

**A Rapid Ethnographic Assessment of
Programs & Services (REAPS) for Fathers
in Montgomery County, Ohio**

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**National
Fatherhood
Initiative®**

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An Initiative of the Ohio Commission on Fatherhood

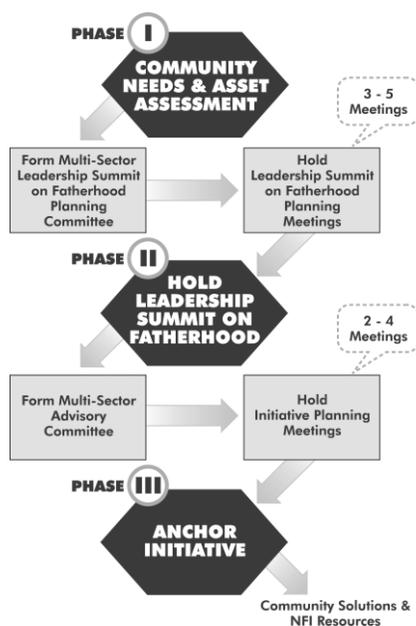
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Introduction

The Ohio Commission on Fatherhood (OCF) has partnered with National Fatherhood Initiative (NFI) in 2011 to assist 12 Ohio counties mobilize around responsible fatherhood. Montgomery County was one of the 12 counties selected to participate in this Community Mobilization Initiative.

NFI's Community Mobilization Approach (CMA), which is diagrammed in Figure 1 below, consists of 3 phases: (1) a needs and assets assessment of the counties' abilities to promote responsible fatherhood; (2) a Leadership Summit on Fatherhood attended by county leaders; and (3) implementing an action plan for a fatherhood initiative generated by a broad cross-section of county sectors.

Figure 1



This report is the culmination of Phase 1 of this ongoing initiative in Montgomery County.

Secondary Data on Fatherhood

According to 2009 U.S. Census Bureau data, over 24 million children live apart from their biological fathers. That is 1 out of every 3 (33%) children in America. Nearly 2 in 3 (64%) African American children live in father-absent homes. One in three (34%) Hispanic children, and 1 in 4 (25%) white children live in father-absent homes. In 1960, only 11% of children lived in father-absent homes.¹

Children who live absent their biological fathers are, on average, at least two to three times more likely to be poor, to use drugs, to experience educational, health, emotional and behavioral problems, to be victims of child abuse, and to engage in criminal behavior than their peers who live with their married, biological (or adoptive) parents.²

The annual cost of father absence in America is staggering. The Federal Government spent at least \$99.8 billion providing assistance to father-absent homes in 2006. This is a conservative estimate; it does not include federal benefit programs for communities, indirect costs related to poor outcomes of children from father-absent homes, and long-term costs in reduced tax income from low-earning single-parent families.³

In Ohio, father absence is at 25.7% or 7.3% lower than the national average and Montgomery County ranks 7.1% higher than the state average at 32.8%. Montgomery County's largest city, Dayton, is significantly higher at 48.5%.⁴

There's no doubt that father absence and poverty are strongly related. Data shows that it's more difficult to get fathers to provide financial support when they are not

¹ National Fatherhood Initiative, 2007, *Father Facts Fifth Edition*.

² National Fatherhood Initiative, 2007. *Father Facts Fifth Edition*.

³ Nock, Steven L., and Einolf, Christopher J. 2008. "The One Hundred Billion Dollar Man."

⁴ 2005-2009 American Community Survey

married to the mother and when they lack an emotional connection to their children. Children in father-absent homes are five times more likely to be poor. In 2002, 7.8% of children in married-couple families were living in poverty, compared to 38.4 % percent of children in female-householder families.⁵ In 2010, Montgomery County's poverty rate was 40.5%, which is the 8th highest in the state out of 88 counties. The short-term trend from 2008 to 2009 in median household income – from \$44,880 to \$41,426 – is not in the desired direction. The county comparative rank also did not move in the desired direction, changing from 6th to 7th. Montgomery County also ranks 8th highest in unemployment at 11.5% or 1.2% higher than the state average.⁶

Montgomery County's teen birth rate (age 15-19) of 47 births per 1000⁷ is 6 higher than the state and national average of 41 per 1000.⁸ There is a clear connection between father absence and teen pregnancy since a father's behavior and values uniquely influence a girl's expectations about boyfriends and husbands. In addition, boys learn from their fathers what kind of husband and father they should become and how to treat girls and women. Research shows that boys raised in single-mother homes are at a higher risk of teen pregnancy⁹ and teenage girls without fathers were twice as likely to be involved in early sexual activity and seven times more likely to get pregnant as other adolescents.¹⁰

Children who grow up without their fathers are at greatest risk for child abuse. In fact, the presence of a child's father in the home lowers the likelihood that a child will be abused. Compared to living with both parents, living in a single-parent home doubles the risk that a child will suffer physical, emotional, or educational neglect.¹¹ There were 4,669 new allegations of child abuse/neglect in Montgomery County in 2007.¹² There were 13 children per 1,000 who were abused or neglected in Montgomery County in 2006. That is 3 children higher per 1,000 than the state rate.¹³

<p style="text-align: center;">Father Absence</p> <p>National: 33% Ohio: 26% Montgomery County: 32.8% Dayton: 48.5%</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Teen Birth Rate (per 1000)</p> <p>National: 41 State: 41 Montgomery County: 47</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Children Abused or Neglected (per 1000)</p> <p>Ohio: 10 Montgomery County: 13</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Adolescents Adjudicated for Felonies (per 1000)</p> <p>Ohio: 14 Montgomery County: 18</p>

There were also 18 adolescents per 1,000 in Montgomery County who were adjudicated for felonies in 2006.¹⁴ Often, the “story behind the story” of a violent crime committed in America reveals a “crime of fatherlessness.” In other words, children who grow up without the presence of an

⁵ U.S. Census Bureau, Children's Living Arrangements and Characteristics: March 2002, P200-547, Table C8. Washington D.C.: GPO, 2003.

⁶ FCFC 2010 Progress Report

⁷ Source URL:

<http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/node/2199/14>.

⁸ Centers for Disease and Control and Prevention. National Center for Health Statistics. VitalsStats.

<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/vitalstats.htm>. Accessed 4/15/2011.

⁹ Teachman, Jay D. “The Childhood Living Arrangements of Children and the Characteristics of Their Marriages.” Journal of Family Issues 25 (January 2004):86-111.

¹⁰ Ellis, Bruce J., John E. Bates, Kenneth A. Dodge, David M. Ferguson, L. John Horwood, Gregory S. Pettit, and Lianne Woodward. “Does Father Absence Place Daughters at Special Risk for Early Sexual Activity and Teenage Pregnancy?” Child Development 74 (May/June 2003): 801-821.

¹¹ America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being. Table SPECIAL1. Washington D.C.: Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 1997.

¹² Ohio PCSAO Factbook, 2007.

¹³ Children's Defense Fund-Ohio. County Fact Sheet Data, 2008.

¹⁴ Children's Defense Fund-Ohio. County Fact Sheet Data, 2008.

involved, responsible, and committed father are significantly more likely to engage in criminal activity. Adolescents who live in single-parent families were significantly more likely to commit status, property, or person delinquency when compared to adolescents living in two-parent families. This was consistent even for controlling for sex, minority group status, and the mother's education (as a proxy for income).¹⁵

Education is another critical issue that father absence affects. Students living in biological father-absent homes are twice as likely to repeat a grade in school; 10% of children living with both parents have ever repeated a grade, compared to 20% of children in stepfather families and 18% in mother-only families.¹⁶ The short-term trend in graduation rate for Montgomery County from 2007-08 to 2008-09 – from 86.9% to 83% - is not in the desired direction. The county comparative also did not change in the desired direction, moving from 2nd to 4th. We were unable to gather concrete data as to the actual number of fatherless homes with children in school. But antidotal data from elementary, middle school, and high school principals indicated the majority of children with academic challenges such as; school retention; dropout; truancy; multi-discipline's; and functioning below grade level come from single parent homes, the majority of which are father absent homes.

Montgomery County Leader Focus Group Results

There were fifteen focus group participants including representatives from the county lead agency and the Ohio Commission on Fatherhood. These individuals represented a broad cross section of the community the majority of which had experience working with fathers and families. The following organizations/businesses were represented (Note – some sectors were represented by more than one individual):

- High School Principal
- Pastor
- Drew Health Center
- Child Support Enforcement Agency
- Job & Family Services
- Community Activist
- US Probation
- Arbor Education
- Children's Services
- County Commissioner
- Juvenile Court
- Channel 2 Anchor
- Goodwill Industries

All focus group attendees agreed that there is a need to address father absence in Montgomery County. Some participants were knowledgeable about statistics related to fatherhood and child well being. However, the majority was more familiar with the issues they observe first-hand in their line of work and/or in the community at large (i.e. challenges with mothers playing the role of mother and father, children being in the middle of parental conflict, etc.). Without denigrating the role of single parents, participants were clear that on average kids do better with both parents actively engaged in their lives. It was noted that father absence often means the extended paternal side of the child's family isn't involved. Participants indicated that father absence occurs with non-custodial fathers as well as with fathers who have full or partial custody of their children and that the issue cuts across social and economic status. The group identified the following needs or issues related to father absence:

- Access to information for fathers that want to be involved with their children but don't know how
- Increased awareness (for fathers, mothers and the community in general) about the importance of father involvement
- Education for fathers (including education about legal rights for visitation, etc.)
- A general lack of responsibility/commitment/

¹⁵ Anderson, Amy L. "Individual and contextual influences on delinquency: the role of the single-parent family." *Journal of Criminal Justice* 30 (November 2002): 575-587.

¹⁶ Nord, Christine Winqvist, and Jerry West. *Fathers' and Mothers' Involvement in Their Children's Schools by Family Type and Resident Status.* (NCES 2001-032). Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Studies, 2001.

intentions of being a family and keeping relationships in tact (for both men and women)

- Lack of mentors in the community or “social dads”
- Community organizations and general systems are not always father-friendly which can be discouraging for fathers
- Work with youth to avoid premature fatherhood
- Focus on expectant and new dads
- Parenting skills classes
- Employment assistance programs and more felon-friendly employers
- Ex-offender programs
- Fatherlessness contributes to gang involvement as kids look for a place to belong

After discussing a variety of needs related to father absence, the majority of attendees agreed that the most pressing needs were helping fathers gain access to information (particularly through the courts) about understanding the law, and how to become more involved as a dad. There was also a desire to see consistent messaging in the county about the importance of father involvement.

Participants indicated that the work of Child Support Enforcement was the closest thing to a broad county wide initiative to promote responsible fatherhood. There are, however, other programs, services, and special activities in the community for fathers. These include:

- Powernet (Reentry)
- Arbor Education (Seek Work Program)
- YMCA
- Men of Standards
- Family & Children First Council
- Catholic Social Services (Erma House)

Participants thought that a clearinghouse of sorts would help market smaller groups that are not well-known. They felt that there was a need for more mentoring programs as well as visitation and mediation services where

both parents can interact. They also identified the need for more Supervised Visitation Centers. There are very few programs in place and those that are available are at capacity.

Renaissance Men at Thurgood Marshall High School was mentioned as an existing program that could help communicate the message of responsible fatherhood. Renaissance Men is a movement for high school males interested in community service and mentorship that has involvement of some of the members of Wright State University’s Black Men on the Move.

The focus group participants expressed interest in continuing to work with the Ohio Commission on Responsible Fatherhood and its efforts to improve father involvement across the state. All attendees agreed that representation was needed from the school system, county judges, magistrates, and fathers.

Participants highlighted the following funding opportunities in Montgomery County:

- Mathile Family Foundation
- Premier Health Partners
- Rahls Construction
- Wright State University and/or University of Dayton (evaluation)
- Financial institutions
- G.E.

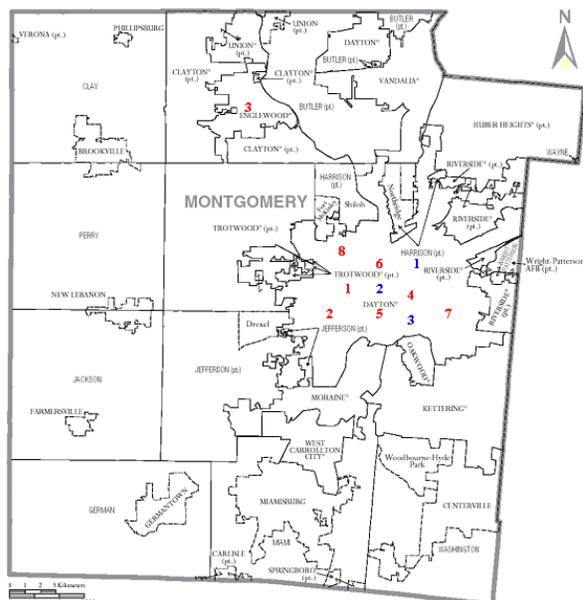
Most Pressing Needs in Montgomery County

Help fathers gain access to information about understanding the law

Help fathers understand how to become more involved as a dad

Create consistent messaging in the county about the importance of father involvement

County Assets Map



Red Numbers = Father/Male-Specific Programs and Services

1. Men of Standards—Wayman Chapel AME Church
2. Rescare Workforce Services—Arbor E&T, LLC
3. Family Enrichment Initiative of Metropolitan Ministries
4. Powernet of Dayton
5. Montgomery County Job & Family Services Fatherhood Initiative
6. The Black Man's Think Tank
7. Catholic Social Services
8. Man Up Dads—The Living Word of Faith

Blue Numbers = Programs for mothers and children that could be expanded to include fathers

1. Goodwill Easter Seals Miami Valley
2. Downtown Dayton YMCA
3. Professional Psychological Services

Montgomery County is fortunate to have 8 currently active father- or male-specific programs. **Men of Standards** focus on problems that affect men, with an emphasis on drug/alcohol addiction. Many of the members are recovering addicts. Rescare Workforce Services **Seek Work Program** is designed to obtain employment for absent parents, the vast majority of which are men. **The Family Enrichment Initiative of Metropolitan Ministries** is a small, faith-based group of mostly African American men that work towards bettering the community. **Powernet of Dayton** is a reentry group that work with offenders and ex-offenders on a variety of life skills, including parenting, and employment seeking. **The Montgomery County Job & Family Services Fatherhood Initiative** will focus on Job & Family Services male clients who need help with life skills, such as parenting, support groups, and employment services. **The Black Man's Think Tank** is an organization that “supports industry among Black organizations and

professionals.” **Catholic Social Services** currently offer fatherhood services as a part of a demonstration program funded by the Office of Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention. They also use the 24/7 Dad™ program. **Man Up Dads** have helped clients with issues surrounding poverty and self-sufficiency.

With the exception of the **Family Enrichment Initiative of Metropolitan Ministries**, all of the other programs are located in Dayton. The map shows some geographic gaps in easily accessible fatherhood programs and services in most areas of the county. It is recommended that some services be offered in locations throughout the county and/or transportation options be provided.

Another area of opportunity is in the kinds of dads served. Programs that target new dads, military dads, and dads with special needs are some areas that should be considered. Because Wright Patterson Air Force Base is located in Montgomery County, it is recommended that a focus be put on military dads. Military dads need help staying connected to their families pre-, mid-, and post-deployment. It is also recommended that Montgomery County leaders explore the interest of those organizations on the map that can expand their services to create father-specific programs.

Conclusions

This report brings to light many specific needs within Montgomery County. It identifies some key issues that increasing involved, responsible, and committed fatherhood can help remedy and some gaps in the geographic locations of programs and services. There are opportunities to target specific kinds of dads who aren't currently being reached.

This report also reveals many assets that have not been fully utilized that can be of great assistance as Montgomery County anchors a County Fatherhood Initiative that mobilizes all sectors around fatherhood. We have a unique opportunity now to enrich fathers, families, and communities in Montgomery County.