

Center for Family Policy and Practice

2007 Annual Report



**Center for Family Policy and Practice
Fiscal Year 2007 Annual Report**

Mission

The mission of the Center for Family Policy and Practice (CFFPP) is to help create a society in which low-income parents - mothers as well as fathers - are in a position to support their children emotionally, financially, and physically. CFFPP seeks to address the unique barriers affecting low-income fathers, including negative public perceptions. Through the provision of technical assistance, policy research, and public education, CFFPP will work to support low-income fathers and their families and develop public awareness of their needs. Fundamental to this mission are the following principles:

- In order to preserve the well being of children, public policy must preserve the well being of children's parents and caretakers. However, when the needs of a child and the needs of parents conflict, those of the child must prevail.
- Public policy must actively and effectively promote the economic viability of families.
- Public policy must support individuals' efforts to create families of their own choosing.
- Low-income parents need accurate and comprehensive legal information and support to successfully negotiate the social service system.
- Public policy must be created and executed in a manner that ensures that individual family members feel secure and are safe from physical harm.

In summary, CFFPP seeks to foster public policies at every level that promote and contribute to the well being of children, parents, and families.

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Staff

Jacquelyn Boggess, Co-Director
Rebecca May, Senior Policy Analyst
Louisa Medaris, Manager of Operations
David Pate, Co-Director
Marguerite Roulet, Director of Programs

Select Activities
July 2006 – June 2007

- Produced guidebook on violence prevention collaboration between fatherhood practitioners and advocates against domestic violence, entitled: Collaboration and Partnership: Fatherhood Practitioners and Advocates Against Domestic Violence Working Together to Serve Women, Men, and Families (2007)
- Participated in the 21st Century Foundation's roundtable discussion and conference addressing the current status of Black men and boys in America. Appointed to the Steering Committee for the initiative (two-year term).
- Participated in the annual Fatherhood Conference in Milwaukee, Wisconsin (October 2006) and the Policy Forum on Strengthening Families (October 2006)
- Participated in the Annie E. Casey initiative, Women in Fatherhood, to explore the role of women within the fatherhood movement and fatherhood programming, including attendance at two seminars, in Baltimore, Maryland (July 2006) and New Orleans, Louisiana (March 2007)
- Participated in numerous national- and state-level domestic violence prevention efforts, including the following: the Decade for Change Summit in Dallas, Texas (August 2006) and Washington, DC (August 2006) the Domestic Violence Hotline Summit in Dallas, Texas (November 2006), the annual conference of the Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community in Los Angeles, California (March 2007), a conference sponsored by Jane Doe, Inc. in Boston, Massachusetts (June 2007), and the Colorado Coalition Against Domestic Violence conference in Denver, Colorado (June 2007). Many of these conferences and summits explored the intersection of fatherhood and domestic violence.
- Invited to be an initial partner, and host of a series of discussions, of the *Independent Lens* film *HIP-HOP: Beyond Beats and Rhymes* (Byron Hurt), which explores issues of gender, race, poverty and violence in the context of hip-hop and rap music. In addition, we were selected as one of the Local Partners in a post broadcast national outreach campaign by *Firelight Media* and *God Bless the Child Productions*. CFFPP hosted small-scale screenings and discussions of the film aimed at developing awareness and raising consciousness about these issues.
- Recognized by the *Ford Foundation* for our work in the area of financial security to low-income families. The Center's work on child support debt incurred by low-income families was part of an "In the spotlight" feature on the foundations website.
- Continued to participate in a monthly radio program on "The Morning Buzz," WORT, 89.9FM, community radio station in Madison, Wisconsin.
- Continued our work to address issues of financial instability and poverty among low-income noncustodial parents contending with child support issues. This effort included the revision and updating of our publication Financial Literacy Issues and Information for Noncustodial Parents (2006), and an Annie E. Casey-sponsored meeting with state child support agency representatives on the development of state-level arrears management programs for low-income noncustodial parents (June 2007)
- Served on the Board of Directors for the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families, the YWCA of Madison, Wisconsin, and Asha Family Services (Milwaukee, Wisconsin)
- Appointed for a one-year term to the Nonprofit Advisory Board of the Wisconsin State Journal newspaper, to provide guidance to news staff on issues pertaining to grassroots concerns in

Madison, Wisconsin and the state of Wisconsin

Highlighted Project – Fatherhood and Domestic Violence

The Center for Family Policy and Practice is a policy organization that focuses on the impact of national and state welfare, fatherhood, and child support and related policy on parents and their children who navigate the family law and social welfare systems without level representation. The Center was created, in part, to provide public education and information as to the concerns of these individuals and families. Because of the limited advocacy and policy analysis with regard to these issues from the perspectives of very low-income and unemployed men of color, our mission has been to concentrate on that perspective.

Since its founding in 1995, the Center has been reaching out to women's organizations and to advocates for battered women. The intent was to openly discuss the potential impact of increased father involvement on women and children in general, and on battered women in particular. The Center entered this discussion, not with the intention of furthering the fathers' rights agenda or of encouraging marriage or family formation, but to provide education and information about the need for social services for men and to provide a bridge between fatherhood groups and women's advocates. Over the past decade, we have sponsored numerous local-, state-, and national-level discussions, meetings, conferences, and cross-trainings intended to bring together advocates from both fields to develop mutually supported recommendations for service and policy improvements to support families.

From 2004-2006, the Center received funding from the federal Department of Justice's Office on Violence Against Women, to provide training to their grantee organizations on the intersection of fatherhood and domestic violence. The project entailed many meetings and discussions, three of which were central to the final product: a cross-training discussion with fatherhood and domestic violence program providers in San Francisco, California in May 2005, a national institute on

violence prevention with fatherhood and domestic violence program providers in San Antonio, Texas in October 2005, and a national technical assistance seminar on domestic violence and fatherhood in Chicago, Illinois in June 2006. The result of these discussions and trainings is our publication Collaboration and Partnership: Fatherhood Practitioners and Advocates Against Domestic Violence Working Together to Serve Women, Men, and Families – A Guidebook (Jacquelyn Boggess, Rebecca May, Marguerite Roulet, June 2007). The guidebook is intended as a tool to enhance collaborative work between advocates for battered women and advocates for low-income fathers around the areas of social service needs and provision and violence prevention. While it is designed to accommodate a range of collaborations that include other partners as well, it specifically focuses on collaboration between domestic violence advocates and fatherhood programs as central partners.

The guide is divided into sections that roughly follow a chronological order. The first section, "Readiness Factors," is intended to be completed by organizations before they begin work with a partnering organization. It allows each organization to determine whether or not there is genuine interest in, or the capacity to undertake, a community collaboration of the type discussed. Once an organization decides to embark on such a collaborative effort, the subsequent sections provide guidance through the process of deciding on partner agencies and defining the goals, objectives, and activities of the collaboration. The final section, "DVD and Discussion," can be used by organizations either individually as a part of completing the "Readiness Factors" or by partnering organizations together once collaborative work begins, to explore many of the issues in the context of viewing and discussing a short film. The film provides a brief depiction of, and interviews with members of a family who are contending with issues related to poverty, domestic violence, child support debt, employment, racial discrimination, and the impact of incarceration in the context of their efforts to raise their children and establish social and economic stability in their lives.



Guidebook Chapters

Acknowledgments

Introduction

How to Use This Guidebook
Fatherhood Programs
Advocacy Against Domestic Violence
Working Together
A Note About Fathers' Rights Organizations
Lessons Learned
Points to Bear in Mind

Readiness Factors: Before You Start a Collaboration

Worksheet A: Does a Collaboration Fit Your Mission and Goals?
Worksheet B: Working Toward Mutual Trust
Worksheet C: Supporting and Creating Domestic Violence Education Programs and Services in Fatherhood Programs

Finding a Partner

Guiding Principles

Worksheet D: Establishing and amending the Guiding Principles

Laying the Groundwork

Worksheet E: Collaboration Objectives and Outcome Measures
Worksheet F: Potential Services
Worksheet G: Memorandum of Understanding

Language and Definitions

Safety

Worksheet H: Developing a Common Understanding of Safety

Ongoing Communication and Critical Analysis

Worksheet I: Developing a Community Frame of Reference

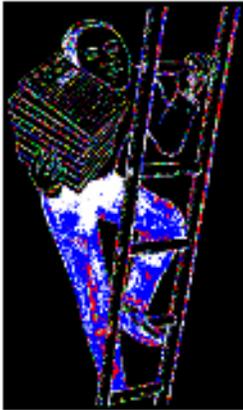
DVD and Discussion

Resources

Highlighted Project – Financial Literacy and Noncustodial Parents

The Center has continued its work on financial literacy issues as these pertain to low-income noncustodial parents. We believe that existing financial literacy models are not able to accommodate the specific needs of low-income noncustodial parents who are struggling with child support debt. These individuals are frequently unable to take advantage of federal assistance programs, are subject to liens that do not permit them to develop assets, contend with mounting debt due to high interest rates on child support arrears, and can face incarceration for failure to meet existing child support debts and payment obligations. While programs can effectively teach financial management skills to individuals, it can still be close to impossible for these individuals to manage their debts and avoid incarceration.

While we are in the process of finalizing several papers that address aspects of this issue (e.g., the child support system as it pertains to low-income noncustodial parents and its intersection with financial literacy, models for addressing child support debt reduction), we have also updated our financial literacy curriculum/ primer that addresses concerns and needs of low-income noncustodial parents (particularly those who have child support debt). The publication, entitled Financial Literacy Issues and Information for Noncustodial Parents (Scott Sussman, Rebecca May, with assistance from Jodi Owens, 2006) can be useful to both parents and financial literacy service providers, as it lays out and explains some of the central financial conundrums of low-income noncustodial parents and relates these to financial literacy services.



Commonly Misunderstood Child Support Facts
Reasons to Go to Your Child Support Hearing
What to Do If You Can't Afford a Lawyer
Information You Will Need for a Child Support Hearing
The Role of the Child Support Attorney
Issues Related to the Custodial Parent
Child Support Modifications and Employment
The Consequences of Not Paying Child Support
Alternative Payment Plans
Then Things You Should Know About the Child Support System
Records Noncustodial Parents Should Keep
Information for Incarcerated Noncustodial Parents

Resources

Glossary

Financial Literacy Issues and Information *Chapters:*

Introduction

Unit 1: Taxes

Introduction/Background
Filing a Tax Return
Benefits of Filing Tax Returns
Commercial Tax Preparers and Problems Associated with Refund Anticipation Loans
Free alternatives to Commercial Tax Preparation Services
Tax Credits for Low-Income Parents
A. The Earned Income Tax Credit
B. The Homestead Credit
Homestead Credit Information Form
Tax Intercept for Child Support Debt

Unit 2: Credit Reports

Introduction/Background
Importance of Credit Reports and Scores
What is a Credit Report?
What is a Credit Score?
Getting a Copy of Your Credit Report
Correcting Errors on Your Credit Report
Improving Your Credit Score

Unit 3: Banking

Introduction/Background
Some Facts About the Banking System
Reasons to Consider Using Banking Services
Checking Accounts
Child Support Debt and Banking Services
Stored Value Cards
Banking Services and Fees

Unit 4: Child Support

Introduction/Background

FY 2007 Funders

Annie. E. Casey Foundation
Charles Stewart Mott Foundation
Community Shares of Wisconsin
Firelight Media
Ford Foundation
National Resource Center on Domestic
Violence (a project of the Pennsylvania
Coalition Against Domestic Violence)
Office on Violence Against Women
(Department of Justice)

A copy of the 2007 annual financial audit
(prepared by Wegner LLP) is available upon
request.

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