

North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services
Division of Social Services

**Overview of State Initiatives
Noncustodial Fathers
May 2012**

Child and Family Services Review

The CFSRs enable the Children's Bureau to:

- (1) ensure conformity with Federal child welfare requirements;
- (2) determine what is actually happening to children and families as they are engaged in child welfare services; and
- (3) assist States to enhance their capacity to help children and families achieve positive outcomes.

Ultimately, the goal of the reviews is to help States improve child welfare services & achieve the following outcomes for families and children who receive services:

Safety

- Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.
- Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible & appropriate.

Permanency

- Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.
- The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for families.

Family and Child Well-Being

- Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.
- Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.
- Children receive adequate services to meet their physical & mental health needs.

Key Findings from 2007 CFSR

There was a lack of consistency with regard to:

- ensure sufficient visitation (or other forms of contact) between the children in foster care and their fathers
- efforts to search for relatives as potential placement options for children in foster care, particularly paternal relatives
- efforts to support the relationship between children and their fathers while the child was in foster care
- assessing and meeting the needs of parents, particularly fathers
- involving fathers in the case planning process

PCANC Assessment

In June 2011, Prevent Child Abuse North Carolina (PCANC) concluded a research and assessment project to identify key strategies for building the capacity and strength of NC's fatherhood movement. The project involved the completion of:

- a literature review on best practices and evidenced-based programs
- an environmental scan of key national and local resources
- interviews with key stakeholders

Simultaneously, PCANC convened the Fatherhood Policy Committee, consisting of key stakeholders within state and community agencies that have been active in fatherhood activities, to assess, discuss and translate the information and data collected, and make recommendations for advancing North Carolina's fatherhood efforts.

Recommendations

1. **Leadership:** Prevent Child Abuse of NC is providing facilitative and capacity-building support within the existing NC Fatherhood Development Advisory Council to build a collaborative, sustainable, statewide leadership structure across public and private agencies that can successfully support enhancing practice with fathers, promote public education on the importance of engaged fathers in healthy child development, and securing funding for fatherhood research and evidenced based practices.

Recommendations Continued

2. **Resources and Tools for NC Fatherhood**
Practitioners: PCANC is maintaining a web-based NC Fatherhood Clearinghouse which provides links to national and state resources, allows practitioners to share documents and materials, and intends to provide up-to-date research and data.

Recommendations Continued

- 3. Support for Practitioners in Effectively Engaging Fathers in Existing Human Services:** Develop and adopt a shared vision of father engagement at the state level, identify and/or develop cross-training opportunities across different child/family serving systems, and explore the development of a shared “core” training on fathers that uses a “child development frame” as its conceptual foundation.

Recommendations Continued

- 4. Support for Replication of Effective Fatherhood Programs:** Public and private funders should require funded programs have evidence and a solid implementation and program evaluation plan.

Recommendations Continued

- 5. Public Awareness and Social Marketing:** PCANC and fatherhood stakeholders have begun partnering with researchers to more fully explore the public’s understanding of fathers and their roles, as well as develop and test new messages to promote public support for engaged fathers.

**NC Child Welfare Professionals' Perspective
on Fathers**

A survey conducted in 2011 of over 600 workers and supervisors concluded:

- *Most families I serve have very engaged and involved biological fathers* - 85% disagreed/strongly disagreed
- *Fathers play just as an important role as mothers in raising their children* - 95% agreed/strongly agreed

**Child Welfare Specific
Recommendations**

- Develop a best practice guide that walks counties through suggested practices from identifying through engaging fathers
- Identify strategies to provide more consistent training to counties on engaging fathers
- Explore whether Family Finding can be used earlier in the life of a case: during in-home services and/or immediately when children go into foster care.

Best Practices Guide Outline

- Child well-being benefits of father involvement
- Maps out what is current existing policy from intake through foster care services
- Practice tips on engaging incarcerated parents
- Discusses families with multiple fathers
- Unique challenges and resources for fathers in the military
- Parents who have a history of domestic violence

Snap Shot of Existing Programs/Services

NCDSS currently provides funding for:

- Buncombe, Durham, Halifax, Cumberland, & Districts 20A/20B - Access and Visitation Services through the AOC
- Wayne - Wages provides father led Circle of Parents groups
- Guilford - Children's Home Society provides 24/7 Dad and Inside Out Dad
- Rockingham - Help, Inc. provides Incredible Years targeting fathers
- Martin/Tyrell/Washington – joint Health Department effort to provide a Nurturing Fathers Program
- McDowell Schools - provides 24/7 Dad and Dr. Dad
- Chatham - Health Department provides a Nurturing Parenting “Focus on Fathers” program
- Forsyth (area) and Durham - Strong Fathers

Connection with Judges

- Ensure the Visitation/Contact Plan includes the non-custodial father
- Encourage the father's/agency's involvement of the father in case planning (developing the Family Services Agreement) particularly through participating within Child and Family Team Meetings
