

JULIA CARSON RESPONSIBLE FATHERHOOD AND HEALTHY FAMILIES ACT OF 2015
DANNY K. DAVIS (D-IL) AND ANDRÉ CARSON (D-IN)

Fathers play a significant and under-appreciated role in the development of their children, with research demonstrating that a supportive and involved father strengthens a child's emotional, physical, intellectual, and behavioral development. Children with positive relationships with fathers – even if they do not live in the same household - have stronger mental health, economic success, and academic achievement with lower rates of youth delinquency, school drop-out, and teen pregnancy. Father engagement does not depend on living in the same house as one's child, with many non-residential fathers being actively-involved with their children and supportive of their children's mothers. However, low-income fathers experience multiple challenges to contributing financially and emotionally to their children due to limited education and job skills, unstable employment opportunities, child support enforcement policies, incarceration, and strained relationships with their children's mothers.

The Julia Carson Responsible Fatherhood and Healthy Families Act of 2015 increases the upward economic mobility of custodial and noncustodial parents so they can actively participate in financial support and child-rearing as well as maintain positive, healthy, and nonviolent relationships with their children and co-parents.

- It reforms the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program to promote critical education and employment skills so parents can secure family-sustaining wages by: prohibiting unfair treatment of 2-parent families; encouraging education and job training by making education a core activity, lifting the 30% cap on education, and doubling the length of vocational programs to 2 years; providing additional employment and training opportunities for recipients who have not succeeded in finding employment by focusing the Contingency Fund on subsidized employment with a state option to fund sectoral training; and clarifying states can provide non-custodial parents the same work supports as custodial parents.
- It improves the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) to allow noncustodial and childless workers to escape poverty and provide for their families by: permanently reducing marriage penalties and enhancing the credit for workers with 3 or more children; expanding access to childless workers from age 21-67, with foster youth eligible starting at age 18; increasing the maximum credit to equal 20% of earnings to allow quicker relief; raising the phase-out to \$11,500 to allow greater support as incomes rise; allowing workers who fail to provide a Social Security Number for a child to claim the childless EITC rather than denying any assistance; and allowing eligibility for the childless EITC for workers living with extended family who do not claim a qualifying child living in their household.
- It modernizes the child support enforcement program by: directing child support to families rather than to government; prohibiting treatment of incarceration as "voluntary" unemployment; establishing a demonstration grant and evaluation for state supervised employment programs for non-custodial parents at risk of incarceration due to non-payment; prohibiting recovery of Medicaid costs for births; requiring states to review, and if appropriate, reduce arrearages if the non-custodial parent is unable to pay; requiring states to assess and report barriers to employment and financial support of children, including modification of obligations for low-income parents and state practices related to ex-offenders; and establishing a grant to review report findings and suggest possible legislative changes to state laws.
- It adjusts the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program to ensure that child support payments do not result in loss of food assistance for families by requiring states to disregard 20% of child support enforcement in determining net income eligibility, as is done with other earnings.
- It enhances the fatherhood and healthy marriage grant program by: ensuring voluntary participation; promoting healthy relationships and marriages; focusing funding on low-income non-custodial parents who are ineligible for TANF; and creating a new grant for partnerships between domestic violence prevention organizations and fatherhood and marriage programs for staff training, domestic violence services, and dissemination of best practices.

July 15, 2015

**Written Testimony of Cynthia Dungey
Director
Ohio Department of Job and Family Services
U.S. House Ways and Means Committee
Subcommittee on Human Resources**

Chairman Boustany, Ranking Member Doggett, and members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony to help inform the committee's consideration of welfare reform and legislation to reauthorize the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. As the director of Ohio's Department of Job and Family Services, I am responsible for managing a number of vital programs that directly impact the lives of Ohioans who rely on TANF, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), job training and employment services, child care, unemployment insurance, child welfare and adoption, adult protective services, and child support programs. Our mission is to improve the well-being of Ohio's workforce and families by ensuring the safety of Ohio's most vulnerable citizens, and promoting long-term self-sufficiency.

A job is the best anti-poverty program, yet too many individuals are trapped in a cycle of poverty. As the economy continues to improve, we cannot afford to have a significant portion of our population in the shadows. Helping these families find meaningful employment is both an economic issue and a moral obligation. In May, Ohio's unemployment rate was 5.2 percent and OhioMeansJobs.com, the state's online job bank, listed more than 206,000 help wanted ads. However, too many Ohioans are unable to take advantage of the improving economy. Nearly 24,000 Ohioans drop out of

high school every year, increasing the likelihood they will not obtain the skills necessary for sustainable employment. At the same time, others struggle to find reliable transportation, stable housing and affordable child care.

Accountability and personal responsibility are important cornerstones of the TANF program and fully embraced by Ohio. In recent years, the state has worked diligently to improve our work participation rate and provide job training and work experiences to adults receiving cash assistance. Ohio's all-family work participation rate improved from 25 percent in December 2010 to 58 percent in March 2015. In addition, the state has increased investments in work support programs, including expanding access to child care assistance for families up to 300 percent of the federal poverty level. We've worked within the rubric of the current system, but simply meeting the work participation rate isn't indicative of actually getting people jobs or the education they need to be successful in the workforce. The next crucial step is ensuring that TANF recipients overcome barriers to employment and develop the in-demand skills local employers seek.

As a county-administered state, with 88 counties representing urban, rural and suburban communities, Ohio is a microcosm of the nation and the perfect laboratory for a new way to work – a new approach to the challenges facing low-income and chronically unemployed individuals.

A New Way to Work

Ohio Governor John Kasich recently signed into law the state's biennial budget, which includes an unprecedented focus on helping Ohioans rise up and out of poverty

and into jobs. The Governor has established a statewide framework that will transform the network of human service and workforce programs to find a *New Way to Work* for the more than 1.8 million Ohioans in poverty, starting first with 16- to 24-year-olds, where early intervention can have the greatest impact.

Ohio is ending the siloed, fragmented approach that for far too long treated “symptoms” of poverty instead of seeking a cure for the underlying challenges faced by low-income Ohioans. We are pushing traditional program boundaries by integrating components of the Ohio Works First TANF program with employment programs under the newly reauthorized Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) to create a better coordinated, person-centered case management system. The state’s Comprehensive Case Management and Employment Program will provide an individualized employment plan appropriate to each person’s unique needs in order to remove barriers and make stronger connections to employment. This strategy leverages the strengths of both the workforce and human services systems in a way that focuses on people, not programs.

A number of states and localities have experimented with reforms to better integrate services and align the workforce system to address the needs of TANF recipients and other low-income workers. Lessons learned, highlighting both the benefits and challenges of these initiatives, are well documented. However, Ohio is embarking on this reform in the new era created by WIOA.

WIOA reauthorized national workforce programs for the first time in 16 years and set the stage for a new round of state and local innovation. The law provides opportunities for employment and training activities to be extended to TANF recipients

and for developing innovative, job-driven programs that align services across the TANF and workforce systems. For example, TANF is now a required partner in the local one-stop workforce system, and there is an increased focus on serving low-income individuals with barriers to employment, including out-of-school youth and individuals receiving public assistance. This increases the overlap between targeted populations under both WIOA and TANF.

As we approach the 20th anniversary of the passage of the Personal Responsibility and Workforce Opportunity Act (PRWORA), there is a similar opportunity to make changes to the TANF program to give states flexibility to integrate services and improve employment outcomes for recipients.

Obstacles to Success

From a TANF perspective, there are two major obstacles to TANF-WIOA coordination: 1) Work participation rates are process measures focused on attendance, not outcomes, and 2) strict federal rules, not individual needs, drive work activities.

Rules governing federal work participation requirements have become overly prescriptive and have fundamentally distorted the way caseworkers interact with TANF clients. Federal law holds states accountable for meeting work participation rates, but that accountability has a ripple effect and impacts decisions individual caseworkers make about activities to which TANF clients are assigned. Instead of spending time identifying what clients need and how to get them employed, caseworkers are incentivized to manage to a process to meet the rate. One caseworker I spoke with referred to the work participation rate as a “numbers game.” Another caseworker said

every once in a while he will “take a kick in the teeth” on work participation to do the right thing for a client. Understanding clients’ complex problems and helping them build a path forward is a human-resource-intensive activity. High-quality interactions between caseworkers and clients are the linchpin to identifying barriers and helping individuals become work-ready. Policies that require caseworkers to do mathematical gymnastics to match countable hours to assigned activities are counterproductive and waste a precious resource: their time.

Work participation rules also have led to a proliferation of work experience programs, many of which unfortunately amount to sheltered workshops where clients are given menial tasks disconnected from the skills needed in the job market. Taxpayer dollars are being used to pay outside contractors that specialize in developing and running these “work experience” programs for the sake of saying a client “worked” for their check and counting them toward the rate. It’s hard to believe such programs were a part of Congress’ original vision for welfare reform in 1996.

Finally, federally prescribed work participation rules provide a strong disincentive for workforce development agencies to work with TANF clients. Navigating the rules around what counts and for how long is simply too burdensome. Instead, workforce agencies are inclined to direct their services toward individuals with more work experience and higher skill levels. In short, the current cookie-cutter approach does not effectively move people into jobs, long-term stability or independence from government assistance.

In order to focus on jobs, Ohio is overhauling our case management system and aligning performance metrics with WIOA. Our standards will not be about an individual’s

core and non-core hours and number of consecutive weeks in an activity. Our standards, and ultimately our success, will hinge on metrics tied to improvements in job entry, job retention, earnings and educational outcomes for low-income Ohioans. The state has been a leader in implanting these measures within many of our workforce programs already.

Recommendations

Ohio is not suggesting that Congress reduce the emphasis on personal responsibility or eliminate minimum-hour requirements for individuals to participate in work activities. Yet, TANF has strayed from its original commitment under PRWORA “to increase the flexibility of states in operating a program designed to achieve the purposes of (the Act)” and “end the dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage.” To return to that commitment, we recommend changing a number of federal TANF rules that make it difficult to customize case management based on an individual’s employment readiness needs. Specifically, these include the following:

- ❑ Removing the distinction between “core” and “non-core” activities.

Education and training are important pre-cursors to getting a good job. Removing the distinction between “core” and “non-core” activities allows for an individualized service approach to more effectively move clients toward work. For example, a TANF recipient who needs adult basic education and is required to complete 30 hours of activity may be assigned 10 hours to work on his or her education (a “non-core” activity) and 20 hours to attend a work experience program solely because it

is a “core” activity. Activities are assigned and constructed around counting that person toward the work participation rate, not because they address underlying challenges and needs that will enable them to be successful in the workforce.

□ Increasing the vocational education training time limit from 12 to 36 months.

Many individuals require remedial education or lengthier support to get a certification or credential they need to meet employer skill requirements. For example, let’s say a TANF work-required mom with an 8th grade education wants to get her GED and become trained as a phlebotomist. If it takes her longer than 12 months to obtain her GED, she already has used up her 12-month allowance for training (basic skills education linked to training counts toward the time limit). The time it takes to go from an 8th grade education to a GED varies. Someone at an eight-grade level might receive 100 instructional hours over an 18-month period and progress one grade level. Another student might receive the same number of hours over six months and progress two grade levels. Extending the time limit allows recipients additional time to get their GED and complete the vocational education training necessary to get a job. This is particularly important in Ohio, where approximately 30 percent of those in poverty who are age 25 and older do not have a high school education. (*Ohio 2014 Poverty Report*)

□ Increasing job search and job readiness time limits from six to 12 weeks, and removing the four-consecutive-week limit. The hardest-to-serve individuals require additional time to gain the skills they need to be job-ready. For example, clients may need significant job readiness preparation and soft skills training before they are ready to meaningfully engage in job searching and interviewing with

employers. After spending four weeks on job readiness, they've used up their consecutive-week limits. Arbitrary time limits on job search and job readiness make it harder to successfully connect them to sustainable employment.

- **Removing the 16-hour monthly cap on good-cause hours (but maintaining the 80-hour annual cap) credited toward work participation.** This would provide more flexibility for individuals with situational extenuating circumstances. For example, a mom with children ages 3 and 6 has a high likelihood of being in a situation where one or both children are ill and unable to attend child care or school for more than two days in any given month. Removing the monthly cap would allow that mom to take care of her sick children without negatively impacting her benefit or the state's work participation rate.

A number of these issues are addressed in TANF reauthorization bills under consideration by the committee, in particular the elimination of the distinction between core and non-core activities and increasing the time allowed for job search activities. Ohio supports reforms that enable us to make these changes and that give us more flexibility to tailor our programs and services to successfully move more low-income individuals into work.

Ohio stands ready to work with the committee and its staff to help inform these and other reforms to the TANF program. If you have any questions or would like more details about Ohio's *New Way to Work* initiative, please feel free to contact me directly. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Cynthia Dungey

Director, Ohio Department of Job and Family Services

Ohio Department of Job and Family Services Response to
New Pathways for Fathers and Families FOA
HHS-2015-ACF-OFA-FK-0993

I. ABSTRACT

Project Title: New Beginnings for New Fathers (NBNF)
Applicant Name: Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS)
Address: 30 E. Broad St.
Columbus, OH 43215
Contact Phone: Kimberly Dent: (614)752-0583 (voice) 614-466-1767 (fax)
Email: Kimberly.Dent@jfs.ohio.gov
Website: www.fatherhood.ohio.gov

Project Purpose: To help fathers strengthen their relationships with their children and the mothers of their children, to improve the long-term economic stability of vulnerable families, and to help fathers overcome barriers that prevent them from being effective and nurturing parents.

Applicant: The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS). The lead agency is the Ohio Commission on Fatherhood which is part of ODJFS.

Target Population: Expectant and new low-income adult fathers and young fathers under age 25, including fathers who are high school dropouts; young fathers involved with the juvenile justice system; fathers who are in, or aging out of, foster care; noncustodial and custodial single fathers; and refugee and other immigrant fathers. The project proposes to serve at least 1000 fathers each year.

Need: The service area encompasses five Ohio Counties: Franklin, Clark, Cuyahoga, Hamilton and Montgomery. All have metropolitan area major cities with high poverty rates. From 2009 through 2014, Cincinnati, Cleveland and Dayton had poverty rates exceeding 30 percent. Four out of five counties chosen for this project have some of the state's highest infant mortality rates – which is a strong indicator of poverty – and Ohio has one of the worst infant mortality rates in the nation. In addition, Clark and Cuyahoga counties have non-marital birth rates higher than the state rate and the non-marital births in the five counties account for 53 percent of all Ohio births.

Project Services: The applicant will partner with fatherhood programs that are located in the target areas and that are experienced in working with low-income fathers. These subcontractors will carry out all direct services with participants, including outreach, engagement and retention activities related to increasing job readiness and employment, improving parenting skills, and strengthening family resilience. Funds will be used to support and integrate all three authorized activities: responsible parenting, economic stability, and healthy marriage and relationship education. By acting proactively rather than trying to engage fathers after they have become disengaged and often estranged from their children and partners, OCF seeks to break this cycle of father absence by providing new and expectant fathers with the tools and support they need to become and remain responsible fathers.

Strategic Focus Area 7: Promoting Fatherhood Involvement in Maternal and Child Health.

OCPIM Action Group Co-Chairs: Kimberly Dent, MPA and Steve Killpack, MS
OCPIM Action Group State Lead: Chip Allen and Jye Breckenridge

Research has shown that early and consistent involvement of fathers in the lives of children has long term social, emotional, health and economic benefits. Far too often programs designed to protect the health of mothers and children fail to incorporate the involvement of fathers in a meaningful way or at best include fathers as an afterthought. Programs to prevent infant mortality and improve birth outcomes will not reach their full potential without the meaningful involvement of fathers. The strategies below are designed to incorporate the meaningful involvement of fathers in existing programs and systematically assure the inclusion of fathers in all new infant mortality interventions.

Partners:

Goal: By 2020, demonstrate an increase in efforts to engage fathers in the participation in their children's lives, by encouraging them to actively support their partners in both preconception and interconception health.

Strategy	Group/Agency Responsible	Current Status	Activities	Measurable Outcomes OR Indicators
7.1. Increase awareness with individuals and organizations across all sectors of society (business, civic, government, faith) regarding the importance for children to have involved and committed fathers present.				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % & # of entities reached
7.2. Evaluate existing fatherhood and male involvement programs and curricula, as well as identifying best practices that further validate the significant role of the father in MCH.				XXXXXX
7.3. Increase efforts to include young men in reproductive health initiatives.				XXXXXX

<p>7.4 Promote the inclusion of culturally appropriate males as home visitors or community health providers in evidence-based or promising-practice programs for the purpose of engaging the at-risk father</p>				XXXXXX
<p>7.5 Create opportunities for men that allow them to discuss lessons learned, give advice, and share wisdom that can be passed onto others.</p>				

Grantees by the Numbers

- 8 Grantees selected for funding
- Funding July 1, 2015-June 30, 2017
- Serving 22 Counties
- Programming in 14 Prisons, Jails and Community Correctional facilities
- 2 levels of funding provided by OCF
- 6 funded at \$100,000 per year
- 2 funded at \$40,000 per year
- 4 of the 8 are being funded by OCF for the first time





**Commission on
Fatherhood**

2015-2017 Funded Fatherhood Programs

ACTION FOR CHILDREN

Franklin, Delaware, Licking, Madison & Marion

Contact: Judy Williams

Email: jwilliams@actionforchildren.org

Phone: (614) 224-0222 ext. 102

Location: 78 Jefferson Ave. / Columbus

LIMA ALLEN COUNCIL ON COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

Allen, Auglaize & Mercer

Contact: Steve Gilroy

Email: sgilroy@lacca.org

Phone: (419) 227-0158 ext. 119

Location: 540 S. Central Ave. / Lima

CAC ERIE, HURON & RICHLAND COUNTIES

Richland

Contact: Markeith Hardin

Email: mhardin@cacehr.org

Phone: (419) 589-2520

Location: 597 Park Ave. East / Mansfield

PASSAGES

Portage & Lorain

Contact: Brian Moore

Email: drbalex1@aol.com

Phone: (330) 296-3237 or toll free: (855) 333-3237

Location: 122 N. Prospect St. / Ravenna

CENTER FOR FAMILIES AND CHILDREN

Cuyahoga

Contact: Artis Gaines

Email: artis.gaines@thecentersohio.org

Phone: 216-325-9124

Location: 4500 Euclid Ave. / Cleveland

URBAN LIGHT MINISTRIES

Clark, Greene & Montgomery

Contact: Darryl Grayson

Email: dgrayson@urbanlight.org

Phone: (937) 328-0122

Location: 515 Yellow Springs / Springfield

COLUMBUS URBAN LEAGUE

Franklin County

Contact: Rayshawn Wilson

Email: rwilson@cul.org

Phone: 614-257-6300 ext. 116

Location: 788 Mt. Vernon Ave. / Columbus

WSOS

Wood, Sandusky, Seneca, Ottawa

Contact: Roger Fisher

Email: rafisher@wsos.org

Phone: (419) 334-8911

Location: 109 S. Front St. / Fremont

FOREVER DADS

Muskingum, Perry & Guernsey

Contact: Burl Lemon

Email: burl@foreverdads.com

Phone: (740) 453-1323

Location: 109 Madison St. / Zanesville

These programs are funded by the Ohio Commission on Fatherhood and provide free services to help fathers become better parents, partners and providers for their families.

To learn more about the Ohio Commission on Fatherhood, visit www.fatherhood.ohio.gov.

OCF Grantees 2015-17 – Counties Served



2015-17 Grantees:

- 1. Action for Children: Franklin, Delaware, Licking, Madison & Marion
- 2. CAC Erie, Huron & Richland counties: Richland
- 3. Centers for Families and Children: Cuyahoga
- 4. Forever Dads: Muskingum, Perry & Guernsey
- 5. Lima Allen Council on Community Affairs: Allen, Auglaize & Mercer
- 6. Passages: Portage & Lorain
- 7. Urban Light Ministries: Clark, Greene & Montgomery
- 8. WSOS: Wood, Sandusky, Seneca & Ottawa