



Fathers to the **Forefront**

Increasing healthy
father involvement with
children, families, and
communities



A five-year plan to
strengthen Minnesota
families

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Authored by Minnesota Fatherhood
Advocates and Practitioners

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**Join professionals across Minnesota!
Make a commitment to support this plan!**

This document was created as a tool to be utilized by fatherhood advocates and practitioners to strengthen Minnesota's fathers and families. It is our hope that non-profit organizations, government agencies, faith-based groups, educational institutions, corporations, and other community entities will work toward the benchmarks either on your own or as part of a joint planning group. Let us know how you'd like to be involved. Contact the Minnesota Fathers & Families Network to get details about meetings of Arena Action Groups or to share your plans for advancing fatherhood in Minnesota. Contact MFFN by email at info@mnfathers.org or by phone at (651) 222-7432.

Thank you.

Introduction ¹

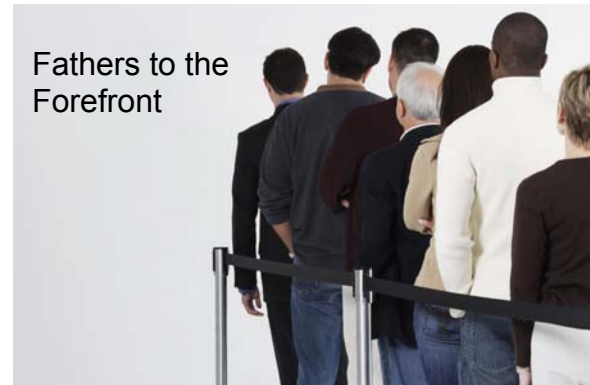
This action plan seeks to engage all fathers – especially fathers who are facing multiple barriers – so that they may become healthy assets for the development of their children, their families, and their communities. The authors of this action plan aim to increase levels of healthy father involvement in Minnesota’s urban, suburban, rural, and tribal communities by working in tandem with organizations that support healthy women and children.

Benefits of Positive Father Involvement

Since the early 1990s, there has been a growing body of evidence that points to the important benefits of a strong father-child relationship. Among these benefits are higher levels of school performance and increases in healthy behaviors. Fathers who are able to develop into responsible parents are able to engender a number of significant benefits for themselves, their communities, and most importantly, their children. For example, children raised with significant positive father involvement display greater empathy, higher self-esteem, increased curiosity, higher verbal skills, and higher scores of cognitive competence.² In 2000, the U.S. Department of Education published “A Call to Commitment: Fathers’ Involvement in Children’s Learning”, which reveals that when fathers are involved in their children’s schools, their children learn more, perform better in school, and exhibit healthier behavior.³ Fathers are also increasingly being recognized as an important emotional resource for their children.

The benefits of healthy father involvement are not relegated to one social class or one family structure. According to the same Department of Education report, “Research has shown that fathers, no matter what their income or cultural background, can play a critical role in their children’s education.... Even when fathers do not share a home with their children,

their active involvement can have a lasting and positive impact.”



Fathers who are active and positively involved in their child’s life will have a tremendous effect on their child’s development – both cognitively and socially. Having the experience of two involved parents adds variety and dimension to the child’s experience of the world.

On the other hand, children who lack a positive relationship with a father or father-figure demonstrate increased juvenile delinquency and lower academic achievement. “Father involvement protects children from engaging in delinquent behavior and is associated with less substance abuse among adolescents, less delinquency, less drug use, truancy, and stealing and a lower frequency of externalizing and internalizing symptoms such as acting out, disruptive behavior, depression, sadness and lying”.⁴

Many families do not realize that the positive benefits of father-child involvement affect fathers as well as children. As explained by Frank S. Pittman, M.D., “The guys who fear becoming fathers don’t understand that fathering is not something perfect men do, but something that perfects men”.⁵ Men, in their roles as fathers, can learn from children in the form of heightened expression of emotion, expanded sense of self, new understanding of empathy, and expanded ability for caring and nurturance.⁶

In addition to the benefits for men and children, healthy fathers recognize, honor, and support the important role of motherhood. Indeed, fatherhood is not the opposite of motherhood and fathers are not a substitute for mothers. As stated by Rob Okun at the Men’s Resource Center for Change, “I believe it is critical that men’s work locate itself within the larger framework of the movement for social justice”.⁷ Within the context of social justice, healthy fatherhood is perceived as an issue of promoting

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gender equity. Healthy fathers support mothers in child rearing and provide mothers with greater opportunities for employment, community involvement, or other pursuits.

Additionally, involved residential and non-residential fathers provide an important financial resource for children. For example, when poor families receive child support payments, that money constitutes more than a quarter of the family's income.⁸

Healthy father-child involvement is clearly linked to the well-being of children, fathers, mothers and families. The very presence of this link amplifies the importance of supporting men to be more present, more active, and more committed to the health and well-being of their children.

Defining Fatherhood

As described above, fathers of various types are able to engender positive benefits for children. Defining fatherhood is a complex task of understanding genetics, law, residence, marital status, and social interactions. For example, a father may be called: legal, biological, putative, presumed, adoptive, step, foster, social, psychological, adjudicated, resident, non-resident, custodial, non-custodial, etc. Full definitions of these terms may be accessed in the report, "Do we count fathers in Minnesota?"⁹

For many families, the key defining factor of a father is not who the man is – but how the man interacts with the child. After all, children often identify their father as the man who provides one or all of the following: love, time, education, safety, and material needs.

The Crisis of Fatherhood

We now possess a stable and growing base of knowledge about the relevance of fathers. The notion that healthy and involved fathers are central to child well-being is accepted as a mainstream idea. At the same time, fathers are impacted by major changes in family structure, the economy, governmental policy, and notions of healthy masculinity. In many cases these changes undermine the ability of fathers to be involved with their children.

This is especially true of "fathers in the shadows" – large populations of men who are left uncounted or discounted in social, educational, and legal arenas. Whether due to the fathers' own choice – or due to societal coercion, neglect, and oversight – various groups of fathers are systematically marginalized including large numbers of men who are unmarried,

divorced, teens, incarcerated, low-income or members of minority ethnic and racial groups. Living in fragile families or altogether absent from their children's lives, many fathers are underrepresented in statistical data, underserved in social service programming and undervalued as assets for healthy family and child development. These fathers must overcome multiple barriers in order to achieve positive father-child relationships, as described below.

Children raised with significant positive father involvement display greater empathy, higher self-esteem, increased curiosity, higher verbal skills, and higher scores of cognitive competence.

The Challenge of the Changing Structure of U.S. Families

There have been drastic changes in the family in the latter half of the twentieth century. The media has well-documented the fact that divorce rates increased dramatically and gradually steadied as the century ended. In 2005 in Minnesota 25,528 couples married while 16,895 couples divorced.¹⁰ Rates of marriages and divorces are nearly equal in Metro Minnesota and Greater Minnesota.

Less publicized, researched, and understood in terms of the impact on children's well-being is the increase in children being born outside of marriage. In 1960, only 5 percent of all U.S. births were outside of marriage. By 1999 the rate of U.S. births outside of marriage had grown to 33 percent.¹¹ In some communities the rates are even higher. 40 percent of Hispanic children and 70 percent of African-American children are born outside of marriage.¹² In Minneapolis in 2005, the non-marital birth rate for U.S. born African American women was 86.6 percent.¹³ Put another way, whereas in 1979 almost all single mother families were headed by divorced or separated mothers, by 1999 almost half of all single mother families were headed by a never married mother.¹⁴

In addition to the growth of households headed by never married mothers, single fathers are increasingly taking the responsibility of raising their children. Currently, single father households are the fastest growing family structure, by percent growth, among families with children under 18 in Minnesota. As of the year 2000, single father households comprised fully 6 percent of all families with children (37,305 families).¹⁵

Therefore, when we examine Minnesota’s family structures, we can see a variety of inter-related factors including growing numbers of children raised by divorced parents, by never married mothers, by cohabiting parents, and by single fathers. Each of these family structures creates new challenges for Minnesota’s social services systems, government agencies, legal practices and policies.

For example, the increase in the number of divorces and the changing norm from single-breadwinner to dual-breadwinner households have created new expectations for and by fathers in terms of child custody and parenting time.

Meanwhile, whereas divorced fathers typically have a divorce decree that specifies their rights, such as a schedule of parenting time, many more legal and social obstacles exist for fathers who have never been married to the child’s mother. In Minnesota, an unmarried mother is automatically given sole physical and sole legal custody of the child until a court order says otherwise. Establishment of paternity and parental rights for never married fathers, and ensuring that father-child relationship, is usually a much more complicated picture than for a divorced father. At the same time as there are more children born outside of marriage, stronger child support enforcement and higher rates of paternity establishment have brought many more fathers into formal structures and the courts than ever before.

Additionally, the growth of single father households has created a new strain on programs that have customarily focused on the needs of women and children. More fathers are seeking community networks, social supports, and visible role-models as they take on the challenges of balancing the demands of their families and their careers (a challenge well-known to generations of single mothers).

The Challenge of Engaging Fathers in Fragile Families

The term fragile families, as originally termed, describes poor children born outside of marriage to

More fathers are seeking community networks, social supports, and visible role-models as they take on the challenges of balancing the demands of their families and their careers.



two natural parents whose parents are working together to raise them – either by living together or by frequent visitation for the father.¹⁶ Fragile, low-income families are represented disproportionately in communities of color. At a critical time in our state, healthy father involvement represents a largely untapped resource, especially among these “fragile families.”

On the one hand, there is now a better understanding of the impact of father absence in children’s lives and an emerging understanding about family dynamics within “fragile families.”¹⁷ There is also a better understanding than ever before of the situation of unmarried parents at the time their child is born, of the wishes of these parents in fragile families in terms of their relationships to each other and to their children, and of the barriers to helping these families. Much of this information has emerged nationally from the ground-breaking Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study.¹⁸ For example, we know that:

- Unwed parents are strongly connected to each other and to their children at the time of the child’s birth. 82 percent of unmarried parents are romantically involved, either living together or dating. The overwhelming majority of the mothers want the father to be involved in raising the child.
- Most unmarried parents are poorly equipped to support themselves and their children. The majority of new, unmarried parents live either below or near the federal poverty line, and have low levels of human capital to draw upon.
- Unmarried parents are younger and much more likely to already have children with more than one partner than married parents. 43 percent of unmarried mothers have children with at least two different men, while only 15 percent of married mothers have children with different fathers. Despite this likelihood, unmarried parents are, on the average, six to seven years younger than married parents.
- At the time of their child’s birth, unmarried parents value marriage and have high hopes for the future of their relationships, but their hopes are typically not fulfilled. 74 percent of unmarried mothers and 90 percent of unmarried fathers say the chances that they will marry the baby’s other parent are “50-50 or greater.” Nevertheless, of the 30 percent of couples in a dating relationship when their baby was born,

only 11 percent had married one year later, while nearly one-third had broken up.

- Employment, education and relationship quality effect union formation and stability for fragile families.¹⁹

As authors Elaine Sorenson, Ronald Mincy, and Ariel Halpern note in *Redirecting Welfare Policy Toward Building Strong Families*, although out of wedlock child bearing is highly associated with paternal absence, the image of mothers raising their non-marital children alone is not totally accurate. 60 percent of all poor children under the age of two who were born outside of marriage lived with both of their natural parents or lived with their mothers and saw their father at least weekly. However, by the time poor children reach their teens, this statistic has flipped. 59 percent of poor teenagers live with their mother and see their father less than weekly.²⁰ These “fragile families” have become a focus in many arenas, among foundations, researchers, nonprofits, and governmental agencies alike.

As we examine the challenges for fathers to stay engaged in fragile families, it is imperative that we also understand the severe socio-economic and political crisis faced by young men of color – fathers and fathers of the future. According to the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation’s findings derived from a multi-year engagement with the Fathers at Work Initiative, employment among young Black men has plummeted. Studies conducted by national experts in the field estimate that 72 percent of Black male high school dropouts are unemployed and even among those with high school diplomas, 50 percent are jobless. Macro-economic forces worsen this situation as “outsourcing” drains jobs that once would have earned this population a living wage, union representation is on the decline, the majority of jobs that do exist that do not require higher education are low-wage, and recent studies prove that racist hiring practices prevail. Black and Latino males are severely over-represented in the low-wage workforce. The median income for White male householders in 2000 was 95 percent higher than for Black males and 81 percent higher than for Latino males.

This crisis is compounded in Minnesota by the fact that less than half of Black, Latino and Native American males graduate from high school, lessening their chances for living wage jobs that require a basic education. More than 1/3 of all Minnesota’s birth fathers, in 2004, had only a high school diploma or lower level of education and those least-educated 1/3 of fathers averaged at least 50 percent more children than

fathers with higher levels of education.²¹ Add to that the staggering likelihood that almost half of Black men will be booked and arrested in Hennepin County alone. Black Minnesotans are incarcerated at 23 times the rate of Whites – the highest rate of racial disparity of any state²². Under-education, pervasive incarceration, intergenerational poverty and structural racism converge to create a harsh and often brutal reality for young men of color, forcing many to engage in the underground economy, often illegal and characterized by drugs, gangs, prostitution and violence. When they become fathers, this reality by nature extends to their children and partners.

What does all this mean for the children of these young men?

- Of the more than 85,000 Black children in Minnesota (6.6 percent of all the state’s children), 71 percent live below 185 percent of the federal poverty line, according to the Children’s Defense Fund of Minnesota. A staggering 52 percent of homeless families are Black and out-of-home placements are slowly decimating the Black community. High rates of births in these communities are babies born to teenage parents (70 out of 1000), ten percent with low birth weight, and growing up in large part without access to health insurance.
- On average, Native American families in Hennepin County make less than half of what the median family income is for all other families and 67 percent of children live in poverty.
- The majority of Latino children (65 percent) also live below 185 percent of the poverty line. The barriers these children face to even grow up to become adults are enormous.

When we talk about children in poverty and families in crisis, it is important to also recognize how institutional racism complicates the issue, especially in the context of governmental, educational, and social institutions. On the one hand, we must recognize the covert and overt

disadvantages that racism places on minority families. All Minnesotans, especially those with influence and power, must work to combat racism for the benefit of new generations of children. At the same time, we must recognize that we are not only discussing issues affecting urban, minority families. Every single community in Minnesota is affected by issues of unemployment, under-employment, domestic violence, substance abuse, teen pregnancy, and divorce.

The Challenge of Promoting Healthy Male Socialization

Any discussion of healthy fatherhood must include a glimpse at how we, as a society, are educating and

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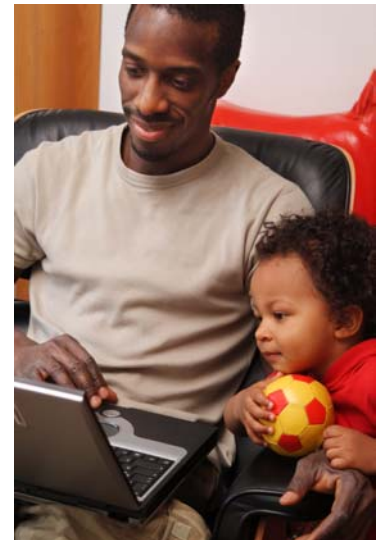
socializing males to become competent fathers. Current examinations of male socialization often identify a paucity of healthy adult male role models for boys and a lack of education about what it means to grow up to become a positive man and father. In many ways, our culture fails to provide boys and men sufficient direction and support in order for individual males to define and adopt healthy expressions of masculinity and fatherhood. It is imperative that we understand the context within which boys become men and men become fathers and that our plan address this socialization aspect of fathering if we are to truly increase the healthy involvement of fathers.

As explained by male activist Jackson Katz, “We are raising generations of boys in a society that in many ways glorifies sexually aggressive masculinity and considers as normal the degradation and objectification of women”.²³ Furthermore, Dads and Daughters, a Minnesota-based organization, has released a recent report about the stereotypes of male behavior in children’s movies (the “G” rated type). The report, conducted by the University of Southern California’s Annenberg School for Communication, described men’s portrayal as “dominant, disconnected and dangerous”.²⁴ Men in children’s movies are infrequently nurturing or caring – the roles expected of good parents. Throughout youth and adolescent culture, healthy messages of manhood that help prepare boys for fatherhood and family life are often difficult to detect.

But according to Rob Okun, masculinity is not the problem in itself. As he explains, “...gender identity can be redirected into other, more fruitful channels.” He points out as an example a father that was seeking “a suitable form of rough-and-tumble play for his son that didn’t involve toy guns. They hit upon firefighting and outfitted their... little boy with all the accoutrements. The ability to think clearly under pressure, to be physically strong and to take decisive action to protect others offers a useful direction to boys and young men”.²⁵ Despite some of the prevalent negative social characteristics of masculinity, healthy manhood has an important place in our families and communities.

While it can be challenging for boys to define healthy masculinity, it can be equally challenging for men to define healthy fatherhood. Christopher Kilmartin eloquently discusses the issues of fatherhood in his book, *The Masculine Self*. Kilmartin states,

The doctrine that prescribed fathers’ role as outside the home and mothers’ domestic role was a result of economic exigencies that arose from industrialization. But the economy has changed and it will continue to change, increasingly making the breadwinner-homemaker dichotomy untenable, and giving rise to the different kinds of child-care arrangements that we have begun to see during the last three decades. Far from being a biologically ordained necessity, historical and cross-cultural perspectives demonstrate that the protector-provider role (in fact, all of the culturally masculine role) is a historical artifact, driven by ordinary peoples’ need to make a living. From this point of view, the current debates over the ‘natural’ roles of women and men in the home (and elsewhere) are the ‘growing pains’ that come with social change.²⁶



Thus, many men continue to seek appropriate family roles ranging from provider, protector, and disciplinarian to nurturer, role-model, educator, and friend. Notably, our cultural values about fathering have changed dramatically in just one generation. As noted by Joseph Pleck at the University of Illinois, in 1981 newly marrying couples “were asked to rank-order certain values they planned to instill in their marriages. He [found] that co-parenting – parent’s sharing in the physical and emotional care of their infants and children as well as in the responsibilities and decision making” was ranked eleventh out of fifteen priorities. Upon asking the same question in 1997, Pleck found that co-parenting had climbed to the second priority.²⁷ Clearly, social expectations of fatherhood are changing quickly.

Therefore, fathers are left asking how to define their roles. Dr. Kyle Pruett described contemporary fatherhood in the following terms, “Practically speaking, fathering means helping with, or paying, the bills; participating in infant care by changing

diapers, bathing, and feeding; disciplining, bandaging cuts, helping with homework, driving to and from after-school and weekend activities, making trips to the pediatrician; and knowing your child's friends, passions, fears, and loves."²⁸ Fatherhood encompasses all of these roles within the context of paternal nurturing. How any one man determines and defines his own role is based on a complex set of conscious and unconscious personal and interpersonal decisions.

This action plan suggests important socio-cultural changes for promoting the healthy socialization of boys. The plan aims to include more men in early childhood education, to create wider availability of social service programming for men, and to promote nurturing fathers through public policy decisions and media portrayals of men.

The State of Fatherhood in Minnesota

Minnesota has a rich tradition of being a leader in the fatherhood field:

- The first Fathers Resource Center in the nation
- The first curriculum for adolescent fathers, established by Meld
- The first U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) program for homeless fathers and children
- The first peer education program in the nation to focus on the role of fathers in teen pregnancy prevention and paternity education, known as Dads Make a Difference
- The first regional conference on fatherhood, sponsored by the National Practitioners Network for Fathers and Families (NPNFF)
- The first fathers' conference in 1982, sponsored by the Univ. of Minnesota's department of Continuing Ed. in Social Work, attracted over 250 fathers.
- The first state to publish a Dads Directory
- The community-wide celebration of fatherhood – the Festival for Fathers and Families – started in 1991
- The first distance-learning program in Fatherhood Program Practice and Family Studies, offered by Concordia University (St. Paul), the St. Paul Urban League and NPNFF
- Anoka and Ramsey Counties were selected to be one of only seven sites as part of Parent's Fair Share, a national demonstration project that examined methods to assist unemployed non-residential fathers who were struggling with child support

- Minneapolis was selected to be one of the sites for the Partners for Fragile Families national demonstration project that started the FATHER Project
- Four Minnesota programs were selected to receive federal Responsible Fatherhood funding through 2010
- Local and state government initiatives have also categorized Minnesota as a leader. Innovative child support policies (such as arrears forgiveness) and programs that have recognized and accounted for the obstacles facing low-income, non-custodial fathers have helped earn this recognition, as well as innovative family court programs that have broken down barriers to father involvement among low-income fathers

This brief list of successes only begins to touch on the good news for families and children. Beyond the crises, many men are stepping forward to be good fathers – and it remains true that most men want to be involved in healthy ways with their children. For example, each fall large numbers of African American dads are joining together to escort their children to their first day of school; early childhood family education classes in all regions of the state are reporting that more fathers are in attendance; and a recent survey of Minnesota's dads showed that they identify their most important role as “showing love and affection” to their children. Indeed, the state of fatherhood is quickly evolving.

The cohesiveness and responsiveness of the fatherhood field in Minnesota, however, has ebbed and flowed over the past ten years. For example, funding for many programs is tenuous; opportunities for fathers are limited in Greater Minnesota and in many urban communities; legal issues continue to perplex many fathers and fatherhood staff; and various other challenges persist.

Wanting to provide a more unified voice and organizational support to the fatherhood field helped lead to the creation of the Minnesota Fathers & Families Network (MFFN). MFFN, a 501(c)(3) organization, is a resource for program professionals and fatherhood advocates across the state. MFFN is devoted to initiating, promoting and supporting effective programs and educating on public policy to enhance the responsible involvement of fathers in the lives of children, families and the community. MFFN has emerged as a leader and taken a large role in shaping the development of this action plan.

MFFN released its report “*Do we count fathers in Minnesota?*” in January 2007 to provide a more complete view of fatherhood in Minnesota. This report for the first time provides a comprehensive

image of the well-being of fathers and men in families in Minnesota. The report ends with initial recommendations that provide the stepping-stone to many of the action steps in this plan.

But MFFN cannot – nor should it – do this work alone. It requires the sustained commitment and resources of all sectors of society: non-profits, for-profits, foundations, government and individuals to make the changes necessary to truly bring fathers to the forefront in Minnesota.

Purpose: Creating a Plan for All Fathers

This action plan aims to strengthen all families in Minnesota by helping men to be engaged with children, to be supportive of mothers, and to be active in communities. This plan is for all fathers, regardless of the structure of his family, the size of his paycheck, the location of his community, or the lineage of his ancestry.

The purpose of this plan is to encourage and support statewide actions that:

1. Increase healthy father-involvement with children

- Increase the actual number of fathers who are involved with their children (helping fathers in fragile families and divorced fathers remain an active presence in their children’s lives) by changing governmental policies and practices, education and support
- Increase healthy interaction between fathers and their children by helping to fund programs (focusing on programs that are effective in helping fathers with parenting, preventing and intervening in situations of child abuse, domestic violence or other harms to children and families; developing promising or best practice approaches; increasing

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collaboration across government sectors and non-profit agencies

2. Increase healthy father-involvement in families

- Support more prenatal education and parenting programs for fathers of newborns and infants
- Support more co-parenting programs, mediation and other means of resolving parental disputes
- Support family law, child access, and parenting time services for unmarried or divorced fathers
- Support programs that help prepare boys and men to become nurturing fathers
- Support multiservice programming to address fathers’ barriers in employment, education, health and mental health

3. Increase healthy father-involvement in communities

- Support fathers to be more involved in schools, local governments, faith-based institutions, and other community organizations
- Support fathers in their development as community leaders and role-models of healthy masculinity
- Promote opportunities for boys and girls to learn about the values and responsibilities of fatherhood and motherhood
- Promote media messages that expect healthy fatherhood, discourage all forms of violence and maltreatment, and embrace positive portrayals of masculinity and femininity

Vision Statement

As professionals dedicated to the development of healthy children, families, and communities, we envision a future where Minnesota’s programs and policies support men in their roles as nurturing fathers. We envision a state where all children have access to healthy fathers and father-figures and all communities embrace the positive aspects of healthy masculinity. We envision a time when fathers and

mothers are lifted up as strong assets for child growth and development.

We care about children, fathers, mothers, families, and communities. We wish all children could experience the loving presence of a positive father figure. We want all men and women to understand the healthy influence that fathers can provide for the next generation of Minnesotans.

Healthy Fatherhood Principles

- Fathers are an essential resource in building healthy families as a context for positive child growth and development.
- Fathers and mothers both have primary responsibility for supporting, nurturing and guiding their children's learning and development, working as a team and not at odds with each other. The emphasis here is on positive co-parenting techniques.
- Family education and support services systems in Minnesota should provide equal opportunities for fathers and mothers that are affordable, accessible and sustainable to enhance and develop their capacity as competent responsible parents.
- Agencies should work in a collaborative manner to identify and address the needs of men and to support healthy fatherhood.
- Agencies and practitioners providing family services should form respectful and culturally sensitive relationships with fathers and families.
- Fatherhood practitioners and advocates can enhance services to fathers and families through increased opportunities for collaboration, training and education.
- For children and families to thrive, the whole community – families and individuals, non-profits, public systems, policy makers, the private sector and funders – needs to work in partnership.



Key Messages for the Fatherhood Movement ²⁹

1. Child well-being: Children benefit from healthy father-child relationships.

- In all families, a positive, substantial father-child relationship is of enormous value to children and is a significant protective factor in the face of other disadvantage.
- Fathers produce a significant protective factor, particularly in vulnerable families – e.g., when the mother is young or the father is unemployed.
- When fathers who are noncustodial parents can pay regular and consistent child support, and remain an active and healthy presence in their children's lives, the child and the entire family benefit.
- Whether or not the parents live together, children benefit from positive father-child relationships.

2. Gender equity: Women benefit from healthy father-child relationships.

- Virtually all mothers want their child to have a positive and close relationship with their father.

- Families benefit when individual and institutional barriers that inadvertently limit either parent are eliminated.
- Child-mother attachment is more secure when child-father attachment is secure.
- Positive mother-child relationships are linked with positive father-child relationships.
- Whether or not the parents live together, positive mother-child relationships are linked with positive father-child relationships.

3. Men's development: Men benefit from healthy father-child relationships.

- Virtually all fathers seek an active role in the healthy upbringing of their child.
- Men benefit through increased expression of nurturance, empathy, self-confidence and self-scrutiny.
- Fathers benefit from a positive relationship with their children.
- Whether or not the parents live together, fathers benefit from a positive relationship with their children.

4. Community development: Communities are healthier and safer when healthy father-child relationships are promoted.

- Neighborhoods are safer when fathers are role models and available to provide a presence and guidance to children of all ages.

- Communities, schools, places of worship, and civic activities positively benefit when fathers are more actively engaged.
- Social service agencies' caseloads are reduced when fathers are part of the solution, not just part of the problem.

Goals and Recommendations

Bringing fathers to the forefront--strengthening Minnesota's fathers and families--is the overall goal of the fatherhood field. These efforts can operate in many arenas, impacting public policy, education, health care, media images of fathers, fathers' legal rights, social service provision, parent education and support, housing, law enforcement, faith communities, and workplaces. Much good work has been done by numerous agencies toward these goals; however, efforts have too often been scattered, creating at best incremental change.



The Fathers to the Forefront initiative creates new energy in the fatherhood field by establishing a blueprint and action plan for coordinated, focused, and sustained efforts to create healthier environments for Minnesota fathers and families. Through their

combined wisdom, numerous professionals active in the fatherhood field, listed individually on page two of this report, have identified the following arenas as priorities for work during the next five years:

POLICY ARENA: Identify and implement policy changes that strengthen fathers and families.

EDUCATION ARENA: Strengthen education for all aspects of fatherhood across many settings: healthy male socialization; planning/preparation to be a father and understanding stages of child development; father involvement in the education system; and increasing the presence of men as educators.

SERVICES AND SUPPORT ARENA: Create and expand resources for fathers and all men seeking support to become the best parent they can be, as well as making current social services gender-responsive and culturally appropriate for fathers.

RESEARCH ARENA: Develop data streams that "count fathers," identify and advocate for promising practices around fathers, and raise the visibility of fatherhood issues.

Pages 13 – 23 provide specific goals within these arenas, action steps, partners, and benchmarks to measure progress.

Conclusion

The Minn. Fathers & Families Network (MFFN), along with a planning group of agencies in the fatherhood field, began planning the Fathers to the Forefront initiative with one key goal in mind: to bring the diverse array of agencies and groups active in the fatherhood field together not just for discussion, but for action. This process has generated tremendous energy to make a substantial difference in the level of awareness, fairness, and resources available to fathers in Minnesota in the next five years. By working together, members of MFFN can

achieve these exciting benchmarks and create "big change." Along with the many small but satisfying changes we make in the lives of individuals each day, the Fathers to the Forefront initiative can help ensure that five years from now fathers and families in Minnesota are stronger and more connected than they are today. Each member, partner and practitioner in MFFN brings unique knowledge and skill sets to one or more of these tasks. We invite everyone who cares about fathers and families to be part of this action-oriented effort.

First Arena: Policy

Goal: Identify and implement policy changes that strengthen fathers and families.



Need: Legislation and policy, whether local, county, state or federal, and policies and practices at corporations, non-profits, foundations and other types of non-government organizations, can all have a negative or positive impact on fathers' ability to form strong relationships with their children. These policy impacts can serve as barriers that frustrate fathers, family members and social service providers alike, or can help promote the healthy involvement of fathers. It is important for the fatherhood field to have a policy voice so that we can “change the playing field” in ways that positively impact fatherhood for the benefit of children

Action: In the policy arena, the Fathers to the Forefront initiative will create a policy group to provide legislative oversight for legislation impacting fathers and families. The policy group will form relationships with father- and family-friendly legislators, public policy decision makers, and judges, and work with concerned legislators to promote both increased funding and policy change around issues of healthy fatherhood. The group will work to identify, strengthen, and create connections and collaborations with other advocacy groups with shared goals. Over a multi-year growth process, the policy group will become an effective advocate and change agent at the county, state and federal level.



Policy Work Plan

Action	Benchmarks
<p>Create a policy group to examine, prioritize and educate about proposed legislation impacting fathers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify laws/policies/procedures that discourage (or can encourage) fathers' involvement and survey fathers/fatherhood practitioners on above (beginning of ongoing process) • Start process of how to connect voices of fathers with policy work and strategic plan for this connection 	<p>2007: Policy group membership, work plan/roles and funding (whether in-kind staff or volunteer time or cash funding for advocates) established (connect with Minn. Fathers & Families Network public policy committee).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create reporting and tracking system for group (6 month benchmarks) • Common voice outside meetings established • Identify key issues to tackle first <p>2007: Other fatherhood advocacy efforts identified and relationships clarified.</p> <p>2007: Potential partners identified, such as: state agencies (Dept. of Human Services, Child Support, Dept. of Corrections, etc), other advocacy groups/nonprofits, legislators, courts, social service providers, philanthropic foundations, etc.</p> <p>2007: Service and Support Group consulted to connect the voices of fathers with relevant policy issues</p>
<p>Track proposed legislation and advocate for issues impacting healthy fatherhood.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritize issues to work on (i.e. those mostly likely to change) • Identify, create and strengthen, collaborations with other groups, including groups that might not be natural allies; identify issues that also impact fathers, e.g. foster care, prenatal care, "children's issues" and work with/support those advocacy groups • Identify father friendly language and practices that can be implemented (changes that may be quicker to accomplish and may not need legislative change) 	<p>2007: Potential partners identified, such as: Minn. Org. on Adolescent Pregnancy, Prevention and Parenting (MOAPPP), Prevent Child Abuse Minnesota (PCAMN), Children's Trust Fund, etc.</p> <p>2008: State legislative calendar flagging bills of interest is established (oversight).</p> <p>2008: Father and family-friendly legislators identified and courted.</p> <p>2008 or 2009: Policy group advocates meet with legislators; testify at committee hearings.</p> <p>2009: Federal legislative calendar flagging bills of interest is established (oversight).</p>

Action	Benchmarks
<p>Work with father/family-friendly legislators and the courts to propose needed legislation, funding, and policy changes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop questions and candidate positions, and question individual legislators on policy positions that support fathers 	<p>2008: Strong relationships developed with father-friendly legislators and judges.</p> <p>2008: Group has list of opportunities/priorities for new legislation to support healthy father-child relationships (including laws from other states that work and current bills which might be able to have father services attached to them).</p> <p>2009: At least one legislator sponsors a new bill/provision that impacts healthy fatherhood.</p> <p>2009: At least one bill passes.</p>
<p>Promote father-friendliness as a nonpartisan issue; educate legislators to embrace healthy fatherhood as campaign/platform issue.</p>	<p>2008: Develop list of legislators who are identified as father-friendly.</p> <p>2010: List of father-friendly legislators will increase by 50% between 2008 and 2010.</p>

Second Arena: Education

Goal: Strengthen education for all aspects of fatherhood across many settings:

1. healthy male socialization;
2. planning/preparation to be a father and understanding stages of child development;
3. father involvement in the education system; and
4. increasing the presence of men as educators.

Need: The education arena is integral to this blueprint at many levels. Educating fathers, potential fathers, and the families and systems they interact with is the first step in raising awareness about fatherhood issues. We hope this increased awareness will lead to actions that advance the goals for fatherhood in Minnesota.

1. As described in the introduction, many aspects of mainstream culture fail to provide boys and men sufficient direction and support in order for individual males to define and adopt healthy expressions of masculinity and fatherhood. Parents, and in particular dads, can learn valuable lessons from the research on how to more effectively raise healthy sons and daughters.

2. While parenting is, arguably, the most important job we do and about 80% of Americans become parents, youth and new parents have few opportunities to learn about this role. Prevention curricula and programs about too-early parenting are often lacking a focus on males as nurturing, important parents and an emphasis on planning to become prepared, capable parents. Young people have few chances to learn good parenting solely by observation at home, while pre-parenting education for fathers is mostly relegated to the role of coach in birthing classes. Many children are at risk of being abused, neglected or otherwise poorly nurtured by inadequately prepared or supported parents. As children reach various ages and stages of life, the father's job evolves as well. Fathers need to learn about dealing with children's unique needs at various stages of life and with various challenges. Sons, daughters, teens, adult children, adoptive children, and children with special needs all have their own sets of joys and challenges.

3. Research on father involvement in children's academic lives suggests a positive and lasting impact on children's cognitive, social, emotional, and moral development. Research also suggests that how men relate to children is influenced by how they think about their role, how others perceive them, and whether or not they have a support system. Fathers

are often underrepresented in school settings, parent teacher associations (PTAs) and parent education classes because the environments can feel unfriendly to fathers. Fathers need both school access and "father-friendly" school and parent education environments to help them connect with their child's development and education in ways that are meaningful to both children and to fathers. Additionally, children must be presented with father-inclusive and gender balanced educational opportunities such as relationship education, parenting education, and healthy examples of male socialization.



4. In contemporary America, men are scarce in the teaching profession of young children. As many occupations have become more gender-balanced, teaching of young children has become less so. Teachers are some of the best role models for children. Male teachers play a doubly crucial part in the lives of the large numbers of children who don't live with their fathers. Teachers cite pay and lack of respect as two of their top reasons why fewer males might favor the profession. In addition, the stereotypes still exist that it's not masculine to teach young children or that men are predators of young children. Similarly, men are scarce in parent educator roles – denying fathers the role models they need and discouraging father participation in parent education classes.

Action: In the education arena, the Fathers to the Forefront initiative will work to develop consistent, unified messages about healthy masculinity and tailor those messages for delivery to different audiences. We also need clear, consistent messages about what it

means to be a father and how fathers contribute to raising a healthy generation of children. While it is important for parents and educators to know what contributes to positive male socialization, we also need to create a movement that will raise a collective voice against the negative stereotypes of men in the media.

The Fathers to the Forefront initiative will advocate for increased father-inclusive and gender balanced educational opportunities and skill development in the areas of healthy relationships and parenting education to develop the attitudes, knowledge, and skills vital to individual social and emotional well-being and to sound future parenting. Preparing youth and adults to become caring, competent parents who understand the stages of child development may be the single most effective way to prevent child abuse and other violence, increase mental health, advance school preparedness, and achieve academic success for future generations.

In the education arena, the Fathers to the Forefront initiative will work to make E-12 education (early

childhood, kindergarten-grade 12) and parent-education environments more father-friendly, thereby increasing father involvement and promoting children's school success. More fathers will become engaged in early childhood, school-based, and after-school programming through:

- A combination of rule, policy, and procedure changes
- Improvements in gender and culture-responsiveness for fathers
- Public education around fathers' impact on school success and healthy child development
- New parent education initiatives for underserved fathers

The education arena recognizes the need to address a growing gender gap of professionals working in E-12 and parent education through the implementation of policies and plans to attract men to the teaching profession. There is a need for more aggressive marketing and more ambitious career mentoring programs that include "male visibility" to attract men to careers in teaching.

Education Work Plan

Action	Benchmarks
<p>Develop consistent, unified messages about healthy masculinity and the definition of fatherhood.</p>	<p>2007: Work team, staffing/roles established and funding secured.</p> <p>2007: Literature/research on healthy masculinity, male socialization, and father roles collected. Individuals who are leaders in the field identified.</p> <p>2007: Avenues for reaching fathers/parents/educators with this information are identified.</p> <p>2007: Potential partners identified, such as: higher education family studies programs, E-12 teachers (early childhood, kindergarten-grade 12 teachers), social services, parenting educators, advertising agencies, media, etc.</p> <p>2008: Work group identifies common themes/concepts for talking about healthy masculinity and fatherhood and develops key messages, talking points, fact sheets, workshops to communicate these messages.</p> <p>2009: Media campaign using healthy masculinity and fatherhood messages.</p>
<p>Increase father inclusive and gender balanced educational opportunities and skill development in healthy relationships, pre-parenting, and parenting education.</p>	<p>2007: Work team, staffing/roles established and funding secured.</p> <p>2007: Identify current service providers of this education and gaps in service. Identify how current work can be broadened or expanded to reach new audiences.</p> <p>2007: Potential partners identified, such as: Dads Make a Difference (DMAD), hospitals, Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE), Family and Consumer Science (FACS), higher education family studies programs, etc.</p> <p>2008: Advocate for pre-parenting education for youth through FACS and Health content areas in schools as well as other youth development programming. Develop talking points. Identify and engage schools/programs.</p>
<p>Educate E-12 (early childhood, kindergarten-grade 12) schools and service programs about the legal rights of non-custodial parents and the educational benefits of involving nonresidential parents in their children's education.</p>	<p>2007: Work group established and has work plan, staffing/roles (in-kind or dedicated) and funding.</p> <p>2007: Group has identified other parent/educational advocacy groups and learned their techniques to create positive change.</p> <p>2007: Group knows "who owns the rules" and has strategy for systems change/plan of attack.</p> <p>2007: Consults with policy group to connect the voices of fathers with relevant policy issues</p> <p>2007: Potential partners identified, such as: state and county child support offices, school districts, Head Start, etc.</p> <p>2008: Group seeks changes to rules or changes to the implementation of rules, as appropriate. Consults with policy group as needed.</p>

Action	Benchmarks
<p>Raise public awareness about the impact of fathers on children’s development and academic success.</p>	<p>2007: Work team, staffing/roles established and funding secured.</p> <p>2007: Potential partners identified, such as: school districts, Minn. Dept. of Education, corporations, Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE), faith-based groups, Working Family Resource Center, Head Start, social services, foundations, etc.</p> <p>2008: Data on father impacts on education/early childhood education collected. Model programs for increasing father participation identified.</p> <p>2008: Public education/father recruitment tools developed and distributed to target areas to raise public awareness of fathers’ roles in education.</p> <p>2009: Father participation increases in target schools.</p>
<p>Develop and distribute information and training on making E-12 school environments father-friendly (include cultural competence elements).</p>	<p>2007: Work team, staffing/roles established and funding secured</p> <p>2007: Potential partners identified, such as: Minn. Dept. of Education, school districts, superintendents, principals, Head Start, social services, etc.</p> <p>2008: Existing curricula/training providers or models identified. Father-friendly school districts/administrators identified.</p> <p>2008 - 2009: Training & resources on making schools father-friendly are broadly available (connect to/promote existing local resources, replicate national models or develop new)</p> <p>2009: At least three school districts have accessed training and resources (urban/suburban/rural).</p> <p>2010: At least two school districts have developed new opportunities for father-friendly parent education or school participation.</p> <p>2011: At least two school districts report increased father participation in parent education and school involvement programs.</p>
<p>Fills gaps or expand services in parent education and child development for fathers including boys (pre-parenting), teens/young fathers, specific cultural groups</p>	<p>2007: Work team established.</p> <p>2007: Potential partners identified, such as: Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE), Dads Make a Difference, social services, Head Start, etc.</p> <p>2008: Team has identified needs, numbers of clients, current programs/options, and possible “homes” for new programs.</p> <p>2008: Program concept has been developed together with program “host,” proposals written and funding secured.</p> <p>2009: Existing programs are supported and expanded, as appropriate.</p> <p>2009: New program launched.</p> <p>2011: Successful program (new or existing) is incorporated into government or agency operating budget.</p>
<p>Increase mentoring and marketing programs to attract men to careers as teachers and parent educators.</p>	<p>2007: Work team, staffing/roles established and funding secured</p> <p>2007: Potential partners identified, such as: MenTeach, higher education, high schools, school districts, Minn. Dept. of Education, foundations, etc.</p> <p>2008: Identify strategy for increasing numbers of men enrolled in training programs for field of education</p>

Third Arena: Services and Support

Goal: Create and expand resources for fathers and all men seeking support to become the best parent they can be, as well as making current social services gender-responsive and culturally appropriate for fathers.



Need: There is a lack of resources available to fathers who generally do not receive accessible and welcoming social services that mothers receive. In some cases, services are specifically for mothers with children, creating barriers for fathers. In addition, a lack of outreach and visibility of services means that fathers are often unaware of their rights or of resources that could help them. In addition, social service providers often focus on the critical needs of women and children – offering few or no services for men.

Unmarried and low-income fathers in particular can be regarded as having no value. Special needs of fathers regarding paternity establishment, co-parenting with a non-spouse, parenting time, multiple fertility issues, teen parents, custodial and access issues, child support, incarceration impacts, and domestic violence and child abuse prevention, chemical health and mental health often go unaddressed.

Family stress or crisis can also create the need for major role transitions or adaptive coping strategies.

The continuation of meaningful attachments between fathers and children, whenever possible, can reduce the major stresses associated with family change. Fathers' experiences can be influenced by gender roles and the gendered organization of family support systems.

In order to meet the multiple needs of fathers, social services agencies and community organizations should work in cooperation with all family members, including fathers, in order to invest fathers in their own progress.

Action: In the services and support arena, the Fathers to the Forefront initiative will work to increase fathers' access to services by creating services, educating fathers about options, promoting gender-balanced policies and gender-responsive approaches in family services that meet fathers' needs, acknowledging fathers as a positive influence, and by reducing barriers and enhancing resources in social services for fathers and men in families. The initiative will also develop a service provider committee, convene quarterly, to share "best practices", to increase educational opportunities for institutional systems that interact with fathers, and to provide information/data on gaps in services within the community as well as strategies for addressing those gaps.



Social Services Work Plan

Action	Benchmarks
<p>Create substantive, professional training specific to social services with fathers, including inclusive language and practices, gender-responsive approaches to paternal parenting, issues around paternity, multiple fertility and marriage, and knowledge of resources.</p>	<p>2007: Work team, staffing/roles established and funding secured.</p> <p>2007: Existing curricula/training providers or models identified.</p> <p>2007: Education group consulted to connect the voices of fathers with relevant policy issues</p> <p>2007: Potential partners identified, such as: community-based services, faith-based groups, nonprofits, corporations, government agencies, etc.</p> <p>2008: Possible training partners and father-friendly administrators identified (especially counties)</p> <p>2008 - 2009: Training & resources for father-friendly social services /case management are available in target areas (connect to/promote existing local resources, replicate national models or develop new)</p> <p>2009: At least one county has offered staff training and resource enhancement on working with fathers.</p>
<p>Reproduce and maintain father services directory, including information on parenting resources, family support resources, cultural programs, and legal information.</p>	<p>2007: Work team, staffing/roles established and funding secured.</p> <p>2007: Work team has collected, merged and updated info on father services into directory</p> <p>2008: Father Services Directory reaches social workers and fathers statewide through effective channels.</p>
<p>Advocate with state human services and non-profit social service agencies to fill gaps (men’s mental health, spreading knowledge of MFAR, access to legal and financial info, co-parenting with mothers especially when not married, incarcerated fathers, cultural specific father’s groups, positive male socialization, for example).</p>	<p>2007: Work team, staffing/roles established and funding secured.</p> <p>2008: Group has gaps list that is prioritized based upon need and opportunity to implement.</p> <p>2008: Group has developed at least five “leads” with agencies to fill gaps, helps strategize program concepts, staffing and funding.</p> <p>2009: At least two new programs are operationalized to fill gaps in services for dads.</p> <p>2010: Programs have stable funding through government or agency operating budgets (interface with policy group as needed).</p>
<p>Advocate with other institutional systems that interact with fathers and families to increase gender balance of policies and services</p>	<p>2007: Potential partners identified, such as: local, county and state agencies working in areas of corrections, education, chemical health, health, juvenile justice, family courts, etc.</p> <p>2008: Group has gaps list that is prioritized based upon need and opportunity to implement.</p> <p>2009: Group has developed at least three “leads” with agencies to fill gaps, helps strategize program concepts, staffing and funding.</p> <p>2010: At least state agency has a one new program operationalized to fill gaps in social service for dads.</p>

Fourth Arena: Research

Goal: Develop data streams that “count fathers,” identify and advocate for promising practices around fathers, and raise the visibility of fatherhood issues.

Need: As detailed in the Minnesota Fathers & Families Network’s recent report, *Do We Count Fathers?*, data on fathers in Minnesota is in considerable disarray. Specifically, data collected about male adults rarely acknowledges whether or not the individual is a father, and data collected about “parents” usually doesn’t distinguish mothers and fathers. Studies speak of “teen mothers” but rarely about “teen fathers.” Definitions of fatherhood itself can be murky. “Single father” may mean a father who is raising a child alone, a divorced father with any level of contact with children, a never-married father who has lived with the child’s mother for the child’s entire life, or a father with multiple fertility. As a result, studies in the fatherhood field are difficult to compare. Another problem is that fathers’ issues tend continually to “stay in the shadows” and not receive sustained attention. Better data and more advocacy strategies are both needed to keep fatherhood and family issues in the public eye (and on the government priority/government contract list), which means more opportunities to understand the increasingly important aspects of father involvement and father absence.



Action: In the research arena, the Fathers to the Forefront initiative will work to standardize evaluation tools and methods used in the fatherhood field to better capture the scope of fathers’ issues and the impact of programs. State-level efforts will distribute information on existing services, promising approaches and best practices that support healthy parenting by fathers and craft compelling arguments for father and family initiatives. A state-level coordinator will coordinate efforts and keep fathers and men in families out of the shadows.

Research Work Plan

Action	Benchmarks
<p>Create state-level fatherhood services coordinator for ongoing coordination, implementation and advocacy, including generating government contracts for fatherhood services from various federal and state sources (such as departments of education, corrections, human services, etc.), public education, promoting promising service models, establishing local and state-wide partnerships, and expanding service development.</p>	<p>2007: Work team, staffing/roles established and funding secured</p> <p>2007: Research similar positions in other states and get their feedback (e.g. Delaware)</p> <p>2007: Position description, responsibilities and outcomes drafted, compelling case for funding written, budget set.</p> <p>2007: Potential partners identified, such as: governor’s office, state agencies, statewide advocacy groups, corporations, foundations, etc.</p> <p>2008: Areas within Minn. state government that could support such a position approached (Dept. of Human Services, governor’s office, etc.); stakeholder buy-in obtained. Work with Policy Group for legislative support.</p> <p>2009: Legislation to authorize position is signed.</p> <p>2010: Coordinator begins services.</p> <p>2011: State budget supports funding for healthy fatherhood programming with sustainable funding stream.</p>
<p>Develop catalog of promising practices around fatherhood and promote findings, including return on investment.</p>	<p>2007: Work team, staffing/roles established and funding secured.</p> <p>2007: Provider data collected from surveys on their practices and their impressions of what works.</p> <p>2007: Potential partners identified, such as: higher education, federal reserve, research-focused nonprofits, think-tanks, foundations, etc.</p> <p>2008: Best practices and promising approaches identified and classified.</p> <p>2008: Catalog published.</p> <p>2009: Regional forums for practitioners held at minimum of 2 sites.</p>
<p>Develop standardized definitions and useful ways of reporting data on fathers; evaluate programs.</p>	<p>2007: Work team, staffing/roles established and funding secured</p> <p>2007: Findings of MFFN’s <i>Do We Count Fathers</i> reviewed, along with national findings on father data.</p> <p>2008: Recommendations for data collection and evaluation developed and shared with stakeholders for buy-in.</p>
<p>Begin longitudinal study of a cohort of fathers and children, birth through adolescence.</p>	<p>2007: Work group established.</p> <p>2007: Develop study concept, preliminary design and capture interest of study partner (respected research organization). Consult with stakeholders on study utility.</p> <p>2008: Study successfully pitched and funded.</p> <p>2009: Begin study.</p>

Endnotes

- ¹ Large portions of the introductory paragraphs are excerpted from “Do we count fathers in Minnesota? Searching for key indicators of the well-being of fathers and families”. Minnesota Fathers & Families Network, January 2007.
- ² Kyle D. Pruett, M.D. *Fatherhood: Why Father Care is as Essential as Mother Care for Your Child*. New York: Broadway Books, 2000: 40-54.
- ³ *A Call to Commitment: Fathers’ Involvement in Children’s Learning*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, 2000.
- ⁴ *The Effects of Father Involvement: A Summary of the Research Evidence*. Father Involvement Initiative Ontario Network, Fall 2002.
- ⁵ Frank S. Pittman, M.D. *Man Enough: Fathers, Sons and the Search for Masculinity*. 1994.
- ⁶ From the newsletter of the Father Involvement Initiative Ontario Network, Fall 2002.
- ⁷ Rob Okun. “Manhood in a Time of War,” *Voice Male*. Men’s Resource Center for Change, spring 2005.
- ⁸ Paula Roberts. *Child Support—an Important but Often Overlooked Issue for Low-Income Clients*. National Center on Poverty Law. November 13, 2002. Available at: http://www.clasp.org/publications/child_support.pdf See also, *Child Support Substantially Increases Economic Well-Being of Low and Moderate Income Families*, available at: http://www.clasp.org/publications/CS_Economic_FS.pdf
- ⁹ Minnesota Fathers & Families Network. “Do we count fathers in Minnesota? Searching for key indicators of the well-being of fathers and families”. St. Paul. January 2007. See pages 14-16 for definitions of fatherhood.
- ¹⁰ Minnesota State Court Administrator’s Office (2005) (cited in “Do we count fathers in Minnesota? Searching for key indicators of the well-being of fathers and families, page 22, Minnesota Fathers & Families Network, January 2007).
- ¹¹ Paul Offner. *Reducing Non-Marital Births*. Brookings Institute. Policy Brief No. 5, August 2001. Available at: <http://www.brook.edu/es/wrb/publications/pb/pb05.pdf>
- ¹² Venture, S., & Bachrach, C. (2000). Nonmarital childbearing in the United States, 1940-99. National Vital Statistics Report, 48(16). Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. (Cited in Mary Parke. *Who are Fragile Families and What Do We Know About Them?* CLASP Policy Brief, January 2004, Brief No. 4, available at: http://www.clasp.org/publications/Marriage_Brief4.pdf)
- ¹³ Hennepin County Human Services and Public Health Data 2006, (Cited in Mitchell Pearlstein, Ph.D., *Achievement Gaps and Vouchers: How Achievement Gaps are Bigger in Minnesota than Virtually Anyplace Else and Why Vouchers are Essential to Reducing Them*, Center of the American Experiment, January 2007, available at: http://www.americanexperiment.org/uploaded/files/achievement_gaps__vouchers_012507.pdf)
- ¹⁴ Elaine Sorenson and Ariel Halpern, *Child Support Enforcement Is Working Better Than We Think*, Washington, D.C., The Urban Institute, Assessing the New Federalism, Policy Brief A-31.
- ¹⁵ U.S. Census Bureau. (2005) (cited in “Do we count fathers in Minnesota? Searching for key indicators of the well-being of fathers and families, page 23, Minnesota Fathers & Families Network, January 2007).
- ¹⁶ Ronald B. Mincy and Hillard Pouncy, *Delivering Dads: Paternalism, Child Support Enforcement, and Fragile Families*, in *The New Paternalism*, edited by Lawrence M. Mead, 1997. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press.
- ¹⁷ See, for example, *Making Fathers Count: Assessing the Progress of Responsible Fatherhood Efforts*, Social Policy Action Network, Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2002.
- ¹⁸ The Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study is the first national study of unmarried parents, their relationships to each other, and the well-being of their children. It is a longitudinal study following a birth cohort of about 5,000 children and their parents, randomly selected from 75 hospitals in 20 cities in the U.S. with populations over 200,000. The Study was designed to primarily address four questions of great interest to researchers and policy makers: (1) What are the conditions and capabilities of unmarried parents, especially fathers?; (2) What is the nature of the relationships between unmarried parents?; (3) How do children born into these families fare?; and (4) How do policies and environmental conditions affect families and children? More information can be found at: <http://www.fragilefamilies.princeton.edu/about.asp>
- ¹⁹ Mary Parke. *Who are Fragile Families and What Do We Know About Them?* CLASP Policy Brief, January 2004, Brief No. 4, available at: http://www.clasp.org/publications/Marriage_Brief4.pdf
- ²⁰ Elaine Sorenson, Ronald Mincy, and Ariel Halpern. *Redirecting Welfare Policy Toward Building Strong Families*. Urban Institute 1999, available at: <http://www.urban.org/url.cfm?ID=310263>
- ²¹ Minnesota Center for Health Statistics, (cited in “Do we count fathers in Minnesota? Searching for key indicators of the well-being of fathers and families, page 19-20, Minnesota Fathers & Families Network, January 2007).
- ²² Human Rights Watch. “United States: Punishment and Prejudice: Racial Disparities in the War on Drugs,” May 2000.
- ²³ Jackson Katz and Sut Jhally. “Put the Blame Where it Belongs: On Men,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 25, 2000.

²⁴ Joe Kelly and Stacy L. Smith. *G Movies Give Boys a D: Portraying Males as Dominant, Disconnected, and Dangerous*. Dads and Daughters, May 2006.

²⁵ Rob Okun. "Manhood in a Time of War," *Voice Male*. Men's Resource Center for Change, spring 2005.

²⁶ Christopher T. Kilmartin. *The Masculine Self, Second Edition*. Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2000: 276.

²⁷ Joseph Pleck. "Over the Course of Sixteen Years: Paternal Involvement: Levels, Sources, and Consequences, in *The Role of the Father in Child Development*. New York: Wiley, 1997, as quoted in *Fatherneed*, Kyle D. Pruett, M.D., 2000: 1.

²⁸ Kyle D. Pruett, M.D. *Fatherneed: Why Father Care is as Essential as Mother Care for Your Child*. New York: Broadway Books, 2000: 19.

²⁸ Adapted from a presentation at the 2007 Minn. Fatherhood Summit by Adrienne Burgess, Fathers Direct, London, England.

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This document was created as a tool to be utilized by fatherhood advocates and practitioners to strengthen Minnesota's fathers and families. It is our hope that non-profit organizations, government agencies, faith-based groups, educational institutions, corporations, and other community entities will work toward the benchmarks either on your own or as part of a joint planning group. Let us know how you'd like to be involved. Contact the Minnesota Fathers & Families Network to get details about meetings of Arena Action Groups or to share your plans for advancing fatherhood in Minnesota. Contact MFFN by email at info@mnfathers.org or by phone at (651) 222-7432.

Thank you.