



# BUILDING THE FUTURE WITH NEW JERSEY'S FATHERS AND FAMILIES

---

**Second Annual Statewide  
Fatherhood Forum**

**Wednesday, December 10, 2014**



# Engaging Fathers In Child Welfare, Juvenile Justice And Related Child And Family Systems

**Christine James-Brown**

**CEO**

**Child Welfare League of America**

**&**

**Dr. Rufus Sylvester Lynch, ACSW**

**NASW Social Work Pioneer ®**

**A Stoneleigh Foundation Social Change Fellow**

**GSSWSR Research Associate, Bryn Mawr College**



# Agenda

- Stoneleigh Foundation Fellow - CWLA Work Together
- Father Engagement in the Context of the CWLA National Blueprint for Excellence in Child Welfare
- The Stoneleigh Foundation Fellow's Father Integration Project - Philadelphia Story
- How Father-Friendly is your organization?
- What are the challenges/opportunities for engaging Fathers?
- Where do we go from here?
- National Call to Action

# Stoneleigh – CWLA WORK TOGETHER

Long term professional working relationship

Shared commitment to the principles of both projects

National/ local connection

# National Blueprint For Excellence In Child Welfare

The CWLA National Blueprint serves as the foundation for our Standards of Excellence and a framework for all children, youth, and families to flourish. It is designed to:

- Broaden the thinking of communities, individuals, and groups, including public and private organizations within and outside of the child welfare system, and to help them understand how their roles and responsibilities fit into the overall strategy to improve outcomes for children and youth
- Serve as the basis for updating and creating CWLA program-specific Standards of Excellence, which play a unique and pivotal role in moving child welfare practice forward.

# National Blueprint For Excellence In Child Welfare

## Themes:

- Frame child welfare within the context of helping **ALL** children, youth, and families to flourish.
- Address issues for children and youth that are vulnerable within the context of safety, permanency, and well-being for **ALL** children and youth.
- Emphasize: the role of community; youth and family involvement; prevention; and, use of evidence-based practices and practice-based evidence.
- Everyone has a role in the well-being of children, youth, and families.
- Importance of the interconnectedness of systems and the need to work together to break down silos and improve overall service delivery.

# National Blueprint For Excellence In Child Welfare

## Principles:

- Rights of Children
- Shared Responsibility and Leadership
- Engagement/Participation
- Supports and Services
- Quality Improvement
- Workforce
- Race, Ethnicity, and Culture
- Funding and Resources

# National Blueprint For Excellence In Child Welfare

## Key Principles Related to Father Engagement:

- Rights of Children Principle – Children should have connections with their family and communities
- Rights of Children Principle – Children have the right to live with their families of origin, unless living with their families is harmful to their safety
- Engagement/Participation – Principles (3/4) requires that all efforts should be made to include Fathers throughout their children’s involvement in the child welfare system, with “supports and services”

# Stoneleigh-Philadelphia Story

## **Background of the Problem and Rationale for the Study**

Various data sources, including the U. S. Census and the National Fatherhood Initiative, document the incidence of the lack of both parents not being “present” in the lives of too many of our children.

In Philadelphia alone 44% of the City’s children live in households without an adult male or father and nearly one million (35%) of Pennsylvania’s children live in a single-parent family. At the same time, almost 400,000 of the Nation’s children received foster care services from Child & Family Agencies.

This phenomenon, referred to as the Father Absence Factor, is associated with nearly all of the social issues facing American society today. On the one hand, father absence is associated with children living in fragile families that experience complex and interconnected marginality, and too many children growing-up at risk of entering, re-entering, or remaining in the child welfare system. On the other hand, children with involved fathers do better across every measure of child well-being than their peers in father-absent homes.

# Stoneleigh – Philadelphia Story

The conundrum is that social service programs and systems dedicated to meeting the needs of children are not, and never were, designed or organized, to maximize fathers' contributions to their children's well-being. Consequently, these systems of care are typically not including fathers as resources essential to ensuring the safety, permanency, and well-being of children. Unfortunately, our children are often not fully served.

## The Project

The Project is uniquely designed to address capacity building of children, youth, and family agencies to include fathers in their service delivery models in order to ensure better child safety, permanency, and well-being. The project uses a multi-faceted approach to exploring the development of *3FAs* (Father Friendly Flagship Agencies) including evidence-based learning, knowledge building and exchange, advocacy, collaboration, systems integration, assessment and evaluation, model development, training and curriculum development, technical assistance, individualized agency capacity building consultation, and policy and practice change.

# Stoneleigh – Philadelphia Story

## Goals of the Project

The Project has a total of ten goals, with an equal number of anticipated outcomes associated with those goals, evaluative strategies that accompany the goals, and performance measures to judge the success of the goals.

The primary and most immediate goal is to champion the conversation and build an awareness of the value of Responsible Fatherhood within foster care service delivery and other children and youth servicing systems, through the initiation of the much needed dialog, by and among a select group of Philadelphia's children, youth, and family focused agencies, regarding the value of safe father involvement to enhance the well-being of children in cross-systems of care.

# Stoneleigh – Philadelphia Story

## **Research Approach**

The research approach utilized is Participatory Action Research.

A Results Based Accountability Framework will be utilized to measure the overall success of the Project

To document organizational effectiveness and capacity growth made by individual agencies the DAPIM (Define, Assess, Plan, Implement, and Monitor) Framework is utilized.

# Stoneleigh – Philadelphia Story

**Project work is conducted on three levels of engagements**

Individual agency level

Agency group level

Trans-Disciplinary Multi-Systems Stakeholder's level

# Stoneleigh – Philadelphia Story

## **Benefit to Agencies**

Participating agencies receive at no cost: 1) an assessment of their agency's father friendliness, as viewed by management and staff; 2) individual consultation regarding steps toward agency capacity building; 3) technical assistance in the development of responsible fatherhood programming (new or enhanced); 4) an opportunity to engage in a focus group designed to identify system impediments that contribute to the lack of father involvement in the lives of their children; 5) an individual agency retooling plan that spells out what is needed to move the agency forward in the areas of Father Friendliness and inclusiveness, with the recognition of qualifying as a Father Friendly Flagship Agency (3FA); and 6) the advantage of including an association with a nationally recognized subject matter expert as a resource for future Fatherhood funding.

# Stoneleigh – Philadelphia Story

## *3FA Certification Eligibility*

- 1) Complete a series of three Father Friendly Flagship Agency survey assessments
- 2) Engage collaboratively in the exchange of information and knowledge regarding agency's service delivery model
- 3) Define and commence the implementation of their Fatherhood capacity building project
- 4) meet the expectation of the Project's evaluation matrix, which among other criteria requires language to be added, changed, or modified in the agency's mission, vision, philosophy, core values, or principles of excellence, that acknowledges the value of Fathers in the life of their children, and support their inclusion in service delivery to enhance best outcomes for children.

# How Father Friendly is your Organization?

## **Acknowledgement and background of the survey tool**

Why use the survey tool?

- Overview of tool
- Administration of key questions in survey tool
- Participant sharing and discussion of survey questions

# Father Friendly Agency Management/Staff Self-Assessment Survey Results

## Summary Results in Philadelphia

Focus on Agencies:

- Strengths
- Challenges
- Opportunities
  - Threats

# Agency Strengths

- Strong agency history
- Track record of caring for children and families
- Deep understanding of the importance of father involvement with children
- Expertise and experience in family services
- Competent and dedicated staff
- Agency focus on healthy families
- Collaborative nature of work with families
- Strength based and best practice approach to work with families
- Strong mission and vision for serving children and families
- Diverse and culturally sensitive workforce

# Agency Challenges

- Inadequate resources
- Systematic barriers to work with fathers (child support issues, criminal backgrounds, domestic violence, etc.)
- Culture and language barriers
- Inadequate marketing and promotion
- Fragmented network of fatherhood services
- Competing unfunded mandates
- Family barriers to locating fathers
- Negative attitudes towards fathers among service providers
- Inadequate training and staff development
- Issues relating to transitioning to DHS/decentralized system

# Agency Opportunities

- Potential partnerships with universities and other educational organizations
- Potential to develop new and strengthen existing partnerships with colleague and community based organizations
- Possibility to incorporate new concepts and service models
- The use of creative programming to attract funding to address fatherhood issues
- The use of organizational activities to attract fathers
- The importance of father involvement and the need for fatherhood services have been documented, thus, the rationale to engage agency in systems' change
- The potential for leadership roles in promoting fatherhood issues
- The potential to increase successful re-unifications including fathers
- The potential to improve father relationships with children in and out of the protective services system

# Threats to Agencies

- Working with undocumented families
- Fathers not understanding their rights
- DHS funding moving to decentralized Community Service Model
- The challenges in identifying fathers and reconnecting them with children
- Federal and State funding reductions
- Legislative and public policy issues that marginalize fathers
- Political factors
- Limited parenting skills of male resource parents
- Personal and system biases against fathers
- General resistance to change in the existing system

# Challenges/Opportunities

Discussion using survey results as background

Agreement on key challenges and opportunities

# Where Do We Go From Here?

Brief discussion of what is needed to advance increased engagement of Fathers in child wellbeing

# National Call to Action

## Formal Partners:

- The Stoneleigh Foundation Fellows' Project "The Integration of Responsible Fatherhood within Foster Care Service Delivery and Other Children and Youth Servicing Systems“
- Child Welfare League of America
- Administration for Children and Families Region III
- The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention
- American Bar Association (ABA) Center on Children and the Law
- Bryn Mawr College, Graduate School of Social Work and Social Research (GSSWSR).

# National Call to Action

**GOAL:** To increase the extent to which fathers are actively engaged in all systems that support the safety, permanence, and wellbeing of children who are in or at risk of entering, and/or remaining in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. In addition to child welfare and juvenile justice the focus of the national call to action is also on other systems of care including: health, mental health, education, domestic violence, homeless, substance abuse, and adult criminal justice systems. There will also be a focus on linking with the efforts of members of the Fatherhood-Engagement-Community movement.

Specifically, this effort will:

- Identify barriers to father engagement and strategies to overcome these challenges.
- Identify cross system strategies that will increase father engagement.
- Increase knowledge and commitment to father engagement in child welfare, juvenile justice, and related service systems.

# National Call to Action

- **June, 2015 event** that will bring together representatives from child welfare, juvenile justice and the Fatherhood Engagement-Community to share information about current services and activities related to engaging fathers; identify common challenges and opportunities related to engaging fathers; identify opportunities for shared learning; and to confirm ways to work together to increase the engagement of fathers.
- Review policies and practices through the lens of Responsible Fatherhood, increase awareness about the importance of fathers and identify challenges and successful best practices related to engaging fathers.
- Encourage other systems that serve their children and families to increase father engagement.
- Develop and broadly distribute statements about the importance of engaging fathers.
- Compare learnings and develop an action plan for continued work together as appropriate.

# CWLA ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS

- Children's Voice Article
- Super Session at CWLA National Conference, April 27-29, Arlington, VA
- Involvement in and follow up to the National Call to Action

# Building the Future with New Jersey's Fathers and Families

**Thank You!**

**Final Questions?**