

Center for Family Policy and Practice

2008 Annual Report



Center for Family Policy and Practice
Fiscal Year 2008 Annual Report

Founded in 1995 as a policy arm of the *Strengthening Fragile Families Initiative*, the Center focuses on the impact that national and state welfare, fatherhood, and child support and related policy has 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. CFFPP seeks to foster public policies at every level that promote and contribute to the well being of children, parents, and families.

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.

Staff

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

Board of Directors

The Center said a fond good-bye to long-time board members John Rich, Beth Richie, Tanvir Mangat, and Esta Soler, several of whom have been engaged with CFFPP since its founding. We gratefully acknowledge their tremendous service to CFFPP over the years and recognize their important leadership role not only in regard to the Center but in the effort to support low-income children and families in the US. We look forward to continued close working relationships with all and are thankful that they have agreed to continue to work with CFFPP in future. At the same time we are excited to welcome new board members Daniel Ash, Tonya Brito, Floyd Rose, Alvin Starks, Bobby Verdugo, and returning member Oliver Williams. They bring vast expertise and experience to CFFPP along with a deep commitment to developing a public policy agenda that enhances the situations of low-income parents and their children. We would also like to recognize the on-going contributions of our continuing board members Adrienne Brooks, Carole Doeppers, Earl Johnson, and Margaret Stapleton. We thank all board members, past and present, for their generous support of the Center's work.

- Daniel Ash, Chicago Public Radio (Treasurer)
- Tonya Brito, University of Wisconsin School of Law
- Adrienne Brooks, United Way of Metropolitan Chicago
- Carole Doeppers, Private Consultant (Secretary)
- Earl Johnson, The California Endowment (Vice President)
- Floyd Rose, Wisconsin Supplier Development Council, Inc.
- Margaret Stapleton, Sargeant Shriver National Center on Poverty Law
- Gerald Smith, IBM Corporation (President)
- Alvin Starks, Arcus Foundation
- Bobby Verdugo, Bienvenidos Children's Center
- Oliver Williams, National Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community

Select Center Activities

July 2007 – June 2008

- Continuing member of the steering committee of the 21st Century Foundation's roundtable discussion and conference addressing the current status of black men and boys in America. In Spring 2008, presented child support training workshop to steering committee.
- Continued participation in the national Annie E. Casey Foundation initiative *Women in Fatherhood*, to address the role of women within the fatherhood movement and fatherhood programming, including attendance at several seminars in Baltimore, Maryland.
- Participated in numerous national- and state-level efforts to address fatherhood, domestic violence, and the social service and policy advocacy needs of low-income families, including the following: "The First Nine Months of Fatherhood: Paternal Contributions to Maternal and Child Health Outcomes" of the Office of the Attorney General of Texas; the annual Professional Development Academy of the Colorado Works Program; the annual conference of the National Black Child Development Institute ("Responsible Fatherhood Issue Forum: Building Bridges Between Responsible Fatherhood and Domestic Violence Initiatives"); the 2007 Fall Conference of the Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management; the Fatherhood Initiative Culmination Event of the Greater St Louis Community Foundation; the annual conference of the Minnesota Fathers and Families Network; and the annual MCH Summer Institute on Health Disparities ("Promoting Health Equity: Family-Centered Program Development and Advocacy") of the Maternal and Child Health Program of the University of Minnesota School of Public Health.
- Provided organizational assistance and substantive trainings to a coalition of faith-based community leaders in Dane County, Wisconsin on the social service needs of low-income fathers and their families in the state. With initial support from CFFPP, the agencies have come together as a standing coalition to address these needs through the provision of both direct services and policy advocacy by faith agencies in the community.
- Served on the Board of Directors for the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families and the YWCA of Madison, Wisconsin.
- Participated for a one-year term (ended May 2008) in 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

Since its founding, the Center has reached 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.

The Center received funding from the US Department of Justice's Office on Violence Against Women for a two-year project in 2004-6 to address domestic violence in low-income communities of color. The Center's 2004-6 project provided training to OVW-grantee organizations on the intersection of fatherhood and domestic violence. The project resulted in a publication and DVD directed at community-based organizations, entitled 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 in the areas of social service and violence prevention.

During the past year the Center received additional funding from the Office on Violence Against Women to continue our work with advocates against domestic violence. The Center's current two-year project focuses specifically on underserved communities of color to identify their service needs. The project centers on 4 states (Kansas, Missouri, Texas, and Wisconsin), developing model service protocols with guidance from survivors, advocates and community members involved in social service and violence prevention efforts. The Center has established a Regional Leadership Coalition that includes participation by representatives from local domestic violence programs and state coalitions, who will help develop and disseminate the service protocols. The protocols are intended to serve as a guide for the development of equivalent services in other states throughout the country.

Highlighted Project – Financial Literacy and Noncustodial Parents

With support from the Ford Foundation and the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, 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 and debts to the state in repayment of assistance services received by their children. 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 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.

In 2006 the Center published a financial literacy curriculum that addressed concerns and needs of low-income noncustodial parents – especially those who are struggling with such debts. The curriculum, entitled Financial Literacy Issues and Information for Noncustodial Parents (Scott Sussman, Rebecca May, with assistance from Jodi Owens, 2006) was directed at parents as well as at programs that work with low-income noncustodial parents and at financial literacy service providers, and addressed some of the central conundrums of low-income noncustodial parents and their relation to financial literacy services.

In the past year the Center finalized a series of related papers, which, taken together, are intended to provide an overview of many of these same issues. The forthcoming series is entitled Financial

Literacy, Asset Development, and Low-Income Noncustodial Parents, and includes the following publications:

- Financial Literacy, Asset Development, and Low-Income Noncustodial Parents – An Introduction
- Child Support and its Relevance to Asset Development
- Child Support Debt Management Programs

Like the curriculum, this series is directed at parents, community-based programs that work with parents, and financial literacy service providers. It is also intended to inform policy advocates in these fields of some of the central barriers experienced by low-income noncustodial parents as they try to become financially stable and develop an economic base that enables them to support themselves and their families.

FY 2008 Funders

Annie. E. Casey Foundation

Charles Stewart Mott Foundation

Community Shares of Wisconsin

Greater St. Louis Community Foundation

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 2008 annual financial audit (prepared by Ritz, Holman, Butala, Fine LLP) will be available upon request.

Center for Family Policy and Practice

23 N. Pinckney Street, Suite 210

Madison, WI 53703

608-257-3148 (Tel)

608-257-4686 (Fax)

www.cffpp.org