

Center for Family Policy and Practice

2009 Annual Report



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Fiscal Year 2009 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.

With the advent of celebrating fifteen years of existence, the staff and board of directors developed a new way of thinking about the mission of CFFPP during the 2009 fiscal year. The new mission statement now reads as follows:

The *mission* of the Center for Family Policy and Practice (CFFPP) is to strengthen society through the expansion of opportunities for low-income parents—mothers and fathers—to protect and support their children. CFFPP operates as a policy think tank to remove the unique barriers and negative public perceptions that affect low-income men of color. Through technical assistance, policy research and analysis, and public education and outreach, CFFPP works to support low-income 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.
- Individuals and communities have the right to live and exist free from all forms of violence, including interpersonal and structural violence.
- Public policy must actively and effectively promote the economic viability of families.
- Public policy must address the impact of race, class, and gender on people’s lives by developing and promoting social systems that are culturally relevant and responsive.
- Public policy must support individuals as they create families of their own choosing.
- Public policy must support social justice and reflect respect for humanity.

(revised June, 2009)

In addition, the Center staff has developed a definition of “low-income” as it is applicable to the work of the Center, it reads as follows:

CFFPP’s policy focus is narrower and concentrates on noncustodial parents in financial positions equivalent to custodial parents who qualify for TANF and other public assistance programs. These parents typically have very low earnings and have *unstable* and *intermittent*, if any, employment. While this scope may seem narrow, it includes large numbers of people who are frequently the subject of economic and family policy in the United States.

Staff

Jacquelyn Boggess, Co-Director (Programs and Policy)
Jill Groblewski, Senior Project Manager
Magda Kmiecik, Project Manager
Rebecca May, Policy (Consultant)
Carol Medaris, Senior Legal Analyst
Louisa Medaris, Manager of Operations
David Pate, Co-Director and Founder (Administration)

The CFFPP staff experienced some gains in the expertise of two new staff members (Jill Groblewski and Magda Kmiecik) and a long term employee, Marguerite Roulet made a new transition into the world of academia. *Jill Groblewski* has worked for more than ten years advocating for social and policy changes that benefit low-income families and victims of violence. Her experience includes community organizing around issues related to poverty, welfare reform, and domestic violence. *Magda Kmiecik* brings to CFFPP over twenty-five years of experience in the area of banking and investment management. Ms. Kmiecik holds a Master of Social Work from the University of Wisconsin–Madison. Her experience includes working with housing programs for families who are homeless; advocacy for children with disabilities; community outreach in the areas of patient advocacy and reducing healthcare disparities; advocacy for workers' rights; and working to improve health care access in the Latino community. *Marguerite Roulet* was a thirteen year employee for CFFPP. She was responsible for the fundraising and program management activities for the Center. She has returned to academia in the area of fundraising and development. We wish her much luck and success in her new endeavors.

Board of Directors

The board of directors remained the same for the 2009 fiscal year.

- Daniel Ash, Chicago Public Radio (Treasurer)
- Tonya Brito, University of Wisconsin School of Law
- Adrienne Brooks, Youth Guidance
- Carole Doeppers, Independent 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, Independent Consultant
- Bobby Verdugo, Bienvenidos Children's Center
- Oliver Williams, National Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community

Select Center Activities
July 2008 – June 2009

- Invited to participate in the first White House Town Hall and Roundtable meeting on Fatherhood sponsored by the Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Initiatives.
- Participated in the statewide (Wisconsin) *Policy Advisory Council* quarterly meetings on the policy recommendations and procedures for the implementation of child support enforcement policy.
- Participated in the monthly policy meetings of the *Covering Kids and Families coalition*, a statewide coalition of more than 65 organizations committed to reducing the number of uninsured children and families in Wisconsin by ensuring that those who are eligible have information about and access to Wisconsin's public health insurance program.
- Served on the Community Advisory Board of the Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin's *Project Cuidándome*. Project Cuidándome is a three year project funded by the Wisconsin Partnership Program "to decrease barriers Latina women in Dane County face regarding accessing and participating in breast and cervical cancer preventive screenings."
- Participated in the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (known as the "Department") process to change medical support and child support rules. CFFPP submitted written and oral comments to the Department, by invitation, as the rule was being developed, and submitted comments to the Department once a final proposed rule was issued.
- Had a summer undergraduate intern from the University of Wisconsin-Madison (July-August, 2008) who primarily worked on the Office of Violence Against Women project; and an summer intern recipient of a Linda K. Cotter Internship Award from Colby College (June – August, 2009). She worked on the Comprehensive Advocacy Project funded by the Open Society Institute.
- Participated in the meetings of the *Wisconsinites for Responsible Lending (WRL)*. This statewide coalition of groups and concerned residents work to promote responsible lending practices and products as well as address predatory payday lending in the state.
- Participated in the *Latino Health Council*, a coalition of Dane County organizations and agencies whose mission is to promote and support the health and well-being of the Latino Community through education, advocacy, and networking.

On-going Center Activities from the previous fiscal year

- 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.
- 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. Jacquelyn Boggess, Co-Director was elected to serve in the position of President for the initiative.
- 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 Masculinity Project (sponsored by ITVS); Faculty for the Batterers Intervention Services Coalition of Michigan Conference; Invited Speaker for the New York State Fatherhood Conference; Invited expert for the Marriage, Fatherhood, and Domestic Violence meeting in Washington, D.C.; Keynote speaker for the Michigan Responsible Fatherhood reception.
- 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.

PROJECTS

Comprehensive Advocacy for Low-Income Men

CFFPP will work to foster a national discussion around developing a comprehensive advocacy agenda on issues affecting low-income black men and fathers. The initiative will address a wide range of issues that isolate low-income black men from the political and economic mainstream, including issues and policies related to: access and opportunities for working and learning; resources and economic security; health; and social and political agency. The initiative consists of two key components: (1) a national communications campaign centered on policy education; and (2) the development of a comprehensive advocacy platform. The national communications campaign entails expanding the distribution of the Center's policy briefing, which summarizes current research, policy developments, and practice in the fields of economic support, criminal justice, child support, child welfare, and other issues affecting low-income families. The comprehensive advocacy campaign will culminate in a national meeting to discuss the research and the capacity to carry out a national advocacy agenda based on the lives and needs of low-income black men and fathers.

Technical Assistance and Evaluation Project (STATE OF MICHIGAN)

The Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community (**IDVAAC**) and the Center for Family Policy and Practice (**CFFPP**) will be providing technical assistance and evaluation services to the Department of Human Services, Michigan Domestic Violence Prevention and Treatment Board (**MDVPTB**), Responsible Fatherhood and Healthy Co-Parenting Program. This statewide technical assistance and consultation project is intended to help agencies that provide services to low-income fathers and families enhance the implementation and delivery of those services.

Domestic Violence and Fatherhood

Since its founding in 1995, the Center has been reaching out to women's organizations and domestic violence advocates. The intent has been to openly discuss the potential impact of fathers' involvement on women and children in general, and on victims/survivors of domestic violence in particular. The Center entered this discussion, not with the intention of furthering the fathers' rights agenda or encouraging marriage or family formation. Rather, the Center has focused our discussion on the provision of holistic social services in low-income communities. Over the years, our work has included facilitating a number of dialogues and serving as a bridge between fatherhood groups and women's advocates.

The Center's first grant from the federal Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) resulted in the production of a guidebook for local service providers to assess and enhance their ability to work across fields. *Collaboration and Partnership: Fatherhood Practitioners and Advocates Against Domestic Violence Working Together to Serve Women, Men, and Families – A Guidebook* (Boggess, May, Roulet, June 2007) can be used to facilitate discussion concerning the wide ranging needs of low-income communities. In particular, it explores providing services for low-income men while simultaneously promoting the safety of women.

Over the past year, the Center has built upon this work through a second OVW-funded project. We partnered with domestic violence agencies and coalitions in four states (MO, MN, TX, WI) to hold a series of listening sessions with low-income women of color who are domestic violence victims/survivors, advocates of color, and other community service providers. As a result, we have heard from more than 200 individuals about services that are available in their communities for low-income women who have experienced domestic violence and for the men who also live in those communities. The overwhelming majority of participants supported the premise of the *Guidebook* and expressed a desire for services that address the needs of both women and men in low-income communities of color.

Economic Support Policies and Programs and Low-Income Families

The Center provides national- and state-level analysis and advocacy on public support policies and legislation affecting low-income families, including such areas as welfare or TANF policy, child support policy, and food stamp and Medicaid programs. This represents a central part of the Center's policy advocacy efforts.

The Center is conducting a project on debt reduction (particularly as it pertains to child support debt), and asset development. While there are many programs that provide financial literacy education and debt management services, there are currently no national programs that directly address the situations of low-income mothers and fathers who are struggling with child support issues. Involvement with the system of child support fundamentally affects the ability of individuals to develop savings, establish financial plans, or gain good credit standing. The Center's project examines the child support enforcement system and the workforce investment act to examine how these policies present challenges or opportunities to help low-income noncustodial parents attain greater financial stability and be in a better position to support themselves and their families.

FY 2009 Funders

Annie. E. Casey Foundation

Charles Stewart Mott Foundation

Community Shares of Wisconsin

Ford Foundation

Madison Community Foundation

Office on Violence Against Women (Department of Justice)

Open Society Institute

State of Michigan (DHS, Michigan Domestic Violence Prevention and Treatment Board)

A copy of the 2009 annual financial audit (prepared by Ritz, Holman, Butala, Fine LLP) will be available upon request.

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