

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

Prepared By:



**National  
Fatherhood  
Initiative<sup>®</sup>**

[www.fatherhood.org](http://www.fatherhood.org)

With Contributions From:

Public Strategies, Inc.  
Ohio State University Extension—Greene County

**An Initiative of the Ohio Commission on Fatherhood**

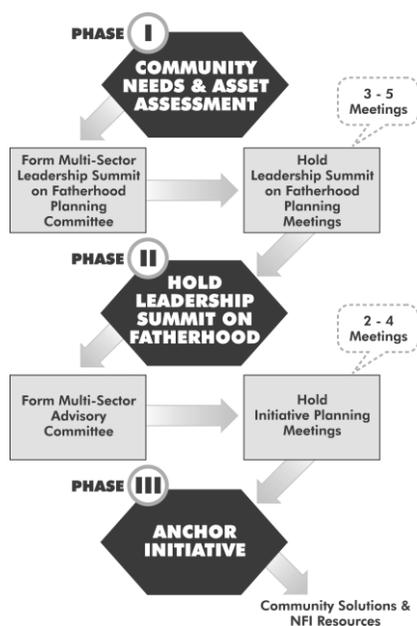
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## Introduction

The Ohio Commission on Fatherhood (OCF) has partnered with National Fatherhood Initiative (NFI) in 2011 to assist 12 Ohio counties mobilize around responsible fatherhood. Greene 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 Greene 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.<sup>1</sup>

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.<sup>2</sup>

In Ohio, father absence is at 25.7% or 7.3% lower than the national average and Greene County ranks slightly lower than the state average at 21.2%. Greene County's largest city, Beavercreek, is significantly lower at 13.4%.<sup>3</sup> This is an unusual dynamic as each of the largest cities in the other 12 counties is substantially higher than the county percentage. Although Beavercreek is the largest city, it is also the location of Wright Patterson Air Force Base which attracts a lot of high tech contractors and highly educated individuals. Xenia, the county seat of Greene County, has a father absence rate of 32.6% which is 7% higher than the state average.

<sup>1</sup> National Fatherhood Initiative, 2007. *Father Facts Fifth Edition*.

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

<sup>3</sup> 2005-2009 American Community Survey

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 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.<sup>4</sup> 8% of all families with children in Greene County were below poverty level compared to 13.2% nationwide. Xenia's rate of 13.2% is 5.2% higher. Greene County's unemployment rate is 9.6% which is equivalent to the state of Ohio's.

Greene County's teen birth rate (age 15-19) of 20 births per 1000<sup>5</sup> is 21 lower than the state and national average of 41 per 1000.<sup>6</sup> Although teen birth rate data is not available for Xenia, it stands to reason that the teen birth rate is much higher than the county average. 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 pregnancy<sup>7</sup> 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.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Children's Living Arrangements and Characteristics: March 2002, P200-547, Table C8. Washington D.C.: GPO, 2003.

<sup>5</sup> Source URL: <http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/node/2199/14>.

<sup>6</sup> Centers for Disease and Control and Prevention. National Center for Health Statistics. VitalsStats. <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/vitalstats.htm>. Accessed 4/15/2011.

<sup>7</sup> Teachman, Jay D. "The Childhood Living Arrangements of Children and the Characteristics of Their Marriages." *Journal of Family Issues* 25 (January 2004):86-111.

<sup>8</sup> 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.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Father Absence</b></p> <p>National: 33% Ohio: 26% Greene County: 21.2% Xenia: 33%</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Teen Birth Rate (per 1000)</b></p> <p>National: 41 State: 41 Greene County: 20</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Children Abused or Neglected (per 1000)</b></p> <p>Ohio: 10 Greene County: 9</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Adolescents Adjudicated for Felonies (per 1000)</b></p> <p>Ohio: 14 Greene County: 9</p>
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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.<sup>9</sup> There were 1,436 new allegations of child abuse/neglect in Greene County in 2009.<sup>10</sup>

There were also 9 adolescents per 1,000 in Greene County who were adjudicated for felonies in 2006.<sup>11</sup> 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,

<sup>9</sup> America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being. Table SPECIAL1. Washington D.C.: Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 1997.

<sup>10</sup> Ohio PCSAO Factbook, 2009.

<sup>11</sup> Children's Defense Fund-Ohio. County Fact Sheet Data, 2008.

minority group status, and the mother's education (as a proxy for income).<sup>12</sup> The Juvenile Court judge in Greene County reports there is an average of 30 cases per month where a father has been cited for failing to pay child support. 90% of these are held in abeyance pending hearing 4-5 months later to see if the father is making progress. If the father is going to jail, they are given the opportunity to pay a lump sum toward arrearage to get released. The average stay is three days.

### **Greene County Leader Focus Group Results**

The Greene County focus group on fatherhood was attended by nineteen individuals representing a diverse cross section of the community and included representatives from the Ohio Commission on Fatherhood. The following community sectors/organizations/individuals participated in the discussion (Note: some organizations had more than one representative and some people represented several sectors).

- Adult Probation
- Anderson Williamson Insurance
- Child Support
- Children's Service Board
- County Commissioner
- Drug & Alcohol Initiative
- Family and Children First Council
- Fairborn City Schools
- Greene County Career Center
- Greene County Combined Health District
- Greene County Community Foundation
- Greene County Fatherhood Initiative Grant
- Greene County Public Transit System
- Greene Leaf Therapeutic Community Program
- Juvenile Court
- Parent Education and Support
- Xenia Association of Churches & Ministries

Focus group participants were concerned about issues related to teen pregnancies, multiple relationships and the lack of emotional attachments between fathers and their children. The group recognized several categories of dads; men who are not seeking to be a responsible parent, men who face significant hurdles to becoming the father they want to be i.e. re-entry issues, child support arrears, visitation issues, unemployment, multiple minimum wage jobs etc., and young dads. The group was most concerned with reaching young people early and often with positive role models, and relationship and life skills education. Despite these issues and concerns participants were hopeful that focused collaborative efforts working across systems and sectors could make a difference for current and future generations of children. The Greene County Fatherhood Initiative, administered by the County Extension Office, was seen as a model program for providing services for rural fathers. Participants were eager to build upon and expand this work.

Consistent with other counties the following thoughts and ideas were brought forward by the group:

- Removing barriers that prevent fathers from being involved (i.e. negative relationship between parents, education and fathering skills, lack of employment, etc.)
- Pro Bono Legal Clinics
- Need for advocacy for fathers (i.e. visitation)
- Juvenile courts need more programs for fathers with children involved in the system
- Educating the community about the value/importance of fathers (start in schools with young people)
- Preventing premature fatherhood / Engaging expectant fathers early
- Mentoring for young men who may not have a father figure
- Employment – fathers need to feel that they are able to provide something financially for children

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<sup>12</sup> 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.

Of the various needs identified throughout the county educating young men about how

to be responsible fathers was highlighted as being among the most pressing.

The Greene County focus group participants agreed that addressing father absence and promoting responsible fatherhood was important but that there was not a comprehensive clearinghouse in place at this time to address this or other social issues in the county. The initiative overseen by the Extension Office was recognized as a giant step in the right direction but much more could be done. Participants were concerned that inconsistent funding streams have led to skepticism and concerns about program longevity across many sectors.

When asked what assets or resources existed in Greene County that could be mobilized, expanded or used to promote responsible fatherhood the following were mentioned:

- 24/7 Dad™ classes
- Breakfast for Dads
- Churches – particularly if they opened their gyms and facilities for activities
- Daddy and Me Carnival (Early Childhood Collaborative Coalition)
- Family Violence Prevention Center programming
- Graduation Reality and Dual Role Skills – Family & Consumer Science program for pregnant and parenting teens
- Green County College Success Program
- The Marriage Resource Center
- Money Management Classes
- Urban Light Ministries – InsideOut Dad™ and other programs
- Visitation Center

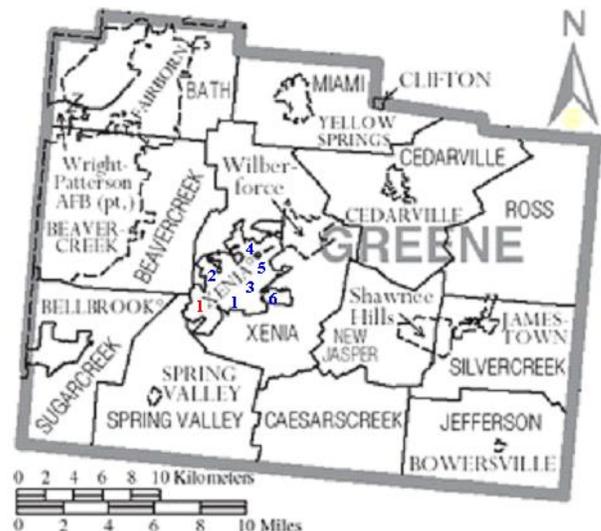
It was noted that while there wasn't high attendance at classes and programming for dads there was a great deal of participation in activities such as Breakfast for Dads, the Daddy and Me Carnival, and Day in the Park. While this was discouraging to some, others saw this as a tremendous opportunity. As one participant said, "Sometimes we just need to provide families structured opportunities to interact and create memories together."

The Greene County focus group attendees seemed most concerned with the current generation of youth, some of whom are fathers, but many who are growing up without a dad or healthy role models. Early preventative programming was seen as essential to addressing the systemic problem of parental irresponsibility and the generational issues that may result. The participants saw the need to continue the conversation about addressing father absence and promoting responsible fatherhood and were eager to bring together additional community leaders to begin formulating a plan and the action steps to bring it about.

Participants highlighted the following funding opportunities in Greene County:

- Churches (in-kind and financial)
- Greene Giving Foundation
- Target
- Wal-Mart
- Combined Health District
- Lowe's
- TCN (The Community Network)—In-kind/volunteers
- OSU Extension—Evaluation

**County Assets Map**



Red Numbers = Father/Male-Specific Programs and Services

1. Why Knot?™ and Relationship Smarts offered by Marriage Resource Center

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

1. Parents As Teachers offered by Greene County Combined Health District
2. Parents As Teachers offered by Family and Children First
3. Strengthening Families offered by the Juvenile Court
4. Domestic Relations Court
5. Children's Services
6. Catholic Children's Services

The Assets Map reveals 2 father or male-specific programs that are offered in Xenia by the Marriage Resource Center located in neighboring Clark County. There are 6 other organizations highlighted in the county that could be expanded to include father or male-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 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. Given Beavercreek's demographics in relation to the Wright Patterson Air Force Base which attracts a lot of high tech contractors and highly educated individuals, it is recommended that a focus be put on military dads and business dads. Military dads need help pre-, mid-, and post-deployment and business dads need help balancing work/family responsibilities. It is also recommended that Greene 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 Greene 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 Greene 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 Greene County.