

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

Prepared By:



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Fatherhood
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An Initiative of the Ohio Commission on Fatherhood

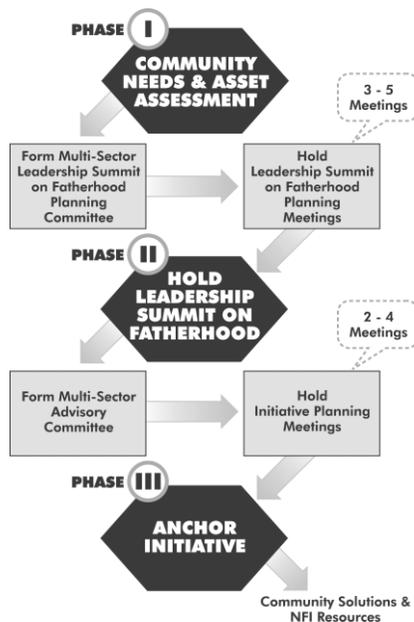
April 2011

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. Trumbull 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 Trumbull 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.

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.¹

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.²

In Ohio, father absence is at 25.7% or 7.3% lower than the national average; however, Trumbull County ranks 3.3% higher than the state average at 29%. Trumbull County's largest city, Warren, is significantly higher at 48%.³

Trumbull County's teen birth rate (age 15-19) of 40 births per 1000⁴ is consistent with the state and national average of 41 per 1000.⁵ There is a clear connection between

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

² Nock, Steven L., and Einolf, Christopher J. 2008. "The One Hundred Billion Dollar Man."

³ 2005-2009 American Community Survey

⁴ Source URL:

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

⁵ Centers for Disease and Control and Prevention. National Center for Health Statistics. VitalStats.

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

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 pregnancy⁶ 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.⁷

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.⁸ There were 1,935 new allegations of child abuse/neglect in Trumbull County in 2007.⁹ There were 4 children per 1,000 who were abused or neglected in Trumbull County in 2006. Although that is 6 children lower per 1,000 than the state rate, this is still an issue that merits attention.

There were also 10 adolescents per 1,000 in Trumbull County who were adjudicated for felonies in 2006.¹⁰ 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 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).¹¹

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| <p style="text-align: center;">Father Absence</p> <p>National: 33% Ohio: 26% Trumbull County: 29% Warren: 48%</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Teen Birth Rate (per 1000)</p> <p>National: 41 State: 41 Trumbull County: 40</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Children Abused or Neglected (per 1000)</p> <p>Ohio: 10 Trumbull County: 4</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Adolescents Adjudicated for Felonies (per 1000)</p> <p>Ohio: 14 Trumbull County: 10</p> |
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Trumbull County Leader Focus Group Results

Thirteen members of the community participated in the focus group held in Trumbull County. These individuals represented a variety of sectors of the community as well as organizations serving children and families. The organizations/community sectors represented included:

- Mentoring Moms and Parents Program – Stepping Stones to Success
- Warren Family Mission
- Trumbull Family and Children First Council
- ACOP Center Day Care
- Greater Warren Urban League

⁶ Teachman, Jay D. "The Childhood Living Arrangements of Children and the Characteristics of Their Marriages." *Journal of Family Issues* 25 (January 2004):86-111.

⁷ 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.

⁸ America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being. Table SPECIAL1. Washington D.C.: Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 1997.

⁹ Ohio PCSAO Factbook, 2007.

¹⁰ Children's Defense Fund-Ohio. County Fact Sheet Data, 2008.

¹¹ 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.

- Job and Family Services
- Collaboration Station
- Warren City Schools
- NAACP
- Warren Police Department
- Trumbull County Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance
- Warren City Health Department
- County Commissioners President

While the focus group attendees felt that a lack of father involvement is in every community, they all agreed that there is a need to address the issue in Trumbull County. The attendees spent time discussing a common attitude in the county that having multiple “baby mamas” is a status symbol and that there is a general lack of respect among men towards being a father and towards women. In addition to these general feelings, the group identified other pressing needs related to father absence. These included:

- Fathers who do not or are unable to pay child support
- Impacts on children’s education when there is only one active parent
- Imbalance of home life / lack of structure and its overall impacts on children
- The creation of a system of poverty when there is not a father present in the home
- Children involved in the juvenile justice system
- Early onset of drug and alcohol use
- Teen pregnancy
- Student involvement in gangs
- Increasing rates of divorce

Of the needs identified, the participants felt that teen pregnancy and the state of poverty that often results from teen pregnancy as well as the need to create a balanced home life to promote educational success were the most pressing needs in Trumbull County.

The group spent time discussing the need to engage fathers that are not involved in their children’s lives as well as those that are in the home but that did not have a positive father-figure in their own life as these fathers may not have learned to be a positive

support to their children. The participants went on to identify specific types of fathers most in need of supportive services and where these fathers could be found in the community. These included:

- Teen fathers (churches, schools, courts, on street corners)
- Un-/Under-employed fathers (one-stops, job fairs, Job and Family Services, call centers, barber shops, fast food restaurants, car washes)
- Fathers without a positive father role model (found in a variety of places)
- Fathers who are present but not active – including educated, professionals that are not able/do not spend quality time with their children (found in a variety of places)
- Non-custodial fathers who want to be involved (courts, child support offices, Children Services)
- Ex-offenders who continue to be financially and socially penalized (parole officers, courts)

The focus group participants were aware of various programs and/or activities (past and present) in the county that have focused on fathers. The following were mentioned during the discussion:

- Warren-Youngstown Urban League fatherhood program (has not been operational for the past few years due to lack of funding)
- “Dad’s Day” event in schools (fathers visit their children, schools host seminars and educational activities)
- New Fellowship Baptist Church “How to be a Father Today” presentations
- Mentoring Moms and Parents Program developing for dads and moms
- Inspiring Minds –recreational program
- “Real Dads Rock” program in hospitals helping dads create a bond with their new baby (program no longer operational)
- Substance abuse programs offered by Warren City Mission

- “A Call to Men”

Additionally, the attendees recognized a number of child- and family-focused programs that could be expanded to more intentionally target fathers. Of the services identified, those related to assisting fathers with their legal rights were identified as being the most in need of expansion. Additional services/programs mentioned included:

- Early childhood programs: SPARK, Head Start, WIC, Help Me Grow
- Prenatal programs
- Parenting programs: Children’s Services Board, Planned Parenthood
- Local sports leagues
- Child immunization programs

During the discussion around what services were present and those that could be expanded to focus on fathers, the group identified the need to develop a resource list of father-focused services and programs. The attendees felt that this list would serve as a referral resource as well as provide opportunities to collaborate when seeking future funding. Similarly, the focus group participants identified a number of assets within the county that could be mobilized to around promoting responsible fatherhood. The following resources within Trumbull County were identified:

- Warren City Mission
- Trumbull Metropolitan Housing Authority
- NAACP
- Urban League
- Schools
- Courts
- Churches
- Children’s Services
- Child Support
- Job & Family Services
- Small Businesses
- Trumbull 100
- Chamber of Commerce
- Trumbull Career and Technical Center
- Ministerial Alliance
- United Way
- Catholic Charities

- Salvation Army
- Community College in Warren
- Trade Schools
- The Tribune Chronicle
- The Vindicator
- Channel 33, 21, 47

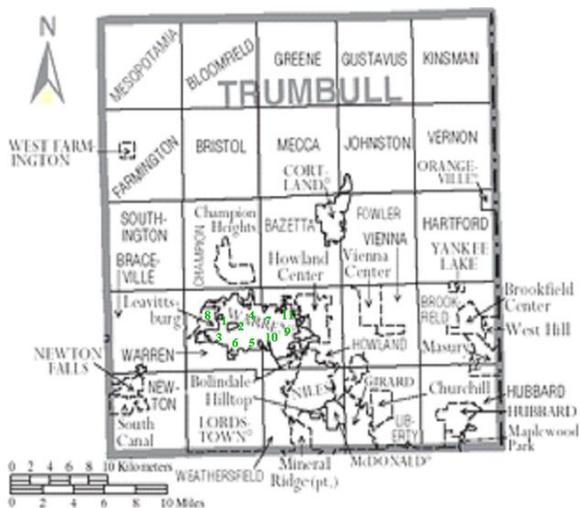
The Trumbull County focus group participants felt strongly that a coordinated effort needs to be made around promoting responsible fatherhood, and they felt that there were others in the community that need to be involved in the conversation.

The participants identified potential funding opportunities that could be explored when the initiative has a more focused approach in place. The following list represents these ideas:

- Wean Foundation
- Panera Bread
- Scrappers
- Media underwriting
- Jobs and Family Services
- Trumbull Memorial Hospital Foundation
- AVI Foodsystems, Inc.
- Banks
- Tony Laricha

While the attendees acknowledged that securing necessary funding for a county-wide initiative may be difficult, they felt that creating more of a “buzz” about the initiative and its direction prior to reaching out to potential funders would be an effective approach. One of the more promising results of the focus group was that Job and Family Services as well as Trumbull Family and Children First Council are interested in dedicating staff time and resources to efforts around the fatherhood initiative if the Ohio State budget does not have a great impact on the organizations’ operating budgets.

County Assets Map



There are no Father-Specific programs and services currently operating
 Numbers = Programs for mothers and children that could be expanded to include fathers

1. Churchill Counseling
2. Community Solutions Association—Family Program and SPARK
3. Greentree Counseling Centers—Marriage & Family Counseling
4. Healthy Start
5. Help Me Grow
6. Homes for Kids—Child & Family Solutions
7. Pregnancy Resource Center
8. Resource Mothers
9. Someplace Safe, Inc.
10. TCAP—Even Start and Head Start programs
11. Valley Counseling—Neil Kennedy Recovery Clinic

Although Trumbull County does not have any known programs or services specifically for men or fathers, the Assets Map shows a minimum of 11 organizations that could expand their services to include fathers. It is recommended that Trumbull County leaders explore the interest of the organizations identified on the map in creating father-specific programs. Even if these organizations would begin offering father-specific programs, they are located in the same geographic area of the county, leaving fathers in outlying areas without easily accessible services. It is also 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 non-custodial dads, incarcerated dads, military dads, and dads with special needs are some areas that should be considered.

Conclusions

This report brings to light many specific needs within Trumbull 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 Trumbull 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 Trumbull County.