

Ohio Commission on Fatherhood

Minutes from the Meeting of

Thursday, April 7, 2011

<p>Commissioners Present:</p> <p>Peter Lawson Jones, Chairman</p> <p>Senator Bill Beagle</p> <p>Senator Charleta Tavares</p> <p>Representative Timothy Derickson</p> <p>Representative Jeffrey McClain</p> <p>Mr. Robert Boykins</p> <p>Director Susan Brown</p> <p>Ms. Kimberly Dent</p> <p>Mr. Thomas Eddie Joyce</p> <p>Mr. David Kontur</p> <p>Mr. Steven Killpack</p> <p>Dr. Randy Leite</p>	<p>Guests:</p> <p>Monica Gillison, Executive Director Ohio Children’s Trust Fund</p> <p>Lavita Stokes, Vice President of Finance Three Leaf Productions</p> <p>Robert Pina</p> <p>Michael Galluzo, President National Organization for Parental Equality (NOPE)</p> <p>Ray Lautenschlager, NOPE President</p> <p>Andy Davis, NOPE member</p> <p>Ross Wilson, NOPE member</p>
<p>OCF Staff Present:</p> <p>Mr. J. Tracy Robinson, Executive Director</p> <p>Ms. Monica Mahoney</p> <p>Ms. Whitney Logan</p>	

I. Call to Order & Welcome New Commissioners

Chairman Peter Lawson Jones (“Chairman Jones”) called the meeting to order at 10:19 AM. Chairman Jones welcomed our guests and the following newly appointed Commissioners: Senators Bill Beagle and Charleta Tavares, Representatives Jeffrey McClain and Mike Ashford and Director John Matthews, Governor’s Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (GOFBCI) (represented at the meeting by Shane Ellett). A quorum was achieved.

II. Approval of February 3, 2011 Minutes

Commissioner Eddie Joyce moved, with Commissioner Steve Killpack seconding, that the minutes from the meeting of February 3, 2011, be approved as submitted. The motion carried unanimously.

III. Executive Director’s Report

Executive Director Tracy Robinson (“Director Robinson”) provided a written summary of his activities in November, December and January, a synopsis of which has been incorporated in these minutes. He highlighted the Commission’s and/or his involvement in the following events:

- Director Robinson attended the Third Annual Columbus State Community College Brothers Keeper Panel. (Columbus - February 8, 2011).
- Director Robinson served as the keynote speaker at Ross Correctional Institution. (Chillicothe - February 10, 2011).
- Director Robinson presented a workshop on Engaging Head Start Fathers at the Ohio Head Start Association Statewide Planning Meeting. (Columbus - February 11, 2011).
- Director Robinson presented a workshop on Engaging the Non-Resident Father at the Michigan Fatherhood Conference. (Howell, Michigan - February 19, 2011).

- Director Robinson presented a workshop on Engaging the Non-Resident Father at the 12th Annual New England Fatherhood Conference. (Providence, Rhode Island - March 23, 2011).
- Director Robinson attended the April Child Abuse Prevention Kickoff for the Ohio Children's Trust Fund. (Columbus - March 31, 2011).
- Director Robinson conducted the Engaging the Non-Resident Father Training sessions in Tuscarawas and Cuyahoga counties. (February 25 and March 24, 2011).
- Director Robinson briefed State Senator Charleta Tavares. (February 10, 2011).
- Director Robinson briefed State Representative Mike Ashford. (February 17, 2011).
- Director Robinson briefed State Senator Bill Beagle. (March 9, 2011).
- Director Robinson along with representatives from current grantees presented proponent testimony on H.B. 145 before the Ohio House of Representatives Committee on State Government and Elections. (March 29, 2011).

IV. BAFF Grant

Commissioner Kimberly Dent spoke about the Asset Building for Financial Responsibility Grant awarded by the federal government in the amount of \$650,000. The Ohio Office of Child Support (OCS) and its primary partner and Assets for Independence Grantee (AFI), the Ohio Community Development Corporation (OCDC), have developed a program with a two-pronged statewide and local approach that to provide for the financial well-being of children across Ohio, with a particular focus on families living in urban poverty. The Ohio Commission on Fatherhood, the Ohio Practitioners' Network for Fathers and Families and the State Treasurer's Office will work with OCS and OCDC to craft a statewide approach to connect low-income non-custodial fathers to financial education and asset building programs offered by AFI grantees.

The partners will cross-train child support workers, fatherhood and family-serving practitioners, financial literacy providers and AFI staff on the child support system and its processes and the asset building services and tools available to low-income families through the AFI program.

AFI programs have been underutilized by low-income non-custodial fathers in Ohio. These fathers - who are often struggling to maintain stable employment while paying their child support and staying actively involved in the lives of their children - typically tend to be wary of traditional financial systems and government agencies. Fatherhood providers with established trusting relationships with non-custodial fathers will be critical in bridging the barrier between child support agencies, AFI grantees and the targeted population. The approach will include a statewide summit to launch the initiative and regional training offerings for collaborative partners across the state. The initiative will be promoted through traditional media (print and web-based) and innovative new media (social networking platform, and text messaging).

OCS and OCDC will partner with child support agencies and AFI grantees in Cincinnati and Cleveland to implement the local approach. The need for financial stability and asset building services is particularly high in these two urban centers. Cleveland (where 42% of children live in poverty) and Cincinnati (where 36% of children live in poverty) have both consistently ranked among the top ten poorest cities in the country. Ohio is the only state in the Union to have two cities among the top ten. The Cuyahoga and Hamilton County Child Support Enforcement Agencies (CSEAs) will target two groups of low income obligors: those who are current in or with their child support payments and those who are in default in or with their child support orders and/or struggling with large arrearages. OCS and its partners will engage in a process and outcome evaluation of the program with these two obligor groups based upon a number of objectives, including increased knowledge about and use of financial literacy and asset building

services available in the community as well as child support order modifications and compromise and waiver of arrearages in targeted appropriate cases.

Commissioners Dent and Jones traveled to San Francisco at the invitation of the AFI grant administrator, the Lewin Group, where they made a presentation about the grant at the National Fathers and Families Conference on March 2nd. Their presentation was well attended, and their remarks well received. All expenses were paid by the Lewin Group.

V. Ohio County Fatherhood Initiative

The purpose of the Ohio County Fatherhood Initiative (OCFI) is to provide training to county leaders to identify and address the father absence problem in their local communities. The ultimate goal is to seed fatherhood initiatives in all 88 Ohio counties. The National Fatherhood Initiative is providing community mobilization training to help counties identify collaborative partners and build sustainable fatherhood programs. All twelve counties participating in the pilot program are conducting fatherhood leadership summits during the month of May. They are Clark, Fairfield, Franklin, Greene, Guernsey, Lorain, Mercer, Montgomery, Muskingum, Stark, Summit and Trumbull. Over the past four months counties have:

- Attended a training on how to conduct a Needs and Assets Assessment in their community;
- Planned for a Leadership Summit on Fatherhood;
- Drafted an action plan on how to implement a Community Action Plan on Fatherhood; and
- Received guidance in how to identify and apply for funding to sustain a County Fatherhood Initiative.

The OCF continues to furnish both technical assistance and the contracted services from the National Fatherhood Initiative. Counties successfully completing the mobilization process will receive a one-time \$10,000 seed grant to begin fatherhood programs in their community. Five counties are already on the waiting list to participate in the next round of OCFI funding. Depending on the OCF budget for the next biennium, the second training is expected to begin in September, 2011.

VI. H.B. 145

Representatives Carlton Weddington and Timothy Derickson are co-sponsors of H.B. 145 which contains the proposed amendments to the OCF statute, O.R.C. § 5101.34 et seq. The bill would amend O.R.C. §§ 5101.34, 5101.341 and 5101.342 by, inter alia revising OCF membership, requiring that fatherhood summits be held every two years (as opposed to four), and by enumerating the staffing duties of the Commission. Director Robinson testified before the State Government and Elections Committee on the measure. Burl Lemon of ForeverDads, Sue Bobson of Action for Children, Roger Fisher of WSOS, Glenn Harris of the Columbus Urban League and two non-custodial low-income fathers, who completed a fatherhood program at ForeverDads, testified at the hearing on March 29th. Director Robinson noted that the committee members had many questions and seemed very intrigued by the work of the OCF. Representative Timothy Derickson briefed the Commission on the progress of HB 145 since the bill was introduced. The Ohio House of Representatives State Government and Elections Committee approved and referred H.B. 145 to the full House for consideration by an 18-3 vote. Representative Derickson said that he spoke to several members who opposed the bill and felt it was based on their lack of understanding of the OCF's work. He suggested that Director Robinson continue to meet with legislators and brief them of the important work the Commission is doing to strengthen fathers. Director Robinson stated letters were sent to all representatives on

the committee thanking those who were supportive and offering to meet with those who opposed the bill. Director Robinson commended Representatives Derickson and Jeffrey McClain for advocating for the bill in the house. Chairman Jones asked Representative Derickson if he knew when H.B. 145 will rise above the black line and come to the floor for a full House vote.

Representative Derricks was unsure when the bill would be considered by the House. Director Robinson stated it would be great for it to pass during the month of June. Director Robinson addressed a potential issue within the bill, stating their summits will be inexpensive and that OCF will collaborate with state and community partners to ensure that the cost remains low. Chairman Jones spoke of the Cuyahoga County's Fatherhood conference and their ability to secure funding and support from local foundations, agencies and corporations.

Commissioner Susan Brown cited the example of the Franklin County Family Empowerment Day, where many agencies came together and provided services to fathers. Commissioner David Kontur asked about the type of activities at the Family Empowerment Day. Director Robinson responded by stating Judge Kim Browne reinstated suspended drivers' licenses, modified child support orders, cleared arrest warrants and collected child support payments.

Senator Charleta Tavares would like information sent to her office when events like this occur. She suggested all communication should go to elected officials because they would like to attend and could incorporate information on such activities in their newsletters.

Ms. Rose Wilson asked Commissioner Brown what is being done for fathers who are incarcerated. Commissioner Brown mentioned collaborations made with COWIC, Workforce Development, DOL Enhanced Transitional Jobs, Buckeye Ranch and Alvis House as examples of programs helping unemployed and formerly incarcerated fathers.

Chairman Jones suggested that Ms. Wilson share her ideas with Commissioner Brown by providing a written document on best practices in her community.

VII. Election of Officers

Chairman Jones asked the Commission if they prefer to vote on commission officers today or establish an appointing committee to nominate officers. The commission decided to do the former.

- Senator Tavares moved, with Commissioner Randy Leite seconding, that Peter Lawson Jones be reappointed as Chairman of the Ohio Commission on Fatherhood.
- Commissioner Steve Killpack moved, with Commissioner Dent seconding, that Commissioner Dave Kontur be reappointed as Vice Chairman of the Ohio Commission on Fatherhood.
- Commissioner Dent moved, with Commissioner Leite seconding, that Commissioner Killpack be appointed Secretary of the Ohio Commission on Fatherhood.

VIII. Announcements & New Business

- Ms. Monica Gillison from the Ohio Children's Trust Fund announced that April is Child Abuse Prevention Month.
- Commissioner Steve Killpack suggested ten percent of the budgeted OCF grant amount be designated to hire an evaluator. Director Robinson believes the outcomes and measurements of the grant cycles are important.
- Senator Tavares suggested creating a clearinghouse of promising fatherhood practices and programs and their posting on the OCF website.

- Director Robinson suggested hiring new staff to identify promising practices and post them on our website. Commissioner Killpack stated that the Ohio Practitioners Network of Fathers and Families will do the same on their website, www.ohiofathers.org.
- Mr. Shane Ellett assured the Commissioner that GOFBCI is in full support of the OCF and is willing to help in any way they can.
- Chairman Jones wished all elected officials well in the budget discussion and “humbly” suggested that they employ a single bottom line lens as they review the upcoming state budget: what will best support Ohio’s families and children. He opined that programs that best and cost-effectively achieve that result should be amply funded. Chairman Jones thanked the legislators for their attendance and for all of their hard work.

IX. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned 11:40 AM.