



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.

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Network Notes

November 2004

Strengthen Your Ability to Serve Fathers

Join MFFN at our second annual winter conference, the **Minnesota Fatherhood & Family Services Summit**, January 19-20, 2005 in St. Cloud, Minnesota. The Summit will include interactive workshops and plenary sessions geared for professionals and advocates working in areas of education, human services and family services across Minnesota. The conference will be a great place to re-energize your commitment to working with fathers, learn about effective programs around the state, and re-connect to leaders in the fatherhood field.

The focus of the conference, *Strengthening Fathers; Strengthening Families*, promotes the understanding that healthy fathers are strong allies and strong advocates for their children, their families, their communities, and themselves.

Thursday, January 20, will be the main day of the conference. Opening and closing keynote addresses will be led by Dwaine Simms of the African American Men Project and Dr. Marti Erickson from the University of Minnesota's Children, Youth and Family Consortium. The day will be filled with two breakout workshop sessions and a luncheon that will highlight award recipients, "Excellence in Fatherhood".

On Wednesday afternoon, January 19, attendees will be able to choose from three pre-conference training sessions. Wednesday evening will feature a casual reception and conversation with Mitch Pearlstein from the Center of the American Experiment.

MFFN seeks to build a strong professional coalition—of conservative, moderate and liberal Minnesotans; from rural, suburban and urban areas; from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds; and from a blend of family environments—based on a shared understanding of the importance of creating strong and positive relationships between fathers and their children.



This diversity is reflected in the conference presenters and workshop themes. Workshop titles include, "Transitioning from corrections: Helping fathers reconnect to families and communities", "Connecting rural dads with the services they need", "Diverse dads: Single fathers, grandparents, gay/bi dads, and mentors", "Recruiting reluctant fathers: Outreach that works", and others.

Limited scholarships to cover the cost of registration are available on a first-come, first-served basis. The grants, generously provided by a number of the Minnesota Initiative Foundations, are limited to professionals working and/or living in certain counties across Minnesota. For details and updates, please visit us online or contact MFFN (see sidebar for contact

Minnesota Fatherhood & Family Services Summit

*January 19-20, 2005
St. Cloud*

*Now registering attendees
and exhibitors.*

*www.mnfathers.org or
(612) 787-4091.*

information).

MFFN is grateful to the McKnight Foundation, Initiative Foundation, Northland Foundation, Northwest Minnesota Foundation, and Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation, for their generous support of this year's Summit

What is “Healthy Marriage”? Defining the Concept

Child Trends' latest research brief, What is “Healthy Marriage”? Defining the Concept, examines the concept of healthy marriage and the elements that, taken together, help define it. Drawing from available research studies and data, theoretical writings, and short papers commissioned from scholars in the field, the study identifies 10 critical ingredients of a healthy marriage. The brief, released September 2004, is part of Child Trends' ongoing conceptual and methodological work on healthy marriage for research and intervention evaluation studies among low-income couples, funded by the Administration for Children and Families of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services through the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Family and Child Well-Being Research Network. Kristin A. Moore is the lead author. Download a PDF version here: www.childtrends.org/Files/CT_HealthyMarriage.pdf.

Head Start Commits to Father-Involvement

The National Head Start Institute on Father Involvement, held in June 2004 in Dallas, Texas, launched the Head Start Fatherhood Initiative and was attended by more than 3,500 Head Start staff and parents from 49 states and several U.S. Territories.

The Institute provided knowledge to programs on effective practices, policies and services to support the ongoing involvement of fathers in the lives of their children. The Head Start Bureau wants to build upon this effort and ensure that local Head Start program staff and parents have the knowledge and skills needed to support the ongoing involvement of fathers in Head Start and in the lives of their children. In order to facilitate this initiative the Head Start Bureau is making available one time funding to all Head Start grantees to support efforts to institutionalize father involvement in Head Start programs, making father involvement an on-going commitment at all levels of program planning, design and implementation.

According to a letter recently sent to all Head Start grantees from Windy M. Hill, Associate Commissioner of the Head Start Bureau, funding allocations will be based on each grantee's funded enrollment level (\$4,000—\$12,000 per program). Funding applications must be submitted to the Administration for Children and Families Regional Office by December, 15, 2004.

During the Institute, the Head Start Bureau introduced the **Building Blocks for Father Involvement**. This resource includes a set of five guides and accompanying videos to support grantees as they design and implement their Head Start father involvement programs. These materials are now available to all grantees in English and Spanish by contacting www.headstartinfo.org.

9 in 10 Nonviolent Ex-Offenders Are Male

A new document from the U.S. Department of Justice, "Profile of Nonviolent Offenders Exiting State Prisons", describes the general characteristics of offenders serving time for nonviolent crimes as they prepare to exit state prisons. Nonviolent crimes are defined as property, drug, and public order offenses that do not involve a threat of harm or actual attack on a victim. According to the report, 9 of 10 nonviolent offenders were male and about two-thirds were under age 34. Overall, about two-thirds were racial or ethnic minorities. Visit www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/pnoesp.pdf to download a free copy of the full publication. (October 2004)



Calendar for Fatherhood Professionals

Tues. Nov. 30, 2004, 8:30 am – 12:00 noon, Prevent Child Abuse Minnesota Videoconference, “Making Room for Dad: Involving Fathers in Prevention and Family Service Activities.” Simulcast to four MN locations in Brainerd, Rochester, St. Paul, and Willmar, with presenters in 3 of the locations. For details, visit: www.familysupport.org/uploadedimages/confreg.pdf. Preregistration is required; \$5 registration fee.

Fri., Dec. 3, 2004, 9:00 am, Professionals Who Work With Men - Networking Breakfast. Elsie's Restaurant, 721 Marshall St. NE, Minneapolis. This informal group generally meets every first Friday to discuss fatherhood and men's services. Open to the public; no RSVP necessary. Directions, call Elsie's (612) 378-9702.

Fri. Dec. 3, 2004, 8:30 am—4:30 pm Minn. Council on Family Relations Fall Conference, Woodbury, MN. Join MCFR for their annual conference, titled “The Experience of New Americans: Walking in Their Shoes”; details available at www.mcfr.net or (651) 407-0950.

Mon., Dec. 13, 2004, 10:00 —3:00 pm MFFN Annual Members' Meeting & Quarterly Board Meeting, Twin Cities. MFFN members are invited to attend our annual meeting. We will elect new Board Members and our '05 Executive Comm. For location, please RSVP to (612) 787-4091 or pmasiarchin@mnfathers.org.

Wed-Thur., Jan. 19-20, 2005, Minnesota Fatherhood & Family Services Summit. St. Cloud Civic Center. Pre-conference training and networking will take place on January 19. A full menu of speakers and workshops will be offered on January 20. Visit www.mnfathers.org or call (612) 787-4091 for details.

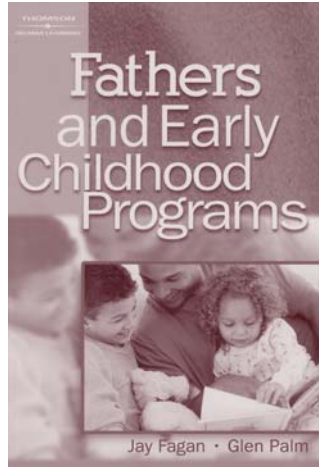
Fri., Feb. 25, 2005, 8:00 am—4:30 pm, Roundtable Meeting for Professionals in Higher Education “What's the role for colleges and universities in healthy male socialization?” Hosted by MFFN and a group of Minnesota-based universities with support from the Otto Bremer Foundation. Location: St. John's Univ., Collegetown, MN.

Book Review: *Fathers and Early Childhood Programs*

Moving beyond current trends that link father involvement to financial support, this book explores in-depth the positive connections between fathers and their children's early educational endeavors. The authors, Glen Palm and Jay Fagen, whom together have close to 50 years experience working with fathers and early education, have combined their experiences to write the book, *Fathers and Early Childhood Programs*.

Offering practical suggestions for starting a father-friendly early childhood program, or adding to an existing program, *Fathers and Early Childhood Programs* begins by defining key terms related to fathers and their involvement with the care of their children as well as defining a "good father". The importance of these definitions cannot be overstated within the context of this book and early education. Although estimates are that 30 - 40 percent of the fathers today do not live under the same roof with their children, the 33 fathers interviewed for this book care about their children. Fagen and Palm, using Erick Erickson's theory of psychosocial development, in particular his generativity stage of adulthood, help us envision why men need to get involved in the lives of their children but also why a father's needs or actions are often misunderstood. The book provides a detailed history of the types of involvement men and women have within their family. Combining this information with research on the dynamics of father involvement, the authors bridge the gap to practical use by discussing four fatherhood initiatives including a child care program in northern California, two Head Start programs in Philadelphia and an Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) program in Minnesota.

For professionals who are initiating efforts to serve fathers, the authors offer practical advice to help start a fatherhood initiative within an early education program. Program assessments are



included to ensure programs offer exactly what fathers want as well as an assessment that can help to better understand attitudes current staff members have regarding a fatherhood initiative. An important aspect of any fatherhood initiative relates to parent education—in particular, the interaction between children and their father. Fagen and Palm include information relating to that interaction time and what to be aware of when implementing father-child time.

Researchers are just beginning to explore the importance of father involvement in his child's life. However detailed *Fathers and Early Education Programs* is on the subject of father involvement, additional research and study is needed to ensure programs offer the most up-to-date and comprehensive programs to fathers. Towards that end, the authors close the book with challenges facing fathers in early education and direction for future goals.

A great deal of information exists regarding a mother's role in the lives of their children and in no way does this book mean to suggest that a father's role is more important than that of a mother. This book offers insightful information based on the most current research on fathers. Importantly, the authors show educational programs how to best utilize that information. The discussion questions at the end of each chapter can be utilized as part of a higher education curriculum on fathers in early education or as a way to analyze existing early childhood programs.

Details: *Fathers and Early Childhood Programs*, 2004. Limited paperback copies of this 320 page book are available for a donation of \$25.00 plus \$3.00 shipping, payable to "MFFN". Mail to the address listed on page one.

Review written by Bill Anderson, Head Start teacher and parent educator, Buffalo, MN

Quick Access To Legal Information

A Web site called LawHelpMN.org is available to help Minnesotans quickly access information regarding numerous legal issues on topics including consumer information, housing, individual rights, and disabilities.

The Family and Juvenile Subtopics page includes information on child support, custody, divorce, domestic violence, guardianship, the Indian Child Welfare Act, parenting time, paternity, rights of grandparents, and much more. Some information is also available in Spanish, Somali, and Hmong.

Additionally, the site provides information about locations of Legal Aid offices and how to get legal help. The site is a project of the Minnesota State Bar Association, Minnesota Legal Services Coalition, and Legal Services Corporation. Visit www.LawHelpMN.org for details.

Help spread the word about services for fathers!

Create a weblink to www.mnfathers.org.

Or, link directly to our list of 100 Minnesota programs that serve men and fathers:

www.mnfathers.org/search/ServProvSearch.php

ADD A LINK TO MNFATHERS.ORG

MFFN Board of Directors



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

MFFN Board Members represent every region of the state.

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Jayne Anderson, Nicollet County Social Services, **St. Peter**

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Support for MFFN is provided in part by:
The McKnight Foundation,
the Otto Bremer Foundation,
& MFFN members.

MFFN Collaborates on 3rd Annual Seminar Series

Legal issues for unmarried fathers generate high interest

In August through October, MFFN joined forces with the Minnesota Department of Health Fathers' Adoption Registry, the Goodwill/Easter Seals FATHER Project, Central Minnesota Legal Services, Southside Community Health Services, and the regionally-based Minnesota Initiative Funds, to host six half-day workshops across Minnesota.

This year's topic, legal issues for unmarried fathers, expanded on themes including the Fathers' Adoption Registry, the Recognition of Parentage form, the establishment of paternity, genetic testing, and the array of issues related to Child Support Enforcement.

Discussions at all six locations explored the importance of helping unmarried fathers to know their rights and responsibilities. Many attendees were surprised to learn of the 30-day time limit, after the birth of a child, for registering on the adoption registry. Others were interested to learn the limited benefits of signing a Recognition of Parentage form.

In a follow-up survey of seminar attendees, MFFN has learned that over 70% of all respondents have already used the new information to improve their services for fathers. For example, one attendee stated, "I've used this information to educate young mothers I work with about the importance of father involvement...and how mothers and fathers can work together to create the best situation for the child." Another participant wrote, "In family court, I now have a clearer understanding of recognition of parentage versus a paternity test and am able to advocate better for the children I represent."

Two key resources that were developed for these workshops by Melissa Froehle, an attorney working with low-income fathers in Minneapolis, are being made available on the MFFN website. Check out the online Resource Bank for availability of the "Top 5 Legal Issues for Practitioners to Know When Working with Unmarried Fathers" and "Unmarried Father's Guide to Paternity, Custody, and Parenting Time in Minnesota." Visit www.mnfathers.org/resources.html for links to these documents.

The meetings, held in Bemidji, Brainerd, Duluth, Hutchinson, Owatonna, and St. Paul, were attended by 150 professionals from a wide range of social service, health, judicial, education, and family service organizations including nonprofits, faith-based institutions and government agencies. The hosts of our meetings were as diverse as the attendees—with meetings held in a local church, a women's building, a university, an electric cooperative, and two government offices.

Do you have an idea for our 2005 Fall Seminar Series? Each fall since 2002, MFFN has traveled across Minnesota to convene professional sessions for fatherhood advocates and family services practitioners. What topic would draw your attention? Please contact Paul Masiarchin (info@mnfathers.org) if you have a father-related topic that you think we should tackle next year.

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 to share with other human services practitioners and fatherhood advocates, please send your idea to MFFN (see page one for contact information).

Donate to MFFN

Help us to meet the needs of fatherhood advocates and practitioners across Minnesota. Your gift in any amount is appreciated. Please contact MFFN (see page one) or print and mail the online form, available at www.mnfathers.org/documents/DonationsForm.pdf.

Subscribe Now

"Network Notes" is published quarterly and mailed to MFFN members each February, May, August, and November. Learn more about becoming a member at www.mnfathers.org/members.html or contact MFFN (see page 1).