

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

Prepared By:



**National
Fatherhood
Initiative[®]**

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An Initiative of the Ohio Commission on Fatherhood

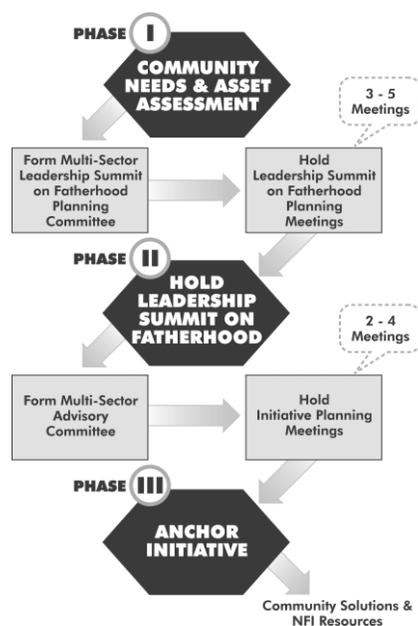
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Introduction

The Ohio Commission on Fatherhood (OCF) has partnered with National Fatherhood Initiative (NFI) in 2011 to assist 12 Ohio counties mobilize around responsible fatherhood. Muskingum 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 Muskingum 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 and Muskingum County ranks about even with the state average at 24.2%. Muskingum County's largest city, Zanesville, is significantly higher at 38.8%.³

Muskingum County's teen birth rate (age 15-19) of 49 births per 1000⁴ is slightly higher than the state and national average of 41 per 1000.⁵ The teen birth rate (age 15-17)

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 Source URL:

<http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/node/2199/14>.

⁵ Centers for Disease and Control and Prevention. National Center for Health Statistics. VitalStats.

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

in Muskingum County is 21.9 is also higher than the state rate (21.9 compared to 19.7).⁶ There is a clear connection between father absence and teen pregnancy 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 pregnancy⁷ 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.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 816 new allegations of child abuse/neglect in Muskingum County in 2007.¹⁰ There were 7 children per 1,000 who were abused or neglected in Muskingum County in 2006. Although that is 3 children lower per 1,000 than the state rate, this is still an issue that merits attention.

There were also 13 adolescents per 1,000 in Muskingum County who were adjudicated for felonies in 2006.¹¹ Often, the "story behind the story" of a violent crime committed in America reveals a "crime of fatherlessness." In other words, children who grow up without the presence of an

involved, responsible, and committed father are significantly more likely to engage in criminal activity. Adolescents who live in single-parent families were significantly more likely to commit status, property, or person delinquency when compared to adolescents living in two-parent families. This was consistent even for controlling for sex, minority group status, and the mother's education (as a proxy for income).¹²

<p>Father Absence</p> <p>National: 33%</p> <p>Ohio: 26%</p> <p>Muskingum County: 24.2%</p> <p>Zanesville: 38.8%</p>
<p>Teen Birth Rate (per 1000)</p> <p>National: 41</p> <p>State: 41</p> <p>Muskingum County: 49</p>
<p>Children Abused or Neglected (per 1000)</p> <p>Ohio: 10</p> <p>Muskingum County: 7</p>
<p>Adolescents Adjudicated for Felonies (per 1000)</p> <p>Ohio: 14</p> <p>Muskingum County: 13</p>

Muskingum County Leader Focus Group Results

There were twenty focus group participants including representatives from the county lead agency. These individuals represented a broad cross section of the community the majority of which had experience working with fathers and families. The following organizations/businesses were represented (Note – some sectors were represented by more than one individual):

- Alfred Carr Center
- The Anchor Church

⁶ Muskingum County Health, 2010.

⁷ Teachman, Jay D. "The Childhood Living Arrangements of Children and the Characteristics of Their Marriages." *Journal of Family Issues* 25 (January 2004):86-111.

⁸ 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.

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 Children's Defense Fund-Ohio. County Fact Sheet Data, 2008.

¹² Anderson, Amy L. "Individual and contextual influences on delinquency: the role of the single-parent family." *Journal of Criminal Justice* 30 (November 2002): 575-587.

- Attorney at Law
- Catholic Social Services
- Century National Bank
- Community Bank
- ForeverDads
- Hands of Faith Church
- Muskingum County Child Support
- Muskingum County Children's Services
- Muskingum County Domestic Court
- Muskingum County Juvenile Detention
- Muskingum County Library System
- Muskingum County Sheriff
- PNC Bank
- Six County, Inc. (Behavioral Health)
- Tom's Print Shop
- Wal-Mart
- WYBZ-FM
- Volunteer

The focus group attendees saw father absence as a critical and growing issue that impacts children, families and the community for generations. Father absence was seen as a major contributor to increased crime rates, school drop-out, and teen pregnancies. Kids growing up without healthy role-models from their parents or mentors tend to fall prey to negative influences that can make it difficult to succeed and thrive. It was noted that according to Genesis Medical Center figures a father-figure is present at approximately 90% of their births yet many of these men do not stay engaged in the lives of their children. Joblessness, lack of financial resources and issues of self-respect along with a lack of parenting skills were seen as barriers that contributed to the problem of father absence. Re-entry programs, job training, and supervised visitation centers were identified services that were critically needed. Budget cuts and lack of consistent funding was recognized as a huge factor in addressing the issue. The participants were encouraged however by the past track record of county wide collaborations, such as the Enriching Lives Lasting Marriages program, and the current work of ForeverDads. A consistent funding stream, a growing volunteer base and a community awareness campaign on the importance of fathers were all seen as critical to

addressing father absence and promoting father "fullness" in the county and state.

Some of the existing programs and services that engage dads include:

- Active Parenting for Stepfamilies
- The Alcohol Chemical Treatment Program
- All Pro Dads
- All Star Dads Day
- Boot Camp for New Dads
- Bringing Baby Home
- Celebrate Recovery
- Community Service Opportunity
- Couples Communication
- InsideOut Dad™
- Library family reading programs
- Nurturing Fathers for Life
- Play Like a Champion Today
- Survival Skills for Healthy Families
- Watch D.O.G.S. (Dads of Great Students)

Participants also identified a number of existing assets/resources in the community that could be mobilized to promote responsible fatherhood. Among those identified were kinship parenting, church programs, library programming and facility resources, the proposed Muskingum Recreation Center and community athletic programs.

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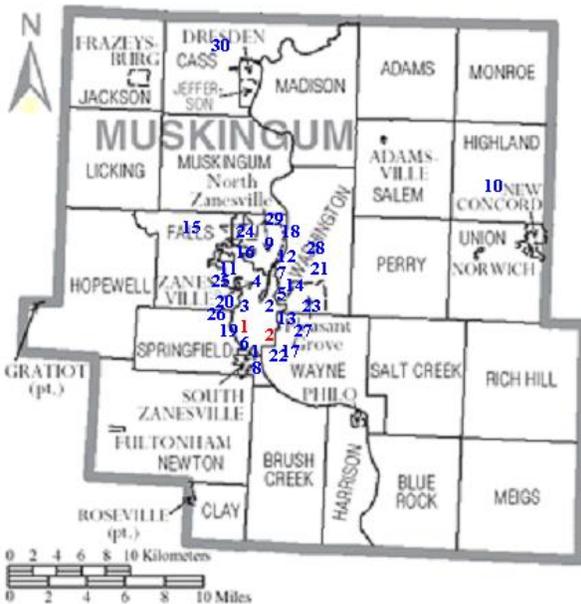
The focus group participants expressed interest in continuing to work with the Ohio Commission on Responsible Fatherhood and its efforts to improve father involvement across the state. ForeverDads is planning a campaign to raise a \$1 million dollar endowment to assist program funding across the county. All participants expressed an interest in helping to plan or attend the

Leadership Summit on Fatherhood. All attendees agreed that representation from the school system, county judges and magistrates, and fathers need to be represented at the Leadership Summit.

Participants highlighted the following funding opportunities in Muskingum County:

- Faith-Community/Church Participation
- PNC Bank (\$100 million dedicated to education of zero to three)
- Muskingum University and/or Ohio University Zanesville in kind evaluation services
- Financial institutions
- United Way

County Assets Map



Red Numbers = Father/Male-Specific Programs and Services

1. Forever Dads
2. Child Support Division

Blue Numbers = Programs for mothers and children that could be expanded to include fathers

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Adult Basic Literacy Education | 16. Goodwill |
| 2. Healthy Start | 17. Heartbeat Family Center |
| 3. Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Zanesville | 18. Help Me Grow |
| 4. Bishop Fenwick School | 19. Muskingum Behavioral Health |
| 5. CareyTown Preschool | 20. Muskingum County Children Services |
| 6. Catholic Social Service | 21. Muskingum County Opp. Ctr. |
| 7. Muskingum County Head Start | 22. Muskingum Family Y |
| 8. Child Development Center-South Zanesville Church of the Nazarene | 23. Ohio State University Ext. |
| 9. Congregational Health Program | 24. Pomey Neighborhood Center |
| 10. East Muskingum Local Schools | 25. Pregnancy Distress Center |
| 11. Eastside Community Ministry | 26. Zanesville Metro Housing Auth. |
| 12. Even Start-Zanesville City Schools | 27. Muskingum County Health Dept. |
| 13. Family & Children First Council | 28. Zanesville City Schools |
| 14. Family Health Services | 29. The Salvation Army |
| 15. Franklin Local School District | 30. Tri-Valley Local Schools |

Muskingum County has 2 father-specific programs. **Forever Dads** provides advocacy for fathers in Muskingum County and serves as a gateway to community services. **Child Support Division** offers paternity establishment. Both of these programs are located in Zanesville so the map shows some geographic gaps in easily accessible fatherhood programs and services in most areas of the county. It is recommended that some services be offered in locations throughout the county and/or transportation options be provided. Schools are the only programs outside of Zanesville that could be expanded to serve fathers.

There are 30 additional organizations that could expand their programming and/or services to include fathers. They could provide programs to fathers around literacy, men's health and wellness issues, mentoring, finances, teen fatherhood, work readiness, and getting involved in their child's education.

Another area of opportunity is in the kinds of dads served. Programs that target non-custodial dads, dads with substance abuse issues, new dads, military dads, and dads with special needs are some areas that should be considered.

Conclusions

This report brings to light many specific needs within Muskingum 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 Muskingum 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 Muskingum County.