Pennsylvania America's most Father Friendly State in the Union.
- **The National Association of Social Workers – Pennsylvania Chapter**, the longest serving Institutional Partner of THE COMMISSION, beginning with the 2012 Stoneleigh Project "The Integration of Responsible Fatherhood within Foster Care Service Delivery." When the Executive Director of the agency left (2013) to assume another statewide advocacy position in the state of Maine, it was **Dr. Amy C. Sagen**, Chief Operating Officer for the organization that stepped in and reaffirmed the association's commitment to the advancement of Fatherhood. Every year since then the association has supported THE COMMISSION's Statewide Symposiums, Regional Workshops, and Training Initiatives across Pennsylvania.

Pennsylvania State University Scranton, a new institutional partner, thanks to **Dr. Raymond E. Petren**, Associate Professor in the Human Development and Family Studies Department, who opened and closed our formal program this year. Dr. Petren research addresses parenting and family relationships across family structure, and transitions with a focus on co-parenting relationships and the role of fathers and stepfathers within families. Penn State Scranton is scheduled to host the 2022 SOC Symposium in Northeast Pennsylvania.

Last but not least, I would like to thank the **University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work Pennsylvania Child Welfare Resource Center** for its continuous support over the last several years, as well as this year's technological wizards (**Lisa Kessler, Aleksandr Miklush, Todd Fisher, Matthew Kerr, Christine Spencer and Kathleen Swain**) for their technology coordination, support, and expertise for the pre-recorded videos, the event itself and creation of the final product.

Finally, on behalf of THE COMMISSION, and the SOC, We thank you, our growing support network, and look forward to your continuous involvement with us as this crucial social issue is brought into the public forum.

With sincere thanks,

David A. Wyher
President and CEO
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Section VI. Acknowledgement Letter of Thanks on behalf of The Strong Families Commission (THE COMMISSION) and Module LLC

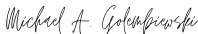
The term "Father" has taken a plethora of definitions throughout history. To most, a Father is defined as a man in relation to his child or children. To some, a Father is a man who gives care and protection to someone or something. And still, to others, a father can be an important figure in the origin and early history of something or someone. The definition that I most relate to, however, is an amalgamation of all of the above.

As a man who has donated my genetics towards the creation of another human being, I am a Father. As a man who has dedicated my life to caring for and protecting my son and all other children who may enter my sphere of influence, I am a Father. Most importantly though, I have an opportunity to be an important figure in the origin and the early history of a child or children, and to truly experience the pride that comes with actively being a good Father.

It's that sense of pride that every father desires and most experience at the birth of their child, often signaling both joy and fear, at the same time.

As a Board Member of The Strong Families Commission, Incorporated (THE COMMISSION), I have had the pleasure and opportunity of working alongside some of the finest minds in the Father, Child and Family Advocacy spectrum. I have watched as a simple concept of questioning, if children have a fundamental right to access both parents, move a volunteer organization forward to providing (7) program opportunities for service to so many individuals, including myself. With a measured approach and strong leadership, this organization continues to be an honor to work with and I can say without a doubt that Module LLC has thoroughly enjoyed collaborating to create and develop this year's SOC Symposium Program Booklet.

On behalf of THE COMMISSION, Module LLC and Fathers across the globe, I would like to offer my sincere appreciation for all of the efforts that have been paved and continue to be paved toward happier and healthier children. I also encourage anyone with interest in this noble cause, to review the SOC information page hosted on THE COMMISSION'S Website (<https://www.thestrongfamiliescommission.com/soc.html>) for more updates and information related to the 2020 Virtual Symposium.



Michael Alan Golembiewski
 Board Manager of External Outreach and
 Information Technology
 The Strong Families Commission Inc.





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SCHOOL OF
SOCIAL WORK

Pennsylvania Child
Welfare Resource Center