

ILLINOIS COUNCIL ON RESPONSIBLE FATHERHOOD

Phone: (312) 296-8656 www.responsiblefatherhood.illinois.gov

THE ILLINOIS COUNCIL ON RESPONSIBLE FATHERHOOD

2010 ANNUAL REPORT

FROM THE OFFICE OF THE CHAIRMAN

JEFFERY M. LEVING

December 31, 2010

2010 Council on Responsible Fatherhood Annual Report

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Jeffery M. Leving, Chairman

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The deterioration of responsible fatherhood over the last half-century has had a devastating effect on American families and 24 million children live absent their biological dads in America. In Illinois, it is estimated that 1.1 million children grow up without their fathers present at home. Countless study findings 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. This information indicates that these most challenging social problems are symptoms of father absence.

We must never forget children need their dads, and when they're absent, something is lost. There is also mounting evidence of the great benefits of appropriate and effective male "father figures/mentors" in the lives of children whose biological fathers are not available to them for various reasons. We have a responsibility to help children who have been born into harsh circumstances and fractured families. To confront this great social challenge in Illinois, the Council On Responsible Fatherhood (the "Council") has continued working towards one clear and measurable goal: to significantly increase the proportion of children growing up with an involved and responsible father and/or responsible "father figure/mentor" in the state of Illinois.

The following is a summary of what the Council has accomplished in 2010:

Convened Statewide Symposium – On June 5, 2010, the Council convened a statewide symposium in collaboration with Congressman Danny K. Davis and other partner organizations with about 500 attendees. The event was held at Malcolm X College in Chicago. The symposium provided education on real life issues that men face such as fathers' rights, child support, relationships, public policy, expunging records, entrepreneurship, conflict resolution, foreclosure, education, health and employment opportunities and the importance of the community in advocating for and supporting male adult involvement in and assistance to children/adolescents who benefit from male adult presence and involvement in youths' lives.

Conducted Strategic Planning Session – Council members met two times during 2010 to make certain that the key areas of focus were aligned with the role and mission of the Council. As a result of the strategic planning process, the Council developed a key area analysis chart indicating relevancy of the key focus areas to the mission/goals. The second strategic planning meeting resulted in identifying ICRF partners, developing action steps, identifying person(s) responsible and establishing time frames to be implemented in order to meet the key focus areas.

The key focus areas identified as issues facing fathers today are:

1. Health and Wellness
2. Funds and Resources
3. Employment
4. Public Policies
5. Legal Obstacles

6. Parenting/Parent Education

Policy Report – Council reviewed and gave consideration to support four pieces of legislation regarding civil paternity fraud, criminal paternity fraud, interest on child support and child support accounting. Following further explanations of the bills, the Council acted not to support the bills as drafted with support from Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS). The Council continues to give attention to needed reforms and legislation during its legislative committee's monthly reports to ensure that state programs' procedures and government policies are reviewed in order to reduce the negative outcomes experienced by children affected by numerous custody issues.

Fatherhood Services Committee – This committee took on the task of seeking funds for the Council during 2010. The Council, with support from IDHS, explored potential grant funds that were relevant to the mission and/or key focus areas of the strategic plan. Efforts were put forth drafting a grant proposal. The Council plans to clarify its process regarding submitting proposals and continue to make requests for funds to support the work of the Council.

Fatherhood Resources

A summary resource guide was printed and copies made available by the Illinois Department of Human Services. A copy of this resource guide can be found on the website. A list of fatherhood resources is available on the Council's website at www.responsiblefatherhood.illinois.gov

The Council investigated various Fatherhood Curriculums and circulated information about some of the available materials. This information gave Council members an opportunity to learn what is being done to provide fatherhood and parent education in many communities. Council members will receive further information which they can utilize and share in their communities.

Generated Public Awareness – One of the primary functions of the Council, as mandated in the Responsible Fatherhood Act, is to generate public awareness of the impact of father absence on children and to assess the needs of fathers in a particular geographic area. The annual symposium, a success from a public policy standpoint, generated significant public relations. The Council received proclamations and recognitions from the President and the Governor.

With support from the Illinois Department of Human Services, the Council's website has an official state government URL. Enhancing public awareness is accomplished via the Council's web site at www.responsiblefatherhood.illinois.gov.

Several Council members attended Region V Fatherhood meetings both in March and September 2010. At the September meeting, discussions occurred regarding a Fatherhood Conference being held in Illinois. The Council hopes to play a significant role in the planning of this conference.

The Council was represented on August 31, 2010 and November 30, 2010 Region V, Administration for Children and Families Fatherhood Collaboration Network Call. This is an outreach call for fatherhood providers and advocates in the six states of Region V.

2011 EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Policy Report

The Council plans to continue implementing activities that address issues identified during the Council's strategic planning meeting. The key areas of focus include:

1. Health and Wellness
2. Funds and Resources
3. Employment
4. Public Policies
5. Legal Obstacles
6. Parenting/Parent Education

The Council intends to conduct another planning meeting in January 2011 to review and revise the strategic plan action steps and expected outcomes.

The council plans to work with state agencies and legislators to enact legislative and policy reforms to build awareness to these issues, institute measures to make changes and identify more specific strategies to address these concerns. The Council will continue to pursue funds for collaborative program initiatives that will assist with technical assistance and training at state agencies and enhance public awareness of rules and regulations that impact fathers' rights.

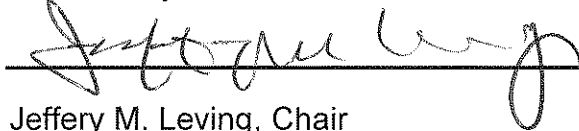
Convene a Statewide Symposium on Responsible Fatherhood

Building on the success of last year's event, the Council will convene another statewide symposium that is to focus on educating fathers, families, practitioners, and community leaders about fatherhood issues and provide them the practical resources needed to promote responsible fatherhood in their homes and in their communities.

Seek Funding

Continue to seek funding and identify person(s) to pursue grant opportunities in order for the Council to enhance its efforts in promoting positive fatherhood involvement in the lives of children throughout Illinois.

Presented by:



Jeffery M. Leving, Chair
Illinois Council on Responsible Fatherhood

Contact: 401 S. Clinton, 3rd Floor
Chicago, IL 60607

19 S. LaSalle Street, Suite 450
Chicago, IL 60603
312.296.8656 (personal line)

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STRATEGIC OVERVIEW APPENDIX A

Council Mission Statement

The mission of the Illinois Council on Responsible Fatherhood is to significantly increase the number of children in Illinois that grow up with a responsible father in their lives. We seek to accomplish this through:

- Raising public awareness of the impact of father absence on children;
- Assisting state agencies and other service providers in securing the resources they need to promote responsible fatherhood;
- Reforming perceptions within state agencies and other service providers regarding the role of fathers as parents; and
- Advocating for programs, policies and legislation that will encourage the positive involvement of fathers.

Goals

- To promote father-friendly policies statewide in state and community agencies, faith-based organizations and institutions;
- To provide assistance and resources to local fatherhood groups;
- To build partnerships with state agencies fatherhood program staff and with community and faith-based organizations; and
- To enhance public awareness of the important role of biological fathers and other father figures in the children's development and learning.

Council Strategic Overview

We will raise public awareness of the impact of father absence on children by:

- Holding regional meetings and sharing statistics;
- Convening a symposium and conducting sessions on the impact of absent Fathers; and
- Preparing a resource guide that will include pertinent resources.

We will assist state agencies and other service providers in securing the resources they need to promote responsible fatherhood by:

- Updating services state agencies to offer fathers information;
- Developing and disseminating a resource guide listing available to service-providers throughout the state; and
- Drafting and supporting legislation that support father engagement.

We will reform perceptions among state agencies and other service providers regarding the role of fathers as parents by:

- Gathering input from citizens throughout the state and share with stakeholders; and
- Convening a symposium to share lessons learned.
- We will advocate for programs, policies and legislation that will encourage the positive involvement of fathers by:
 - a) Conducting assessment or researching of current programs, policies, legislations that hinder father engagement; and
 - b) Holding a symposium to gather information and evaluate current programs and policies.

Sub-Committees (comprised of council members)

Symposium Sub-Committee Responsibilities:

- Collaborating with state agencies to plan symposium; and
- Help plan regional meetings.
- Resource Guide Sub-Committee Responsibilities:
 - Collaborate with state agencies to revise “Non-Custodial Parent Service Directory” into a resource guide; and
 - Compile existing pertinent information on the state of fatherhood in Illinois for a Resource Guide.
- Fatherhood Services Committee and Sub-Committee Responsibilities:
 - Maintain up-to-date information regarding fatherhood services; and
 - Assist with seeking funds to enable the Council to better fulfill its role and function.
- Intergovernmental Affairs Sub-Committee Responsibilities:
 - Interact with state agencies to keep abreast on new policies and programs; and
 - Make recommendations for changes in agency policies and programs.
- Legislative Sub-Committee Responsibilities:
 - Research legislative initiatives that could serve fathers; and
 - Make recommendations for the General Assembly.

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APPENDIX B FATHERHOOD SYMPOSIUM REPORT

Overview

Mission:

To educate and empower fathers to be more responsible parents and to provide them with resources to make positive changes in their lives.

The 2010 Fatherhood Symposium accomplished this through:

- Public dialogue with selected panelists regarding policies and programs relevant to fathers;
- Informative skill-building workshops; and
- Resource Fair.

The focus of the 2010 event was reforming state policies and programs to encourage fathers to be more involved in the lives of their children.

Theme:

“Fathers Who Care Expo for Today’s Man”

Location:

Malcolm X College in Chicago, Illinois

Who Was There:

- Approximately 500 people attended. Many in attendance were indigent or lower income fathers; and
- This year’s symposium had an increase in the number of social service agencies represented.