



Ohio Practitioners' Network for Fathers and Families

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Summer 2007
Newsletter

Ohio Fatherhood Policy Forum

By Calvin Williams,
OPNFF President

OPNFF is a co-sponsor of the Ohio Fatherhood Policy Forum being held September 20, 2007 at the Midwest Hotel and Conference Center. This event brings together fathers, state and community partners from across Ohio to discuss issues affecting children, fathers and families. With a great deal of work already being done around fatherhood in Ohio, this Policy Forum increases the likelihood that public policy changes supporting fathers efforts to get and stay con-

nected to their children will happen.

For the past four years OPNFF has built relationships in state government, connected practitioners, disseminated best practices, convened conferences and workshops all in the name of improving children's chances of having a consistently involved father. When approached by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) Region V Office in Chicago several months

ago about supporting a Fatherhood Policy forum in Ohio, we jumped at the opportunity. The thought of bringing legislators, state agency and department heads, community-based family serving agencies, fathers and fatherhood practitioners together to hear from each other is unprecedented.

OPNFF Board members took leadership roles in planning and developing the event. Luis Vasquez,

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OPNFF Welcomes New Members

Adrienne Arthur
Jonathan Baker
Karen Balconi Ghezzi
Maria Barsa
Coe Bell
Denise Betlejewski
Joan Bier
Audrey Coaston-Shelton
Leonard Cofer
Jerome Davis
Allen Dixon
Allen M Dixon, Sr
Emily Erlwein
Rebecca Facey
Tony Foreman
Lois Fridenstine
Jennifer Gillece
Rachelle Griffin
Carl'averis Jackson
Richard Kruszynski
Barbara Laraway
Angela Lee
Randy Leite
Dianne Magnani

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Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction Focuses on Successful Reentry

By Terry Collins, Director of the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction

Representatives John White (R-Dayton) and Tyrone Yates (D-Cincinnati) introduced House Bill 130 on March 27, 2007. HB 130 is a comprehensive package that has been over four years in the making proposed by the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (ODRC) designed to: (1) challenge present collateral sanctions for offender reentry, (2) provide an expanded, accountable criminal justice treatment and sentencing continuum for specific offenders, and (3) improve agency operations.

Why is there a need for reentry? ODRC releases over 28,000 offenders back into our communities each year. Preparation to return offenders home is critical to

ensuring public safety, reduced victimization, cost containment, and prison management.

Enhancing offender reentry and challenging collateral sanctions are key components of HB 130 and provide the framework for long-term investment in Ohio's economy by reducing employment and other barriers to offenders reentering society. If offenders return to their communities more prepared and with support networks in place, they are more likely to become productive members of the community. They become taxpayers rather than tax burdens. Recommendations include reducing the barriers to obtain proper identification, removing non-relevant prohi-

bitions to employment, codified state agency partnerships and review of social service barriers.

The reentry movement today aims to achieve sensible balance in public policy – crime prevention and control. ODRC supports tougher penalties for the most serious repeat and violent offenders, especially those that prey on children. The current population in ODRC prisons is nearing 50,000, recently surpassing the all-time record high population in 1998. Additionally, 60 percent of ODRC commitments are serving less than one-year sentences. The majority of those are property and drug offenses and over 8,500

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Terry J. Collins is the current Director of the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction, having been appointed by Governor Taft in May of 2006, and reappointed by Governor Strickland in February of 2007.

More New Members!

Christie Manning
Marilyn McFadgen
April Milbry
Sharmin Philpot
Christine Pruitt
Chuck Restivo
Ann Roach
David Sanders
Judd Shiffler
Libby Svoboda
Carolyn Taylor
Diane Taylor
Christian Tobin
Elaine Wey
Katrina Wilson
Yvonne Young
Joyce Zarlenga
Sheryl Zawatsky-Johnson

OPNFF Welcomes New Board Members!

Terry Miller, LSW, M.Ed. is the Director of Coshocton County Job and Family Services. Since completing



the Masters of Education Counseling Program at Ohio University he has been serving families and fathers. Prior to his current position, he was the Director of Coshocton County Children Services where he progressively advanced from his initial position as a caseworker in 1980. Mr. Miller chairs the Coshocton Fatherhood Initiative, established in 2004 and is a member of the Family and Children First Council Board, as

Training: One of OPNFF's Most Important Strategies

By James McDonald, OPNFF Vice-President

On June 22, 2007, eighty-six practitioners converged at the state capital to attend the "**Fabulous State-wide Fatherhood Conference**", sponsored by Early Childhood Mental Health Initiative (ECMH) and OPNFF. "I cannot say how excellent this day was", said one of the professionals attending the conference.

Bob Farmerie of PEP in Cleveland began the day with an outstanding review of the facts and myths of teen dads, and a framework for assisting teen fathers and their partners. We were honored to hear from Neil Tift, Director of Paternal Instincts Consulting from Minneapolis, a founding board member of the National Practitioners Network for Fathers and Families who provided great handouts on "Suggestions for Improving Learning Environments for Girls and Boy" and "Gender Differences".

OPNFF Board President **Calvin Williams** received the highest evaluation rating of the day with a bril-

liant analysis of "Fatherhood, Poverty, and Children's Mental Health". And finally, the morning and afternoon session ended with two panel presentations:

liant analysis of "Fatherhood, Poverty, and Children's Mental Health". And finally, the morning and afternoon session ended with two panel presentations:

Inter-Agency Affairs Manager for Cuyahoga County, Office of Health and Human Services, **Luis Vazquez** of Cleveland, and Foreverdads Director, **Burl Lemon** of Zanesville lead the panel addressing low father participation rates, and challenges and opportunities in serving dads and their families; and

Founding OPNFF Board Members Muqit Sabur, Manager of Fathers and Families Together – Center for Families and Children, Cleveland, and Scott Neely of the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections, lead the panel focused on critical issues in the field, including pending legislation and state and national fatherhood initiatives.

After the conference, participant Ruthanne McKeever of Cincinnati

Childrens Hospital's Every Child Succeeds program commented, "I thoroughly enjoyed the entire day. I learned valuable information from all of the presenters and am looking forward to incorporating and integrating this information into our home visitation program for first time parents. Although our focus is on working with first time mothers, we hope to involve fathers in both the home visits and in the parent groups held monthly at many of our agencies."

ECMH and OPNFF plans to co-sponsor another workshop on fatherhood next year so look for the announcement and make it a priority to attend!

Are you interested in having OPNFF participate in a local event or provide a training in your community on best practices in fatherhood programming? Contact us through our website www.opnff.net or email us, info@opnff.net. We look forward to hearing from you!

well as the United Way Board.

Luis Vazquez, M.A. is the Inter-Agency Affairs Manager at Cuyahoga County Office of Health and Human Services, where he supervises this multiple social program with a budget over \$50,000,000. Mr. Vazquez graduated from Sienna Heights Uni-

versity, Adrian, Michigan in 1992. He was previously employed as the Director of HUMADAOP, Incorporated, Special Program Administrator of Employment and Family Services, Superintendent of the Division of Youth Services at the Department of Justice Affairs. He serves on numerous boards and com



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DRC Sponsors Prison Forums on Reentry and Faith Based Initiatives

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offenders committed in 2005 were for Felony 5 offenses.

HB 130 provides an expanded, accountable criminal justice treatment and sentencing continuum for specific offenders, i.e. judicial release, intervention in lieu of conviction, community control and authorization for re-entry court. Judicial and prosecutorial release options for appropriate offenders while maximizing Ohio's sophisticated community corrections network equates to good government. Diverting low-level offenders to community punishment translates to offenders who work in the community, maintain family ties, pay child support, fines, and receive treatment,

saving taxpayer dollars and preserving public safety. The end result is reduced recidivism.

A commitment to sound public policy decisions and good government strategies to improve agency operations and manage Ohio's prison population is also part of the bill. Proposals include targeting specific offender populations, i.e. medical and foreign national offenders, modifications to post release control and recommendations to improve operational efficiency within the Department.

House Bill 130 currently has bipartisan support in the Ohio House of Representatives, with 15 co-sponsors currently signed onto the legislation. The bill has had 4 hearings to date in the

House Criminal Justice Committee. The Department has been working over the summer with various stakeholders to finalize amendments to the bill, in anticipation of a committee vote when the legislature reconvenes in the fall.

The Department is also conducting prison forums in August and September across the state to build community support for reentry initiatives and a companion faith based initiative (HB 113) that is also pending in the General Assembly.

For more information regarding HB 130, and the prison reentry forums, please contact ODR at (614) 752-1164.

New OPNFF Board Members

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mittees including The Foundation Center of Cleveland, Cuyahoga Community College, Catholic Charities, Health Advisory Committee – City of Cleveland, Levin College of Urban Affairs – Cleveland State University, Lutheran Hospital, and the United Way.

James J. Whitfield, ESQ. is the Parenting Coordinator at the SUMA/Talbert House (Re-Entry Program in Cincinnati and Dayton. Since earning a Juris Doc-



torate in May 2000 after graduating from the University of Cincinnati, College of Law, Mr. Whitfield has been serving families through policy analysis and innovation; impacting litigation on child support issues; influencing local, state, and national legislation; developing parenting curriculums; designing and facilitating programs for children, teens, and fathers, including organizing and leading fatherhood groups; consulting with administrator and practitioners regarding matters of law and service delivery; and hiring and supervising staff in community based family programs.

Federal Legislative Update: Second Chance Act of 2007

The Senate Judiciary Committee has unanimously approved the Reducing Recidivism and Second Chance Act of 2007 (S. 1060).

The measure would authorize funding for a state and local grant program to implement comprehensive substance abuse treatment programs, academic and vocational education programs, housing and job counseling programs, and mentoring for offenders who are approaching release or who have been

released. S. 1060 also authorizes funds for the Federal Bureau of Prisons to improve federal offender reentry services and establish an elderly non-violent offender pilot program.

The committee adopted an amendment by Senator Jon Kyl (R-Ariz.) to exclude sex offenders from some program eligibility and rejected an amendment by Senator Tom Coburn (R-Okla.) that would have reduced the federal share of the fund-

ing to a 50/50 matching ratio rather than the 75/25 matching ratio that currently is in the bill. The House Judiciary Committee approved a similar measure in March.

For more information on the Second Chance Act of 2007 visit the Reentry Policy website, www.reentrypolicy.org. OPNFF will continue to monitor the bill's progress and provide updates to our members.

www.opnff.net



OPNFF

Ohio Practitioners' Network
for Fathers and Families

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JOIN US! And be part of a growing network of nearly 500 fatherhood advocates & practitioners.

Membership in OPNFF is FREE: do it online today
www.opnff.net

Ohio Fatherhood Program Survey!

OPNFF is conducting an online survey to collect information from all Fatherhood Programs in the State of Ohio. The information will be compiled and shared with referring agencies throughout the State. In addition, OPNFF will share the results of the survey with the newly formed Ohio Commission on Fatherhood. The survey will provide the Commission a picture of the landscape of Fatherhood programming in Ohio.

Make sure your program is included! Go to <http://healthyfathers.opnffprogramsurvey.sgizmo.com> to complete the survey or access the link from the OPNFF homepage. Please participate today!

Thank you!

Ohio Fatherhood Policy Forum

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Steve Killpack, Scott Neely, and I served on the Planning Committee. The Governors Office of Faith-Based & Community Initiatives joined the planning effort via Angela Woodson and Alan Bannister. Representatives from Ohio Community Action Partnership, Ohio Head Start Association, Ohio Department of Jobs & Family Services and ACF Region V staff made up the rest of the committee.

As the leading statewide advocacy organization for fathers and families in Ohio, OPNFF brought our relationships and expertise to bear on the process. The event is invitation-only so as to target exactly who the Planning Committee believes will have an impact on policy development and implementing the ideas generated. OPNFF was asked specifically to identify twenty fathers and fifteen practitioners to attend the event. We have fathers and practitioners coming from various counties throughout the state. The voices of the father must be and will be heard at his event. There will be four panels presenting during the Fatherhood Policy Forum: Child Support, Incarceration and Re-entry, Visitation and Custody and Father-Serving Programs. Each panel will have three subject matter experts and one father. OPNFF will also manage the "call for testimonies" process through our website (www.opnff.net—the information will be posted in late August). The Ohio Fatherhood Policy Forum will be webcast thanks to the Governor's Office of Faith-based & Community Initiatives. A post-event summary document will be produced along with a DVD and CD.

OPNFF believes this Ohio Fatherhood Policy Forum will be a strong step towards strengthening the abilities of fathers to provide for and nurture their children and families. We know that all too often fathers come up against policies and procedures that don't take into account the father's effort, desire or circumstances when decisions are made about the care or custody of their children. Look for the outcomes of the Ohio Fatherhood Policy Forum in the next OPNFF newsletter.

Call for Testimony - www.opnff.net