

**2004 REPORT ON THE ILLINOIS  
COUNCIL ON RESPONSIBLE  
FATHERHOOD**

**FROM THE OFFICE OF THE CHAIRMAN  
JEFFERY M. LEVING**

*December 28, 2004*

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Since my appointment as chairman to the Illinois Council on Responsible Fatherhood, I have begun laying the groundwork for an entity committed to a clear and measurable goal: to significantly increase the proportion of children growing up with an involved and responsible father in the state of Illinois. By aggressively generating public awareness of the Council and its mission, and by establishing a network of legislators, educators, community leaders and decision-makers throughout the state and around the nation committed to contributing their resources, we have already made great progress toward this most important objective.

The deterioration of responsible fatherhood over the last half-century has had a devastating effect on American families. Countless studies and mounting anecdotal evidence continues to demonstrate how children who grow up in father absent homes are much more likely to be poor, to use drugs, to experience educational, emotional and behavioral problems, to be victims of child abuse, and to engage in criminal behavior. Because of this great need, the responsible fatherhood movement has become a nationwide call-to-action for all parents and concerned citizens seeking to improve the welfare of the next generation of American children. The governor's leadership on this issue and his continued support of the Council and its mission is essential to the success of the movement at both a statewide and national level. The Illinois Council on Responsible Fatherhood is one of the first government programs of its kind and will serve as a model for other states across the country seeking to restore responsible fatherhood as a societal norm.

## **OUR MISSION**

The mission of the Illinois Council on Responsible Fatherhood is to generate awareness of the importance of the participation of both parents in the lives of their children and to promote a social policy and practice that values the contribution each parent brings to the family.

There are four specific objectives of the Council:

- 1) Increase the awareness of problems created when a child grows up without the presence of a responsible father;
- 2) Identify obstacles that impede or prevent the involvement of responsible fathers in the lives of their children;
- 3) Identify strategies to overcome these obstacles and encourage responsible fatherhood; and
- 4) Facilitate the transition to policies, perceptions and practices that will promote the contributions of responsible fathers

## **2004 ACTIONS**

### *Generating Public Awareness*

As chairman of the Illinois Council on Responsible Fatherhood, I have championed the Council and its mission through my own public outreach. Some forums in which I have promoted the Council include:

- Radio: Interviews on radio shows, including Chicago talk radio and WGCI-FM;
- TV: As a host of “Chicago Counterpoint,” a popular public affairs show on CAN-TV in Chicago, and through an interview on a major Rockford television station; and
- Print: As a featured columnist in a prominent community newspaper in Chicago and several submitted Op-Ed pieces to top dailies throughout the state

Generating public awareness supporting responsible fatherhood is an essential part of the Council’s objective in bringing these issues to the forefront as well as educating Illinois residents concerning the problems resulting from father absence. Fathers, mothers, educators and community leaders all need to understand the importance of promoting responsible fatherhood before progress can be made.

### *The Illinois Council on Responsible Fatherhood Luncheon*

The first major council event, held on June 18, 2004, brought together some of the state’s top legislators, community leaders and fatherhood groups in Illinois to discuss integrating resources on behalf on the Council. (A full list of invited guests is attached to this report). This event was perhaps the most significant gathering of stakeholders in the Illinois fatherhood movement ever assembled. The result of which was to generate a tangible sense of momentum within this community and securing support from these organizations for the Council and its mission.

### *Building Relationships with Father-Friendly Organizations*

Building on the momentum established at the luncheon, I have continued to aggressively reach out to father-friendly organizations to identify issues facing each constituency and strategies that could be employed to implement change. These efforts have helped create a network of organizations and potential resources available to the Council, and have helped form objectives for 2005 and beyond.

### *Dialogue with Legislators*

Keeping up regular contact with key lawmakers engaged in fatherhood issues in Illinois has helped the Council build a foundation for long-term success. Major proponents of the Responsible Fatherhood statute, especially Sen. Kimberly Lightford and Rep. Paul Froelich, have been involved in the process thus far and held significant roles at the Council’s luncheon in June. Moreover, I believe we have built an alliance between the Council and Congressman Danny Davis. Through my good relationship with the

congressman and the help of Council commissioner Rev. Walter Jones – a member of the congressman’s legislative task force – I believe we have secured Rep. Davis’ continued support for the Council’s mission. This relationship will be helpful in generating grass-roots public awareness and in pursuing reform.

## **2005 EXPECTED OUTCOMES**

### *Build the Council*

Although significant progress has already been made, it is essential that we are able to fill the remaining spots on the Council's Board of Commissioners in order to properly and effectively execute the objectives of the Illinois Council on Responsible Fatherhood. Not only will this facilitate our goals organizationally, but will help us continue to build a network of individuals committed to promoting responsible fatherhood in Illinois. Along these lines, I would recommend appointing commissioners from areas across the state, in order to help ensure we are meeting the needs of all Illinoisans.

### *Convene Regional Meetings*

In order to continue to build our network and identify the needs of communities throughout the state, the Council intends to convene meetings in three geographic regions: Chicago, Central Illinois/Springfield and Southern Illinois/Carbondale. These meetings will be open to the public and target educators and leaders of local family/children-focused organizations. These meetings will also give us the ability to generate grassroots community awareness and opportunities to reach out to the media in each of these geographic locations.

### *Statewide Symposium on Responsible Fatherhood*

At this event, with a target date of June, 2005 to coincide with Father's Day, I intend to present a report summarizing the information gathered at the regional meetings and lay out programming and policy recommendations for the Illinois Council on Responsible Fatherhood based on these think tanks. It will also be an opportunity to recognize key partners and leaders in the responsible fatherhood movement. Moreover, this symposium will be a significant media event that I expect will provide incredible exposure for the Council and its mission. Leveraging the progressive and innovative nature of the Council, I expect to receive coverage from national as well as local media to promote responsible fatherhood.

### **Presented by:**

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**Jeffery M. Leving, Chair**  
**Illinois Council on Responsible Fatherhood**

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## THE ILLINOIS COUNCIL ON RESPONSIBLE FATHERHOOD LUNCHEON

### Invited guests:

Governor Rod Blagojevich	Rev. Dr. Scott Clark, National Center for Violence Interruption
Congressman Danny K. Davis	Mr. William W. Holland, Special Assistant to the Secretary
Congressman Jesse Jackson, Jr.	Illinois Department of Human Services
Congressman Bobby Rush	Mr. Scott McFarland, Legal Assistance Foundation of Chicago
Congressman Luis V. Guitierrez	Mr. Barry Maram, Illinois Department of Public Aid
Congressman William O. Lipinski	Representative Kevin Joyce
Congressman Rahm Emmanuel	Representative Charles G. Morrow
Senator Emil Jones, Jr.	Representative Ralph C. Capparelli
Senator Miguel A. del Valle	Mr. Useni Perkins, Chicago State University
Senator Ricky Hendon	Salim Al Nurridin, Healthcare Consortium of Illinois
Senator Kimberly Lightford	Dr. Kirk E. Harris, Family Support America
Rev. Senator James T. Meeks	Representative William Delgado
Senator Antonio "Tony" Munoz	U.S. Senator Richard J. Durbin
Senator Barack Obama	David Hirsch, Illinois Fatherhood Initiative
Senator Steven Rauschenberger	Representative Calvin L. Giles
Senator Martin A. Sandoval	Representative Michael J. Madigan
Lieutenant Governor Patrick Quinn	Representative Arthur Turner
Jesse White, Secretary of State	Representative Frank Aguilar
Mr. Byron Zydiman, Employment and Training Administration, U.S. Department of Labor	Senator Don Harmon
Atty. Patrick Murphy, Office of the Public Guardian	Alderman Bernard Stone
Dr. Michael Battle, Abraham Lincoln Center	Alderman Michael Chandler
Mr. Byran Samuels, DCFS Director	Alderman Walter Burnett, Jr.
Mr. Donald N. Synder, Jr., Director, Illinois Department of Corrections	Alderman Ed Smith
Mayor Richard Daley	Alderman Richard Mell
Alderman Thomas Allen	Alderman Isaac Carothers
Alderman Patrick O'Connor	