

Ohio Commission on Fatherhood

Minutes from the Meeting of

Thursday, June 7, 2012

<p>Commissioners Present:</p> <p>Mr. David Kontur, Chairman</p> <p>Mr. Steven Killpack, Vice Chairman</p> <p>Representative Michael Ashford</p> <p>Senator Bill Beagle</p> <p>Mr. Robert Boykins</p> <p>Ms. Trudie Bormann</p> <p>Ms. Kimberly Hettel</p> <p>Mr. Thomas Joyce</p> <p>Mr. James Lapczynski</p> <p>Mr. Scott Neely</p> <p>OCF Staff Present:</p> <p>Kimberly Dent, Interim Executive Director</p> <p>Monica Mahoney</p> <p>Whitney Logan</p>	<p>Guests:</p> <p>Senator Bill Seitz (via telephone)</p> <p>Mr. Michael Adeyanju, Legislative Aide for Representative Tracy Heard</p> <p>Ms. LuAnn Berry, WSOS</p> <p>Mr. Matthew Cunningham, TANF Section Chief</p> <p>Ms. Jenelle Donovan-Lyle, ODJFS Legislative Liaison</p> <p>Mr. George Dupey, WSOS</p> <p>Mr. Roger Fisher, WSOS</p> <p>Ms. Charmaine Kirby, Case Manager, Spirit of Peace</p> <p>Madison Lisotto Legislative Aide for Representative Ross McGregor</p> <p>Mr. James McDonald, President, OPNFF</p> <p>Mr. Michael Newsom, Social Program Coordinator, Montgomery County JFS</p> <p>Mr. Barry Sheets, Consultant to the RIDGE Project</p> <p>Mr. Edward Stockhausen, Legislative Aide for Senator Shirley Smith</p>
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I. Call to Order & Welcome

Chairman David Kontur, (“Chairman Kontur”) called the meeting to order at 10:10 a.m. Chairman Kontur introduced himself and welcomed our guests.

II. Collateral Sanctions Legislation

Senator Bill Seitz joined the meeting via conference call and the legislative aides of the bills’ other co-sponsors attended the meeting. Senator Seitz shared the highlights of the Collateral Sanctions bills that were recently enacted in Ohio. One in seven Ohioans have had a criminal conviction at some point in their lives. Most offenders offend from age 18 to 30 and there are relatively few first offenses after age 30. In young adulthood we all did very stupid things. At what point do we give folks a break?

The Collateral Sanction bills provide an opportunity for former offenders, people who have been convicted or who were on probation and have kept clean for one year since their last misdemeanor or three years since their last felony to ask the court for a Certificate of Qualification of Employment (CQE). The court will determine whether the person needs to find employment and does not impose a reasonable risk of harm to the public. The CQE can be taken to a prospective employer and if the person is hired, the employer will not be subject to a lawsuit based on theory of negligent hiring. In the past, employers have been hesitant to hire past offenders because of potential liability if that person commits another crime. DRC certifies that the person has rehabilitated himself while in prison. This law extends that principal to a broader group to include people who were never in prison because sentenced to probation. The law does not mandate that employers hire ex-offenders or that they need to do criminal background check.

In addition, the law contains provision on:

1. Calculation of child support: under current law does not take into account criminal conviction or incarceration. Assumes that the noncustodial parent can earn same amount of money while in jail or post conviction. New law relaxes imputation of income requirement. Senators Seitz and Senator Smith would like to see further revisions of child support provisions.

2. Professional Licensing: Also removes from Ohio law provisions that some licensing agencies prevented application even if conviction is completely unrelated to service to be performed in that licensing role. Now cannot deny license on basis of prior conviction unless there is a direct nexus to the offense and the license that is sought. Ohio has shortages in many construction jobs like welder but many did not seek job because could not get license.
3. Driver License: Declassifies some traffic related offenses that have nothing to do with driving habits. All fathers and mothers should appreciate that it's tough to have a job if you can't get there. Adopted many recommendations from Senator Lehner's work group on decriminalizing license suspension for offenses that are unrelated to driving.

Under current federal law if you receive a drug conviction you automatically lose your driver's license. Although states can opt out of this federal law Ohio is not doing that through these bills because the proper procedure is joint resolution by the House and Senate. Senator Seitz anticipates that Ohio will do that this fall. He does not sanction drug use but thinks that a person should not lose his driver's license because he used drugs in his home.

Commissioner Bormann wanted to make sure that people beyond fathers could take advantage to these changes. Lack of license, for a profession and to drive, are among the biggest barriers to Ohio improving its federally mandated Work Participation Rates.

According to Senator Seitz, Governor Kasich strongly supports these changes to the law. It is extremely rare to have a bill of this complexity pass through both houses and have identical bills. Because both houses worked together, they are poised to have final action next week and to get the bills signed quickly by the Governor. Senator Seitz worked on sentencing reform for three years before it happened. This is a major accomplishment that they could do this so quickly and with such unanimous support.

Commissioner Neely mentioned that under the expungement provision a judge now has discretion on a felony and misdemeanor committed at different times or two separate misdemeanors or non-support

convictions with cooperation of CSEA. Under current law, a person can only have one expungement during his lifetime. This change gives judges discretion beyond that.

DRC Director Mohr is in Colorado at a Pew Conference speaking about sentencing reform and recidivism. Ohio has one of the lowest recidivism rates in the country (31%); in many states it is 50% or more. If we can get people employed they are less likely to reoffend.

According to Senator Seitz, by following enlightened criminal justice policies you are actually increasing public safety. Education, job training and employment bear much fruits for taxpayers and increase the tax base when these people become taxpayers.

Charmaine Kirby asked if conviction is from another state, what type of remedy does Ohio offer? Senator Seitz responded that if you were convicted in another state, Ohio will not allow you to seek a CQE from Ohio because Ohio courts would not have had any involvement with you and would be too cumbersome for courts.

DRC has eight justice reinvestment officers and for people who were "guests of the Gary Mohr hotel system" people have the option to go before one of these special justices. People who were never in a DRC facility have the option of going before one of these officers or a judge in court. Ohio followed the model of Uniform Collateral Sanctions Act that envisions going to court in most cases.

Barry Sheets asked if an ex-offender seeks a CQE, is there a rubric the courts use or is it case by case, and if it is case by case and an ex-offender has kept his nose clean but the court denies the CQE, is there a right to appeal? Senator Seitz responded that there is an appeal but the court applies an abuse of discretion standard which is a high standard. Also, there is a statutory framework in the bill for what the court is to consider.

III. Approval of February 2, 2012 and April 5, 2012 Minutes

Commissioner Steve Killpack moved with Commissioner Randy Leite seconding, that the minutes from the meetings on February 2, 2012 and April 5, 2012 be approved as submitted. The motion carried unanimously.

IV. Update on OCF Fatherhood Grants and Funding

A. Evaluator

Director Dent informed the commission that an evaluator for the OCF funded fatherhood grantees has been selected. Matthew Cunningham stated that Daniel Houston & Associates was selected and have been notified of the award letter but no contract has been issued yet. There were only two applicants. They are based in Columbus. Mr. Cunningham hopes to have them begin work in July. Commissioner Killpack said that he looked at Daniel Houston & Associates website but could not find any mention of evaluation work they had done. Mr. Cunningham said evidence of prior work was required in the response to the letterhead bid.

B. County Fatherhood Initiative

Director Dent said that OCF is still planning to fund five Ohio counties: Lucas, Perry, Lake, Cuyahoga and Hamilton for the next round of the Ohio County Fatherhood Initiative. The funds will come from the FY 2013 budget. OCF staff has been working with Contracts and Acquisitions on finalizing the RFP to hire the trainer.

V. Grantee Experience

Two OCF grantees were invited to present information about their fatherhood programs.

A. Talbert House

Harold Howard presented about the fatherhood program at Talbert House. They offer case management to all fathers and serve over 200 fathers a year. Most come in needing help with child support issues followed closely by access and visitation. Talbert House educates fathers about their rights and teaches

them how to get modifications of their child support orders and things of that nature. Understanding how to navigate the system is half the battle for most men. Housing is a big issue in Hamilton County along with employment. Talbert House has a staff attorney who helps with family law issues and expungement. They do not handle many divorces and do not provide criminal representation. Every father who takes the Nurturing Fathers class has a consultation with the attorney to educate them about their rights. They also have an employment services provider on staff and receive funding from United Way for their work force reentry program. They provide additional help to the hard to hire.

Talbert House offers “Nurturing Father classes in 10 week sessions 3 times a year. Typically, they register 40-50 men per class with 22-27 of those men ultimately graduating from the program. All men participate voluntarily and are not court ordered. Those who don’t complete class usually stay involved but may have found full time employment. The fathers they serve face many barriers including felony records. One of their program strengths is a strong alumni network to keep fathers involved. Everyone needs ongoing support and many alumni fathers volunteer in the program as mentors to other men.

Tomorrow Talbert House will hold its annual “Father of the Year luncheon” which is a major source of funding. Last year the luncheon raised \$60,000 and so far this year they have \$70,000. This money helps Talbert House continue its program while they await funding streams. It is also a way to involve the business community in fatherhood work. Some of the perceptions about fathers are not always good but this luncheon gives Talbert House an opportunity to highlight fathers who have done extraordinary things.

B. WSOS

Roger Ward, Ms. LuAnn Berry and George Dupey, all fatherhood program staff from Woods Sandusky Ottawa and Seneca Community Action (WSOS) attended the meeting and made a presentation about the fatherhood program at WSOS. Initially WSOS served only the four counties represented in its name but now serves 15 counties throughout Ohio. Their fatherhood program includes fatherhood

classes, case management, financial literacy training, and job placement assistance. Many of the fathers they serve were formerly incarcerated. WSOS was one of two Ohio programs to receive funding from the Federal Responsible Fatherhood Grant Program in 2011; the other program to be funded is the Ridge Project. WSOS works extensively with the Ridge Project to help men about to be released from prison so they can transition back into society and their families. Their federal grant requires WSOS to serve six counties and includes a broad base of employment services including funds to go back to school for training in new skills. In addition to using evidence based curriculum, WSOS uses “VIP- very important padre program” which focuses on important qualities for positive fathering.

VI. Montgomery County’s New Approach to Fatherhood

Mike Newsom, Social Program Coordinator for Montgomery County spoke about the county’s new approach to fatherhood. His is a new position that requires him to review all Montgomery County Job and Family Service (MCJFS) policies and programs to ensure they are “father friendly”. He works to educate MCJFS staff about all things pertaining to fatherhood and link fathers to needed services in multiple agencies. He does fatherhood outreach to schools, prisons and churches. They have overcome barriers by promoting the program as a family initiative because it benefits more than fathers and collaborating wherever possible.

VII. Ohio Practitioners’ Network for Fathers & Families

James McDonald, President of the Ohio Practitioners’ Network (OPNFF) for Fathers and Families made a presentation about the history and work of OPNFF. Chairman Dave Kontur would like Mr. McDonald to attend future commission meetings and give regular updates about the work of OPNFF. Although the Ohio Commission on Fatherhood was created by statute in 1999 it was not funded initially. In 2004 a group of fatherhood practitioners created OPNFF as a forum for sharing ideas about how to encourage responsible fatherhood and to learn about activities that were happening around the state. OPNFF has a Board of Directors which includes OCF Commissioners Steve Killpack and Scott Neely as well as 1000

members. OPNFF is a grassroots connection to communities. Their mission is to focus on children. Their client is the fatherhood practitioner. Public agencies predominantly serve women and children even though they are called family agencies. OPNFF engages in five activities:

1. Trainings on fatherhood curriculum: train the trainer;
2. Public policy meetings;
3. Technical assistance to other states developing fatherhood network;
4. Collaborative projects; and
5. Networking through their website www.fatherhood.org. People can search by topic in 88 counties to find out what fatherhood work is happening in each county

OPNFF is working with Ohio University to create endowed professorship for fatherhood. They are in the midst of a \$2 campaign to endow this chair and create the Institute for Fathers and Families. The Institute will develop evidence based programs and policies. Commissioner Randy Leite is involved in this. Ultimately, they hope to have statewide involvement with satellite offices throughout Ohio.

VIII. Fathers' Day

With Father's Day at the end of the month, several organizations are sponsoring events for fathers. OCF will continue to post links to upcoming events on our website. Director Dent highlighted several including Cuyahoga County's annual fatherhood summit this Friday, past OCF grantee Forever Dads summit on Saturday and the BAFF/ Fatherhood Summit co-sponsored by OCF grantee the Columbus Urban League on June 30

IX. Announcements & New Business

There were no announcements or new business.

X. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 11:50 am.