

VISION:

The Commission's vision is that children and youth in Philadelphia, across the state, and around the country will benefit from and grow up with the emotional, social, intellectual, spiritual, and financial support of both parents in a healthy and supportive environment

**Dear Stakeholder of Child Well-being:**

Happy New Year!

2016 will bring to closure my Stoneleigh Foundation Senior Fellowship Project (The Integration of Responsible Fatherhood within Foster Care Service Delivery and Other Children and Youth Servicing Systems); while at the same time propel forward The Strong Families Commission Incorporated ("The Commission"), as the sustaining entity for championing the conversation and building the awareness of the value of Responsible Fatherhood in the lives of children.

The Commission will also: a) track the consequences of Father Absence or the non-involvement of Fathers in the lives of their children as documented in various child and family systems of care; b) measure children, youth, and family-focused agencies continued capacity growth to include Fathers in service delivery; and c) to support the implementation within child and family-focused agencies of pre-eminent practice standards, by encouraging the utilization of evidence based, informed, promising, and emerging best programs and practices.

The Commission's newsletter will be sent to you periodically as a resource to:

- 1. Keep you abreast of the Commission's activities;*
- 2. Provide you with information on national, state, and/or local fatherhood and family policy and program initiatives that might compliment as well as strengthen the work in which you are engaged;*
- 3. Alert you to free training webinars and/or current research that relates to children, fathers, and families;*

**Also In this issue:**

Commission Update
pg. 2

News from the Nation's Capital
pg. 3 - 4

Family Strengthening in PA
pg. 4 - 5

Free Training Webinar
pg. 5

Research Findings of Interest
pg. 5 - 6

Upcoming Events
Pg. 6 - 7

The Strong Families Commission, Incorporated
P.O. Box 13502, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19101
www.thestrongfamiliescommission.com T: 215-879-1745

4. Offer you information, whenever possible, on potential program funding opportunities; and to
5. Encourage you to engage in inter-agency program collaborations by highlighting successful initiatives.

In closing, I would like to thank Debra Pontisso, the Commission's Washington, D.C. connection and Editor of the Newsletter. Ms. Pontisso serves as the Commission's Director of Institutional Advancement.

We welcome your review and feedback of our 2016 inaugural edition. Please contact Ms. Pontisso with such feedback and/or content ideas for future Commission newsletters by emailing her at dpontisso@aol.com.

Dr. Rufus Sylvester Lynch, ACSW, Chair
Senior Fellow, Stoneleigh Foundation



Commission Update: 2016 Strategic Plan

The Commission's 9 point strategic plan includes the following:

1. Expand the Commission;
2. Establish a working relationship with members of City Council, Office of the Mayor, and Leadership within the Court System;
3. Partner with the City's new Mayor to document current policies and procedures that strengthen child and families, inclusive of men within those families;
4. Launch a quiet campaign to educate the media, as well as the philanthropic, public, private and corporate community about the value of fathers in the well-being of children;
5. Continue to build collaborative relationships with children, youth, and family-focused agencies that are inclusive of fathers within the Greater Philadelphia Metropolitan area;
6. Aggressively pursue the Commission's public education and advocacy strategy;
7. Develop and execute a sustaining fundraising strategy;
8. Host a state-wide Conference addressing the challenges that children face without the benefit of both of their parents; and
9. Execute the Commission's new initiatives;
 - a. Systems' Impediment Review (SIR): Documenting the Challenges of Serving Children and Families
 - b. Legal Call to Action: A Public Appeal for Change of Policy
 - c. Engaging Families and Systems of Care: Schuylkill West Mobilization Demonstration Project.

For additional information go to:

www.thestrongfamiliescommission.com

The Strong Families Commission, Incorporated
P.O. Box 13502, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19101
www.thestrongfamiliescommission.com T: 215-879-1745

MISSION:

The *mission* of the Commission is to strengthen families and improve child well-being through advocacy designed to affect child and family policy and programs, leverage resources to contribute to the well-being of children and families, and to encourage collaboration among Philadelphia organizations and beyond that are family-focused and *inclusive of fathers.*



News from the Nation's Capital

The Commission Supports Proposed Changes in the Federal Child Support Program

The Strong Families Commission joined 40 plus other fatherhood, family and child well-being, labor, and criminal justice organizations by “signing on” to a letter to the White House in which the Administration was encouraged to finalize the proposed rule changes to the federal Child Support Program.

The big ticket items that would improve the situation of non-residential fathers are three-fold: 1) prohibit the accumulation of child support debt while a parent is incarcerated; 2) allow child support agencies to provide employment services to non-residential parents; and 3) base child support payments on actual earnings. All of these changes would positively impact the lives of fathers and their children and, we believe, put an end to the unintended consequences of accumulating child support arrears while parents are incarcerated.

In summary, the proposed rules are aimed at modernizing the federal Child Support Program, and to break the link between unaffordable child support orders/arrears and mass incarceration. Furthermore, the proposed rule is critical in reducing the barriers to reentry for formerly incarcerated individuals who are noncustodial parents. For those individuals – overwhelmingly men of color – the stakes for themselves and their families are incredibly high. Another other important feature of the proposed rule is the requirement that states consider noncustodial parents' ability to pay when setting child support orders. The letter to the Administration argues that evidence shows that “realistic, income-based orders result in more regular child support payments over time.”

Good News! Continued Funding for Federal Teen Pregnancy Prevention Programs (TPPP)

Excerpt from the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy:
www.thenationalcampaign.org

On December 18, 2015, Congress passed, and the President signed into law, the omnibus appropriations bill (H.R. 2029), which funds the government through the remainder of Fiscal Year (FY) 2016. The bill received bipartisan support, passing the House 316-113 and the Senate 65-33.

The bill maintains funding for programs critical to reducing teen and unplanned pregnancy, including \$101 million for TPPP and \$286.5 million for Title X. For more details on the bill, please see The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy's statement on its release [here](#). You can find the full text of the bill [here](#). The funding levels for Title X and TPPP can be found [here](#) on pages 107 and 128, respectively.

Additional resources from “The Campaign” -

- [A blog](#) from Ron Haskins of the Brookings Institution on why Republicans should use evidence and not ideology when funding teen pregnancy prevention programs.

- December 2015 [letter](#) from more than 150 national, state, and local groups demonstrating broad support for maintaining funding for evidence-based teen pregnancy prevention programs.
- For state specific information about teen and unplanned pregnancy, and TPPP and Title X grants going to the state, see [here](#).
- Survey data and infographics that demonstrate...
 - ...[strong support](#) for TPPP, along with a graph pointing out the dramatic progress in the national teen birth rate since TPPP began. While there are certainly many things that have contributed to the declines in teen childbearing, this accelerating progress is notable.
 - ...[widespread support](#) across racial/ethnic, political, and regional lines, as well as among all ages and education levels for the evidence-based TPPP and Title X.
 - ...[extensive support](#) for taxpayer-funded efforts to prevent teen pregnancy to be invested in interventions that have been shown to actually change teen sexual behavior.



Family Strengthening in Pennsylvania



Former Mayor W. Wilson Goode, Sr., Keynote Speaker at the Commission's "Year-In-Review Celebration" on December 17, 2015 urged the Commission to continue to move forward. In that regard the Commission's Board of Commissioners introduced their 2016 program agenda which includes a three-fold appeal to the public:

GOAL:

The Commission's overarching goal is to "model" Philadelphia as the most Father Friendly City in America, by eliminating the systemic barriers that work against increasing father engagement in all systems of care that address the well-being of children, youth, and families. Achieving this goal can propel the Philadelphia model into a successful example for the rest of the nation to emulate.

Free Training Webinar!

Wednesday, January 20,
2016 12:30pm – 2:00pm EST

Employment and Economic Stability Services for Fathers

Many fathers who participate in fatherhood programs are looking for assistance in the areas of employment and economic stability. This webinar will cover strategies and resources that can help low-income fathers gain new employment skills, find better jobs, and improve their overall financial situation.

To register go to:

<http://icfconsulting.adobeconnect.com/e3ommh6ja03/event/registration.html>



- 1) to the legal community public policy leaders and advocates of child well-being, the Commission **urged** their coming together to consider the question of whether a child has a fundamental legal right to access both biological parents;
- 2) to the children, youth, and family-focused agencies within the city of Philadelphia, The Commission **invited** their participation to educate the public regarding the systemic barriers that are impediments to Fathers being in and remaining in the lives of their children; and
- 3) The Commission **called upon** the community, and those systems of care that serve them, to join the conversation about the involvement of fathers in the lives of their children in order to make Philadelphia America's most Father Friendly City.



From left, Dr. W. Wilson Goode, Sr. with Commission Members George D. Mosee, Jr., First Assistant District Attorney for the City of Philadelphia; Lynn Fields Harris, Executive Director, Center in the Park; and Dr. Rufus Sylvester Lynch, Commission Chair

Research Findings of Interest

The Link between Family Structure and Financial Circumstances by Pew Research Center

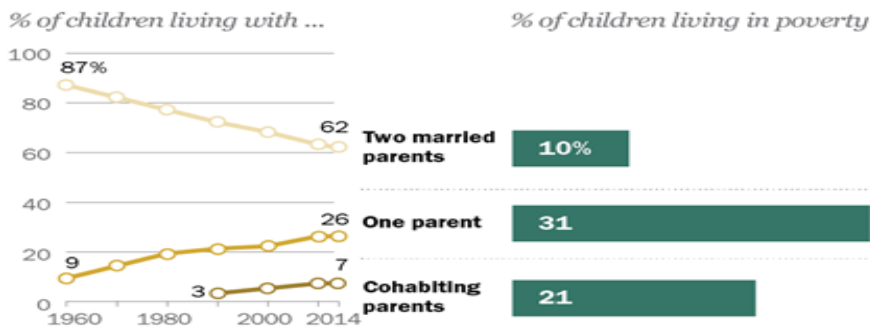
The dramatic changes that have taken place in family living arrangements have no doubt contributed to the growing share of children living at the economic margins. In 2014, 62% of children younger than 18 lived in a household with two married parents – a historic low, according to a new Pew Research Center analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau. The share of U.S. kids living with only one parent stood at 26% in 2014. And the share in households with two parents who are living together but not married (7%) has risen steadily in recent years (1) Note.

These patterns differ sharply across racial and ethnic groups. Large majorities of white (72%) and Asian-American (82%) children are living with two married parents, as are 55% of Hispanic children. By contrast only 31% of African American children are living with two married parents, while more than half (54%) are living in a single-parent household.

The economic outcomes for these different types of families vary dramatically. In 2014, 31% of children living in single-parent households were living below the poverty line, as were 21% of children living with two cohabiting parents (2) Source. By contrast, only one-in-ten children living with two married parents were in this circumstance. In fact, more than half (57%) of those living with married parents were in households with incomes at least 200% above the poverty line, compared with just 21% of those living in single-parent households.



For U.S. kids, strong link between parents' marital status and likelihood of living in poverty



Note: Based on children under 18. Data regarding cohabitation are not available prior to 1990; in earlier years, cohabiting parents are included in "one parent." Poverty is measured using the Supplemental Poverty Measure (SPM) and not the Official Poverty Measure.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 1960-2000 decennial census, 2010 and 2014 American Community Survey and 2014 Current Population Survey (IPUMS)

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

STRATEGY:

As a principal strategy, the Commission does its work by partnering with children, youth, and family-focused agencies and systems of care to increase their capacity to include fathers in their service delivery models that are designed to improve the well-being of the children they serve.

Upcoming Events

Source: National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse

Texas Fatherhood Summit

Wednesday, February 3, 2016
Austin, TX

The Child and Family Research Partnership at The University of Texas at Austin's LBJ School of Public Affairs and the Texas DFPS' Prevention and Early Intervention division are hosting the Texas Fatherhood Summit in Austin, Texas. The Summit brings together researchers, policymakers, and practitioners in the field of fatherhood to exchange ideas and assess the state of fatherhood programs throughout the country. To register, go to: <http://childandfamilyresearch.org/2015/12/txfatherhoodsummit2016/>

National Association (NCSEA) Policy Forum

National Child Support Enforcement Association
February 11-13, 2016
Washington, DC

The National Child Support Enforcement Association (NCSEA) Policy Forum is an essential event for child support professionals interested in policy and the broad issues impacting the child support program. The forum will continue to focus on changing family demographics in America, as well as the significant societal issues that affect the NCSEA and the families they serve. To register, go to: <http://www.ncsea.org/programs-events/conferences/2016-policy-forum/>

2016 Rise Up Families! National Families & Fathers 17th Annual Conference

February 16-19, 2016
Los Angeles, CA

This year the National Families & Fathers 17th Annual Conference will be held in Los Angeles, CA and feature five professional certification programs, a series of workshops, and an awards ceremony honoring fathers and agencies who are committed to giving and making a difference in their communities. To register, go to: <http://fathersandfamiliescoalition.org/conferences/conference-2016-fathers-and-families-coalition-of-america.html>

A Note from the Editor



If you have information on best practices, research and other topics that you think readers would be interested in, please contact me – Debra Pontisso --at dpontisso@aol.com.

A ***SPECIAL THANK YOU*** to everyone who made a tax deductible gift to The Commission in 2015.....

...and ***we invite anyone*** who wishes to support the work of the Commission to give generously and securely online -- www.thestrongfamiliescommission.com - via PayPal and/or you can mail a check to:

The Strong Families Commission, Incorporated

P.O. Box 13502

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19101



We Need your Support!

The Strong Families Commission, Incorporated
P.O. Box 13502, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19101
www.thestrongfamiliescommission.com T: 215-879-1745