



National Center on Fathers and Families

STATE POLICY SERIES BRIEF

State Policy Series on Family Support and Father Involvement:

A Summary of Activities and Issues in Mid-Atlantic and New England States

*NCOFF Briefs provide summaries of literature reviews, research reports, and working papers published by NCOFF and of emerging practice- and policy-focused issues in the field. This Special Conference Brief describes the second meeting in the **State Policy Series on Family Support and Father Involvement**. The formal meetings are intended to build upon discussions and efforts in family support, responsible fatherhood, and child well-being, particularly recent initiatives and developments around welfare reform. Copies of NCOFF Briefs are available in paper form or online at www.ncoff.gse.upenn.edu.*

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Key Findings

- Access to adequate health care represents a major boost to a low-income father's general mental state and employment prospects.
- How state agencies and community-based organizations charged with managing employment training initiatives leverage resources and coordinate efforts with local industries, business leaders, and educational institutions is critical to moving individuals from welfare-to-work and reducing poverty.
- Service integration and coordination between state agencies remains a key component of a successful initiative targeting child well-being and father involvement.

Recommendations for Policy

- Explore and specify how policymakers can connect state and federal funding for addressing issues of ex-offenders.
- Restructure existing programs to include services to fathers.
- Expand the culture of child support enforcement beyond its often collections-oriented, reactionary, and punitive focus.

Recommendations for Practice

- Support programs that help ex-offenders develop positive support networks and become productive members of the community by encouraging relationship-building between prisons, jails, community-based organizations, and the local business community in order to build a referral process/network to enhance men's employment prospects.
- Involve community-based organizations early in child support enforcement efforts.
- Make all health services (e.g., hospitals, substance abuse centers, clinics, etc.) father friendly.

Recommendations for Research

- Clarify racial and cultural issues in data collection.
- Survey child support enforcement agencies throughout the country on their philosophy and flexibility regarding low-income men and arrearages.
- Define positive aspects of fatherhood in different communities and develop strategies to promote these values within the general public.
- Conduct research on fatherhood based on the “functioning” population as opposed to fathers in treatment, utilizing the resiliency model vs. deficit model .

State Policy Series on Family Support and Father Involvement:

A Summary of Activities and Issues in New England and Mid-Atlantic States¹

The *State Policy Series on Family Support and father Involvement* engages policymakers from executive and state government in a discussion with researchers and practitioners serving fathers and families. Each meeting of the State Policy Series brings together a regional *cluster* or *cohort* of states. Discussion topics include:

- Coordination of fatherhood activities between federal and state governments, between different non-governmental organizations, and between different agencies within the same level of government
- Relationship development (e.g., between policy makers in different state governments; between policymakers and practitioners; and among policymakers, practitioners, and researchers)
- Social welfare, fatherhood, child support, and family efficacy

This Brief describes the proceedings of the third meeting in the Series which was convened in Boston, Massachusetts on June 17-18, 1999. Focused efforts were made to include legislators, governors’ aides, and representatives from state corrections, education, labor/workforce development, and social/health and human services agencies. A cross-section of state policymakers, practitioners, researchers, and foundation officers participated, representing seven states: Delaware, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Rhode Island, and Maryland. The meeting was sponsored in collaboration with the Massachusetts Department of Revenue and the National Conference of State Legislatures.

Participants were asked to describe and summarize the following:

- Their state’s mission, goals, objectives, and expectations for responsible fatherhood, family support, and child well-being
- State processes, issues, and challenges

- The degree to which current and planned activities are coordinated with different state departments and agencies serving children and families
- Planning efforts for future activities
- Needs around planning coordination and delivery support to children, families, fathers, and communities

Context

Several developments in national policy issues contributed to setting the context for the meeting. In the months prior to the State Policy Series meeting with representatives from Mid-Atlantic and New England states, skepticism had arisen over Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) policies in relation to their ability to support families in moving from welfare-to-work. The increasing availability of data chronicling the ambiguous impact of welfare reform supported the skepticism. Under the *Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA)* of 1996, benefits had been denied to mothers who did not have adequate information about their children’s father or who had not complied with new regulations regarding paternity establishment and welfare receipt. Subsequently, these mothers were counted along with other former aid recipients who had found employment and contributed to the dramatic reduction in welfare caseloads. States’ emphasis on punitive measures for noncompliance caused many participants to question the immediate damage caused to low-income families as well as the long-term sustainability of such policies.

In addition, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) had set October 1, 1999 as the deadline for states to submit their proposals for surplus allocations.² Various interests were represented by those claiming a stake in the surplus, e.g., women’s rights groups, ex-offender programs, youth and children services, domestic violence groups, etc. The failure to meet the deadline would result in HHS assuming control of the unspent funds. These issues provided an ideal backdrop for the meeting.

¹ State-level activities have expanded since the date of this meeting. Reports presented here reflect efforts prior to June 17, 1999.

² President Clinton approved the final budget on November 29, 1999, nearly two months after fiscal year 2000 began. Congress will consider welfare surplus proposals in the upcoming session.

State Reports

Massachusetts:

State Reporters: Marilyn Ray Smith, Chief Legal Counsel and Associate Deputy Commissioner, Child Support Division, Department of Revenue, and Executive Director, Governor’s Commission on Responsible Fatherhood; and John Pearson, President, Big Brothers Association of Greater Boston

Six task forces comprised the Governor’s Advisory Commission on Responsible Fatherhood and Family Support: (1) Community Resources, (2) Health Resources, (3) Family Relationships, (4) Prevention, (5) Law Enforcement, and (6) Mentoring. Ray Smith described the goals of the newest of the groups: Health Resources and Law Enforcement. The Task Force on Law Enforcement and Task Force on Health Resources were recently added to the Commission. Ray added a goal of the latter task force is to make all health services from hospitals to substance abuse centers father friendly. Pearson emphasized the role and significance of mentoring in assisting individuals improve their lives, commenting that mentoring is not an initiative in and of itself but works to enhance overall outcomes as a program component.

Connecticut:

State Reporters: Patricia Wilson-Coker, Commissioner, Department of Social Services, and John Martinez, Representative, Connecticut State Assembly

At the time of the conference, Governor Rowland was considering Connecticut House Bill No. 6466: An Act Establishing a Fatherhood Initiative, a Fatherhood Council and a Research and Demonstration Program. The bill was signed days later. Commissioner Wilson-Coker listed the next steps following approval of the bill: convene members of the commission, hold public hearings on the purpose and direction of the commission, perform a comprehensive inventory and evaluation of state programs serving fathers/parents, and question the degree to which policies work against families and father involvement or encourage responsible fatherhood. In this effort, the state will request the services of researchers from local universities to design research studies and demonstration programs addressing such issues as the role of child and medical support, job placement and retention, increased earnings and improved visitation, family reunification principles, paternity establishment, the effects of parenting on fathers under 23, and incarcerated fathers. An interim report was to be published by January 2000 and a final report with recommendations will be published by 2001. In the interim, the state plans to produce a video promoting responsible fatherhood.

With funds from the state and federal government, the Department of Social Services administers the Health Insurance for Uninsured Kids and Youth (HUSKY) Plan. Through the various components of the HUSKY Plan, children in working families without adequate health coverage, children in need of specialized physical therapy or

behavioral counseling, and children in high-income families receive medical attention either free of charge or at a reduced rate. Commissioner Wilson-Coker noted that families only pay a maximum out of pocket cost of \$50. Rep. Martinez commended Commissioner Wilson-Coker for her contributions to the cause of coordinating state efforts around responsible fatherhood.

New Jersey:

State Reporter: Leonard Feldman, Director of Research, Office of Policy and Planning, Department of Human Services

Feldman reported that New Jersey is progressing in the evaluation of the WorkFirst Program, New Jersey’s welfare reform program. Grants for 1999-2000 from the New Jersey Children’s Trust Fund support young men/young fathers’ programs, parenting classes for teen mothers, home visiting for at-risk newborns, respite care, programs for families of substance abusers, and programs for children with special needs and their families. Trenton-based Operation Fatherhood assists unemployed noncustodial fathers by providing them with job training, employment assistance, and formal peer counseling. The Union Industrial Home administers the site which is one of seven national sites selected by the Parents’ Fair Share (PFS) Partners. Currently, efforts are underway to coordinate statewide efforts more effectively and develop a broad-based initiative around responsible fatherhood and family support.

State	Number of Recipients, 1993	Number of Recipients, 1998	% change, 1993 - 1998
CT	162,481	117,777	-28
DE	27,736	15,820	-43
ME	66,914	39,423	-41
MD	219,998	116,456	-47
MA	321,219	167,043	-48
NH	29,797	15,409	-48
NJ	345,370	196,947	-43
NY	1,215,526	886,746	-27
PA	610,531	360,009	-41
RI	62,187	54,150	-13
VT	28,301	19,643	-31

Source: The Effects of Welfare Policy and the Economic Expansion on Welfare Caseloads: An Update, Council of Economic Advisers, August 3, 1999. Table 1.

Delaware:

State Reporter: Dana Cropper, Family Planning Program Administrator, Division of Public Health, Department of Health and Social Services

Cropper stressed the need to include males in family planning and reproductive health initiatives and programs. Offered by the Division of Child Support Enforcement, the Strengthening Young Parent Families Initiative provides parenting and survival skills to young mothers and fathers. Noncustodial fathers with children who receive public aid benefit from the Our Parents Seek Work program, which focuses on finding employment for program participants. Similarly, Cropper described a state-sponsored teen pregnancy prevention program in Wilmington, Delaware that is based on an entrepreneurship training program. Cropper noted that the Division of Public Health partners with the Department of Corrections and Prison Health Services to ease recently released individuals' transition into society by connecting them with appropriate health care providers. Lastly, Delaware was the second state to have a federally-certified automated child support system and the second state to meet the additional automation requirements of the Family Support Act of 1988.

Rhode Island:

State Reporters: Jan Shedd, Chief, Adolescent & Young Adult Health Unit, Department of Health, and William Logan, Male Responsibility Project, South County Community Action

Shedd reported that momentum is beginning to build around issues concerning responsible fatherhood. A small, committed group of individuals has formed the Father Network under the aegis of Children & Family Services and is working to increase interaction with key policymakers around family support issues. The Male Responsibility Project aims to prevent teenage fatherhood through direct services from male counselors. Initially a day-care initiative, Starting Right has expanded to offer before and after-school programs for youth. Also, the state offers a program which provides a free vasectomy to volunteers. This service raised serious concerns from meeting participants which are discussed in the *Synthesis of the Core Issues* section of this Brief.

Maryland:

State Reporter: Mark Veny, Special Projects Officer, Child Support Enforcement, Department of Human Services

Outreach services to fathers in Maryland are coordinated through Maryland's local Departments of Social Services, community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, and Maryland's judicial system. Currently, Maryland's Department of Human Resources sponsors 17 program sites throughout the state that provide access and visitation, employment and parenting skills, and peer mediation services to fathers and their families. The state also sponsors public service announcements that promote paternity establishment and child support.

Table 2
STATE APPROPRIATIONS CHANGE FOR THE
TANF BLOCK GRANT, FY 1998

State Name	CT	DE	MA	MD	NJ	PA	RI
Percentage increase, welfare dollars available per family (millions)	8.2	19.4	37.9	33.5	15.6	27.4	12.2

Source: National Conference of State Legislatures, Dana Reichert, 10/31/97.

Pennsylvania:

State Reporter(s): Ivonne Bucher, Department of Health, and Derrick Span, Director, Project for Community Building Department of Community and Economic Development

At the time of this meeting, Governor Tom Ridge had planned a September 1999 launch for the Pennsylvania Fatherhood Initiative, a collaborative effort between the Departments of Public Welfare, Education, Health, Corrections, Community and Economic Development, Labor and Industry, and Board of Probation and Parole. Various components of the initiative will address male responsibility; parenting, peer mentoring, legal services, employment and life skills training for noncustodial fathers; and parenting programs in state prisons. Span reported that the state plans to reach and better serve fathers and families through a media campaign, Community Development Bank, Family Savings Account, and an entrepreneurial training program. Bucher noted that Governor Ridge has been on the forefront of promoting responsible fatherhood as a member of the National Governors' Association.

Synthesis of the Core Issues*Health Care*

Access to adequate health care represents a major boost to low-income fathers' employment prospects and overall well-being. As participants suggested, these fathers are often historically prone to poor health, do not have a primary physician, and may have a substance abuse problem. While TANF specifically prohibits funds from supporting medical services to aid recipients, health care-related items such as substance abuse treatment and dental care are permissible through TANF, given that the service is administered by non-medical personnel.³ However, when

³ Tweedie, J., Reichert, D., & Steisel, S. (199, September) *Challenges, resources, and flexibility using TANF block grant and state MOE dollars*. Denver, CO: National Conference of State Legislatures.

used separately from federal dollars, state Maintenance of Effort dollars, dispersed by the state, can fund medical services at the state’s discretion.⁴ Specific state efforts in health care include:

- Wisconsin serves as an example of a leading state in providing medical insurance to fathers who meet certain income-based eligibility requirements. Badger Care is an extension of Medicaid for working uninsured families that is based on the belief that if adults have access to health care, they are more likely to seek health care services for their children.
- The services offered through Healthcare for Uninsured Kids and Youth (HUSKY), according to the Children’s Defense Fund, place Connecticut within the top four states for providing children’s health insurance service.⁵ When combined, program components assist children in low- and higher income families as well as children with physical and/or behavioral conditions that require special attention.
- Participants discussed issues around volunteer vasectomy and tubal ligation programs offered through state health agencies. In particular, Edith Wolff, Center for Native American and Alaskan Indian Health, offered the perspective that such programs are perceived as genocide within Native American communities where: (1) distrust of federal authority exists due to historical precedents and (2) where population size determines the amount of resources allocated from the federal government. Wolff pressed for increased sensitivity in health initiatives that serve communities with a distrust of formal systems, e.g., the use of the term “family planning” as opposed to “birth control.”

Workforce Development/Employment Training

In the inner city, a disparity exists between unemployed residents and businesses lacking a pool of skilled workers. Also, the term “spatial mismatch” has been coined to describe the contrast between extreme joblessness in urban areas and the availability of jobs in suburban areas. How state agencies and community-based organizations charged with managing employment training initiatives leverage their resources and coordinate their efforts with local industries, business leaders, and educational institutions is critical to moving individuals from welfare-to-work and reducing poverty. One approach, sectoral employment initiatives, targets community-specific industries and trades seeking to increase labor-force participation among low-income Americans by creating career opportunities and changing the dynamics of the local labor market.⁶ Another effort, spearheaded by the Initiative for a Competitive Inner City, seeks to broaden discussion on urban development beyond a focus on reducing poverty to creating income and wealth.

Indiana*	Michigan
Minnesota*	Nevada
Washington*	New York
Florida*	North Dakota
Arizona	Oklahoma
California	Pennsylvania
Connecticut	Rhode Island
Delaware	South Carolina
Hawaii	South Dakota
Illinois	Tennessee
Iowa	Utah
Louisiana	West Virginia
Massachusetts	Wyoming
* Indicates a leader in its category	
Source: HHS Fact Sheet– The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, December 4, 1999.	

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⁴ Tweedie, J., Reichert, D., & Steisel, S. (199, September) *Challenges, resources, and flexibility using TANF block grant and state MOE dollars*. Denver, CO: National Conference of State Legislatures.

⁵ The Children’s Defense Fund. (1998, May). *CHIP checkup: A Healthy Start for children*. A mid-term report on the State Children’s Health Insurance Program. Washington, DC: Author.

⁶ For more information on sectoral employment initiatives, refer to *Jobs and the Urban Poor: Publicly Initiated Sectoral Strategies and Jobs and the Urban Poor: Privately Initiated Sectoral*

Relevant Websites

Center on Budget on Policy Priorities
<http://www.cbpp.org>

Charles S. Mott Foundation
<http://www.mott.org>

Healthcare for Uninsured Kids and Youth (Connecticut)
<http://www.huskyhealth.com/>

Map & Track: State initiatives to encourage responsible fatherhood.
<http://cpmcnet.columbia.edu/dept/nccp/MT99text.html>

Dads make a difference: Action for responsible fatherhood. Boston:
<http://www.state.ma.us/cse/programs/dmd/guide.htm>

National Conference of State Legislatures
<http://www.ncsl.org>

The Osborne Association
<http://www.osborneny.org/>

Pennsylvania's Fatherhood Initiative
<http://www.state.pa.us/fatherhood.html>

STRIVE Boston Employment Services, Inc.
<http://www.strivecentral.com/sites/national/boston.htm>

The Vera Institute
<http://www.vera.org>

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