

**A Rapid Ethnographic Assessment of
Programs & Services (REAPS) for Fathers
in Clark County Ohio**

Prepared By:



**National
Fatherhood
Initiative[®]**

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An Initiative of the Ohio Commission on Fatherhood

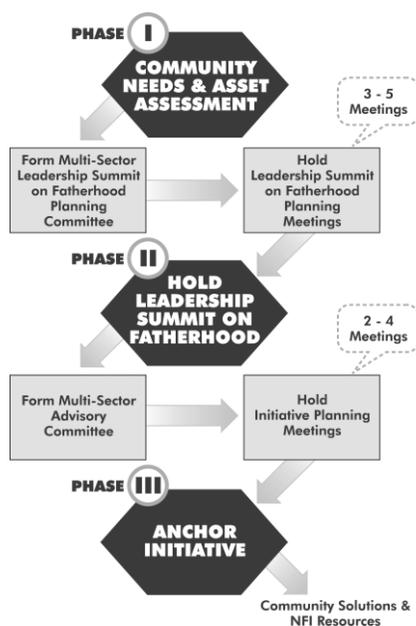
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Introduction

The Ohio Commission on Fatherhood (OCF) has partnered with National Fatherhood Initiative (NFI) in 2011 to assist 12 Ohio counties mobilize around responsible fatherhood. Clark County was one of the 12 counties selected to participate in this Community Mobilization Initiative.

NFI's Community Mobilization Approach (CMA), which is diagrammed in Figure 1 below, consists of 3 phases: (1) a needs and assets assessment of the counties' abilities to promote responsible fatherhood; (2) a Leadership Summit on Fatherhood attended by county leaders; and (3) implementing an action plan for a fatherhood initiative generated by a broad cross-section of county sectors.

Figure 1



This report is the culmination of Phase 1 of this ongoing initiative in Clark County.

Secondary Data on Fatherhood

According to 2009 U.S. Census Bureau data, over 24 million children live apart from

their biological fathers. That is 1 out of every 3 (33%) children in America. Nearly 2 in 3 (64%) African American children live in father-absent homes. One in three (34%) Hispanic children, and 1 in 4 (25%) white children live in father-absent homes. In 1960, only 11% of children lived in father-absent homes.

Children who live absent their biological fathers are, on average, at least two to three times more likely to be poor, to use drugs, to experience educational, health, emotional and behavioral problems, to be victims of child abuse, and to engage in criminal behavior than their peers who live with their married, biological (or adoptive) parents.¹

The annual cost of father absence in America is staggering. The Federal Government spent at least \$99.8 billion providing assistance to father-absent homes in 2006. This is a conservative estimate; it does not include federal benefit programs for communities, indirect costs related to poor outcomes of children from father-absent homes, and long-term costs in reduced tax income from low-earning single-parent families.²

In Ohio, father absence is at 25.7% or 7.3% lower than the national average; however, Clark County ranks 2.6% higher than the state average at 28.3%. Clark County's largest city, Springfield, is significantly higher at 40%.³

Clark County's teen birth rate (age 15-19) of 51.9 births per 1000 is significantly higher than the state and national average of 41 per 1000.⁴ There is a clear connection between father absence and teen pregnancy

¹ National Fatherhood Initiative, 2007. *Father Facts Fifth Edition*.

² Nock, Steven L., and Einolf, Christopher J. 2008. "The One Hundred Billion Dollar Man."

³ 2005-2009 American Community Survey

⁴ Centers for Disease and Control and Prevention. National Center for Health Statistics. VitalStats.

<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/vitalstats.htm>. Accessed 4/15/2011.

since a father's behavior and values uniquely influence a girl's expectations about boyfriends and husbands. In addition, boys learn from their fathers what kind of husband and father they should become and how to treat girls and women. Research shows that boys raised in single-mother homes are at a higher risk of teen pregnancy⁵ and teenage girls without fathers were twice as likely to be involved in early sexual activity and seven times more likely to get pregnant as other adolescents.⁶

Another issue negatively impacting our youth in Clark County is drug and alcohol use. 30% of high school students in Clark County report smoking marijuana in the past 30 days compared to the state's 17.7% and 20.8% nationally. That's 12% higher than the state average and 9% higher than the national average! 40% of high school students in Clark County report drinking alcohol within the past 30 days compared to 45.5% in Ohio and 41.8% nationally⁷. Although this percentage is slightly lower than state and national averages, it is still a large percentage of high school students. Father involvement plays an important role in reducing drug and alcohol use among youth. Researchers at Columbia University found that children living in two-parent households with a poor relationship with their father are 68% more likely to smoke, drink, or use drugs compared to all teens in two-parent households. Moreover, teen in single-mother households fared much worse. They had a 30% higher risk than those in all two-parent households.⁸

Children who grow up without their fathers are at greatest risk for child abuse. In fact, the presence of a child's father in the home lowers the likelihood that a child will be abused. Compared to living with both

parents, living in a single-parent home doubles the risk that a child will suffer physical, emotional, or educational neglect.⁹ There were 1,871 new allegations of child abuse/neglect in Clark County in 2007.¹⁰

<p style="text-align: center;">Father Absence</p> <p>National: 33% Ohio: 26% Clark County: 28% Springfield: 40%</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Teen Birth Rate (per 1000)</p> <p>National: 41 State: 41 Clark County: 52</p> <p style="text-align: center;">High School Students who Smoked Marijuana in the Past 30 Days</p> <p>National: 21% State: 18% Clark County: 30%</p> <p style="text-align: center;">High School Students who Drank Alcohol in the Past 30 Days</p> <p>National: 42% State: 46% Clark County: 40%</p>

Clark County also had 2,642 delinquency and unruly cases and 1,435 youth enter a detention center in 2008. There were 120 youth adjudicated for felonies in Clark County in 2010.¹¹

Clark County Leader Focus Group Results

The Clark County focus group on fatherhood was attended by nineteen individuals representing a diverse cross section of the community and included representatives from the Ohio Commission on Fatherhood. The following community sectors/organization/individuals participated in the discussion:

- Chief of Police

⁵ Teachman, Jay D. "The Childhood Living Arrangements of Children and the Characteristics of Their Marriages." *Journal of Family Issues* 25 (January 2004):86-111.

⁶ Ellis, Bruce J., John E. Bates, Kenneth A. Dodge, David M. Ferguson, L. John Horwood, Gregory S. Pettit, and Lianne Woodward. "Does Father Absence Place Daughters at Special Risk for Early Sexual Activity and Teenage Pregnancy?" *Child Development* 74 (May/June 2003): 801-821.

⁷ Center for Disease Control, *Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance-United States* (2009).

⁸ "Survey Links Teen Drug Use, Relationship With Father." *Alcoholism & Drug Abuse Weekly* 6 September 1999:5.

⁹ *America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being. Table SPECIAL1.* Washington D.C.: Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 1997.

¹⁰ Ohio PCSAO Factbook, 2007.

¹¹ County Juvenile Court Annual Report; Ohio Department of Youth Services, 2008 & 2010.

- City Commissioner
- Clark County Jobs and Family Services
- Clark County Sheriff
- Clark County Commissioner
- Community College Admissions Director
- Prenatal Community Health Center Director
- Fatherhood Program Director
- Foundation Manager
- Ministry President
- Minority Business Development
- Pastor
- Probation Director
- Professional Clinical Counselor
- School Superintendent
- United Way Director of Community Services
- Work Force Development
- Removing barriers that prevent fathers from being involved (i.e. negative relationship between parents, education and fathering skills, lack of employment, etc.)
- Pro Bono Legal Clinics
- Need for advocacy for fathers (i.e. visitation)
- Juvenile courts need more programs for fathers with children involved in the system
- Educating the community about the value/importance of fathers (start in schools with young people)
- Preventing premature fatherhood / engaging expectant fathers early
- Mentoring for young men who may not have a father figure
- Employment – fathers need to feel that they are able to provide something financially for children

Focus group participants were vocal about issues related to generational poverty, drug abuse and incarceration. Teen pregnancies and generational cycles of father absence were of great concern. Joblessness and the lucrateness of the drug culture were also mentioned as challenges. Family instability is evident by the percentage of children who transfer from school to school throughout the year. There are a growing number of grandparents raising grandchildren and single dads raising children because of moms' drug addictions. Education early and often on the importance of family stability and responsible parenthood was a reoccurring theme throughout the morning meeting. Mentoring programs were seen as key to helping youth develop emotional literacy, life skills and the self-respect needed to overcome the challenges that so many are facing.

Despite these issues and concerns participants were hopeful that collaborative and focused efforts working across systems and sectors could make a difference for current and future generations of children. Reaching and working with fathers was seen as one of several strategies to break the current cycles and trends.

Consistent with other counties the following thoughts and ideas were brought forward by the group:

Of the various needs identified throughout the county, job training, employment opportunities and educating young men about how to be responsible fathers were highlighted as being the most pressing.

The Clark County focus group participants agreed that addressing father absence and promoting responsible fatherhood is important in the county. Participants indicated that other community leaders have recognized this as a need as well and that the Miami Valley Partnership for Fathers has helped to address these issues. Specific programming developed through this partnership and other agencies that reach fathers but aren't necessarily father-specific include:

- Aspire T16 Group / preschool initiative father-child activities, i.e. kite flying
- Basic Training for Men / relationship skills development
- Circles / pathways out of poverty
- Family Academy / evening school based classes
- Father's Day Poster and Essay Contest
- Fatherhood Resource Center / food assistance, info & referral
- InsideOut Dad™ Program / prison program

- Mentoring / parent to parent and adult to youth
- Nurturing Fathers for Life / parenting program
- Parent Support Clinics / system navigation
- Parents as partners / 1115 Waiver program
- Promises / youth mentoring modeled after Jeffrey Canada Program
- Sunshine Clubs and Eagles & Doves / after school programming
- Why Knot?™ / Marriage readiness for men
- Wise Guys / teen male responsibility development

When asked what assets or resources exist in Clark County that could be mobilized or used to promote responsible fatherhood the following were mentioned:

- Chamber of Commerce (family businesses)
- Family & Children First Council
- Clark State
- Faith community
- Jobs & More
- Marriage Resource Center
- Nehemiah Foundation
- Nurturing Fathers for Life
- Radio Station WEEC
- Salvation Army
- School district
- Upward Bound Basketball
- Why Knot?™
- Wittenberg University - mentors from black fraternities
- YMCA

In addition to enhancing the above mentioned programs and services it was noted that there was a need to provide parenting skills and relationship education for expectant and new dads.

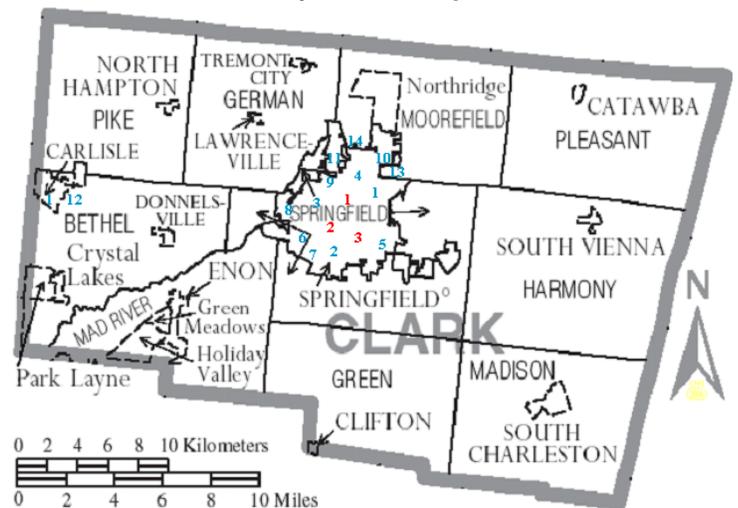
The Clark County focus group attendees were eager to see things taken to the next level. There has been some success with the local marriage initiative and the fatherhood work of Urban Light Ministries yet the task can seem daunting at times. The educational systems in the county

seemed the most primed to address the issues. It was also noted that there is a large faith community in the county and that with a few notable exceptions they have not collectively come together on this issue. The participants saw the need to continue the conversation about addressing father absence and promoting responsible fatherhood and were eager to bring together additional community leaders to begin formulating a plan that can be accomplished.

Participants highlighted the following funding opportunities in Clark County:

- Family-friendly businesses
- Chick-Fil-A
- Family and Children First Council
- Federal Fatherhood Grants
- New hospital
- Honda
- Kroger
- Springfield Foundation
- Clark State Community College
- Wittenberg University (for evaluations)

County Assets Map



Red Numbers = Father/Male-Specific Programs and Services
 1. Nurturing Fathers for Life and Why Knot?—Urban Light Ministries
 2. Basic Training for Men—Marriage Resource Center of Miami Valley
 3. Parents as Partners (can be offered at different county locations)

Blue Numbers = Programs for mothers and children that could be expanded to include fathers
 1. Women, Infants & Children
 2. Parent Infant Center
 3. Clark County Extension Services
 4. Miami Valley Child Development Centers (Head Start)
 5. Help Me Grow
 6. Springfield City Schools
 7. Rocking Horse Community Health Center
 8. Oesterlen Services for Youth
 9. Clark County Combined Health District
 10. Parent Infant Center
 11. Pregnancy Resource Center
 12. Women's Network
 13. Project Woman
 14. Child Advocacy Center

Clark County has three father or male-specific programs and services provided by Urban Light Ministries, Marriage Resource Center of Miami Valley, and Parents as Partners. The Assets Map shows that each of these programs are located in Springfield, so a gap exists in geographically accessible programs and services for men and fathers in other areas of the county. Based on the fathers served in these programs, it appears as though there are opportunities to expand services for incarcerated dads, military dads, working dads, and dads with special needs children. There are also 14 organizations charted on the map that provide programs for moms and children that could be expanded to serve fathers. It is recommended that Clark County leaders explore the interest of those organizations in creating father-specific programs or collaborating with the three current groups that already offer fatherhood programs.

Conclusions

This report brings to light many specific needs within Clark County. It identifies some key issues that increasing involved, responsible, and committed fatherhood can help remedy and some gaps in the geographic locations of programs and services. There are opportunities to target specific kinds of dads who aren't currently being reached.

This report also reveals many assets that have not been fully utilized that can be of great assistance as Clark County anchors a County Fatherhood Initiative that mobilizes all sectors around fatherhood. We have a unique opportunity now to enrich fathers, families, and communities in Clark County.