

# Network Notes

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Our mission, as a statewide network, is to initiate, promote and support effective programs and to educate on public policy to enhance the responsible involvement of fathers in the lives of children, families and the community.

161 Saint Anthony Ave. Suite 845  
Saint Paul, MN 55103  
Phone: 651-222-7432  
info@mnfathers.org  
www.mnfathers.org

Visit us online at  
[www.mnfathers.org](http://www.mnfathers.org)

## A Voice for Fatherhood

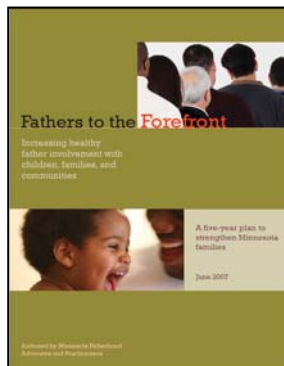
MFFN seeks to provide a voice for Minnesota's fatherhood and family services organizations.

If you have a *best practice* or information you would like to share, please contact MFFN.

"Network Notes" is published each February, May, August, and November.

## Fathers to the Forefront: five-year plan aims to strengthen Minnesota families

Since June of 2005, a dedicated group, comprised of over 50 family service practitioners, educators, and fatherhood advocates, has gathered to build momentum behind Minnesota's fatherhood movement.



Through a series of meetings hosted by the McKnight Foundation and the Bush Foundation, the group has succeeded in developing a 25-page action plan for the fatherhood field. The action plan, "Fathers to the Forefront: a five-year plan for strengthening Minnesota's fathers and families", will be released at meetings and through the media throughout late summer 2007.

The document, "Fathers to the Forefront", is currently available to download from [www.mnfathers.org](http://www.mnfathers.org).

The planning group included professionals who work in fatherhood focused non-profits, various state and county agencies, educational institutions, and other organizations that promote the well-being of Minnesota's families.

Together, the professionals identified four key "arenas" for on-going work: Education, Public Policy, Services & Support, and Research. Benchmarks in each of the four arenas were designed to set a course of action for 2007 – 2011.

The action plan provides a blueprint for increasing supports for fathers and families. The document will be disseminated with the hope that advocates for fathers, families and

Continued on page 2, "Blueprint".

## Minnesota Legislature passes laws affecting fathers, families

During the 2007 legislative process, a number of new laws were passed that will affect fathers, families, and children across Minnesota. Here is a recap of a few of those laws.

**Child support changes:** A new law, with various effective dates, makes minor technical adjustments and two substantive changes to child support laws passed in 2005. Currently, child support arrears are subject to an interest rate 2 percent above the interest rate placed on any other monetary judgment in Minnesota. The new law removes the increase, which will hopefully be an incentive for parents to stay current with child support payments, according to the bill's sponsors. The law also states that a deviation in the amount of child support is permissible if the child has resided in a foreign country for more than one year, and that country has a substantially higher or lower cost of living.

**Funding for young learners:** A new law includes \$13.7 billion in E-12 education funding over the next biennium. Early childhood family education spending is increased 14 percent and Head Start funding is increased by 5 percent. "Overall the early childhood package is very good. We're back to restoring the cuts in 2003 and moving forward from there," according to one of the bill's legislative supporters.

**Funding for parent involvement in literacy development:** An early childhood literacy program is established to increase skills of Head Start participants. The programs are to be based on "involved parents, ongoing professional staff development, and high quality early literacy program standards." Students may enroll in full-time online learning programs or supplemental online learning programs. The law requires students and their parents to submit an application to the online learning provider and identify the reasons for enrolling. Local school boards are encouraged to adopt and implement a parent and family involvement policy that

Continued on page 3, "2007 laws".



Celebrating five years of service to fatherhood advocates, educators and family professionals.  
2003—2007

## Blueprint for healthy fatherhood

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children from across the state will commit to advancing one or more of the benchmarks for healthy fatherhood.

### Take Action!

“Fathers to the Forefront” is an action plan — a blueprint for advancing fatherhood in each of the four arenas. As such, every social service agency, community-based organization, faith-based group, non-profit entity, corporation, public policy decision maker, and government agency has a stake and a role in its success.

### What can you do?

- 1) Download the document and share it with a colleague. It's linked at [www.mnfathers.org](http://www.mnfathers.org).
- 2) Engage your co-workers in a conversation about how to create father-friendly and father-inclusive environments.
- 3) Contact MFFN to schedule a 30-minute discussion about the blueprint at your next staff meeting or board meeting.
- 4) Link the blueprint to your organization's homepage.
- 5) Identify one to four benchmarks that you and your colleagues can commit to promoting over the next few years.
- 6) Contact your legislators, your school board members, your county commissioners, and the governor to promote greater visibility of issues affecting healthy fatherhood and to promote the notion that healthy fathers are better equipped to nurture healthy children.

The “Fathers to the Forefront” action plan aims to engage a broader audience in discussions about men in families.



### Background of the blueprint

In many ways, “Fathers to the Forefront” is a companion to MFFN's report from January 2007, “Do we count fathers in Minnesota?” The latter is a compilation of facts and figures about

Minnesota's fathers with a set of recommendations in the final chapter. The former takes the recommendations one-step-further and creates expectations for action. Together, the two documents provide an excellent basis for understanding fatherhood in Minnesota and for moving forward in positive growth of services and supports for men in families.

With your help, “Fathers to the Forefront” can become a living document that invigorates Minnesota's fatherhood field and engages a broader audience in discussions about men in families.

## Fall Fatherhood Seminar Series offers workshops across Minnesota

The University of Minnesota Extension and Minnesota Fathers & Families Network present a series of half-day professional seminars, titled “Counting and Serving Never-Married Families.”

During each workshop, participants will:

- Learn key statistics and recent research about never-married parents;
- Gain a better understanding of the national “fragile families” research, with a focus on fatherhood;
- Learn about themes impacting never-married parents including relationship issues, co-parenting styles, and support for children;
- Share concrete ideas for supporting unmarried parents in local program delivery;
- Network with other community professionals on topics of fatherhood and family development.

Workshops will take place in the following locations:

<b>Marshall</b>	September 25, 2007
<b>Duluth/Proctor</b>	October 2, 2007
<b>Minneapolis</b>	October 16, 2007
<b>Moorhead</b>	October 23, 2007
<b>Bemidji</b>	October 24, 2007
<b>Hutchinson</b>	November 1, 2007
<b>Rochester</b>	November 14, 2007
<b>Saint Cloud</b>	November 15, 2007

Details are available at [www.mnfathers.org/news2007.html](http://www.mnfathers.org/news2007.html) or by calling MFFN at (651) 222-7432.

## SAVE THE DATE

5th Annual

### Minnesota Fatherhood Summit

The annual winter conference of the  
Minn. Fathers & Families Network

Monday—Tuesday • January 14—15, 2008 • St. Cloud, Minn.

*For everyone interested in creating healthy connections  
between dads and kids.*

**Confirmed keynote presenters include:**

Dr. Glen Palm, Professor, St. Cloud State University, Saint Cloud, MN  
Jacquelyn Boggess, Co-director, Center for Family Policy and Practice, Madison, WI

Additional details coming early fall 2007.

## 2007 laws affect fathers and families

Continued from page 1.

promotes regular, two-way meaningful communication between home and school; parenting skills; and welcomes parents in the school by seeking their support and assistance.

**Early childhood and adult programs:** A phase in of full-day services in Head Start programs or licensed child care is required so that by fiscal year 2009 at least 25 percent of the total state funded enrollment throughout the state must be provided. The minimums increase to 40 percent in fiscal year 2011 and 50 percent in fiscal year 2013. If a Head Start program or licensed child care center cannot meet the federal standards or choose not to participate, the program may request an exemption from the commissioner. Early childhood family education programs must submit biennial plans to the commissioner, under the law. The plan should describe how the program provides parenting education and ensures family participation.

**Domestic abuse:** As a component of the public safety finance bill, if a person violates a domestic abuse no contact order and is found guilty of a gross misdemeanor, he or she will serve a minimum of 10 days' imprisonment in addition to counseling. If a person knowingly violates a no contact order within 10 years of the first of two or more previous qualified domestic-violence related offenses, or is found in possession of a dangerous weapon, he or she may be sentenced to 5 years in prison and fined up to \$10,000. A 30-day imprisonment and counseling will be imposed as a condition of probation.

**Supervised parenting grants:** A component of the public safety finance bill provides for \$200,000 each year for grants to organizations that provide supervised parenting time services to parents and children in Minnesota. The commissioner shall establish grant evaluation and award criteria for the program and ensure that grant recipients operate in a manner consistent with standards and guidelines promulgated by the Supervised Visitation Network.

**Legal services for family law matters:** A component of the public safety finance bill provides Legal Services to Low-Income

Clients in Family Law Matters. Of this appropriation, \$877,000 each year is to improve the access of low-income clients to legal representation in family law matters.

**Substance abuse:** The state commitment law will be amended to provide for court-ordered early intervention services if it is found that a pregnant woman is chemically dependent. This would include a woman who during the pregnancy has engaged in excessive use, for non-medical purposes, controlled substances, alcohol or inhalants such as tetrahydrocannabinol, and if that use will pose substantial risk of damage to the brain or physical development of the fetus.

**Help for sexual assault victims:** The Compassionate Care for Sexual Assault Victims Act sets a statewide standard of care for sexual assault victims. The law requires hospitals to give unbiased information about emergency contraceptives and prophylactic antibiotics, which help prevent infection of sexually transmitted diseases. It also mandates that such drugs be provided should they be safe for, and requested by, the patient. The law states that emergency care for sexual assault victims must be provided for both male and female patients.



**Sibling connection:** Children separated from their genetic siblings because of their parents' rights having been terminated will have an easier time connecting with each other. Under a new law, a person who was adopted or placed in Department of Human Services' guardianship, and is at least 19 years old, may have access to their siblings' contact information. The law specifies, however, that this release of contact information can be provided only upon mutual consent.

**Details:** This story is quoted from the Minnesota Legislative website. Full listings of new laws in 2007 are available here: [www.house.leg.state.mn.us/hinfo/Newlaws2007-0.asp](http://www.house.leg.state.mn.us/hinfo/Newlaws2007-0.asp)

The Minn. Department of Human Services has also compiled an overview of laws affecting families and children, available here: <http://edocs.dhs.state.mn.us/lfserver/Legacy/DHS-5152-ENG>

## Child Support launches webpage for community partners

Over the past few months, the Minnesota Child Support Enforcement Division (CSED) has been working overtime to implement the new guidelines for child support payment levels.

At the same time, state workers at CSED have been adding some great new features to the agency's website. If you haven't visited the website in recent months, two new features are worth noting for anyone that works to support fathers and families.

First, the new **Child Support Web Calculator** is a tool that takes the suspense out of the child support calculations. Designed to resemble "TurboTax", the calculator requires parents to input a number of facts including both parents' income, number of children, and expenses for health care and child care. Parents are reminded that accurate facts produce more accurate estimates of their actual payments. By inputting correct figures in each of the required fields, parents can get a good estimate of their potential child support level.

This tool can be accessed through the Department of Human Services homepage: [www.dhs.state.mn.us](http://www.dhs.state.mn.us). To access it, click on "child support online calculator" under "Quick Links" on the right side of the page.

The second online addition is the **Child Support Community Partners** page, geared toward community-based nonprofits, social service agencies, parent education groups, and others who work with families. The page provides information to help clients access child support services, to modify an existing order, to establish paternity, to answer questions for incarcerated parents, to manage child support debt, to report changes to their income, and more.

The Community Partners page is available by visiting the Dept. of Human Services homepage: [www.dhs.state.mn.us](http://www.dhs.state.mn.us). Click "child support" under "Quick Links" on the right side of the page. Then, click "Community Partners" on the left side of the page.



The Minnesota Fathers & Families Network is committed to hearing the voices of fatherhood practitioners from throughout Minnesota.

- Rebecca Ahlstrand, Carlton County Child Support, **Carlton**
- Jayne Anderson, Nicollet County Social Services, **St. Peter**
- Mary Anderson, Fatherhood Advocate, **Perham**
- Jason Giese, Southwest Minn. Private Industry Council, **Montevideo**
- Jon Harper, Adventures in Fathering, **Crystal**
- Jan Hayne, Dads Make a Difference, **St. Paul**
- Michael Jerpbak, Crossroads College, **Rochester**
- R. Clarence Jones, Southside Community Health Services, **Minneapolis**
- Gar Kellom, St. John's Univ., **Collegeville**
- Joe Kelly, Dads and Daughters, **St. Paul**
- Nancy Norbie, Kandiyohi County Family Services, **Willmar**
- Glen Palm, St. Cloud State Univ., **St. Cloud**
- Velura Peterson, Social Services, **Virginia**
- Tamy Reese, Morris Early Childhood Family Education, **Morris**
- Jack Sharp, Fatherhood Advocate, **St. Cloud**
- Dwaine Simms, Twin Cities RISE!, **Minneapolis**
- Enrique Soto, R.R. Donnelley Inc., **Long Prairie**
- J. Neil Tift, Dads and Families Center, **Stillwater**
- Laura Turner, Employment / Fatherhood Advocate, **St. Paul**
- Tina Welsh, Boyz II Dadz, **Duluth**

## Fatherhood research/resource roundup

### National responsible fatherhood clearinghouse

Primarily a tool for professionals operating federal Responsible Fatherhood programs, this website provides access to print and electronic publications, information on fatherhood issues, and resources that support federally-funded Responsible Fatherhood and Healthy Marriage grantees. The website also provides essential information for other audiences interested in fatherhood issues such as domestic violence, incarceration, mental health, and substance abuse. Online here: [www.fatherhood.gov](http://www.fatherhood.gov)

### Supporting new/expectant fathers

This section of the FathersDirect website contains news, policy, research and practice articles of relevance to midwives, pediatricians, obstetricians and other professionals working in the maternity services, with a focus on helping expectant fathers to support their pregnant partners and to support new fathers in the transition to parenthood. Online here: [www.fathersdirect.com/index.php?id=2](http://www.fathersdirect.com/index.php?id=2)

### Working with Muslim fathers

This section of the FathersDirect website relates to fatherhood in Islamic communities, and Muslim fatherhood. Here you'll find news, research, policy and practice articles of interest to those working within Muslim communities. Online: [www.fathersdirect.com/index.php?id=8](http://www.fathersdirect.com/index.php?id=8)

### New blog provides connections for parents of teens

Shoulder to Shoulder is taking advantage of today's technology by launching a new blog to connect parents of teens to information and each other. Using the blog, "Raising Teens Together", parents can pose questions, provide ideas on topics of concern and learn about teen culture in our communities. Shoulder to Shoulder is a Minnesota-based project for parents of teens and other caring adults to share practical, evidence-based information and tools. Details are online: [www.shouldertoshoulderminnesota.org](http://www.shouldertoshoulderminnesota.org)

### Impact of couple and marital relationships on parenting and child outcomes

Family professionals spend a lot of effort helping parents learn the skills to guide their children's development and behavior. Often, little time is spent on nurturing the parents' relationship with each other. Why should we focus on the quality of their couple relationship and foster the development of skills to strengthen the relationship? Listen to this online discussion/presentation to learn some of the latest information on these topics (May 2007): [www.extension.iastate.edu/marriage/pages/connect.html](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/marriage/pages/connect.html)

### Support for MFFN is provided in part by:

The McKnight Foundation, Bush Foundation, Grotto Foundation, Otto Bremer Foundation, International Dairy Queen, St. Paul Foundation, & MFFN members.

## Donate to MFFN

Help us to support healthy child development through positive father involvement. Your gift in any amount is appreciated.



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 Amount enclosed : \_\_\_\_\_

- My gift is (please check one):
- membership registration (basic membership is \$20 annually).
  - a gift to MFFN.
  - an anonymous contribution.
  - in memory of: \_\_\_\_\_
  - in honor of: \_\_\_\_\_
  - other: \_\_\_\_\_

Clip and mail this form with payment to MFFN / 161 Saint Anthony Ave. Suite 845 / St. Paul, MN 55103. MFFN is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. Your donation is tax deductible to the extent allowable by law.

