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CHESTER J. CULVER, GOVERNOR  
PATTY JUDGE, LT. GOVERNOR

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES  
KEVIN W. CONCANNON, DIRECTOR

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December 14, 2007

Michael Marshall  
Secretary of Senate  
State Capitol  
LOCAL

Mark Brandsgard  
Chief Clerk of the House  
State Capitol  
LOCAL

Dear Mr. Marshall and Mr. Brandsgard:

Enclosed please find a copy of a report to the General Assembly. The report is titled *Iowa Department of Human Services: Options and Resources Needed to Support Responsible Fatherhood.*

The report was prepared pursuant to the directive contained in 2007 Iowa Acts, Chapter 218, section 9, that the Department of Human Services provide information regarding options considered, potential funding opportunities, and subsequently initiated options to support responsible fatherhood.

Sincerely,

Molly Kottmeyer  
Legislative Liaison

Enclosure

cc: ✓ Dennis Prouty, Legislative Service Agency  
Peter Matthes, Senate Minority Caucus  
Kris Bell, Senate Majority Caucus  
Brad Trow, House Minority Caucus  
Zeke Furlong, House Majority Caucus

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**DEC 14 2007**

**LEGISLATIVE SERVICES  
AGENCY**

**Iowa Department of Human Services**

**Options and Resources Needed to Support Responsible Fatherhood**



**Submitted to the Iowa General Assembly by  
Kevin W. Concannon, Director  
Iowa Department of Human Services  
December 14, 2007**

**Iowa Department of Human Services  
Options and Resources Needed to Support Responsible Fatherhood  
December 2007**

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**Iowa Department of Human Services**  
**Options and Resources Needed to Support Responsible Fatherhood**  
**December 2007**

**D) Executive Summary**

This report is prepared in response to the Iowa General Assembly's request for the Department to identify options and resources needed to support responsible fatherhood as well as identify any options initiated by the Department.

The Department first formed a steering committee composed of the following Departmental individuals: Division Administrator of Child and Family Services, Division Administrator of Child Support, Case Management, and Refugee Services, the designee for the Division Administrator of Financial, Health, and Work Supports, Des Moines Service Area Manager, and an University of Iowa MSW intern. Additionally, representatives from Iowa Workforce Development and the Children's Justice Initiative were invited to attend committee meetings.

The Department conducted research of the social science literature and government publications to answer the question: Why support responsible fatherhood? Research affirms the benefits of positive father involvement in the lives of children, which includes enhanced maternal parenting, positive influence on child development, enhanced physical and mental health of the child, and decreased adolescent delinquency and substance abuse. Fathers' lack of involvement with their children yields negative consequences for children such as delinquency, alcohol and/or drug use, dropping out of school, sexual promiscuity, which increases the likelihood of out-of-wedlock births, poverty, and poor school achievement. These consequences not only affect individuals and families but communities as well.

Not all children suffer from these consequences. There are many single mothers whose children achieve positive outcomes without the involvement of their fathers. Lack of father involvement may be a result of domestic violence, drug usage, mental health issues, etc., that prevent the father from being a nurturing parent to his children. However, unless the father poses a risk to the children or mother, children benefit from the active, nurturing involvement of their fathers in their lives.

The Department sought feedback from the Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence (ICADV) to ensure that the Department has adequately addressed domestic violence advocate concerns. The Department will continue to work with ICADV during its implementation of options to ensure that Iowa's children and mothers are protected against domestic violence.

The Department also sought public input regarding fathers' service needs and how the Department's programs could be more father-friendly. The Department conducted an online survey and distributed an electronic paper survey for manual completion to many DHS partners. The results of the survey illustrated that the Department can take steps to support responsible fatherhood within its existing programs and services.

Finally, the Department considered a total of thirty-seven options. The Department recognized that, apart from federal grants or private grants, restricted financial resources would limit any options that the Department could initiate. Therefore, DHS plans to initiate options which are primarily new ways of supporting responsible fatherhood within the Department's current programs and policies, expanding two existing programs, and building connections with other agencies around responsible fatherhood.

The Department also identified options that other agencies or the Iowa General Assembly might want to consider in supporting responsible fatherhood. Some examples include providing responsible fatherhood curricula to middle school and high school males and females, changing "visitation" to "parenting time" in the Iowa Code, or establishing a statewide office or funding mechanism to ensure that efforts to support responsible fatherhood continue.

## **II) Introduction and Background**

Legislative language in House File 909, a product of the 2007 Iowa legislative session, directed the Department to identify options and resources needed to support responsible fatherhood. Responsible fatherhood is defined through five main focus areas: delaying fatherhood until emotionally and financially ready, establishing paternity, being actively involved in the child's life regardless of marital status, supporting the child financially, and co-parenting with the mother.<sup>1</sup>

The language of House File 909 follows below:

*"The department of human services shall identify options and resources needed to support responsible fatherhood. The department shall report on or before December 15, 2007, concerning the options considered, potential funding opportunities, and any options subsequently initiated to the persons designated in this Act to receive reports."*

### *Background of Responsible Fatherhood:*

In March 2000, Governor Thomas J. Vilsack, through Executive Order 15, established the Interagency Work Group on Responsible Parenthood. The Work Group determined to what extent Iowa's children received financial and emotional support from both parents. Additionally, the Work Group identified the benefits of parents' involvement, the barriers to that involvement, and what opportunities and best practices existed to attain and maintain the involvement of both parents. The Work Group issued its report in December 2000. The Work Group's recommendations are listed in the Work Group's Executive Summary, Appendix A.

In February 2001, the Governor's Task Force on Responsible Fatherhood was established through Executive Order 17. The Task Force was charged with raising the public's awareness of the consequences of father absence, identifying barriers to father involvement, identifying best practices, and making recommendations in the

areas of policy and practice that encourage and support fathers to be involved in their children's lives. The Task Force submitted its report in January 2002. Appendix B contains the Task Force's Executive Summary, which lists its recommendations. The Polk County Fathers and Families Coalition, formed in 2003, evolved from the Task Force. More information about the Coalition is presented in Section IV.

In 2003, per the request of the Iowa General Assembly, the Department formed the Fatherhood, Marriage, and Family Supports Advisory Group to examine fatherhood, marriage, and family supports through the eyes of Iowa's citizenry, to provide this information to the General Assembly, and to provide recommendations contingent upon federal fund availability. The Advisory Group issued its report in January 2004. The Advisory Group's recommendations are contained in Appendix C.

Federal funding for responsible fatherhood initiatives dates back to the Clinton administration. Recently, the federal government, through the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005, has issued grants to public and private entities to promote responsible fatherhood. The Department's Child Support Recovery Unit (CSRU) applied for a responsible fatherhood grant, entitled SOLID START-Responsible Fatherhood, in July 2006. The Department did not receive the grant. Further information regarding the federal government's fatherhood grants is presented in Section VIII.

While the Department continues to support responsible fatherhood, most notably through child support initiatives, a new emphasis is warranted, particularly in the area of child welfare. The federal government is scrutinizing, through the Child and Family Service Review (CFSR), the extent to which States engage fathers in their child welfare systems. Analysis of 35 states who participated in the CFSRs in Federal Fiscal Years (FFY) 2002 through 2004 revealed several challenges that these states faced in achieving safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes for children. States that participated in the CFSR in FFY 2001 were not included in the analysis due to format differences between FFY 2001 and FFY 2002 through 2004. Examples of challenges that the 35 states faced include the following:

- 100% failed to sufficiently involve the fathers in case planning
- 37% failed to demonstrate reasonable efforts to contact fathers, even though many of the fathers were involved in their children's lives, and
- 54% failed to consistently consider paternal relatives as placement options for children in foster care.<sup>2</sup>

In 2006, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) issued a manual entitled, "The Importance of Fathers in the Healthy Development of Children". This manual, a part of DHHS' child abuse and neglect manual series, explains why fathers are important to their children and how to engage them within the child welfare process, from assessment to case closure. It is clear that the federal government is emphasizing the responsible inclusion of fathers within child welfare services. As a strategy to further reflect this emphasis as well as increase Iowa's compliance with CFSR benchmarks, the Department is increasing its efforts to be more inclusive of fathers within its child welfare system.

Finally, the goal of responsible fatherhood initiatives and efforts is to enhance the relationships between fathers, mothers, and children. It is not intended to supplant the mother's role in the family or usurp the mother's relationship with her children. Both parents are needed to raise children. Positive father involvement can help mothers by assisting them in care giving, providing emotional support to children, providing financial support for the children, and helping to relieve the stress of single parenthood for many mothers. Positive father involvement is defined as the father's involvement with the child in affirmative social activities, nurturing the child, being sensitive to the needs of others in the family, appropriately disciplining the child, developing a positive relationship with the child's mother, and providing for the economic needs of the child.

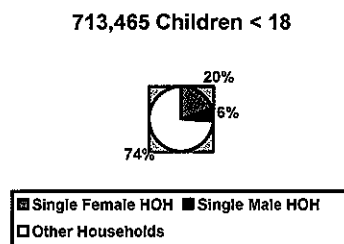
Parents, whether a father or mother, can positively or negatively affect their child's development by the example they set, the behavior they display, and the level of nurturing interaction they have with their child. Responsible fatherhood, therefore, encompasses the idea that father presence and interaction should be positive. As such, responsible fatherhood is not construed as a "father's rights" issue. It is an issue that reflects the underlying premise that the best interests of the child should prevail.

Given this, there may be times, however, when it is not appropriate for the father to be involved with the child, as in the case of domestic violence or sexual abuse. Because domestic violence is present in many families involved with the child welfare system, it is important that child welfare staff are aware of the signs of domestic violence. In cases involving domestic violence, or child sexual abuse or serious physical abuse by a child's father, diligence must be taken to ensure the safety of the child and the mother, as well as to assist the father in receiving necessary services.

### III) Scope of Issue

#### A. Data:

Children are increasingly growing up without the benefit of a mother and father in the home. This trend is a result of several factors, including the increase in out-of-wedlock births, teenage births, declining marriage rates, and divorce rates.



- In 2005, there were 713,465 children under the age of 18 living in Iowa. Of these children, 26% lived in single-parent families, 20% of which were female head-of-households and 6% were male head-of-households.<sup>3</sup>



■ Marital Births ■ Non-Marital Births

- In 2005, there were 12,757 out-of-wedlock live births, which represented approximately 32% of all total live births.<sup>4</sup>

- In 2005, Iowa’s teenage birth rate was 32 per 1,000 young women aged 15 to 19. Eleven states had lower teenage birth rates in this age group than Iowa.<sup>5</sup>
- Even though the number of divorces in Iowa is declining, from 10,545 divorces in 1995 to 8,148 divorces in 2005, 52.9% of all divorces in 2005 involved families with children under 18, representing 4,152 children. Furthermore, the number of marriages in Iowa is declining, from 22,573 in 1995 to 20,419 in 2005.<sup>6</sup>

*B. Consequences of Father Absence:*

Social science research has for the past several decades documented the adverse effects of a father’s absence on the financial, physical, emotional, and behavioral well being of his children. Father absence is defined as the father being absent from residing in the home and his lack of active involvement with his children.

- Father absence can negatively affect the financial situation of children.
  - In 2006, there were 74,706 female head-of-households with children under the age of 18 living in Iowa.<sup>7</sup>

<i>Married Households in Iowa, 2006</i>	<i>Single Female Head-of-Households in Iowa, 2006</i>
4.3% with children under 18 lived in poverty	36.5% with children under 18 lived in poverty
3.6% with children under 5 lived in poverty	48.8% with children under 5 lived in poverty

- In approximately 34.34% of child support cases, monthly child support owed is not collected in the month that it is due<sup>8</sup>, which affects the family’s ability to adequately meet its needs on a consistent basis.
- Children whose fathers are not present and actively involved in their lives are at increased risk for involvement in delinquent behavior, dropping out of school, and out-of-wedlock births.<sup>9</sup>
- Empathy development in boys is affected by the quality of relationship with their father and lower levels of empathy have been linked to sexual offending and aggressive behavior.<sup>10</sup>



- Children whose fathers are not present and actively involved in their lives are at greater risk for “deficits in cognitive functioning” as well as decreased academic performance and social skills.<sup>11</sup>
- A “non-residential father is the strongest predictor of alcohol use” of an adolescent when coupled with “...problems in relating to him, less attachment to him, ...less spirituality” and limited monitoring of the adolescent by the parents or guardians.<sup>12</sup>
- When fathers do not reside with their children, negative outcomes for their children are due “...from a loss of social capital: parental guidance, time, attention, and social connections.”<sup>13</sup>
- Father absence negatively affects communities due to:
  - (1) increased adolescent sexual promiscuity, which can lead to increases, not only in out-of-wedlock births, but also sexually transmitted diseases (STDs):
  - “(2) increased levels of violent crime,
  - (3) increased levels of infant morbidity and mortality, and
  - (4) decreased levels of high school graduation.”<sup>14</sup>

### *C. Benefits of Positive Father Involvement*

Research within the last several years documents quantifiable benefits of positive father involvement for children and mothers.

- Increased contact between fathers and children yields higher levels of “...adequate maternal parenting” and higher maternal parenting yields better outcomes for children, such as “...better adaptive language abilities and fewer behavior problems...”<sup>15</sup>
- Paternal parenting also influences child development. For example, toddlers are “more competent at problem-solving tasks” and children are “more successful in their academic, social, and emotional lives...more popular with peers”.<sup>16</sup>
- Father involvement encourages children to be independent, competitive and provides “...a sense of emotional support...”.<sup>17</sup>
- Father involvement decreases delinquency and substance use for adolescents, particularly boys.<sup>18</sup>
- Higher father involvement, particularly involvement in their children’s education, yields higher math scores for adolescents.<sup>19</sup>
- Father involvement positively affects the physical health of children well into adulthood.<sup>20</sup>

- Fathers' monetary support influences the "...economic structure of the household...".<sup>21</sup>

#### *D. Characteristics of Fathers*

While many fathers do not experience any barriers to being actively involved with their children, others do. Two groups of fathers of particular interest to the Department are young fathers in fragile families and non-custodial fathers of children receiving financial assistance from the Department. Fragile families are defined as families where the mother and father never married. Consider the following national characteristics and statistics regarding these sub-populations of fathers:

##### 1. Young fathers in fragile families:<sup>22</sup>

- Young fathers, ages 23-29, struggle to provide support for themselves and their children.
- Young fathers in fragile families may withdraw from their children or not access services, if they are unable to economically provide for their children.
- Many young fathers have problems accessing their children.
- Many young fathers need emotional support and to be a part of the decision-making process regarding their child.
- Young fathers may increase engagement with their children as a result of participating in a fatherhood program.

##### 2. Non-custodial fathers of children receiving financial assistance from the government:

- 2004 National statistics:<sup>23</sup>
  - 50% are under 30 years of age
  - 75% are a member of minority group
  - 66% have more than one child to support
  - 33% have less than a high school diploma
  - 61% have no checking or savings accounts
  - Many non-custodial fathers of children receiving financial assistance from the government could not meet their own basic needs, such as food, housing, and transportation. For example, 11% did not have enough to eat, 6% had utilities turned off, 17% could not afford to pay rent so they moved in with a relative, and more than 50% did not own a vehicle.
- 2007 Iowa statistics for payors of DHS child support whose children receive financial assistance:<sup>24</sup>
  - Age range is from 22 to 50 years old.
  - 31% are a member of a minority group.
  - Average gross income of payor is \$915 per month.

- 21% receive Medicaid/Food Assistance.
- 2% receive FIP.
- 3% receive SSI.
- 8% are incarcerated.

#### IV) Current Services and Projects

An assessment of services supporting responsible fatherhood within the Department yields mixed results. While there are several projects within the child support arena, projects within the child welfare system are just beginning. Furthermore, given the way income maintenance programs determine the family unit, i.e., either the person is residing in the home and counted as part of the family unit or is not residing in the home and is not counted and therefore not eligible for benefits, there are no specific projects designed especially for fathers within these programs. Current services and projects are delineated below.

##### *Parental Obligation Pilot Projects (POPP) (\$200,000 TANF funds):*

The Child Support Recovery Unit (CSRU) offers startup grants in collaboration with Decategorization and Empowerment community groups for pilot projects. These Parental Obligation Pilot Projects help non-custodial parents meet their parental obligations to support their children both personally and financially and avoid disruption in the family relationships. The grants are funded through the federal TANF block grant as authorized by the General Assembly. Types of services offered include: parent/child activities, parental skills training, mediation, legal assistance/referral, financial counseling, and fathers support groups. There currently are three grantees.

- Family and Children's Council  
Serving Black Hawk County  
July 1, 2007 – June 30, 2008 (Grant period)  
Provides an "Empowering Dads" program, which offers on-going support and parent education to custodial or non-custodial fathers. This program includes access to legal consultation and community resources as needed. The program is available to fathers every Thursday evening, with a meal served at 5:30 p.m., and meetings beginning at 6:00 p.m. Legal and child support consultation are offered the third Thursday of each month. The agency also offers parenting programs, including Parent to Parent, Parent Connection and Women's Empowerment, Mandatory Child Abuse Reporter's Training, What's Where in Parenting Directories and Wise Guys program, an adolescent pregnancy prevention program for young men.  
Results: For the monthly reporting period ending October 2007, a total of 19 non-custodial parents (NCP) received mediation services. A total of nine NCPs responded to outcome measures. Results are that 22% improved their financial support of their children, 22% saw improved frequency of visits with their children, and 22% perceived less conflict with the custodial parent.<sup>25</sup>  
Contact information: Julie Pitzen at (319) 234-7600, etc. 17 or David Goodson at (319) 234-7600, ext. 11.
- First Resource Corporation – Common Ground  
Serving Mahaska and Wapello Counties

July 1, 2007 – June 30, 2008 (Grant period)

The project began on February 1, 2007. The agency provides neutral drop off and pick-up, mediation and visitation, counseling and also supervised visitation and parent education services. The agency also offers the Helping Hands Nurturing Program, providing voluntary parent skill instruction services, HOPE (Helping Out People through Empowerment), a voluntary in-home substance abuse program, substance abuse testing, life skills for Hispanic population and life skills services.

Results: Since July 1, 2007, the agency has served a total of 46 families. These families received the variety of services mentioned above. Twenty-seven families were still receiving services at the end of October 2007. Out of these 27 families, 33% of NCPs improved their financial support of their children, 48% saw improved frequency of visits with their children, and 52% saw an increase in positive interactions with their children.<sup>26</sup>

Contact information: Michael Merrick at (641) 683-1302 ext. 341 or Julie Seemann at (641) 673-1421.

- First Resource Corporation

Serving Jefferson, Keokuk, Van Buren and Washington Counties

July 1, 2007 – June 30, 2008 (Grant period)

The project began February 1, 2007. The agency provides neutral drop off and pick-up, mediation and visitation, counseling and also supervised visitation and parent education services. The agency also offers the Helping Hands Nurturing Program, providing voluntary parent skill instruction services, HOPE (Helping Out People through Empowerment), a voluntary in-home substance abuse program, substance abuse testing, life skills for Hispanic population and life skills services.

Results: Sixteen families received the variety of services mentioned above during the latest quarter. Twelve families were still receiving services at the end of October 2007. Results for the quarter were: 36% of NCPs reported improved financial support of their children, 55% saw improved frequency of visits with their children, and 64% saw an increase in positive interactions with their children.<sup>27</sup>

Contact information: Michael Merrick at (641) 683-1302 ext. 341 or Denise Wright at (641) 622-2543.

*Access and Visitation Grants (\$100,000 federal grant):*

CSRU receives federal funds for services to facilitate access and visitation for non-custodial parents. State law requires federal access and visitation grant moneys be issued to private not-for-profit agencies that provide services designed to increase compliance with the child access provisions of court orders, including but not limited to providing neutral exchange sites, visitation counseling, and mediation services. Currently there are three grantees.

- Bethany for Children and Families

Serving Scott, Clinton, Jackson and Muscatine Counties

December 1, 2007 – June 30, 2009 (Grant period)

Provides neutral drop-off and pick-up, mediation and visitation counseling and also divorce/separation counseling. Additionally, the agency provides Teen Parent Services, Family First, therapy, and the Ways to Work Program.

Results: The agency served 14 NCPs in Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2007. For FFY 2007, 100% of NCP reported an increase in time spent with their children.

Contact information: Mark Garden or Deanna Solis at (309) 736-6650 or (563) 627-0186.

- Youth and Shelter Services, Inc.  
Serving the Marshall County area  
November 27, 2006 – July 1, 2008 (Grant period)  
Provides neutral drop-off and pick-up, mediation and visitation counseling and also supervised visitation and parent education services. Additionally, referrals can be made to Children in the Middle classes and the Stork's Nest. The agency also offers a 24-hour crisis hotline and additional services for youth ages birth to 26.  
Results: The agency served 8 NCPs in FFY 2007. In FFY 2007, 88% of NCP reported an increase in time spent with their children.  
Contact information: Lisa Shafer or David Hicks at (641) 752-2300.
- Girls and Boys Town of Iowa  
Serving Pottawattamie, Mills and Montgomery Counties  
October 2, 2006 – July 1, 2008 (Grant period)  
Provides neutral drop-off and pick-up, mediation and visitation counseling and also supervised visitation and parent education services. Additionally, the agency provides remedial services to help parents and children with mental health issues, Common Sense parenting classes, and the National Crisis Hotline.  
Results: The agency served a total of 8 NCPs in FFY 2007. In FFY 2007, 64% of NCPs reported an increase in time spent with their children. <sup>28</sup>  
Contact information: Lisa Batenhorst at (712) 323-4011.

*Contempt Alternative/Parenting Program (\$200,000 TANF funds):*

In collaboration with the Fifth Judicial District, CSRU works with individuals facing contempt of court charges for failure to pay child support. The project coordinator works with participants to identify barriers prohibiting them from having a healthy relationship with their children. In turn, participants are expected to overcome those barriers enabling them to provide financial, medical and emotional support for their children. Currently, there are more than 111 participants/220 child support cases for over 260 children. Participants are making monthly payments for about 64% of those cases. They have avoided over 7,353 days of imposed jail sentences by continuing to make regular child support payments. More than \$200,000 has been collected in child support since the program began in 2005.

*Polk County Fathers and Families Coalition (No Funding):*

The Polk County Fathers and Families Coalition, formed in 2003, is composed of representatives from business, faith and community based organizations, human service agencies, corrections, education, and Head Start. The Coalition is dedicated to creating a community where all children grow up in strong, healthy relationships with their parents. With the support of Head Start and community groups, several trainings and workshops have been offered on various topics related to parenting, fatherhood and relationships. Through grant funding from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Polk County Community Development, Prairie Meadows, Mid-America Commercial Real Estate, Principal Financial Group

Foundation, EMC Insurance Companies, Mid-America Group, and Wells Fargo, corporate and individual gifts, and in partnership with Making Connections and the YMCA of Greater Des Moines, the Coalition has initiated a Fatherhood Initiative to link fathers with the support they need to be positively involved in the lives of their children. This includes providing physical, emotional, and financial support to their children and developing and maintaining a positive relationship with the mother of their children.

*Partnership with the Iowa Attorney General's Office (\$31,000 State of Iowa DHS appropriated funds):*

CSRU maintains a partnership with the Attorney General's Office to promote greater awareness of the need to pay child support. The program focuses on the importance of parents staying involved in their child's life both financially and emotionally even when they are not always physically able to be there. The activities of this public awareness program include radio and television public service announcements; educational packets on the responsibilities of parenthood, especially financial responsibility, distributed to schools; and the "Step Up to the Plate" program in partnership with Iowa's minor league baseball teams to honor parents who pay child support.

*Iowa Fatherhood Website:*

The Department has a website, (<http://www.dhs.state.ia.us/fatherhood/>), which was created to give any parent easy access to information that will help them be actively and positively involved with their children. This site contains links to a variety of other web sites with Iowa, regional or national importance.

*Partnership with the Iowa Department of Corrections:*

CSRU and the Department of Corrections will begin a collaborative effort in early Spring 2008 to reduce the accumulation of large amounts of child support inmates owe upon release. The Department of Corrections staff at Oakdale will assist inmates with the process of applying for a child support review. CSRU is simplifying the child support review form as well as developing a CD regarding child support modifications to place in every prison. Additionally, the two agencies are developing a plan to have a child support point of contact person at each prison.

*Child Support Recovery Unit Efforts:*

CSRU is at the beginning of an outreach campaign to Hispanic communities. This outreach consists of sharing the importance of fathers' involvement in the lives of their children, physically, emotionally, and financially, as well as educating the communities about child support policies and practices.

CSRU also initiated a project, Connections Equals Collections (CEC), whereby child support workers have early and repeated contact with fathers. These heightened efforts to connect with fathers resulted in increases in child support payments as well as in the number of fathers contesting paternity.

*Partnership between Child Support Recovery Unit and Child Welfare:*

CSRU is collaborating with the Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS) to train staff on the importance of father involvement as well as how to identify and locate fathers. The

training may be expanded to include staff of the Department's Division of Financial, Health, and Work Supports.

Additionally, CSRU and DCFS, in partnership with the DHS Cedar Rapids Service Area, Independent Child Advocate Services, Inc. and the Juvenile Courts, applied for a grant to engage fathers within the child welfare system. This grant was advertised by the National Quality Improvement Center on Non-Resident Fathers (QIC NRF) with funding originating from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children & Families, Children's Bureau. Four grantees will be chosen with the expected notice of awards to occur sometime in January 2008. If DHS is one of the grantees, fatherhood activities will be implemented in five rural counties, Benton, Tama, Iowa, Wapello, and Washington counties, and two urban counties, Linn and Johnson counties, with Marshall county as a potential expansion county in the event that recruitment falls short in the project counties.

*Community Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Grant Program:*

DCFS utilizes TANF funds to provide grants to community agencies and organizations to develop or expand programs aimed at preventing teenage pregnancies. Several of the grantees provide programming to adolescent males to either prevent early fatherhood or to assist young fathers in developing appropriate life skills. Program services are typically focused in the areas of education, intervention, and community education.

*Parent Partners:*

DCFS and three sites, Cedar Rapids, Des Moines, and Sioux City, recently launched the Parent Partners program. The Parent Partners program is a mentoring program, which matches parents who had their child removed with parents who have been successfully reunified with their child for at least one year. The program currently has three fathers as mentors. DHS is making efforts to increase representation of fathers within this program.

*Income Maintenance Programs:*

The Division of Financial, Health, and Work Supports (DFHWS) is examining the disregarding of child support payments as income to payors of child support under programs like Food Assistance. Under current Food Assistance policy, if both the non-custodial and custodial parent are receiving Food Assistance for their respective households, child support is effectively counted as income both to the non-custodial parent who initially earns or otherwise receives income that is then used to pay child support, and to the custodial parent who receives the support payment. Although this change is not specifically designed for fathers, it will benefit many fathers, who make up the majority of non-custodial parents.

## **V) Public Input**

The Department solicited public input and information in the following ways.

- The Department developed and offered an Internet/web-based survey from its Child Support web site, Fatherhood web site, and Child Welfare Better Results 4 Kids web site that sought information from fathers regarding their service needs as well as their comments on father involvement within child support and child welfare programs.

- The Department sent an e-mail to service area managers, social work administrators, Chief Juvenile Court Officers, child welfare providers, and Community Partnership for Protecting Children sites, including links to the web sites, a PDF file of the survey, and a script to utilize if surveys were printed, completed, and turned in manually.

The survey consisted of a total of 13 questions with 6 open-ended questions. There were several demographic questions, which asked about participants' age, race/ethnicity, education, employment status, and number of children. There were several questions that asked if the father lived with any of his children, if a child support order was established, and if so, if the father had any suggestions on how the child support program could be more supportive of fathers. Two questions asked participants' if their children were involved with the child abuse and neglect system and if so, requested feedback on how the system could be more supportive of fathers. Finally, two questions asked participants' to indicate services they received and how they would rate them, as well as to indicate which services they currently do not receive that they would utilize regularly. A general comments section ended the survey. Results of the survey are provided below.

#### *Survey Results:*

There were a total of 136 responses to the survey, 134 through the Internet and 2 sent through the mail.

#### *A. Demographics:*

##### *Age:*

- 11% of fathers were younger than 25.
- 38% were 25-34 years old.
- 37% were 35-44 years old.
- 14% were older than 44.

##### *Race/Ethnicity:*

- 87.7% of fathers were White.
- 6.6% were African American.
- 4.7% were Hispanic.
- 1.0% represented a combination of Asian/Pacific Islander, American Indian/Alaskan Native, and Other categories.

##### *Education:*

- 9% of fathers had less than a high school education.
- 8% had completed their GED.
- 29% were high school graduates.
- 26% had attended some college.
- 28% were college graduates.



*Employment:*

- 88% of fathers worked full-time.
- 7% worked part-time.
- 4% were unemployed.
- 1% represented a combination of fathers who were disabled, stay-at-home dads, or students.

*B. Child Support:*

The results of the requested feedback regarding the child support program indicated that, on average, fathers had 2 children. Furthermore, a little more than half of fathers reported that they did not live with their children, 56%, while 19% indicated they lived with some but not all of their children, and 25% lived with all of their children. Of those who did not currently live with some or all of their children, 84% reported having a child support order established. Sixty-eight respondents provided recommendations for supporting fathers, which are listed below.

- Change child support guidelines, with public input, so that both parents are financially responsible for the child and the father is able to support himself and his family.
- Promptly adjust child support orders when income changes.
- Ensure that child support goes to support the children and is not used for other things by the custodial parent.
- Establish visitation orders at the time child support orders are established.
- The courts should enforce visitation orders and the laws should provide a means for the courts to do so.
- Assist unmarried fathers with paternity establishment and legal rights.
- The courts should not assume that the mother is automatically the better parent for physical care of the child and should consider joint physical care more often.
- There should be ways for fathers to modify child support and establish and/or modify visitation orders without needing a lawyer.
- Communicate with fathers more respectfully.
- Unmarried fathers should have rights under the law instead of having to fight for their rights.
- Efforts should be made to assist the custodial parent in supporting, not interfering with, the non-custodial parent's relationship with his or her children.
- There should be more programs to assist fathers.

*C. Child Welfare:*

Only 10% of fathers indicated their children were involved in the child abuse or neglect system. Another 6% did not know while 84% responded that their children were not involved in the system. Twenty-three respondents provided recommendations for improvement, which are listed below.

- Investigate allegations of abuse more thoroughly and screen foster parents more thoroughly.
- Take fathers seriously when they report abuse.
- Provide more information to fathers when their children are subjects of an investigation.
- Involve fathers early in the case and listen to their opinions.
- Give fathers the same rights as mothers.
- Consider giving custody to the father when the child is removed from the mother's home.
- Child support should immediately stop when a child is removed from the home.
- The system is "...under funded with limited resources."

*D. Income Maintenance and Other Services:*

The overwhelming majority of fathers who responded to the survey, 85%+, were not receiving any of the twenty-one services listed on the survey, which ranged from basic needs like food, housing, and transportation, to educational needs, legal needs, and relationship needs. Overall, those who did receive services listed on the survey rated the services as somewhat or very helpful. Of those not currently receiving the listed services, 36 fathers indicated services they would access and use regularly. The most repeated services are listed below.

- Legal services regarding child support and visitation
- Services to work out differences with former partner before going to court
- Parenting classes, including services to co-parent with the mother
- Housing
- Food Assistance
- Child care assistance
- Services to manage money, household, time, etc.
- Job training and job search
- Mentoring and support groups

*E. General Comments:*

Finally, general comments provided by 34 respondents reiterated several comments made previously under the individual programs. However, general comments related to DHS included the following:

- The Department should work with the courts to address fathers' needs.
- The Department should work with the Children in the Middle classes to ensure that all relevant information is presented.<sup>a</sup>
- The Department should change to include fathers more in its programs and services.

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<sup>a</sup> Note: Children in the Middle Classes are classes for divorcing parents to educate them on how divorce affects their children and how they can help their children navigate through the divorce process.

## **VI) Guiding Principles**

The Department used the following guiding principles to inform decisions around which options to implement.

- Fathers' desire to be actively involved in their children's lives, regardless of whether they live with their children or not.
- Children benefit from the physical, emotional, and financial support of both parents.
- Responsible fatherhood aims to improve the relationships between fathers, mothers, and children, which is in the best interest of children.
- There are limited situations where involvement of the father poses a safety risk to the child and mother. In these situations, diligent care must be taken to ensure the safety of the mother and child.
- Fathers may face multiple barriers to involvement with their children, such as unemployment or underemployment, lack of education, housing, or transportation, substance abuse and/or mental health issues, poor physical health, or incarceration.

## **VII) Options and Potential Funding Opportunities**

### *Discussion*

As DHS considered options and resources to support responsible fatherhood, the identification of options the Department intends on pursuing was based on several factors, including but not limited to the following:

- Currently, Child Support Recovery Unit (CSRU) has led the way in supporting responsible fatherhood. However, Child and Family Service Reviews (CFSR) have heightened the emphasis of father engagement within the child welfare system.
- Successful initiatives often first start with a shift in organizational thinking and culture.
- Responsible fatherhood is primarily concerned with the best interests of the child.
- Responsible fatherhood initiatives must be sensitive to domestic violence and child maltreatment concerns.
- Federal and State resources currently available to the Department are already designated for other priority areas and are limited. Utilization of these funds for responsible fatherhood initiatives would result in decreases in other program areas. Given economic and budgetary concerns, a real potential exists for current funding levels to be decreased, maintained at the status quo, or increased only slightly due to inflation thereby limiting resources available for new initiatives.
- DHS will embed options that are initiated within existing programs and therefore will utilize those programs existing funding streams. However, the Department will continue to look for and pursue grant opportunities to fund further initiatives.
- Funding opportunities exist through federal grants:
  - Title IV-A of the Social Security Act provides \$50 million annually in Responsible Fatherhood Grants, from Federal Fiscal Years 2006 through 2010. The last year grants were awarded was in 2006, with many grantees awarded

multiple year grants. Therefore, it is anticipated that no grants will be awarded for potentially a year or more.

- Eligible applicants for these grants include "...States, territories, Indian tribes and tribal organizations, and public and nonprofit community entities, including religious organizations..."<sup>29</sup>
  - Activities considered applicable for the Title IV-A Responsible Fatherhood Grants include those activities that promote or sustain marriage, those activities that "promote responsible parenting", including co-parenting, those activities that assist fathers to improve their economic situation, and those activities that increase the public's awareness of responsible fatherhood.<sup>30</sup>
  - These grants are highly competitive. Therefore, once the Department has identified and developed an option for the grant, the Department will apply for the grant, when the grant is announced, with implementation of the option dependent upon the Department successfully securing the grant.
- o The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children & Families, Children's Bureau, in 2006, awarded a five-year grant to the American Humane Association, American Bar Association Center on Children and the Law, and the National Fatherhood Initiative to create a National Quality Improvement Center (QIC) researching non-resident fathers (NRF) engagement within the child welfare system. The QIC-NRF will award up to four grants totaling \$1,975,000 in January 2008.
- Eligible applicants for these grants were state, county, or private child welfare agencies.
  - Activities will focus on the relationship between NRF and/or paternal kin and children in foster care with attention paid to child safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes.
  - As previously mentioned in Section IV, DHS has applied for this grant and is waiting on the grant awards notification.

The following table categorizes Department identified options into the main focal points of responsible fatherhood previously mentioned in Section II with the added category of funding. Many of the options could be listed in several categories but were listed in only one. In addition, the Department identified options that it could not implement due to budget or legal restraints and other options that stakeholders besides the Department may want to implement.

Options DHS is Currently Implementing

DHS Intends to Implement 2 to 3 of the Following Options Over the Next 18 Months

<p><i>Delaying Fatherhood until Emotionally and Financially Ready</i></p>		<p>1. The Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS) will provide fatherhood curricula, as part of transition planning, for young men aging out of the foster care system as well as consider such programming for young men in care.</p> <p>2. DCFS will require new applicants of the Community Teenage Pregnancy Prevention Grants to indicate how they will address delaying early fatherhood or how they will provide services to teenage fathers within their grant proposals.</p>
<p><i>Establishing Paternity</i></p>	<p>1. The Child Support Recovery Unit (CSRU) currently provides information to men on paternity establishment.</p>	<p>1. DCFS and the Division of Financial, Health, and Work Supports (DFHWS) will provide men information regarding paternity establishment as well as information regarding their rights and responsibilities as fathers.</p>
<p><i>Active involvement in the child's life regardless of marital status</i></p>	<p>1. CSRU is currently updating its Fatherhood web site to reflect more current fatherhood information and resources.</p> <p>2. CSRU holds community events across the State, in partnership with the Attorney General's Office, to share importance of fathers to their children. However, these events are not held in every community.</p> <p>3. CSRU is collaborating with communities of faith to support responsible fatherhood through a pilot project in Polk County.</p> <p>4. DCFS has initiated contact with the Children's Justice Initiative regarding supporting responsible fatherhood.</p>	<p>1. The Department will create family-friendly offices by utilizing posters that portray men and women in a positive light, having magazines that are gender neutral, and having specific information for both fathers and mothers in lending libraries.</p> <p>2. The Department will solicit information from fathers and groups who work with fathers on how the Department can engage them more effectively within existing programming and services.</p> <p>3. DCFS will provide staff development training to administrative, front line, and new workers regarding responsible fatherhood.</p>

**Options DHS is Currently Implementing**

**DHS Intends to Implement 2 to 3 of the Following Options Over the Next 18 Months**

<p>5. DCFS has initiated contact with the Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence (ICADV) regarding domestic violence concerns related to supporting responsible fatherhood.</p> <p>6. The Department is increasing its efforts to attract, employ, and retain staff more representative of Iowa's population.</p>	<p>4. DCFS will develop, at the state level, policies/procedures regarding identifying, locating, and engaging fathers within their employee manuals, model of practice, training materials, etc.</p> <p>5. DCFS will communicate to providers, partners, and other stakeholders information on the importance of fathers in the lives of their children, father focused services, the services currently available to fathers, assessing and addressing domestic violence concerns within the context of responsible fatherhood, and the importance of working with mothers around co-parenting issues.</p> <p>6. DCFS will work with ICADV during implementation of options to ensure that domestic violence concerns are addressed.</p> <p>7. DCFS will work with the Community Partnerships for Protecting Children (CPPC) sites to further the discussion of responsible fatherhood in Iowa's local communities.</p> <p>8. DCFS will initiate conversations with the Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC) Resource Center at the University of Iowa to see how responsible fatherhood could potentially decrease the disproportionate share of minority children in foster care.</p> <p>9. DCFS will collaborate with the Juvenile Court system, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs), and Foster Care Review Boards to determine how each system or group can assist father inclusion within the child welfare system.</p>
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Options DHS is Currently Implementing

DHS Intends to Implement 2 to 3 of the Following Options Over the Next 18 Months

		<p>10. DCFS staff will collaborate with the Children's Justice Initiative in arranging for a national speaker and one of the father's involved in the child welfare system to present information regarding responsible fatherhood and the court's role at the Judge's Conference in June 2008.</p> <p>11. DCFS staff will write an article for the Children's Justice newsletter regarding responsible fatherhood and the court's role as well as present similar information to attorneys by August 2008.</p>
<p><i>Supporting the child financially</i></p>	<p>1. CSRU is collaborating with the Department of Corrections to address inmate child support issues as well as potentially linking fatherhood programs in prisons with Work Place Essentials curriculum.</p>	<p>1. CSRU will provide training on child support policies and locating non-custodial fathers to child welfare and income maintenance staff. (Currently, CSRU staff is working with the Des Moines Service Area to provide training to child welfare workers.)</p> <p>2. Depending on the availability of funding, CSRU will expand the Alternative to Contempt Program to include additional judicial districts. (Currently, the program is in the 5<sup>th</sup> Judicial District only but is slated to expand to Sioux City soon.)</p> <p>3. CSRU will collaborate with the Iowa Workforce Development (IWD) to provide fathers with job readiness skills, including "soft skills", and job search services. (CSRU and IWD are examining utilizing the Work Place Essentials curriculum within existing fatherhood programs.)</p> <p>4. DFHWS will extend the Food Stamp Education and</p>

Options DHS is Currently Implementing

DHS Intends to Implement 2 to 3 of the Following Options Over the Next 18 Months

		<p>Training (FSET) program beyond Polk and Scott counties. (The Department is including a request within its 2009 Budget Offers to expand the program to Linn County with post-secondary education as an expansion service. However, Linn County would only receive the expansion service not the basic FSET services.)</p> <p>5. The Department will initiate conversations with Iowa Community Empowerment Boards, Family Development and Self-Sufficiency (FaDSS), and Community Action Agencies on the importance of fathers in the lives of their children, fathers being involved in their children's lives, developing resources to meet fathers' needs, development of projects aimed at supporting responsible fatherhood, grant information, etc.</p>
<i>Co-parenting with the mother</i>		<p>1. The Department will provide brochures to male and female clients regarding the importance of both parents in the lives of their children as well as brochures to increase responsible fathering.</p>
<i>Funding</i>	<p>1. CSRU and DCFS, in partnership with the DHS Cedar Rapids Service Area, Independent Child Advocate Services, Inc. and the Juvenile Courts, applied for a grant from the National Quality Improvement Center on Non-Resident Fathers (QIC NRF) to engage fathers within the child welfare system. Notice of awards is expected sometime in January 2008.</p>	<p>1. The Department will seek grant money provided through Title IV-A of the Social Security Act as well as other federal and private grants.</p>



*Options considered but not implemented due to budget or legal constraints:*

- Allocating funding each year for events/activities that include fathers in DHS services.
- Increasing use of public service announcements to strengthen focus on the importance of fathers and positive portrayals of men as fathers.
- Updating technology systems to provide a seamless interface between disciplines and to track mothers and fathers independently, including designating when fathers do not reside with their children.
- Increasing funding for Community Teenage Pregnancy Prevention Grants, with particular focus on avoiding early fatherhood and promoting responsible fatherhood.

*Additional options that outside entities can do to support responsible fatherhood:*

- Community Agencies:
  - Compile community resource listings for fathers to include resources for education, employment, food, housing, medical assistance, parenting classes, anger management classes, etc.
  - Seek inclusion of fatherhood in Iowa's 211-system and cross-link information that relates to services for fathers.
  - Open conversations with the Department of Education regarding providing fatherhood curricula to middle school and high-school males and females, such as "Dad's Make a Difference" and "Bridges to Manhood" for adolescents.
  - Employment services could include skills training, including coping and interviewing skills, to attain a better paying job.<sup>31</sup>
- Social Service Providers:
  - Social service interventions could focus on the quality of relationships between the mother and father and the father and child.<sup>32</sup>
  - Educational programs provided to both parents could include communication skill building, parent skill development including child development, childcare,<sup>33</sup> and father's emotional availability to children, as well as co-parenting.<sup>34</sup>
  - Services for fathers could include providing one-to-one mentoring and support groups<sup>35</sup> where men can discuss their fathering concerns as well as their relationships with their own father and how that impacts their identity as a father.<sup>36</sup>
  - If not already provided, batterer's groups could include a component on men's relationships with their fathers.<sup>37</sup>
- Iowa's Judicial System:
  - Legal services for fathers could consider the following: joint physical care as fathers with joint physical care see their children more and "pay regular child support", mediation services,<sup>38</sup> ensuring due process and parental responsibilities for unwed fathers,<sup>39</sup> negotiating visitation plans when establishing child support orders (however, Child Support Recovery Unit cannot enact this), and reviewing visitation plans for changes in either parent's lives.<sup>40</sup>

- Iowa General Assembly:
  - Change “visitation” to “parenting time” within Iowa’s Code of Law. Several states have made this change, including Colorado, Indiana, Michigan, and Minnesota.
  - Establish a state level office/position to track, promote, and evaluate fatherhood initiatives and services across state agencies.
  - Establish a state funding mechanism for fatherhood activities to promote/support responsible fatherhood.
  - Economic activities could include extending the Earned Income Tax Credit to non-custodial parents paying child support.<sup>41</sup>

The options considered, options the Department is further exploring for implementation, and subsequent initiated options represent a necessary step in supporting responsible fatherhood. Father absence negatively affects children, parents, and entire communities. Although financial resources are limited, there are initiatives that cost little money but that can result in important changes for families and communities. The Department encourages other State agencies and the General Assembly to continue to support responsible fatherhood as it continues to work towards this end as well.

10. Continue Opportunities for State Agencies to Discuss Parenthood Issues
11. Develop Partnerships Across State Agencies to Implement Policy and Programs
12. Communicate Lessons Learned from Projects Underway in Iowa
  
13. Create a Task Force to Champion Responsible Parenthood.

**Recommendations for the proposed task force include:**

13. Articulate a Vision of What It Means to Support Families
14. Broaden the Scope of the People Who Are Engaged in this Effort
15. Organize a Public Awareness Campaign

These recommendations for action reflect a beginning point for a coordinated and focused effort of the public through a proposed task force and state government to address the need to support both parents in their most important work: raising their children.

## **Appendix B – Excerpt: Task Force for Responsible Fatherhood Executive Summary<sup>43</sup>**

Governor Thomas J. Vilsack established the Governor's Task Force for Responsible Fatherhood through Executive Order Seventeen on February 13, 2001. The purpose of the Task Force is to heighten understanding of the importance of two parents being actively involved in the lives of children, with a particular emphasis on the involvement of fathers. Governor Vilsack asked the Task Force to do the following:

- Identify promising best practices that support and engage both parents in the emotional and financial support of their children;
- Identify obstacles that impede or prevent the involvement of fathers in the lives of their children;
- Raise public awareness of the consequences the absence of the father causes in a child's life;
- Make recommendations for policy and practice both within and without state government that sustain and re-engage fathers in their children's lives.

### **Background**

The Task Force recognizes the difficult job faced by single parents in raising their children. While many single parents are able to raise their children to be responsible and successful adults by themselves, the need to engage both parents, especially non-custodial fathers, in the lives of their children is readily apparent. Many studies underscore and reinforce what Iowans intuitively know: that children need the support and guidance of both parents. Children without both parents involved in their lives are more likely to live in poverty, twice as likely to drop out of school, have lower academic achievement, and a significantly greater risk of drug, and alcohol abuse.

The lives of men and their children are positively transformed by the experience of committed fatherhood. All parents need support in the difficult task of being good parents. Fathers can learn from each other, from their own fathers, from their children's mothers and from their children, and from community and professional service providers in many areas about how to be better fathers and responsible citizens. In recent years a growing number of national and local organizations, conferences, publications, and public events have drawn increasing attention to the importance of specifically targeting the promotion of responsible fatherhood as an issue requiring public attention and resources.

### **Guiding Principles**

The Task Force members, in their examination of the issues of fatherlessness, identified four guiding principles upon which to base their work. These principles are:

- Children thrive when both parents are actively and positively involved in the lives of their children.
- Healthy, stable, safe, and stronger families result when communities at all levels – individuals, schools, businesses, employers, the media, community groups, the faith

community, and government -- all understand and demonstrate family-friendly and father-inclusive approaches in their everyday activities.

- Government at all levels should acknowledge the importance of fathers and support the implementation of father-friendly rules, policies and practices.
- Effective fatherhood programs include continuous evaluation and improvement, have demonstrable and measurable results, and incorporate best practices.

## **Recommendations**

From their own varied experiences and perspectives Task Force members identified a number of obstacles to personal or financial involvement with their children that fathers, especially those who do not live with their children, face. Most of the barriers could be categorized in three main areas:

- Lack of awareness both by the general public and by individuals of the importance of fathers;
- Lack of education, training, and information – both formal and informal;
- Lack of adequate income.

The Task Force then worked to identify the following recommendations for Governor Vilsack's consideration. In summary, these recommendations are:

1. Establish a locus of responsibility for fatherhood issues, initiatives and activities within state government.
2. Heighten public awareness of the importance of fathers and spur further support for fatherhood issues by bringing together interested community groups and practitioners on a regular ongoing basis.
3. Advocate that all programs and services provided to families by public agencies address the appropriate involvement of both parents in raising their children. Service providers must take into account the varying needs of fathers at different stages of their lives and base their services upon the idea of lifelong education.
4. Encourage state government to use its leadership to:
  - Partner with business, communities and education to help secure "Better Paid Iowans"; a living wage is an important key to helping fathers support their children.
  - Examine the existing policies and practices of all branches of government to determine their father-friendliness.
  - Coordinate various programs to complement each other.
  - Ensure that publicly funded programs are based upon guiding principles defined in this report.
  - Ensure that programming is provided for fathers with widely varied needs.
  - Strive for a balanced approach between prevention and intervention for initiatives, programs, funding, and policy making.

- Monitor and report on initiatives, results, lessons learned, and best practices.
- Provide technical assistance for results measurement to ensure that all fatherhood programs developed within the state have demonstrable and measurable results.
- Support the courts in considering the importance of the roles of fathers when issuing decisions that affect families.

5. Make the educational system at all levels aware of the importance of involving both parents in their children's educational development.

6. Encourage mental health, substance abuse, adult corrections, juvenile justice, and child welfare professionals to recognize that their work strongly affects good parenting. Emphasize parenting education as part of the treatment.

7. Develop pre- and post-incarceration support programs with support systems after release for both juveniles and adult males.

8. Seek to make the workplace more family- and parent-friendly. In order to be a more family-friendly and father-inclusive workplace, employers -- state government and private employers -- must provide a workplace that helps create healthy, stable, safe, and strong families and a more productive workforce.

9. Build on existing work programs for men by linking them with issues of fatherhood.

10. Children benefit from living with both parents in a loving stable relationship that is a partnership.

One of Governor Vilsack's initial steps in addressing fatherhood issues was to create the Interagency Workgroup, whose report was submitted in December 2000. The report and the ten recommendations of the Task Force represent the next step in Iowa's actively encouraging and supporting the involvement of both parents in the lives of their children. The Task Force believes that any further discussions around this issue should be certain to include parents, including single mothers and fathers and those who are married or in long term relationships, divorced mothers and fathers, and young men and women who will be fathers and mothers.

Fatherhood has many facets and the issues can be complex and numerous. The Task Force submits this report to Governor Vilsack with their sincere thanks, encouragement, and support to the Governor as he leads Iowans to create a place where children benefit fully from the involvement of their fathers in their lives.

## **Appendix C – Excerpt: The Fatherhood, Marriage and Family Supports Advisory Group Recommendations<sup>44</sup>**

The Advisory Group recognized the importance of the family and the need for the family to provide a safe, loving and stable environment. The responses from the focus group participants reinforced the overall importance of family. A strong family is built on healthy relationships among all the members of that family and others. The following recommendations were developed within the context of relationships and what's best for children.

### **1. Lift Up the Importance of the Family**

The future of our children depends on the family. Iowans have long supported education, economic development, health, and support services for individuals in the family. What is often not recognized is the importance of working with the whole family rather than just the individual members.

- Bring the focus of what we do back to the family itself.
- Recognize the importance of fathers and men and the role they have in the lives of their family and children.
- Affirm that the responsibility of raising healthy children begins with the family and provide parents with the supports they need to fulfill that responsibility.
- Reinforce informal support systems and learn from the past – when neighborhoods had front-porches and neighbors cared for each other and watched and protected others' children.
- Respect the family as the foundation of our communities and that all institutions need to actively support the family.

### **2. Act Before A Family Faces Crises and Is Harmed**

Iowans have long been reluctant to intervene in the lives of family unless they are in crisis. However, the adage - an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, has merit. At the point of crisis or afterwards, it is usually too late to save the family structure.

- Make less costly investments earlier to reduce the need for more costly intervention and treatment.
- Recognize that the safety net starts with the family members and includes extended family, neighbors and all formal and informal support systems.
- Create a holistic approach to address the needs of the family – including, communities, faith-based groups, schools, government, health systems, the courts, businesses and the media.
- Provide adequate funding for essential social service programs.

### **3. Improve the Relationship Skills of All Iowans**

Healthy and strong families are created and maintained when family members have the skills needed to address issues across the life span of the relationship. Education and life-skills development begin in the home. The ability to form strong relationships begins at birth. Commitment to a life-long relationship requires different skills at different stages.

- Teach relationship skills, life-skills, citizenship and parenting through both formal and

informal methods including classes, mentoring, role models and the media.

- Integrate character education, decision-making, relationships, healthy choices, conflict resolution, and life development skills throughout the entire school curriculum, not just one class and not just one grade level.
- Build a stronger partnership between schools and parents.
- Establish anti-bullying programs for both victims and bullies.
- Utilize established curriculums with proven track records.

#### **4. Bolster Families Through Economic Stability and Employer Support**

Iowans have a reputation of being hard-working, productive employees. The Iowa work ethic includes taking responsibility for providing financial support for families. Financial issues continue to be a problem for many parents trying to support their families. These issues include earnings and earnings potential, financial management, and employer policies that present barriers to parents spending more time with their families. Future productivity of workers is dependent on healthy and financially secure families.

- Help families obtain competitive and livable wages and benefits that meet families' needs.
- Promote economic development that recognizes and supports the pivotal role of families.
- Create employment policies that support both fathers and mothers in fulfilling their family responsibilities.
- Secure safe, affordable, quality child care for parents when they must work.
- Recognize the need of parents to have flexibility in their work schedules.

#### **5. Surround Families With a Comprehensive Array of Services**

Iowans are fiercely independent, however, everyone needs support at some time. Families and relationships don't exist in isolation. There needs to be a community-wide commitment to help families support themselves. A wide array of services must be available and accessible to families when they need or choose to seek help.

- Help families help themselves.
- Recognize that all family members have strengths; services should build upon those strengths.
- Commit to building a collaborative, comprehensive network of services that incorporate community-based and faith-based organizations.
- Provide adequate funding for support services.
- Communicate to parents through formal and informal channels the availability of services and programs within their community.
- Support the development of community and neighborhood collaborations.
- Provide accessibility including transportation for families to receive services.

#### **6. Utilize Best Practices & Pilot Initiatives to Produce Measurable Outcomes**

With an increasing scarcity of resources, government is striving to be more efficient and produce successful outcomes.



- Utilize available state and federal funding for proven programs with measurable outcomes.
- Begin with pilot programs to test effectiveness.
- Reinforce the commitment to supporting families.
- Provide community-wide services through community-based and faith-based organizations.
- Promote best practices that support families as discussed in the recommendations above.

<sup>1</sup> Source: *Responsible Fathering: An Overview and Conceptual Framework*. William J. Doherty, Ph.D., Edward F. Kouneski, M.A., and Martha Farrell Erickson, Ph.D. of the University of Minnesota. September, 1996. Prepared for the Administration for Children and Families and the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation of the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services.

<sup>2</sup> Source: Summary of the Results of the 2001 – 2004 Child and Family Services Review, accessible via <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwmonitoring/results/genfindings04/genfindings04.pdf>. Note: States that participated in the CFSR in FFY 2001 were not included in the content analysis due to format differences in the evaluation instruments between FFY 2001 and FFY 2002 through 2004.

<sup>3</sup> Source: 2007 Kids Count Data Book: Iowa

<sup>4</sup> Source: Iowa Department of Public Health, 2005 Vital Statistics of Iowa

<sup>5</sup> Source: Same as endnote 3 above

<sup>6</sup> Source: Same as endnote 4 above

<sup>7</sup> Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006 American Community Survey: Iowa

<sup>8</sup> Source: Iowa Department of Human Services, Child Support Recovery Unit, State Fiscal Year 2009, Offer #401-HHS-002 Narrative

<sup>9</sup> Source: Flouri, E. & Buchanan, A. (2003). The role of father involvement in children's later mental health. *Journal of Adolescence*, 26, 63-78.

<sup>10</sup> Source: Hunter, J., Figueredo, A.J., Becker, J. & Malamuth, N. (2007). Non-sexual delinquency in juvenile sexual offenders: The mediating and moderating influences of emotional empathy. *Journal of Family Violence*, 22, 43-54.

<sup>11</sup> Source: Jones, K.A. & Benda, B.B. (2004). Alcohol use among adolescents with non-residential fathers: A study of assets and deficits. *Alcoholism Treatment Quarterly*, 22(1), 3-25.

<sup>12</sup> Source: Same as endnote 11 above.

<sup>13</sup> Source: King, V., Mullan Harris, K. & Heard, H.E. (2004). Racial and ethnic diversity in nonresident father involvement. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 22, 1-21.

<sup>14</sup> Source: Mackey, W. & Immerman, R. (2007). Fatherlessness by divorce contrasted to fatherlessness by non-marital births: A distinction with a difference for the community. *Journal of Divorce & Remarriage*, 47(1/2), 111-134

<sup>15</sup> Source: Jackson, A.P. & Scheines, R. (2005). Single mothers' self-efficacy, parenting in the home environment, and children's development in a two-wave study. *Social Work Research*, 29(1), 7-20.

<sup>16</sup> Source: Same as endnote 11 above

<sup>17</sup> Source: Same as endnote 9 above

<sup>18</sup> Source: King, V. (2006). The antecedents and consequences of adolescents' relationships with stepfathers and nonresident fathers. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 68, 910-928

<sup>19</sup> Source: Min Lee, S., Kushner, J. & Ho Cho, S. (2007). Effects of parent's gender, child's gender, and parental involvement on the academic achievement of adolescents in single parent families. *Sex Roles*, 56, 149-157

<sup>20</sup> Source: Fabricius, W.V. & Luecken, L. (2007). Postdivorce living arrangements, parent conflict, and long-term physical health correlates for children of divorce. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 21(2), 195-205.

<sup>21</sup> Source: Same as endnote 9 above

<sup>22</sup> Source: Saleh, M.F. (2006). *Dimensions of paternal involvement among young and adult fathers in fragile families*. Ann Arbor, MI: ProQuest Information and Learning Company. (Dissertation)

<sup>23</sup> Source: Cancian, M. & Meyer, D.R. (2004). Fathers of children receiving welfare: Can they provide more child support? *Social Service Review*, 78(2), 179-206.

<sup>24</sup> Source: Iowa Department of Human Services

<sup>25</sup> Source: Family and Children's Council, Parental Obligation Pilot Project Monthly Service Report, October 2007

- <sup>26</sup> Source: First Resources Corporation, Common Ground, Mahaska and Wapello Counties, Parental Obligation Pilot Project Monthly Service Report, October 2007
- <sup>27</sup> Source: First Resources Corporation, Common Ground, Keokuk, Jefferson, Washington, and Van Buren Counties, Parental Obligation Pilot Project Monthly Service Report, October 2007
- <sup>28</sup> Source for all three agencies: Iowa Department of Human Services, Bureau of Collections, Summary of State-Funded Local A/V Programs for FY 2007
- <sup>29</sup> Source: Title IV-A of the Social Security Act
- <sup>30</sup> Source: Same as endnote 29 above.
- <sup>31</sup> Source: Weinman, M.L., Buzi, R.S., & Smith, P.B. (2005). Addressing risk behaviors, service needs, and mental health issues in programs for young fathers. *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Social Services*, 86(2), 261-266.
- <sup>32</sup> Source: Same as endnote 15 above
- <sup>33</sup> Source: Wiemann, C.M., Agurcia, C.A., Rickert, V.L., Berenso, A.B. & Volk, R.J. (2006). Absent fathers as providers: Race/ethnic differences in support for adolescent mothers. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 23(5/6), 617-634.
- <sup>34</sup> Source: Dick, G. & Bronson, D. (2005). Adult men's self-esteem: The relationship with the father. *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Social Services*, 86(4), 580-588.
- <sup>35</sup> Source: Same as endnote 22 above
- <sup>36</sup> Source: Same as endnote 34 above
- <sup>37</sup> Source: Same as endnote 34 above
- <sup>38</sup> Source: Same as endnote 22 above.
- <sup>39</sup> Source: Risley-Curtiss, C. & Heffernan, K. (2003). Gender biases in child welfare. *Affilia*, 18(4), 395-410.
- <sup>40</sup> Source: Laakso, J.H. & Adams, S. (2006). Noncustodial fathers' involvement with their children: A right or a privilege?. *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Social Services*, 87(1), 85-93.
- <sup>41</sup> Source: Curran, L. (2003). Social work and fathers: Child support and fathering programs. *Social Work*, 48(2), 219-227.
- <sup>42</sup> Source: *Responsible Parenthood: Taking Care of Our Children, Building the Case in Iowa; A Report to Governor Thomas J. Vilsack, Interagency Work Group on Responsible Parenthood, December, 2000*. Accessible via Archives at <https://dhssecure.dhs.state.ia.us/fatherhood/>.
- <sup>43</sup> Source: *A Report to Iowa Governor Thomas J. Vilsack, from the Task Force for Responsible Fatherhood, JANUARY 2002*. Accessible via Archives at <https://dhssecure.dhs.state.ia.us/fatherhood/>.
- <sup>44</sup> Source: *The Fatherhood, Marriage and Family Supports Advisory Group Report & Recommendations, Presented to the Iowa General Assembly and Governor Thomas J. Vilsack, January 2004*. Accessible via Archives at <https://dhssecure.dhs.state.ia.us/fatherhood/>.