



Symposium Organizing Committee

MARCH 2019



***FROM PRACTITIONERS TO POLICYMAKERS: A STATEWIDE CALL TO
ACTION FOR GREATER FATHER INVOLVMENT IN THE LIVES OF
PENNSYLVANIA'S CHILDREN AND FAMILIES***

ABSTRACT

Children have a right to access their parents, and parents have a right to access their children. This document is the vehicle created by grassroots service providers, subject matter experts and human service advocates to present recommendations to the Executive, Judicial and Legislative branches of Pennsylvania government to reduce the barriers to father involvement and to expand opportunities for father inclusive services; all for the benefit of child and family well-being.

Submitted by The Reverend
Doctor W. Wilson Goode, Sr.,
SOC Chair



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Disclaimer

The recommendations contained in this Report do not necessarily represent, in total, the opinions and/or consensus of all who participated in the Symposium Organizing Committee's (SOC) various information sessions, panels or conferences held in 2017 or 2018.

Nor does it represent a complete picture of the myriad of State-administered programs critical to the well-being of children, fathers, and families.

The Report does, however, reflect the consensus of participants' and various Pennsylvania state and local leaders that the role of fathers in the lives of their children is critical to their emotional, social, educational and economic health.

Furthermore, the Report underscores participants support for implementing a "systems integration approach" (e.g., a statewide plan) that emphasizes: a) the urgent need for father involvement by removing systemic barriers; and b) adopting policies that allow for the provision of father-inclusive services throughout the family care network of agencies within the Commonwealth.



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To: His Excellency Thomas W. Wolf, Governor of Pennsylvania;
The Honorable Members of the General Assembly; and
The Honorable Chief Justice and Justices of the Supreme Court

The following pages contain a culmination of three years of analysis of various aspects of the Commonwealth's child and family related programs and services. The Report begins with the premise that children have a right to access their parents, and parents have a right to access their children. This document presents recommendations to the Executive, Judicial and Legislative branches of Pennsylvania government urging the removal of systemic barriers to father involvement and the expansion of opportunities for father inclusive services; all for the benefit of child and family well-being.

We strive in this report to demonstrate and convince you to join us, citizens of the Commonwealth, in embarking on a special mission dedicated to improving the lives of children, parents and families in Pennsylvania. Each of you possess the power, acting within your separate governmental spheres, to effectively foster a positive environment where children can be nurtured and reared in an environment for positive growth supported by both parents. Working together you hold the power to change government agencies' policies and practices, enact new state laws, and remove the systemic judicial barriers and rules against the full and equal participation of fathers in the lives of their children.

During the statewide 2017 Symposium and the 2018 Convening of father, child and family advocates from across the Commonwealth, there was widespread recognition that fathers present a valuable resource in the successful development of their children, families and the communities in which they live. However, we are not likely to see a transformation of greater father involvement anytime soon, without a coordinated and concerted effort involving us all, to implement the beneficial systemic and legal changes required to eradicate the barriers that imperil child welfare in Pennsylvania.

We encourage you to review the information in the enclosed report, especially the recommendation found in the Preface of the report for your specific branch of government, and join the effort to reform Pennsylvania's systems of care as discussed in this report.

Respectively

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "W. Wilson Goode, Sr.", written in a cursive style.

W. Wilson Goode, Sr.

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Purpose for the Call to Action

The purpose of the Call to Action is to advocate for the establishment of a government sanctioned entity that will promote father contributions to the well-being of children and families across the Commonwealth.

Pennsylvania faces a variety of barriers to father involvement and child well-being, but the state is well-positioned to not only overcome these barriers but also become a national leader in the movement to increase father presence and greater father involvement.

People and organizations across Pennsylvania are motivated to change policies and practices that impede fathers' involvement. Academics, social service providers, nonprofit leaders, legislative staff, elected and appointed public officials, and others came together at the **2017 Symposium and 2018 Convening** to identify barriers to father involvement and to recommend solutions for overcoming the barriers.

This energy and desire to increase father involvement is an invaluable resource for Pennsylvania. Perhaps the biggest barrier to father involvement is simply the failure of Pennsylvania's social service systems to prioritize positive fatherhood as a valuable ingredient for healthy development of children and families. Addressing this barrier requires people across the state to talk to their colleagues, elected officials, friends, and family members about the importance of father contributions to the well-being of children and families.

When one considers the research conducted, data analyzed and conversations had at various gatherings; as well as psychic energy from grassroots participants; service providers, advocates, academics, policy makers and opinion influencers, it must be acknowledged that the state has the responsibility to take the lead in improving the wellbeing of children and families by employing all possible resources to that end, including fathers. Fathers, the under-tapped resource, must have equal footing and protections in social service delivery systems.

It is the consensus of participating stakeholders across the Commonwealth that Pennsylvania state government 1) should explore, elevate and sanction language to solidify the importance of the role of fathers, and 2) create a government authorized entity to support, create and promote a statewide father friendly philosophy, policies, practices, procedures and protocols throughout Pennsylvania's departments of service to children and families.



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Message from the Principal Editor

Dr. Rufus Sylvester Lynch, NASW Social Work Pioneer ®

All too often in the media and day-to-day discourse, the absent/non-involved father conversation denotes marginalized communities and their misfortunes. That is not the purpose of this report. In fact, this document is not presented as an entreaty about the plight of Black or Brown absent or non-involved fathers and the marginalized state of their children. Instead, the Symposium Organizing Committee (SOC) agenda is to broaden the conversation to be inclusive of all fathers and all children regardless of race, economic or social standing. The findings within this report examine how systems philosophy, policies, practices, procedures and protocols minimize or even exclude fathers' contributions to the wellbeing of their children. The goal of SOC is to promote change regarding how fathers' contributions to children's well-being is perceived by members of society, and to shine a light on the possibilities.

The term nuclear family, which refers to a household that consists of the father, mother and their children, came into use in the early twentieth century. However, in a recent census, less than 25% of households contained the original biological parents, compared to over 40% in 1970 (Williams, Sawyer and Wahlstrom, 2005). The bottom line is that many children are in households separate from their biological parents, most often their fathers. Numerous studies reflect the need for involvement of both parents in support of a child's well-being, but many systems, by default or design, are geared toward supporting women and children to the exclusion of fathers (<https://www.fatherhood.org>). Governments are now taking heed of the research findings and feedback from community-based organizations regarding the critical need to analyze, identify and adjust how tax payer dollars are used in various social systems and the need to maximize all viable resources in support of children, including fathers' contributions.

A review of the literature tells us that current policy regarding child protection services (CPS) places increasing demands on children, youth, and family-focused service providers to engage fathers whose children are receiving CPS services, or are at risk of receiving such services. Sadly, policy implementation too often clashes with the ongoing challenges that fathers have historically faced working within the CPS network of service providers. The challenge of engaging families involved with CPS has been documented for years. Despite a child welfare history of emphasis on serving mothers, social science research increasingly highlights the important role of fathers in children's development. Research findings document the importance of the father role in permanency plans for children during involvement with CPS.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) reports that children with involved and engaged fathers matter, including when it comes to positive outcomes for children in the child

welfare system process <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4389279/>. Many of us with child and family practice experience have long understood that active participation of fathers and compliance with the case plan increases the likelihood that children's foster placement will be briefer and birth family reunification will be more likely. Surprisingly, even when fathers do not reside with their children, the impact of their external participation on children's intellectual and social development can be positive. This influence occurs as a by-product of the father-child relationship, and indirectly, via the father's relationship with the mother and other adults in the child's support network.

Thus, the contributors to this document are hoping to make the case that here in Pennsylvania our state government leaders will see the need for a statewide entity/single point of contact established to ensure that there is a cultural shift in our thinking about the importance of fathers and their children, whether system-involved or not.

Should an initiative would not be in competition with or to the detriment of mothers. However, a statewide entity sanctioned by the government is required to take on the task of monitoring and developing policy and legislation to ensure equal footing for fathers in social service systems. Not only should this entity be a policy clearinghouse for father focused programming, but also an advocate for systematic removal of barriers that impede the emotion, social, physical, intellectual, spiritual and financial contributions that fathers can, and often do, provide to the well-being of children.

Such an entity should also take steps to promote good "return on investment" of tax dollars by ensuring consistent statewide application of rules, increasing the capacity of service delivery systems, and evaluating the outcomes of the taxpayer investment in father supportive initiatives. This level of oversight can only be sustained through a legislatively authorized and funded entity tasked with vetting proposed and existing legislation, and evidence-based policy and practice models that demonstrates the impact on fathers.

In short, this document is written to elevate fathers' standing in family life and in our service delivery systems. SOC's call to action is to fully support the wellbeing of children, while harnessing all available resources that promote stronger outcomes for society, including a commonly overlooked resource: fathers.



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Preface

Pennsylvania State Government – and the importance of its leadership

At the end of the October 2018 Convening of Father, Child and Family Advocates <http://soc18.org/>, held in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania, participants affirmed their collective hope that Pennsylvania's state government leaders, upon receipt of the final recommendations found within this report, would continue to be encouraged to push forward the Father-Child conversation among state leaders and to advocate training for their system leaders regarding the value of contributions to children from their fathers. This report emanates from three years of study by a trans-disciplinary group of practitioners and scholars concerned with improving outcomes for children and families, and the desire to work with government to remove systemic barriers that impede fathers' greater involvement in the lives of children.

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

Various attitudes, policy and procedural impediments exist to the successful recognition of the importance of fathers to the proper development of their children. The key to the successful implementation of strategies requires effective endorsement by all three branches of government.

Following are insights and recommendations offered as a first step for consideration by each branch.

- **The General Assembly** is encouraged 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;
- **The Governor** is urged to issue an Executive Order that directs all state 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; and
- **The Supreme Court** is requested 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.



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Executive Summary

Research shows that father involvement is associated with greater child well-being. Just like mothers, fathers have a lot to offer. They are role models, caretakers, providers, and advocates. When a child has the benefit of access to both mother and father, s/he is more likely to exhibit healthy behaviors, excel in school, and achieve emotional well-being. However, in Pennsylvania, the major barrier to father involvement across social service systems is the failure to prioritize the importance of the father-child relationship.

This failure permeated throughout the systems was reviewed by the various panels assembled by SOC. The lack of such prioritization often results in a deficiency of focus by direct service providers on services that strengthen bonds between mothers and fathers, a fundamental need for healthy development of children. Many of the policies and practices in the systems that disadvantage fathers, e.g. show preference or bias in favor of mothers. And a result, staff members often do not have the mindset, inclination or incentive necessary to engage fathers, as it is not a program or agency priority.

Nationwide, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, 31% of our children are living with either a single parent or no parent at all (23% with mother, 4% with father, and 4% with no parent). Out of the 2.6 million children residing in Pennsylvania, over 886,000 are living in single-parent households (mother-headed: 690,230; father-headed: 196,410.) A near majority of children (46%) in single-mother households are living in poverty. In many Pennsylvania counties, this percentage exceeds 50% compared to 7% of children living in poverty in married-couple households. Child well-being outcomes can be greatly improved by increasing and supporting father involvement in the lives of their children through a “systems integration approach.”

The task of SOC and the informed panels that were assembled was to explore the rationale for lack of prioritization of father inclusiveness in main stream service delivery; discuss the causes, trends and strategies in the current environment; and develop recommendations that would encourage systemic change. This document is the vehicle to present these recommendations to the Executive, Judicial and Legislative branches of Pennsylvania government in order to reduce the barriers to father involvement and to expand opportunities for father inclusive services; all for the benefit of child and family well-being. There are no risks associated with this movement for change. Improving the outcomes for children and families through the inclusion of fathers assures immediate and long-term benefits for our communities and our Commonwealth. The federal government, through the Department of Health and Human Services, is already moving toward a more inclusive stance regarding father involvement through their Final Rule: Flexibility, Efficiency, and Modernization in Child Support Enforcement Programs, which is designed to send

the message that the agency is moving forward and becoming more family friendly and supportive of all parties, including the custodial, as well as the noncustodial parent.

Under the United States Constitution, federal statutes, and Pennsylvania law, children and parents enjoy a number of rights and privileges. Perhaps most importantly, “familial companionship” is a basic right that all children and parents are entitled to. Children have a right to access their parents, and parents have a right to access their children. The following chart below represents the work of the panels and the recommendations that they are putting forward for review and consideration:



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Problem Statements with Recommendations

<p>Administration of Justice/ Public Safety</p> <p>Chair: George D. Moses, Jr. Esq.</p> <p>Co-Chair: Reizdan B. Moore, Esq.</p>	<p>Policies and practices in the justice system often conflict with the rights and privileges guaranteed to children and parents.</p>	<p>All Americans have strong associational rights when it comes to family life and the upbringing of children.</p> <p>The rights and privileges that the justice system affords children and parents should, in theory, shape how social systems and institutions approach them.</p> <p>Under the United States Constitution, federal statutes, and Pennsylvania law, children and parents enjoy a number of rights and privileges. Perhaps most importantly, “familial companionship” is a basic right that all children and parents enjoy.¹</p> <p>Children have a right to access their parents, and parents have a right to access their children.</p> <p>The United States Supreme Court has stated:</p> <p>Choices about marriage, family life, and the upbringing of children are among associational rights this Court has ranked as of basic importance in our society, rights sheltered by the Fourteenth Amendment against the State’s unwarranted usurpation, disregard, or disrespect.²</p> <p>Notwithstanding, the justice system interacts with child well-being and father involvement in a variety of ways. The most profound ways relate to the criminal justice system and child support enforcement. Physical proximity and availability are key to father involvement, and the criminal justice system affects both. Incarceration directly limits access to fathers, and reentry policies impact fathers’ capacity to be available for their children.</p> <p>Moreover, incarceration and child support enforcement can affect father involvement in a more elusive way: through collateral consequences that affect fathers’ access to financial resources that fathers feel they need to serve as present and</p>	<p>The Pennsylvania Department of Correction is urged to increase and make accessible to all inmates the use of technology to maintain their associational rights when it comes to family life and the upbringing of their children.</p> <p>Utilizing already existing secure telecommunication technologies, i.e. Skype, can allow for richer father child interactions.</p>
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<p>Behavioral Health</p> <p>Chair: Dr. H. Jean Wright</p> <p>Co-Chair: Dr. Jay K. Cherney</p>	<p>Unaddressed child and parent behavioral health issues, including those of fathers, can have a negative impact on the joint child-parent relationship.</p>	<p>effective father figures. The collateral consequences include criminal records, fines, and most importantly, stigma associated with having come into contact with the Justice System.</p> <p>Men are notorious for not seeking personal assistance nor professional services, especially behavioral health services, primarily due to the stigma associated with receipt of such services. This behavior (reluctant to seek or receive needed assistance) potentially can negatively impact their relationship with their child and family, caretakers of their children, interactions with fellow co-workers, and others in the broader community.</p> <p>According to the Center for Social Policy, “[c]hildren and youth with mental health problems have lower educational achievement, greater involvement with the criminal justice system and fewer stable and longer-term placements in the child welfare system than children with other disabilities.³</p> <p>Behavioral health services are also important for parents’ wellness and, in turn, parents’ effectiveness as caretakers. Parenting under the best set of circumstances is difficult. It requires at a minimum parents who can provide support for the emotional, social, physical, intellectual, and spiritual development of the child, not to mention financial sustenance needed to deliver the best opportunities to learn, grow and prosper. However, parents, including fathers, faced with unaddressed behavioral health challenges are more likely to find it difficult to fulfill these expectations.</p>	<p>The “Full Comprehensive Report” of the 2017 Symposium on Child Well-Being in Pennsylvania and the Urgent Need for Father Involvement stated that the overarching barrier to father involvement in Pennsylvania’s behavioral health system is a lack of prioritization among behavioral health entities and staff, notwithstanding that some fathers do not know that they need help or simply do not want the help offered. This statement suggest that formal policies alone do not drive this barrier; fathers’ perceptions and societal norms and expectations about the role of fathers seem to be an equal, if not a principal, driving factor. In that regard, The Pennsylvania Department of Human Services (DHS) is encouraged to consider a Paradigm shift that recognizes the importance of fathers in behavioral health treatment and services.</p> <p>Behavioral health systems throughout the Commonwealth should be required to recognize and integrate into their service delivery models the overwhelming evidence that responsible and involved fathering starting from the prenatal period and into adolescence, has positive effects on the well-being of children. To achieve this paradigm shift, DHS should launch a public campaign showcasing the immeasurable value of a father in a child’s life. Further, annual trainings on the importance of father involvement should be held throughout Pennsylvania where children and families are involved. This will not only signal to staff that father involvement is a priority but also afford staff the tools necessary to facilitate father engagement as an inclusive strategy.</p>
<p>Child Support Custody, Services & Enforcement</p> <p>Chair: Debra Pontisso</p>	<p>Understanding the child support enforcement system can be challenging -- not only for noncustodial fathers and workforce organizations, but also for children, youth and family service providers that want to assist with family connection, re-</p>	<p>Many fathers are ill informed about child support, do not trust “the system” and want to remain outside of it. What they may not know is that child support enforcement agencies may be willing to negotiate debt, modify orders and suspend enforcement if the father is cooperative.</p> <p>According to the Guide for Father Involvement in Systems of Care⁴ (April 2013):</p>	<p>In partial response to punitive policies and procedures, negative public discourse, policy analysis and research findings, the Federal Office of Child Support Enforcement issued in 2016 a new and revised federal child support regulation – Final Rule: Flexibility, Efficiency, and Modernization in Child Support Enforcement Programs, which is designed to send the message that the agency is moving forward and becoming more family friendly and</p>

<p>Co-Chair: Jeff Steiner</p>	<p>connection, and reunification, if not with mom, certainly with the children from the union.</p>	<p>Often . . . child-serving systems seem to discount the importance of fathers' involvement. They often seem to treat payment of child support as the fathers' only critical responsibility to their children. Financial support is important, but data show that outcomes for children will improve not by virtue of financial support alone, but also through high quality interactions between fathers and their children.⁵</p> <p>Fathers often have the erroneous belief that if they fall behind on child support payments, they immediately forfeit their parenting rights. This belief deters fathers from engaging with the child support system to rectify past compliance failures, and it chills father involvement.</p> <p>Fathers do not understand their child support rights because information about their rights is neither disseminated to them in effective ways nor otherwise publicized. Relatedly, stakeholders in the child support system often fail to engage fathers and approach them as a resource for children. Fathers therefore often lack supportive relationships with stakeholders within the system who can educate them about their rights. Thus, navigating the child support system can be a formidable challenge for fathers in addition to community-based organizations attempting to help them resolve their child support issues.</p>	<p>supportive of all parties, custodial, as well as the noncustodial parent.</p> <p>The success of this new regulation will rest, in part, on the Pennsylvania Office of Child Support Enforcement's ability to "roll-out" the new provision to the general public along with efforts to conduct outreach and training geared toward educating those community-based organizations serving fathers.</p> <p>The recommendation here is addressed to the Honorable Members of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court and the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services (Office of Child Support Enforcement) asking the Court not to forget about the value of including children, youth and family service providers, also as institutional partners, who are equally concerned about serving fathers within their service delivery models. This statewide system of service providers often is serving the same population that is served by the Pennsylvania's Office of Child Support Enforcement.</p>
<p>Dependent & Delinquent Crossover Youth</p> <p>Chair: David R. Fair</p> <p>Co-Chair: Nancy Fagan</p>	<p>Challenges related to the involvement of fathers in assuring the safety, permanency, and well-being of youth in the child welfare system have been identified, debated, and discussed by practitioners in the system for years.⁶ But little progress has been made in practice in addressing the issues that prevent fathers from playing an active role in the child welfare system.</p> <p>The systemic and prevailing stereotype in American culture is that Fathers are not responsible for the nurturing of children but instead, are expected to be good providers, protectors, disciplinarians, and educators of</p>	<p>Pennsylvania's child welfare system faces many challenges. Hiring difficulties, inadequate training, and heavy caseloads to name a few.⁷ In an effort to address such challenges, the system has undergone major reforms over the past few years.⁸ Yet one significant challenge has received limited attention: biases within the system that limit the full involvement of both parents of a child in child protective services. The system does not equally integrate fathers and mothers into its processes. It prioritizes mother involvement while overlooking the benefits of father involvement.</p> <p>Studies show that early childhood education has far-ranging benefits, including greater long-term earnings, lower likelihood of future incarceration, and greater educational attainment.⁹</p> <p>The early childhood field is predominately comprised of women, many of whom have difficulty engaging men who are</p>	<p>The Pennsylvania Department of Human Services should require counties to specify, in their annual Needs-Based Plan and Budgets, comprehensive plans for improving rates of father inclusion in child protection services, juvenile justice cases.</p>
<p>Early Childhood Development</p> <p>Chair: Malkia Singleton Ofori-Agyekum</p>	<p>The Pennsylvania Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL), jointly overseen by the Departments Human Services and Education recently introduced Early Learning Resource Centers (ELRCs) across the Commonwealth to act as a single point of contact for families, early learning service providers and communities</p>		

<p>Co-Chair: Jeanette Casciato</p>	<p>the outside world. As a result, early childhood development system experiences often create unintentional barriers to Father inclusion, in service delivery to children.</p>	<p>fathers. This is a problem, since early childhood education sets the tone for parent involvement throughout the child's development. Because early childhood education is the first formal educational experience that most children have, it lays the foundation for how a child and their parents approach the education system, including how involved each parent is or is likely to be.</p> <p>Typically, mothers are the initial and on-going point of contact with early childhood programs, including child care centers. This dynamic contributes to early childhood education professionals having difficulty engaging fathers and fathers not feeling welcome in early childhood settings. Consequently, a culture of ignorance has formed whereby many fathers do not know how to navigate the early childhood education system at all. This too is alarming, as research indicates that father involvement can greatly enhance the benefits of early childhood education. A study by the Father Involvement Research Alliance shows that babies with more involved fathers are more likely to be emotionally secure, confident in new situations, and eager to explore their surroundings.¹⁰ Also, toddlers with involved fathers have higher cognitive functioning at age 3 and are more ready than other children to start school and cope with the stress of being away from home all day.</p>	<p>to gain information and access services that support high quality child care and early learning.</p> <p>Given the function of such entities and the important contributions that fathers can make to the well-being of their children and families, family engagement and father inclusion should be made a priority initiative that is funded with designated, trained and committed staff to foster a culture of fatherhood inclusiveness in the education and service delivery to children and families, unlike current practices.</p>
<p>Education</p> <p>Chair: Dr. Richard Jeffrey Rhodes</p> <p>Co-Chair: Larry L. Klinger, Jr.</p>	<p>The laws that protect student rights, parental rights, and family law in general, often also tend to prohibit educators from being able to fully engage fathers by creating apprehension and perhaps unintentionally supporting misconceptions and stereotypes on both sides.</p>	<p>According to a Columbia University Teacher's College study, over forty years of evidence show that (1) parent involvement is one of the strongest predictors of educational success and (2) families play pivotal roles in their children's cognitive, social, and emotional development from birth through adolescence.¹¹</p> <p>Despite the importance of parent involvement, the Education Roundtable at the 2017 Symposium concluded that many Pennsylvania parents are disconnected from the public school system.</p> <p>Family dynamics or the lack of communication between and among the custodial parent can create situations in which teachers and administrators become reluctant to engage with anyone other than the parent of record. Such practices can and often do lead to parental disconnect within the public-education system, especially with fathers, as mothers are typically the period of record.</p>	<p>The Pennsylvania Department of Education should provide and encourage implementation of state-wide Family Engagement Strategies that are inclusive of Fathers. For example, encourage Counties through incentives to implement District-wide family engagement strategies that are inclusive of Fathers. Considering the research showing that parental involvement in education has substantial benefits for child outcomes, combatting the barriers of parental disconnect through extended family engagement strategies that are inclusive of fathers should be a priority for the Pennsylvania Department of Education, as well as the 500 school districts within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.</p>

<p>Employment and Training</p> <p>Chair: Jason Cosley</p> <p>Co-Chair: Andrew Cheeseboro</p>	<p>The employment and training system interacts with child well-being and father involvement in a variety of ways. For example, nationally between 70 million and 100 million, or 1 in 3 Americans, have some type of criminal record. Such records can impact a parent's ability to provide for their children and families.</p>	<p>For these reasons, the U.S. Department of Education -- since 2008-- has commissioned a Family Engagement Initiative to facilitate greater parent involvement in education.¹² The initiative known as "The Family Engagement Team" has the goal of expanding efforts to help schools, districts, and states better engage families in education. The Team is committed to supporting parents and families by empowering them and giving them a voice and an opportunity to be engaged.</p> <p>As a society, we are still operating in the paradigm of the past and not in the family structure of today. Modern families come in many forms other than the traditional two parent household consisting of a married couple - man (father/head of household) and woman (mother/homemaker).</p> <p>With 35% of Pennsylvania's children living in single parent homes, the custodial parent, usually the mother, may or may not elect to have the non-custodial parent (Dad) involved with their child's school and/or teachers. Such a situation could cause a problem for both the child and the school.</p> <p>Parental access to desirable employment opportunities correlates directly with child well-being.</p> <p>One of the contributing factors to the lack of securing employment opportunities for many is the current collision of two trends that have been decades in the making. The first trend stems from "tough on crime" and mass incarceration, and the second trend is the dramatic expansion of occupational licensing, which requires people to obtain permission from a government agency, and commonly pass a background check before they can work. The result: "More than 70 million people with a record in the United States either face significant barriers when seeking a license to work, which is now required for one in four jobs, including many good-paying jobs that are in high demand in healthcare and other industries, or—worse—they are automatically disqualified, sometimes for life."</p> <p>An effect of these trends on children and families is that we as a nation are witnessing about 2.8 million children in the U.S. (1 in 28) with a parent behind bars, up from 1 in 125 just a quarter century ago. Moreover, 1 in 9 African American children have an incarcerated parent, a rate that has quadrupled in the last 25 years. And research tells us that children with incarcerated parents are more likely to drop out of school and</p>	<p>Although the Clean Slate Act is now in law in Pennsylvania. The legislature should provide guidance to stakeholders, the general public and employers regarding the significance of this landmark legislation. These communications should include timeframes of implementation, limitations and/or exceptions to this law relative to federal and national background checks, included and excluded offenses, but most importantly the benefits to the public, employers and housing entities.</p>
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<p>Housing, Supervised Independent Living, and Homelessness</p> <p>Chair: Kerry Krieger</p> <p>Co-Chair: Angela McIver</p>	<p>The housing, supervised independent living, and homelessness systems have at least one thing in common, they have the difficult task of addressing critical housing needs with limited resources.</p> <p>Thus, administrators and policy makers are required to prioritize constituent service delivery, which more often than not includes mothers with children, and thereby by implied definition the absence of fathers. So, by doing the question becomes are these systems discriminating against a protected class – Fathers and there (familial status)?</p> <p>Unfortunately, the systems do not prioritize father involvement or take steps to ensure subject matter competence about fathers and the value of their contributions to the well-being of their children and families.</p>	<p>to struggle with speech problems or a learning disability, developmental delays or ADHD, physical health problems, and mental health problems such as anxiety and depression, even after controlling for environmental factors, race, and other characteristics.</p> <p>Roundtable discussion participants recognized the work that many within the Commonwealth are doing to resolve the issue of full employment and training for those in need. In that regard, both Representative Jordan A. Harris and Representative Sheryl M. Delozier are acknowledged for their leadership in getting HB 1419 (Clean Slate) signed into law by Governor Tom Wolf. The Clean Slate Act provides for automatically sealing certain criminal records so that they are not available to the public but can still be accessed by law enforcement.</p> <p>Safe, stable housing is critical to all people—especially children. Children require stability to focus on their education and development. Housing instability imposes stresses and uncertainty on children that can destabilize their personal growth.</p> <p>Housing, supervised independent living, and homelessness are separate, but related, public policy areas. They all involve people’s access to safe, stable housing—which is critical to “the well-being and health of families.”¹³ Many Americans are aware of the Civil Rights Act of 1968, its history and its impact on everyday life. However, few are familiar with Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968, also known as the Fair Housing Act, which protects people from discriminatory treatment when they are renting, buying, or securing financing for any housing. Unfortunately, many housing providers are also unaware of how to apply the Fair Housing Act and they unknowingly discriminate against their own tenants, applicants, and others seeking housing.</p> <p>https://fairhousingact.org/the-7-protected-classes-under-the-fair-housing-act/</p> <p>The Fair Housing Act, with some exceptions, prohibits discrimination in housing against families with children under 18. In addition to prohibiting an outright denial of housing to families with children, the Act also prevents housing providers from imposing any special requirements or conditions on tenants with custody of children.</p>	<p>The Governor of Pennsylvania is requested to establish a statewide taskforce to explore the need for the development of a statewide culturally competent curriculum and training module consistent with the Fair Housing Act that focuses on fathers, i.e., the importance of fathers in children’s lives, and system and practice barriers that prohibit outreach, thus the inclusion of fathers in the matters of child and family well-being.</p> <p>The curriculum training could be modeled on the statewide on-line Mandated Reporter Training; ensuring that staff at all levels in all practices that receive government funds receive the training.</p>
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<p>Parent Education/Supportive Services</p> <p>Chair: Anita Kulick</p> <p>Co-Chair: Bob Brinker</p>	<p>Society and parenting have changed. Fathers are no longer the primary “breadwinners” and mothers no longer the primary “caregivers.” In most cases, both parents must work and both parents must care for the physical, emotional, social, and cognitive development of their children.</p> <p>Parenting education and support services, government policies, social service agencies’ delivery systems, and the laws must reflect these changes.</p>	<p>The 2017 Symposium on child well-being in Pennsylvania and the urgent need for father involvement, however, reported that in Pennsylvania, a major barrier to child well-being and father involvement within the housing, supervised independent living, and homelessness systems is simply a failure to recognize and prioritize the importance of father involvement; although the consequences for same warrant’s greater attention.</p> <p>The Housing, Supervised Independent Living, and Homelessness Panel believes that the above systems are well-positioned to promote father involvement, and in turn child well-being, but they do not take advantage of this opportunity.</p> <p>Their lack of prioritization is manifested primarily in the systems failing to train and educate staff about the value of father involvement and how to engage fathers. In turn, staff are left without the subject matter competence to facilitate father involvement. These systems play a central role in father involvement for families receiving services. They can dictate a child’s household composition, thereby affecting access to fathers.</p> <p>Affordable housing programs, for example, can exclude certain individuals from public housing based on past criminal history or other criteria. In short, these criteria can exclude fathers from their child’s home.</p> <p>Parenting education and support services are critical to providing parents the tools they need to raise their children and to serve as consistent, productive parents.</p> <p>Parenting is a complex and multifaceted issue; success in parenting requires not only a variety of skills but also financial and social resources. Parents, for example, must exhibit love and affection, stress-management skills, relationship skills, and sound judgment.¹⁴ Parents must also have access to social networks that can provide child care, meet financial needs, and provide emotional support. Effective parenting education and support services help parents (residential or not) with achieving these skills and resources.</p> <p>While many of Pennsylvania’s parenting education and support services programs do phenomenal work for families, several barriers exist within this system that impedes a child’s well-being and their father’s involvement.</p>	<p>In this regard, it is time for Pennsylvania to try a different approach to parent education for fathers involved in the raising of children, outside of the traditional service delivery providers.</p> <p>Therefore, it is recommended that the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services issue a RFP that would authorize the creation of a network of County service providers who would specialize in the recruitment, training, and certification of Fathers in matters of familial relationships, and system navigation.</p> <p>This recommendation is not directed at any particular current parent education contractor, instead it is intended to highlight the point that the current system is not meeting the needs of most fathers, either in their relations with their children and family, or their ability to become</p>
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<p>better navigators of the service systems that they need to improve their relationships within their families.</p>	<p>Among the key barriers are: 1) Emotional disconnect between mothers and fathers. When children grow up with one or more emotionally detached or absent parents, there are a number of consequences, including affected adult relationships stemming from early childhood experiences or trauma; fear of attachment and love; borderline and narcissistic personality traits; selfishness; substance abuse/dependency; lack of identity and direction; and loss of hope, faith, and joy.¹⁵ Emotional disconnect between fathers and mothers also impedes the effectiveness of parenting education and support services. Teamwork and connectedness can be a major asset to parenting education.</p> <p>2) Lack of institutional focus on strengthening bonds between fathers and children. Throughout the parenting education and support services system there is a lack of focus on strengthening bonds between fathers and children. Father involvement and engagement is not identified as an important issue. While programs focusing on fathers exist, father involvement and engagement is not an overarching goal of the various programs in Pennsylvania. This contrasts with mother involvement—an issue that is implicit in most programming.</p> <p>3) Difficulties engaging fathers and finding times to convene parenting classes. Engaging fathers can be difficult because they are often non-custodial parents. Consequently, parenting education and support service providers find it difficult to coordinate meeting times and classes with fathers. This, of course, is a barrier that can be overcome if providers were given adequate resources for engaging fathers, most importantly the time to devote effort towards doing so. However, engaging fathers is not a priority in most programs, so providers lack such resources.</p> <p>4) Discriminatory policies and practices within the system. Embedded in the parenting education and support services system is a bias towards mothers. Programs are “mother-facing” meaning they are designed to assist mothers, often overlooking fathers. For example, outreach efforts generally target mothers, without equal targeting of fathers. Further, many staff are saddled with biases about fathers that chill efforts to engage fathers.</p>

<p>In short, the major barrier to father involvement in the parenting education and support services system is the system's failure to prioritize father-child involvement.</p> <p>This failure permeates the system. It results in a lack of focus by direct service providers on services that strengthen bonds between mothers and fathers, a fundamental need for healthy development of children. It results in policies and practices in the system that disadvantage fathers, e.g. show preference or bias toward mothers. And it results in staff members not having the resources necessary to engage fathers, as it is not a program or agency priority.</p>	<p>The compelling recommendation to the public health system in Pennsylvania, as organized through the Department of Health, is to adopt Father Absence and Father Non-involvement as a public health issue and raise awareness throughout the Commonwealth of its importance to children and families, as well as the community at-large. Pennsylvania must move to identify father absence and father non-involvement as a public health issue worthy of research, prevention, public education, and policy change.</p> <p>A first, concrete step that public health organizations in Pennsylvania can take is to create pages on their websites devoted to father involvement including a discussion regarding the social consequences of father absence as a public health issue. Thereafter, educate individuals, groups, families, organizations and institutions about the detriments of father absence and non-involvement, which must be disseminated aggressively. Similar to the way that cigarette smoking was causally connected to lung cancer and chronic bronchitis, the lack of father involvement can be causally connected to problems that impact society on multiple levels and can take a tremendous toll on families and communities.</p>
<p>Public Health Chair: Dr. William Champagne Co-Chair: Samantha Shuster</p>	<p>Public health is the science and art of preventing disease, prolonging life, and promoting health through the organized efforts of society. This definition underscores the broad scope of public health and the fact that public health is the result of society's efforts as a whole, rather than that of single individuals. One philosophy of public health is the balance between the interests of communities and populations and those of individuals. These interests spring from two complementary and essential public health goals: the prevention of disease and the promotion of health and well-being. The goal of a Public health professional is to prevent public health related problems from occurring or occurring again by implementing health education programs, improving access to health care, developing public health policies, controlling infectious disease, and conducting research that is used to reduce environmental hazards, violence and drug abuse¹⁶.</p> <p>Thus, we can conclude that "Public health promotes and protects the health of people and the communities where they live, learn, work and play."¹⁷ Public health professionals encourage healthy behaviors, raise awareness about diseases and psychological stressors, and provide preventative medical care.¹⁸ Such professionals attack problems that undermine the health of our communities through a multi-faceted approach, leveraging empirical research, public campaigns, medical professionals, and community organizations.</p>
<p>Because father involvement is not viewed by epidemiologist as a disease, it is not viewed as an issue warranting the attention and expertise of the public health system—a system that focuses on widespread, complex issues affecting community health, i.e. incidence and prevalence in large populations, with emphasis on detection of the source and cause of epidemics of infectious disease.</p>	



Symposium Organizing Committee

Historical Background

Eight Years of Learning

In 2011, long before the statewide planning group known as SOC (Symposium Organizing Committee) and the formation of The Strong Families Commission, Incorporated (THE COMMISSION), a small group of child and family stakeholders were convened in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania by David J. Lett, former Regional Administrator for Children and Families, Region III, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, to consider how an increase in Father Involvement might add positive benefits to the lives of Philadelphia's children, improving their safety, permanency and well-being.

Within months of organizing, the small group of stakeholders began to expand their membership and collaborated to make the case that essential dialogue concerning the value of Fathers' contributions to the well-being of children and families was needed by Philadelphia's Children and Youth (CY) and Family-Focused Agencies (FFAs). This group was named the Philadelphia Strong Families Coalition (PSFC).

Over the next few years, the work of PSFC advanced as members, including a Senior Fellow at the Stoneleigh Foundation, conducted research and literature reviews examining the nature of Father Inclusion in various social service systems of care and its impact on children. An alliance between PSFC and the Senior Fellow at the Stoneleigh Foundation, along with his project to explore the integration of Responsible Fatherhood within Foster Care Service Delivery and Other Children and Youth Servicing Systems, created an opportunity to champion the conversation and build an awareness of the value of *Responsible Fatherhood* programming within CY & FFAs.

The Coalition pursued its long-term vision by engaging opinion leaders and practitioners who were committed to developing innovative policies, practices, and protocols that supported the involvement of Fathers in the care of their children. Important milestones for the Coalition included producing the comprehensive 2014 report "Child Well-Being in Philadelphia: Profiles of Children, Families & Fathers" <https://stoneleighfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/PSFC-Child-Well-Being-in-Philadelphia-Complete-Report-8-2014.pdf>, a publication that offered a menu of strategies designed to dissolve the systemic barriers that limit fathers' participation in their children's lives. Among its other findings, the report recommended that the City of Philadelphia endorse an independent city-wide advocacy alliance as a public repository for information, data, and resources that contribute to building healthy families. The

goal of that effort is to guide public agencies toward embracing the notion that each child is entitled to a Father-child relationship. During the same time period (2014), three (3) members of PSFC founded The Strong Families Commission, Incorporated (THE COMMISSION), as a Pennsylvania non-profit charitable organization to fulfill the recommendation of the report <https://www.thestrongfamiliescommission.com/>.

Within two years of existence, THE COMMISSION, in partnership with others, hosted the statewide “Symposium on Child Well-Being in Pennsylvania and the Urgent Need for Father Involvement” (2017). Last year (2018), THE COMMISSION and its partners convened a gathering of “Father, Child & Family Advocates” to continue the goal of the 2017 historic bipartisan and bicameral Symposium to bring to light something that has been in the dark far too long, ... the absence or non-involvement of too many fathers in the care of their children and families”... and to shine a spotlight on the consequences of such behavior.

Both the *2017 Symposium* and *2018 Convening* brought together stakeholders to explore the issues of father inclusion and put forward strategies and recommendations to be considered by state policymakers, as well as philanthropic, public/private business and corporate leaders and community stakeholders. This document represents the hours of deliberations and refinement of key positions recommended to promote the advancement of fathers’ contributions to the well-being of their children.



Symposium Organizing Committee

A Summary of the Problems Underpinning Our Recommendations

All Americans have strong associational rights when it comes to family life and the upbringing of children. The rights and privileges that the justice system affords children and parents should, in theory, shape how social systems and institutions approach them. Under the United States Constitution, federal statutes, and Pennsylvania law, children and parents enjoy a number of rights and privileges. Perhaps most importantly, “familial companionship” is a basic right that all children and parents enjoy.²¹ Children have a right to access their parents, and parents have a right to access their children. The United States Supreme Court, for example, has stated:

Choices about marriage, family life, and the upbringing of children are among associational rights this Court has ranked as of basic importance in our society, rights sheltered by the Fourteenth Amendment against the State’s unwarranted usurpation, disregard, or disrespect.²²

Additionally, from the Pennsylvania Supreme Court:

“Fathers have the same responsibilities and, importantly, the same rights as mothers”
(Justice Max Baer, Pennsylvania Supreme Court)

The symposium roundtable discussion statements, editorial reviews and panel deliberations revealed that there are several barriers to child well-being and father involvement, some are affirmed, and others are newly described:

- Stigmatization associated with involvement in certain systems of societal care
- Fathers are hesitant to seek services
- Systems failure to recognize fathers’ individual circumstances and obstacles
- Gender inequities
- Fathers inability to navigate systems
- Parental disconnect
- Fathers viewed as *“breadwinner, rather than caretaker”*
- Fathers are not targeted for service
- Emotional (spousal) Detachment
- Father Absence seen as individual occurrences, not a systemic force

However, a barrier not widely explored that undergirds this examination of father inclusion is the use of attribution theory when attempting to explain the absence or non-involvement of fathers’ in

the lives of children. In general, many of our service delivery systems view fathers as synonymous with the word problem, attributing family struggles to fathers and casting fathers as irresponsible rather than as individuals facing numerous systemic barriers.

For example, the criminal justice system sees fathers as having broken the law, offended someone, or as emotionally unstable. Therefore, when fathers interact with the criminal justice system, they are stigmatized and lack the support necessary to serve as effective role models for their children. Fathers' inability or hesitation to seek behavioral health services because of stigma is seen as an individual problem rather than a problem stemming from social expectations about manhood.

Men who are not taking care of their families are often seen by the child support system as negative influences in society, rather than individuals who may be struggling financially due to systemic employment barriers.

Children typically come into the child protective service system for two reasons: child abuse or neglect. More often than not, they are removed from single parent households where there is not a father present. In that regard, line workers who service these children and families frequently witness the trauma experienced by both mother and child. Too often without knowing all of the facts, fathers who are not present receive the full brunt of the criticism for the circumstances that the child and families find themselves in.

Because early childhood education is the first formal educational experience that most children have, it lays the foundation for how a child and their parents approach the education system, including how involved each parent is or is likely to be. Fathers not involved in the child's education, especially when there are problems, are seen themselves as the problem.

Parent involvement is one of the strongest predictors of educational success, and families play pivotal roles in their children's cognitive, social, and emotional development from birth through adolescence. Again, when children are not achieving in education, and fathers are not around to assist with homework, etc. they are typically seen as a contributing problem to the child's lack of achievement.

Fathers' who are not working and contributing to the well-being of their children and families are seen as dead beat dads, and unworthy of the concept of a caring and loving father, especially if they are not engaged in an employment and training program.

Having a criminal justice system minor record, including an arrest that never led to conviction can stand in the way of nearly every building block of economic security, including employment, housing, education, family reunification, and even public assistance. Thus, a minor record reinforces the notion that fathers who are deviant in their behavior, including responsibilities to their families are not worthy for targeted limited public services.

The importance of parenting education and supportive services to building strong families cannot be overstated. Children cannot protect themselves from an aggressive external environment, they need caring adults to provide safety, keep them from harm and defend them against those who would threaten or attack them. Typically, this type of protection is provided by the child's parents

who are in love with one another and look forward to building a caring family. When children grow up with one or more emotionally detached or absent parents, there are a number of consequences, including affected adult relationships stemming from early childhood experiences or trauma; fear of attachment and love; borderline and narcissistic personality traits; selfishness; substance abuse/dependency; lack of identity and direction; and lose of hope, faith, and joy. When a father is not present and active in his child's life, blame is often placed on the father for these types of outcomes, rather than considering why the father is not present.

Perhaps as a consequence of our tendency to view father disengagement as an individual, rather than a systemic problem, public health agencies do not have robust initiatives to educate communities about the benefits of father involvement, and correlatively, the detriments of father disengagement. In other words, father involvement is viewed as an issue driven by individual occurrences (specific to the individual), rather than systemic forces (affecting us all). Because father involvement is not viewed as a systemic issue, it is not viewed as an issue warranting the attention of the public health system—a system that focuses on widespread, complex issues affecting community health.



Symposium Organizing Committee

Appendices

Dads Resource Center Supplemental Report

Listing of Panel Chairs & Co-Chairs

Listing of Pennsylvania Citizens' Policy Team

Chair & Co-Chair of the Pennsylvania Fathers, Families & Service Providers
Network (PFFSPN)



**SUPPLEMENTAL REPORT TO THE STRONG FAMILIES COMMISSION
CHILD SUPPORT SERVICES AND ENFORCEMENT WORKGROUP**

February 11, 2019

SUBMITTED BY THE

DADS' RESOURCE CENTER

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Research strongly indicates that children do best when they have the active involvement of both their mother and father in their lives. Absent the presence of either parent during their youth, they struggle to be successful in life. This is the case under normal circumstances, but even more so in separated families.

Unfortunately, single fathers in the care of their children frequently face pervasive biases and obstacles in the legal and human services system. These barriers are commonly known and accepted: almost everyone working within the system will acknowledge in private conversation that fathers face many unfair hurdles that result in their children losing the benefit of their active presence in their lives.

There is hesitancy from those within the system to discuss and address these imbalances. There seem to be many services available to help women and, yet very little comparable formal help for fathers. Although many voices collectively speak on behalf of women, comparably speaking little or no voices speak as a group on behalf of fathers, which is a significant factor in the lack of custodial equity within the system.

Too often, public opinion is reflected by the courts, county and human services agencies consistently defaulting in favor of mothers and the cumulative effect over time severely limits children's contact with their fathers. Initial custody determinations tend to go more toward the mother, and once custody is set it becomes very difficult to readjust even if there are indications that it might be in the best interest of the children to do so. For example, if something happens to affect the custody time for parents, the system has a greater sense of urgency in returning custody to mothers, while being much slower, or resistant, to returning custody time for fathers.

This report identifies five areas in the system where potential biases most often affect fathers' capacity to be in the lives of their children.

I. POTENTIAL INEQUITIES IN THE DETERMINATION OF CUSTODY BY THE COURTS

The Dads' Resource Center conducted a study of the ratio of custody time given to mothers and fathers as ordered by the courts in 700 contested custody cases in Pennsylvania in 2016. The average awarded custody time per week in the 14 counties that were studied was 69% for mothers and 31% for fathers (116 hours to mothers & 52 hours to fathers).

Courts of the Commonwealth have the final say in cases where parents are unable to resolve custody issues on their own. The courts, more than any other part of the system, most directly impact the lives of children in separated families.

While not definitively proving bias against fathers, the disparity in awarded custody time is significant enough to support the belief that there may be biases against fathers within the court system.

Recommendations

- 1) Because children need the active involvement of both parents throughout their childhood to have the best chance at being successful in life, it is imperative that there is a comprehensive assessment of how Pennsylvania Courts determine custody. This would include data on the amount of custody time awarded to parents, possible patterns that become established by specific courts, and variables including parental alienation. This recommendation encourages the Pennsylvania Supreme Court to task the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts (AOPC) to conduct such an assessment. We believe that the end analysis of such a study will create the opportunity for compulsory training for judges and attorneys, with a focus on the importance of ensuring that children have the opportunity for the active involvement of both parents in their lives.
- 2) The Pennsylvania CODE is the Operating System (OS), and sets the overall thinking for the courts, legal community and county offices. A working group should be commissioned to consider options to rework the Family Court Rules in a manner that better serves children. House Bill 433, amending Title 23 (Domestic Relations) of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes, sponsored by Representative Tedd C. Nesbit, and co-sponsored by 14 other members of the House of Representatives is a measure that could help to equalize custodial equality, as would statutory models that have been adapted in other states, such as Shared Parenting legislation.

II. POTENTIAL INEQUITIES THAT RESULT FROM PROTECTION FROM ABUSE (PFA) ORDERS

Protection From Violence orders are a vital intervention that saves lives and protects possible victims of various forms of potential abuse. Unfortunately, PFAs are also used as a “cheat” to get leverage in custody matters. A PFA can instantly reset established custody agreements or create custody parameters where none existed prior, without the due process of a custody hearing.

It is an accepted practice by some attorneys to recommend the use of PFAs in this manner for their clients to gain the upper hand in matters of custody against the other parent. This is not illegal or categorized as being unethical. In fact, many attorneys view this as justifiable as a means to provide the most assertive representation possible for the interests of their clients.

Men and fathers are the defendant for the vast majority of approved temporary PFAs, and the most likely to be disadvantaged relative to the custody of children by the misapplication of them. In Centre County in 2016, of the 197 approved temporary PFAs, 170 were male defendants and 27 were female defendants. Of the 86 cases that involved both parents of a child or children, 76 defendants were males and 10 defendants were females.

The strategic use of PFAs to game the custody process is a significant source of over work for both the courts and law enforcement. Even worse, it denigrates the system put into place to safeguard those who face real domestic violence threats; therefore, it should never be used for the purpose of undermining the custody process.

Recommendations

- 1) The state and counties have instituted extra precautions for accessing PFA case information to safeguard those under the protection of the orders. It is recommended that a working group of judges and attorneys who recognize that gaming of the system exists should be convened to identify what data should be collected in order to quantify the extent that this issue occurs. Then, based on this information, corrective action should be taken to prevent such behavior in the future and to disincentive current practice.

III. POTENTIAL INEQUITIES THAT MAY IMPACT CUSTODY WHEN THE OFFICE OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH BECOMES INVOLVED

The safety and welfare of our children is of paramount importance. Those who work in the Offices of Children and Youth perform a critical service, and work tirelessly to ensure the well-being of youth in potentially dangerous circumstances.

Courts often defer to the expertise and training of CYS workers and their supporting agencies when making decisions relative to the wellbeing of children. However, similar to PFAs, when courts become involved with families due to the involvement of Children and Youth, established custody agreements often are instantly reset without the due process of a custody hearing.

The Dads' Resource Center conducted a study of the ratio of male to female workers and supervisors in the offices of Children and Youth for every county in Pennsylvania. The study shows the ratio of CYS workers to be 82% female to 18% male, and the ratio of supervisors to be 84% female to 16% male. This extreme disproportion of female to male staffing reinforces the perception that fathers can be treated unfavorably when Children and Youth Services becomes involved with their families.

Recommendations

- 1) A working group of CYS supervisors and staff should be convened by the Pennsylvania Child Welfare Resource Center to develop measurements to quantify how successful offices are in ensuring that children are getting the opportunity to have both parents actively involved in their lives. The working group could utilize this information to put forward proposals that would enable county offices to develop more father friendly cultures. This could include highlighting fatherhood during the interviewing and hiring process, developing father focused policies and local based initiatives that focus on fatherhood. Each office should have staff that is identified as "fatherhood specialists" who are provided with additional training and resources to more effectively work to engage disaffected fathers and assist disenfranchised fathers.

IV. POTENTIAL INEQUITIES THAT MAY EXIST IN THE MEDIATION PROCESS

The outcomes from custody decisions by the court are public record. This is not the case for mediation. Some mediation results are forwarded to the court to be made an order. Some are forwarded to the court, but not put into the record. Some are not forwarded to the court at all. Because of this, we are unable to quantify the outcomes from mediation.

Fathers very often are overly deferential in the early stages of the breakup of a family, and susceptible to being dissuaded from seeking shared custody to make the transition easier for their

children. We have absolutely no data to assess if there are trends that might indicate biases toward fathers in the mediation process.

Recommendations

- 1) All results from mediation should be reported and compiled at the state level.
- 2) A working group of mediators appointed by the Pennsylvania Supreme Court should analyze this data to see if disparities exist and whether new procedures should be implemented to ensure that children have the best opportunity to have the active participation of both parents in their lives.

V. THE UNKNOWN INFLUENCE OF GUARDIAN AD LITEMS (GAL) ON CUSTODY

Guardian Ad Litem (GAL) have great sway on behalf of the children they represent in the courts, and human services systems. Given the influence that they have, there are few standards or accounting for their activity. There is a large disparity in the qualifications, requirements and training for Guardian Ad Litem from county to county.

Recommendations

- 1) A working group of Guardian Ad Litem should be convened to review Rule 1154 of the Pennsylvania Code and Pa. C. S. 23 5334 for the purpose of:
 - Developing standards to be recognized as a GAL;
 - Developing standards for ongoing training to maintain status as a GAL; and,
 - Developing a system of reporting to track (and quantify) the actions that GALs take on behalf of children.

All of which would emphasize an awareness and recognition of the importance for children to have the active involvement of both parents in their lives.



Symposium Organizing Committee

Panel Chairs & Co-Chairs

I. Administration of Justice/Public Safety

- *George D. Mosee, Jr. Esq., Panel Chair, & Non-Profit Administrator and former First District Attorney, City of Philadelphia.*
- *Reizdan B. Moore, Esq., Panel Co-Chair, & Practicing Attorney and former Parliamentarian, Pennsylvania House of Representatives, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.*

II. Behavioral Health

- *Dr. H. Jean Wright, PsyD, Panel Chair, & Director, Behavioral Health and Justice Services Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual disAbility Services, City of Philadelphia.*
- *Dr. Jay Cherney, Ph.D., Panel Co-Chair & Director of DadLab, Abington, Pennsylvania.*

III. Child Support Custody, Services & Enforcement

- *Debra Pontisso, Panel Chair, & Co-Chair, National Responsible Fatherhood Roundtable, Washington, D.C.*
- *Jeff Steiner, Panel Co-Chair, & Executive Director, Dads Resource Center, Penn State, Pennsylvania.*

IV. Dependent, Delinquent & Crossover Children and Youth

- *David R. Fair, Panel Chair, & Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Turning Points for Children, a PHMC affiliate, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.*
- *Nancy Fagan, Panel Co-Chair, & Director of Child Welfare Services, Jewish Family and Children Services of Greater Philadelphia.*

V. Early Childhood Development

- *Malkia Singleton Ofori-Agyekum, Panel Chair, & Pennsylvania Program Director for the Parent-Child Home Program, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.*
- *Jeanette Casciato, Panel Co-Chair, & Supervisor for Allegheny Intermediate Unit's Head Start Programs, Homestead, Pennsylvania.*

VI. Education

- *Dr. Richard Jeffrey Rhodes, Panel Chair, & Assistant Superintendent, The School of Philadelphia, Philadelphia County.*
- *Larry L. Klinger, Jr., Panel Co-Chair, & Program Supervisor Family & Community Education Services, and Adult Education and Workforce Development, Allegheny Intermediate Unit, Homestead, Pennsylvania.*

VII. Employment and Training

- *Jason Cosley, Panel Chair, & Executive Director, First Step Staffing Philadelphia, Philadelphia County.*
- *Andrew Cheeseboro, Panel Co-Chair, & Chief Executive Officer, Small Seeds Development, Inc., Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.*

VIII. Housing, Supervised Independent Living, and Homelessness

- *Kerry Krieger, Panel Chair, & Director of Family Services at Delta Community Supports, Glenside, Pennsylvania.*
- *Angela McIver, Panel Co-Chair, & Executive Director, Fair Housing Rights Center in Southeastern Pennsylvania.*

IX. Parent Education/Supportive Services

- *Anita Kulick, Panel Chair, & President and CEO, Educating for Parenting, and Chair, Pennsylvania Parent Educators' Network.*
- *Robert Brinker, Co-Chair, & adjunct professor at Westmoreland County Community College and Seton Hill University, and Retired Focus Program Coordinator at (PARENTWISE).*

X. Public Health

- *Dr. William Champagne, E.d.D., Panel Chair, & Male Support Service Coordinator, Department of Public Health, Healthy Start, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.*
- *Samantha Shuster, Panel Co-Chair, & Community Action Network Facilitator, Philadelphia Department of Public Health, Division of Maternal, Child and Family Health - Healthy Start.*



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End Notes

¹ See *Smith v. City of Fontana*, 818 F.2d 1411, 1418 (9th Cir. 1987) overruled on other grounds by *Hodgers-Durgin v. de la Vina*, 199 F.3d 1037 (9th Cir. 1999).

² *M.L.B. v. S.L.J.*, 519 U.S. 102, 116–17 (1996).

³ *Promoting Children’s Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Health*, Center for Social Policy, <https://www.cssp.org/policy/papers/Promote-Childrens-Social-Emotional-and-Behavioral-Health.pdf>.

⁴ *Guide for Father Involvement in Systems of Care*, Technical Assistance Partnership for Child and Family Mental Health (April 2013).

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ Gordon, et al., *Engaging fathers in child protection services: A review of factors and strategies across ecological systems*, *Children and Youth Services Review* 2012 34 (8): 1399–1417.

⁷ *State of the Child*, A Special Report by the Auditor General of Pennsylvania (September 2017).

⁸ Coakley, TM, *Examining African American fathers’ involvement in permanency planning*, *Children and Youth Services Review*, 2008; 30(4) 407–17.

⁹ Office of Head Start, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (January 28, 2018): <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ohs>.

¹⁰ *A community perspective on the role of fathers during pregnancy: a qualitative study*, National Institute of Health (February 10, 2018): <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3606253/>.

¹¹ Carrie Jasper, Family & Community Engagement Presentation, U.S. Department of Education. (On file with authors.)

¹² See Dr. Richard Jeffrey Rhoades, Symposium Facilitator’s Report (September 24, 2017). (On file with authors.)

¹³ See *Supervised Independent Living*, Children’s Service Inc. (February 10, 2018): <http://csichild.org/sil/>.

¹⁴ Indeed, some states like Florida offer programs specifically on cooperative parenting. See *Child Welfare*, Florida Department of Children and Families (February 11, 2018): <http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/programs/childwelfare/stabilization/online.shtml>.

¹⁵ *What is Public Health?* American Public Health Association (Apr. 22, 2018): <https://www.apha.org/what-is-public-health?>

¹⁶

<https://www.google.com/search?q=Philosophy+of+public+health+systems&oq=Philosophy+of+public+health+systems&aqs=chrome..69i57j0j8&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8>

¹⁷ *Id.*

¹⁸ See, e.g., Pennsylvania Department of Health (Apr. 22, 2018): <http://www.health.pa.gov/Pages/default.aspx#.Wtz919PwbjC>; Allegheny County Health Department (Apr. 22, 2018): <http://www.achd.net/mainstart.html>; City of Philadelphia Department of Public Health (Apr. 22, 2018): <http://www.phila.gov/health/>.



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