

Kids Need Their Dads!



Engaging Fathers in the Child Dependency System

A Report to the Pennsylvania State Roundtable
May 2011

May 26, 2011

Dear Statewide Roundtable Members:

Following the 2010 State Roundtable, the Fatherhood Workgroup was charged with the following tasks: finalize a protocol for establishing paternity, establish a protocol for engaging fathers, identify best practice engagement strategies and identify training needs. The Fatherhood Workgroup met regularly from August 2010 through April 2011. This report summarizes the efforts of the workgroup to accomplish the identified tasks and establish a statewide approach for involving fathers in the lives of their children with the ultimate goals of protecting children, promoting strong families, promoting child well-being, and providing timely permanence.

Our work began with the finalization of a statewide survey addressing the participation of non-resident fathers in case planning, court hearings, and visitation with their children. The survey results confirmed that there is much work to be done to get fathers to the table and engage them with their children and with the child welfare process. The top five barriers identified in the survey included a perception of bias towards mothers, payment of child support, incarceration, mothers shielding fathers from the family's problems, and father's work schedule making him unavailable during work hours.

The work begun in early 2010, to create detailed and specific protocols for the court and child welfare agencies addressing the establishment of paternity and location of fathers, was completed.

Additionally, the workgroup has identified best practices for engaging the fathers that we locate. The best practices are tailored to the caseworker, court, and legal counsel perspective and support the Guiding Principles.

In order to implement our work, the Fatherhood Workgroup has developed a proposed curriculum for education and training. The initial training envisions a three-hour time commitment that would include judges, masters, caseworkers and attorneys. A more extensive training should be developed for caseworkers for a second three-hour training.

Input from fathers was sought. As a result, the workgroup felt that it was important to educate our fathers on the importance of their role and active involvement with their children. A brochure was created to distribute to fathers by way of the court, caseworker, attorneys, CASA or providers that in simplified terms explains their rights and responsibilities and explains the important role they play as an involved father to their children.

Finally the workgroup has identified additional tasks that would require the continuation of our efforts beyond May of 2011.

We wish to especially acknowledge the hard work of the members of our workgroup and the significant contributions of the staff members of the Office of Children and Families in the Courts.

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**Kids Need Their Dads:
Addressing the Issues of Non-Resident Fathers in the Child Dependency System**

A Report to the State Roundtable of Pennsylvania

Background:

The issue of non-resident fathers has come to the forefront of national attention within the last few years. Disparities within the child dependency system in the engagement, inclusion and treatment of fathers, especially non-resident fathers, have been noted and there is an effort underway to raise awareness of the issues of these fathers and effectuate change within the system, both in culture and in practice.

To this end, the American Humane Association together with the American Bar Association Center on Children and Law and the National Fatherhood Initiative received grant funding to create a national resource center for research and information dissemination called the National Quality Improvement Center on Non-Resident Fathers and the Child Welfare System (<http://www.abanet.org/child/fathers/>). Their work is providing outcome data on the impact of fathers in the child dependency system and working to address areas where fathers have great impact, such as on the truancy and delinquency rates of juveniles, or where they and their families are an untapped resource that could provide for more timely permanence for children.

At the Pennsylvania State Roundtable in May of 2009, Karen Jenkins from the American Humane Association and Mimi Laver from the American Bar Association made a presentation to the roundtable members on the issues surrounding fatherhood involvement and the non-resident father. They offered preliminary findings on the impact of fathers and the costs associated with them being absent from the lives of their children as well as practice points on engaging fathers. They spoke about ways that fathers may be different than mothers and the practices that can be put into place to provide for better inclusion of fathers within the child dependency system. Finally, they offered a “Father Friendly Check-Up” that local children’s roundtables could use to gauge their effectiveness in being sensitive to the issues of fathers.

At that same meeting, the State Roundtable set fatherhood as one of the priorities for 2010 and authorized the creation of a workgroup to explore the issues of non-resident fathers and to make recommendations regarding practice and culture changes to make Pennsylvania a more father-friendly child dependency system. The fatherhood workgroup was convened in the fall of 2009 and began meeting in spring of 2010. The group’s task was to identify the challenges with engaging nonresident fathers in the dependency process and to develop solutions and best practices for better fatherhood engagement.

The Fatherhood Workgroup presented the following recommendations and next steps to the Pennsylvania State Roundtable in May of 2010:

1. The workgroup recommended that the Statewide Roundtable approve and adopt the Mission and Vision Statements.
2. Training for judges, lawyers, caseworkers, and others is crucial to the successful engagement of fathers. To that extent, the workgroup recommended the following:

- a) In 2011, regional training should be held to focus on fatherhood engagement, including establishing paternity, locating fathers, and gender specific communication.
 - b) Children and Youth staff should receive training on locating fathers. Training should focus upon how to complete a diligent search, document review, use of all search engines and databases. We strongly recommended that agencies consider hiring and/or assigning dedicated staff to locate fathers.
 - c) Caseworkers and judges should receive training on how to properly engage mothers and others with respect to the inclusion of father in the dependency process.
 - d) Mandatory cross-systems trainings focusing on aspects of fatherhood engagement should be held on a regular basis.
 - e) Utilization of *Advocating for Nonresident Fathers in Child Welfare Court Cases*, as a training tool for parent attorneys.
3. The workgroup recommended that the Statewide Roundtable approve and adopt the protocols for establishing paternity and locating fathers.
4. The workgroup recommended that the Statewide Roundtable approve the concepts and recommendations for engaging fathers in case planning and services.
5. The workgroup recommended that the CPCMS orders should be revised to include a check box that would require the court to find that paternity has been established and how paternity was established or to establish paternity and, if paternity has not or cannot be established, the reason(s) that paternity has not been established and what efforts, if any, are being made to establish paternity. This should be referred to the Juvenile Rules Committee.
6. The workgroup recommended that CPCMS or some other database should collect data measure outcomes with respect to father engagement.

(Several additional recommendations were made addressing visitation issues, which have been referred to the Visitation and Incarcerated Parents Workgroup.)

In May of 2010, the State Roundtable approved the following mission and vision statements.

FATHERHOOD MISSION STATEMENT

KIDS NEED DADS: Pennsylvania endorses the positive involvement of fathers and paternal family to protect children, promote strong families, promote child well-being, and provide timely permanence for children.

FATHERHOOD VISION STATEMENT

Positive connections between children and their fathers are achieved and nurtured by prompt identification, outreach, and engagement in services that recognize fathers' unique strengths and are tailored to meet each father's individual needs.

The State Roundtable did not approve the protocols for establishing paternity and locating fathers, and asked the workgroup to continue to work on these protocols to ensure that children do not lose connections with males with whom they have a bond and relationship. Additionally, the State Roundtable directed the workgroup to continue and expand their work on the other recommendations and to develop recommendations, protocol, and best practices for engaging fathers in case planning, delivery of services, and in the court process.

2010-2011 Fatherhood Workgroup

This report will detail the work that that was accomplished from August 2010 through April 2011 by the workgroup. The workgroup met six times, with additional meetings/conference calls held among the members of the subcommittees. The initial task that was tackled and accomplished included the format finalization, dissemination, and evaluation of data for the Fatherhood survey sent to the sixty-seven jurisdictions of the Commonwealth. The workgroup also re-visited and finalized protocols for establishing paternity and locating fathers.

The workgroup then split into three subcommittees to address specific tasks. Carrie Ann Frolio, Assistant Director York County Office of Children, Youth and Families, led a subcommittee to develop best practices for fatherhood engagement. Gene Detter, Curriculum and Instructional Specialist from PA Child Welfare Training Program, led a subcommittee to identify and develop specific training needs so that caseworkers, attorneys, masters and judges can be equipped to actively engage fathers in all cases at all levels. Daniel Worley, Esquire, York County GAL and parents' attorney led a subcommittee to develop a brochure that is father friendly and outlines a father's rights and responsibilities and emphasizes the importance of fathers being actively involved in their children's lives.

I. Fatherhood Survey

In order to have a better understanding of specific practices and areas of improvement that pertain to Pennsylvania, the group devised a comprehensive survey that was sent to all sixty-seven jurisdictions. The focus of the survey was information gathering in the following areas:

- Identifying Fathers
- Engaging fathers in case planning and services, including incarcerated fathers
- Visits for fathers, including incarcerated fathers
- Perceived barriers to non-resident fathers full engagement and participation

Forty-one surveys were returned for a response rate of 62 per cent.

The survey results indicated that an average of 62% of the fathers were identified in court active cases involving non-resident fathers. However, only an average of 31 % of the fathers became actively involved in the case. Even more concerning, an average of 11% of fathers are never identified. The survey further demonstrated that relatively few non-resident fathers attend court hearings, visit with their children, participate in case planning or ever have their children placed in their custody.

The survey identified several methods utilized by the child welfare agencies and the courts to engage fathers. The most prominent methods identified include telephone calls, letters, home visits, Family

Group Decision Making, Family Finding, interviews with extended family members (including the mother and child during court proceedings), and Accurint searches.

While numerous agencies offer non-traditional hours to better accommodate working parents, few agencies reported that they offer programs/services geared specifically toward fathers. The survey suggests that there are gaps in services necessary to better engage fathers, such as, male centered parenting programs and support groups, drug and alcohol treatment (with accommodations for children), counseling (with therapists trained in male help-seeking behaviors), mental health services, employment services and mentoring. These same services must be located within areas accessible to transportation and with schedules convenient for working fathers.

Additionally, within these services, systemic cultural changes need to take place. Workers must value the role of fathers, be held accountable for engaging fathers, demonstrate cultural competence, understand different parenting styles based on gender, assist fathers in understanding their own value in the lives of their children and develop interview skills specific to men.

While respondents stated that visitation policies or practices are the same for both fathers and mothers, they also acknowledged that fathers are more often excluded from visits, more often supervised, have less frequent visits, treated with greater suspicion, and have more restrictions. Respondents suggested that gender specific visitation practices be developed.

Finally, the survey identified the following barriers preventing non-resident fathers from being fully engaged and participating in the case planning process: incarceration, perceived system bias toward mothers, requirement to pay child support, mother serves as a gatekeeper to father involvement, unavailability during work hours, perceived disrespect, lack of male centered services, inequity of services offered to men, and fear of never seeing the child again.

II. Protocols

A. Establishing Paternity

When considering the issue of timely permanence for children involved in the child dependency system, one of the first issues to consider is the identity of the father of the child. The intersection of the legality of the system and the social aspects of the system can be complicated to navigate. The child welfare agency has a recognition that family systems are unique and the role of father may be played by one, more than one, or no one. The court system recognizes one father only and with that recognition comes certain rights and responsibilities. As such, we created a protocol for the early establishment of paternity so that there could be a clear focus on the father for efforts for engagement and inclusion. The protocol is offered below.

PROTOCOL FOR ESTABLISHING PATERNITY
ONE FATHER PER CHILD!

Protocol for the Agency

- a) Check with the Bureau of Child Support Enforcement (BCSE) paternity tracking system for acknowledgements of paternity. In the case of infants, this check should be conducted after a three-month interval.
- b) Check Pennsylvania Child Support Enforcement System (PACSES) for orders of support.
- c) Ask/interview the mother, explaining the important role that a father plays in the life of a child and the importance of identifying paternal relatives.
- d) Ask/interview the child.
- e) Ask/interview the maternal relatives or close friends.
- f) Check all collateral sources (including birth certificates, school records, medical records, neighbors, other relatives, etc.). Conduct an Accurint search and utilize social networking sites.

Protocol for the Court

- a) Establish a legal father (there should be only one father per child).
- b) Question mother and/or the child under oath.
- c) Explain to mother the importance of establishing paternity.
- d) In cases where there is no legal father, and an alleged father appears, the judge should do a colloquy on the record about his obligations (child support, etc) and then order genetic testing or ask him to sign an acknowledgement of paternity.
- e) In cases with a legal father, and there is a question as to who the biological father is, require the party seeking a paternity test to file a motion or petition seeking genetic testing, with service upon and notice to the legal father and all parties.
- f) Ensure the court order reflects that paternity has been established and, if not, the reason(s) paternity has not been established and what efforts, if any, are being made to establish paternity.
- g) If paternity has not been established before the adjudication of dependency, but is subsequently established through either genetic testing or acknowledgement, the court should enter an order establishing paternity.
- h) When paternity is established, the court should consider filing a copy of the order with Domestic Relations to prevent later inconsistencies.
- i) If paternity has not been established, at every court hearing, the court should inquire as to the efforts that have been made to establish paternity.

B. Locating Fathers

Once paternity has been established, county child welfare agencies and the courts should make every effort to locate the legal father if his location is unknown. The early location of fathers will enable that father to take part in the proceedings from the beginning stages and for agencies to make their reasonable efforts in a complete and timely manner. As such, the group offers the following.

PROTOCOL FOR LOCATING FATHERS

Agency Protocol for Locating Fathers

Make locating fathers a priority by:

- a) Explaining to mother the importance of locating father by asking/interviewing the mother, the child, relatives, friends and associates regarding father. **Caseworkers should be trained in engagement skills with family members and youth.**
- b) **Going to the last known address for the father** in an attempt to personally engage with the father who may still be residing there; or by interviewing the current residents and neighbors, who may have information such as a forwarding address or other contacts.
- c) **Completing a diligent search** for the whereabouts of the father by checking databases related to jails and prisons, Department of Public Welfare records, PennDOT records, voter registration rolls, Armed Forces, etc. **Other sites to consider are social networking sites such as Facebook.** If the father is paying child support through wage attachments or the court, **check PACSES** for a record of his address, employer, or other possibly useful information. Conduct an **Accurint** search.
- d) Sending letters to the last known address and requesting post office verification of receipt with the hope of getting a forwarding address. **Contacting the Postmaster via the Freedom of Information Act** to access a forwarding address and to verify a current mail delivery address. (Utilize Address Information Request Form.)
- e) **Utilizing all six steps of the Family Finding process** for fathers and extended family members. These steps are: Discovery, Engagement, Planning, Decision Making, Follow Up, and Evaluation.
- f) If a child has been placed in out-of-home care, **the Fostering Connections Act** requires the agency to **notify all adult relatives to the third degree** within 30 days of placement. This action can lead to location of the father.
- g) If father's last known address in another state, contact the responsible child welfare agency and request a courtesy home visit to that address in an attempt to locate father or arrange a visit by the assigned caseworker, if within reasonable travel distance.
- h) Updating efforts to locate father every 3 months and completing a full search annually until father is located.

PROTOCOL FOR LOCATING FATHERS

Court Protocol for Locating Fathers

At every hearing:

- a) Where the father has not been located, the judge or master should ask/interview mother, the child, and others **under oath and on the record** regarding the whereabouts of the father. In order to do so effectively, judges and masters should be trained on how to properly engage mother, the child, and others.
- b) The judge or master should ask the agency to **place on the record the efforts made to locate** the father.
- c) The judge or master should **require the agency to take affirmative steps** to locate the father.
- d) The court **order should reflect the efforts made or needed** to locate the father.
- e) The judge or master should **consider a finding of “No Reasonable Efforts”** if the agency has **not** made attempts to locate the father.

III. Best Practices for Engagement of Fathers

Fatherhood engagement should advance the mission for Pennsylvania’s dependency system: Protect Children, Promote Strong Families, Promote Child Well-Being, and Provide Timely Permanency. Engagement with the non-custodial father is an ongoing, strength-based, solution focused process. *It takes more than sending him a letter!*

Engagement of fathers requires a cultural change. The court and agency must recognize and acknowledge the value of fathers in the lives of their children. **Leadership from the top** is needed to accomplish this. **Mandatory cross-systems training** is needed and should include gender specific communication. Without the awareness and skills necessary to approach and engage fathers in ways that will be productive and positive, systems will continue to find barriers and lack of engagement. A good resource for this, as well as some national data, can be found in the 2006 Health and Human Services study of non-resident fathers: *What about the Dads? Child Welfare Agencies’ Efforts to Identify, Locate & Involve Non-resident Fathers*. Documented findings in this study are that involvement of non-resident fathers leads to a higher likelihood of reunification, a lower likelihood of adoption, quicker discharge from foster care and lower likelihood of subsequent maltreatment.

The survey results identified the following prevalent barriers to engagement of non-resident fathers in dependency cases:

- Incarceration of father
- Perceived bias of the system toward mothers
- Requirement of paying child support
- Mother shielding father from the family’s problems
- Father’s work schedule leading to unavailability during business hours
- Perceived disrespect.

With respect to the **Protection of Children**, the system should ensure that reasonable services are provided to parents—including the non-resident father or other caregivers prior to removal, if possible. The court should encourage the development of community-based services that meet the needs of fathers, such as parenting classes for fathers, mentoring and support groups for fathers and other gender-specific programs. Upon the identity and location of the non-resident father, the agency should undertake a complete and comprehensive risk, safety and family assessment.

In order to **Promote Strong Families**, we should recognize that a child should be maintained with the parents, whenever possible, and if not, then with other family members. Accordingly, both the agency and the court should make a determination if father is a danger to the mother or the children and consider appropriate protective orders. If there is no danger, both the agency and the court should move swiftly to include father and the paternal relatives into the case planning process. **It is the responsibility of the agency to find and engage absent parents, siblings, and other relatives to keep children connected to their birth families.**

According to the National Fatherhood Initiative of 2007, involvement of a father in the life of a child **Promotes Child Well-Being**. Specifically, fatherhood involvement results in:

- better cognitive outcomes,
- better self-esteem as teens,
- less depression as teens,
- greater academic achievement,
- lower level of substance abuse, and
- higher levels of pro-social behaviors.

In order to **Provide Timely Permanency** for children, the court and agency should recognize that a child should be reunified with parents whenever possible, and if not, then with other family members, *including the non-resident father and the paternal relatives*.

Effective engagement occurs when the caseworker makes outreach efforts to the non-custodial father from the point of intake and throughout the life of the case (including the placement of the child). The outreach efforts should be goal directed, based on a comprehensive family assessment, culturally relevant and must include the father in all aspects of case planning, service delivery and case reviews—both court and administrative.

A. Engaging Fathers in Case Planning

The workgroup recommends that following as best practices in engaging fathers in the case planning process.

1. Protocol for the Agency

- a) In most cases, the **caseworker should visit the father in his home**. In almost every dependency case, the mother's home is visited and assessed. Why should the father be treated differently?
- b) The caseworker should **engage mother as to the importance of having the father involved** in the case planning. Caseworkers should be trained on engaging mother.

- c) Father should be included in all **permanency planning** and other team meetings. The caseworker should ensure that father receives notice of all meetings.
- d) If paternity was not established at the onset or if father was not located at the onset, **once father is identified and located, the family service plan should be revised to include him.** The caseworker should fully assess a father's needs and create a family service plan with goals specifically tailored to the father's needs and issues.
- e) Utilize practices such as **Family Group Decision Making**, which are designed to engage the family. Make sure that father and paternal relatives are invited to the family conference and assist him/them in getting there.
- f) The caseworker shall **maintain regular contact** with father.

2. Role of the Court

- a) At every review, the **judge or master should ask whether father has been included in the case planning**, and if not, why father was not included.
- b) If father is not involved, **the judge or master should engage mother as to the importance of having father involved** in the case planning.
- c) At every review, the **judge or master should examine the family service plan** to ensure that it includes father and is specific to the issues at hand.
- d) The judge or master should insist that caseworkers make good faith efforts to engage and support father throughout the case.
- e) If possible, **the dependency court judges should decide the issue of child support** to reduce the financial impact that may impede the father's willingness to participate in case planning or to meet the child's needs.
- f) The court order should reflect that father is required to participate in case planning and that the agency is required to include him in the case planning.
- g) The court should make sure that **the paternal family has been considered as placement resources**, if necessary and direct the agency to complete assessments of the paternal relatives.

3. Role of the Parent Attorney

- a) **Good legal representation** should result in better engagement. Parent attorneys should be trained on engaging fathers. The goal is to **establish a solid attorney-client relationship** that will promote honest communication.
- b) The parent attorney should **encourage the father to participate in the case planning** and should work with the father to identify family service plan goals.
- c) The attorney should **contact father to remind him** to attend planning meetings.

B. Engaging Fathers in Delivery of Services

The workgroup recommends the following as **best practices** in regards to engaging fathers in the delivery of services. *Fathers should have equal access to services!!*

1. Role of the Agency

- a) The agency should **identify services that are currently available for fathers** and assess the **"father-friendliness"** of those services.

- b) The agency should **partner with community providers** and organizations to create and develop father-focused services.
- c) Once father has been located, the agency should immediately begin to develop an appropriate visitation plan for father.
- d) The caseworker should assist father in establishing individual goals that will facilitate permanence for the child. The caseworker should be an “active listener” in assessing what services father needs. The agency should **make a “real assessment” of a father's needs** and create a family service plan with goals specifically tailored to each father's needs and issues.

2. Role of the Court

- a) The court should **partner with community providers** and organizations to create and develop father-focused services.
- b) The judge or master should **ensure that the family service plan has “real goals” for father**. At every review, the court should examine the family service plan to ensure that it includes father and that it is not a boilerplate family service plan.

3. Role of the Parent Attorney

- a) The attorney has a responsibility to **advocate for appropriate services** for fathers. The attorney should insist that the agency provide all necessary referrals for services.
- b) If father has not been offered the necessary services, the attorney should **request that the court enter a finding of “No Reasonable Efforts.”**
- c) The attorney should meet with father to identify case goals and **empower father to direct the course of the representation**.

C. Engaging Fathers in the Court Process

The workgroup identified the following as the **best practices** for engaging fathers in the court process.

1. Protocol for the Agency

- a) The caseworker should **send notice** to and advise father of all court proceedings.
- b) The caseworker should engage father about the importance of attending court proceedings and **encourage his attendance and participation**.
- c) The caseworker should advise father verbally and in writing of his right to be represented by an attorney and should **explain to father the importance of having legal representation**.
- d) The caseworker should **provide father with information on obtaining representation**.
- e) The caseworker should **provide father with copies of all court orders and addenda**.

2. Protocol for the Court

- a) When a father's work schedule will not permit him to attend court hearings, or if father resides out of the county or state, **the judge or master should allow the father to appear and participate by telephone**.
- b) If father is located, but does not attend court hearings, the **court should require him to be subpoenaed so that the court can ensure his appearance**.

- c) Judges and masters should **treat fathers with respect** and acknowledge his importance to the legal proceedings and to the child. The judge or master should **take time to explain issues** such as the nature of the proceedings, the importance of fathers, permanency issues, ASFA timelines, a father's legal rights, and the potential role of the paternal family with respect to the child.
- d) At every hearing, the judge or master should **give father the opportunity to address the court.**
- e) The judge or master should **ask father if he is satisfied with the services** that have been provided or if he needs additional services.
- f) At the conclusion of the hearing, the judge or master should **explain to father what is expected of him** with respect to the family service plan and visitation.
- g) The **court order should set forth in clear and concise language** what is expected of father and it should also reflect that father is required to participate in case planning and that the agency is required to include him in the case planning.

3. Protocol for the Attorney

- a) The attorney should **maintain contact with father** and communicate with him prior to the hearing to ensure that father received notice and to determine whether father will attend the hearing in person or by other means.
- b) The attorney should **explain the purpose of each hearing** and provide father with sufficient information to make informed decisions at each stage of the proceedings.
- c) The attorney should **work with father to identify case goals** and empower father to direct the course of representation.
- d) The attorney should **ensure that father's position is communicated** to the court.
- e) The attorney should **provide father with copies of all court orders** and explain the orders to father, if needed.

IV. Training

To successfully implement the best practices outlined in this report, the workgroup believes that it is imperative that training occur at every level—judges and masters, caseworkers and solicitors, parents' attorneys, GALs and CASAs. The workgroup believes that an initial training would involve all of the aforementioned participants for a one-half day session with the focus being to acknowledge the value of engaging non-resident fathers and to identify strategies to overcome the barriers associated with identifying and engaging non-resident fathers.

The format contemplated by the subcommittee included the following:

- Short introduction of why the training is viewed as important and necessary at this point in time.
- Active participation from the audience in identifying why fathers are not actively engaged in cases. Why is it that engaging mothers gets so much more of our time and effort?
- Research demonstrating the value of locating and engaging non-resident fathers.
- Identifying barriers to locating and engaging non-resident fathers.
- Setting aside of personal biases in recognition of a child's need to connect with his/her father.
- Understanding differences in culture and gender.
- Adopting Best Practices for engagement in real life.

Expanded training is recommended by the workgroup for child welfare personnel.

Recent information received by the workgroup indicates that the National Quality Improvement Center on Non-Resident Fathers and the Child Welfare System (QIC-NRF), a collaborative effort by the American Humane Association, American Bar Association Center on Children and the Law and the National Fatherhood Initiative, has also developed a training for engaging non-resident fathers. The workgroup believes that such training curricula should be investigated for use in Pennsylvania.

V. Brochure for Fathers

Much of the focus of the work of the Fatherhood Workgroup has been placed upon systemic changes within the child welfare system and the courts. The workgroup felt that it was very important to reach out to fathers and gain their perspective on why they may not be engaged.

Bill Phifer, from Allegheny County Children and Youth, met with his local fathers' support group, Dads Assisting Dads (DADs) and asked a series of questions to gain insight into their perspective on their individual experiences within the child welfare system. It is worthy to include a summary of their responses in this report:

What are dads entitled to?

- Visitation
- DNA testing
- To be heard in court
- Representation
- Services should be equal

What motivates you?

- Kids
- Mothers
- Threat of placement
- Being responsible
- Being a role model

What works?

- Dad's program
- Family Service Plans
- Honesty, truthfulness
- Sincerity

What does not work?

- Complaining
- Fighting with mother
- Communication
- Fighting with children
- Disrespect of mother
- Disrespect of self
- Arguing

- Oppositional behaviors

What would you change?

- More visitation
- More respect
- More communication with teachers
- Preparation for court
- Quality and quantity of time with children

What do you think should be different?

- Fathers should have same/equal rights as mothers
- Father's voice should have same power as mother's
- No prejudice
- Equal punishment for mothers and fathers

What is the effect on children of absent father?

- Child is truant
- Child involved with gangs
- Child goes in the wrong direction
- Child not raised by biological family
- Child blames him/her self for father's absence

The subcommittee felt that it was important to develop a brochure that could be distributed to fathers that simply and succinctly advises them of their rights and responsibilities and stresses to them the importance of their involvement with their children. The brochure, once produced, should be delivered to all fathers by all participants in the child welfare process, i.e. caseworker, judge, master, attorney, GAL, CASA, providers. This "mass" dissemination would hopefully impress upon fathers that each participant in the system values the father's involvement in the process. Moreover, receipt the first time may not lead to actual digestion of the materials depending on the mindset of the father, the distributor of the brochure and the environment in which it is received. Again, repetition increases the likelihood that a father will actually open it and read some or all of the information contained therein.

A draft of the brochure is attached to our report for your consideration.

VII. Final Recommendations

The members of the Fatherhood Workgroup respectfully recommend the following:

1. The State Roundtable approve and adopt the protocols for establishing paternity and locating fathers as set forth in this report.
2. The State Roundtable approve the best practices for engaging fathers as set forth in this report.
3. Training for judges, masters, lawyers, caseworkers and CASAs is imperative to successfully engaging fathers with their children. To that extent:

- a) In 2011-2012, county or regional training should be implemented to focus on embracing the concepts of fatherhood engagement and implementing the best practices. Initial sessions should include judges, masters, lawyers, caseworkers and CASAs.
 - b) More intensive training should be developed for child welfare caseworkers and should include specific training on locating fathers.
4. The State Roundtable approve the content of the brochure for fathers attached to this report.
 5. CPCMS order forms be revised to include a checkbox that would require the court to find that paternity has been established and how paternity was established. If paternity has not been established, the court shall indicate the reasons why paternity has not been established and what efforts, if any are being made to establish paternity. A referral shall be made to the Juvenile Procedural Rules Committee.
 6. CPCMS should collect data to measure outcomes with respect to father engagement.
 7. The Fatherhood Workgroup should continue for 2011-2012 to address the following issues:
 - a) Review of bench cards currently being finalized by the American Bar Association addressing: the identification and location of non-resident fathers, engaging fathers in court hearings and case planning, understanding male help-seeking and learning styles.
 - b) Developing a plan for the printing and distribution of the father's brochures.
 - c) Implementation of the fatherhood engagement training
 - d) Developing fathers' support groups in the counties
 8. The State Roundtable consider the need for a separate workgroup to address issues of domestic violence and its impact upon children in the child welfare system.

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