

The proposed “*Fatherhood Connections*” initiative targets 200 fathers in rural, northwest Ohio over a one-year period for \$560,000. The voluntary program developed with input received from a focus group of fathers and experts from three domestic violence shelters was customized to include what fathers feel are important to their families and what experts feel are essential to domestic violence prevention. The proposal addresses the challenges and needs identified: responsible parenting, healthy marriage, joblessness, inability to access public benefits and supportive services, lack of skills, and emotional support from people who care.

The program is structured to work with fathers faced with barriers that affect their abilities to support their children emotionally and financially. The program provides access to employment, education, training, intensive family-centered case management, as well as a range of other support mechanisms in a comprehensive, individually tailored service delivery model that helps families reach economic stability. The program design incorporates best practice techniques, research based curriculum, and many years of experience working with fatherhood programs which have been an effective catalyst for moving families out of poverty.

The initiative focuses on fathers with diverse backgrounds. The targeted population will include married and non-custodial fathers who are coping with poverty; have little interaction with their children; have a family history of single parenthood, violence, and/or substance abuse or misuse; are experiencing recent or long term lack of employment; have a child with a disability; are attempting to reconnect or build a strong relationship with their children; or they or their partner are incarcerated and transitioning out of the justice system.

Utilizing the US Department of HHS, Pathways to Responsible Fatherhood funds, WSOS will be able to lay the groundwork to build healthy parent child relationships, help fathers improve their economic status, while building our communities workforce development capacity. “*Fatherhood Connections*” participants across the service area will be able to select from a menu of services and enroll into supportive training modules that foster economic stability, promote responsible parenting, and promote or sustain marriage. Components include mentoring, financial education, wrap around services, case management, mentoring, work ethic and basic life skills (i.e. problem-solving, goal-setting, prioritizing, relationship building, leadership, conflict resolution and budgeting), employment and training activities, subsidized employment, job retention, career advancement education, and domestic violence prevention. Participants will learn to counterbalance their strengths, motivations and supports.