



Child Well-Being in Philadelphia: Profiles of Children, Families & Fathers

September 2014

Philadelphia Strong Families Coalition

Jacquelyn Mitchell, J.D., L.C.I.S.W., Editor

*The Philadelphia Strong Families Coalition extends appreciation to the Administration
for Children and Families, Region III, for support of this initiative*



Philadelphia Leadership Foundation

2210 South 71st Street Philadelphia, PA 19142

Rev. Dr. W. Wilson Goode, Sr., Chair
Dr. Joseph Meade, President

August 15, 2014

Dear Concerned Citizen:

It is my honor and privilege to champion the work of the **Philadelphia Strong Families Coalition** and to continue to stand with and for the children, families and fathers of the City of Philadelphia. Despite the ever transforming definition of “family” today or the changing norms attributed to family dynamics and stability, the significant affect a child’s family life has on cognitive, physical, behavioral, spiritual and emotional development is one singular factor determining how that child will mature into adulthood and is a snapshot of who we are as a society in our neighborhood, city, nation and world.

The report *“Child Well-Being in Philadelphia: Profiles of Children, Families & Fathers”* is the culmination of collective expertise, research and findings that provides us with undisputable information about the state of children and families in our city. Moreover, it offers the opportunity to create the pathway to systemic, strategic, and provocative change to reverse the dismal statistical reality of brokenness, poverty, and social ills.

We often say “it takes a village”..... I would like to change that and say, **“we must be the village”** to raise a child. It is time for us to do what is needed for the transformation that must take place in our city. Children are our heritage.

I am indeed thankful for the foresight of Dr. Lynch, the funders and each individual who contributed to this effort. Together, we can create the future we seek. Together, we can effect positive change for the children, families and fathers of our City.

Sincerely,

W. Wilson Goode, Sr.
Chairman

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Dear Concerned Citizens of Philadelphia:

Thank you for your interest in this report and the work of the Philadelphia Strong Families Coalition. I am involved with this group of stakeholders because of my deep belief that strong families provide the best foundation for the healthy development of our children. Unfortunately, today's society for a variety of reasons has deviated from this tenet and as a result many of our communities have suffered and continue to do so.

While it is true that many individuals are able to overcome the difficulties and obstacles that are presented by the lack of strong parental involvement, it is obvious from the research outlined in this report that too many of our fellow citizens have been adversely effected by the negative aspects of being raised in single parent homes where paternal or maternal involvement is lacking. This is an issue that affects all facets of the population but it's most devastating effect is on low-income Latino and African-American families.

Let us be clear. This city is facing an existential crisis caused by the disintegration of the traditional family structure and its expectant consequences as expressed in this report of lower family incomes, higher percentages of income assistance, compromised childhood achievement in school, health disparities, poor housing, and precarious neighborhoods, risks for drug use, gang involvement and teen parenthood.

Philadelphia is not alone, in facing these challenges as most urban centers in the United States are also experiencing similar dysfunction. However, as a long-time resident of this great city and a community activist committed to improving the quality of life for Latinos and all other citizens and families who reside in Philadelphia, I know that this issue must be confronted and successfully overcome for Philadelphia to move forward as a place where all citizens are afforded the opportunity to reach their human potential.

The traditional family unit of a mother and father living together with their children is no longer the norm for a large percentage of families in this country and this trend appears to be permanent. But this does not mean that the new models cannot be as successful as generations past, if all parties involved are willing to do whatever it takes to ensure that the well-being of children are of paramount concern. In fact, the goal of the Philadelphia Strong Families Coalition is to improve out-comes for children and strong resilient families through advocacy and community partnerships.

I believe that this report and the implementation of the provided recommendations represent a solid starting point in laying the groundwork for the reintegration of the missing parent (too often the father) into the family unit and the revitalization of the family structure. I intend to be a strong advocate for achieving the mission of the Philadelphia Strong Families Coalition and I respectfully request your participation in this most important initiative.

Sincerely,



Nelson A. Diaz

NAD:tc

Acknowledgements

The *Child Well-Being in Philadelphia: Profiles of Families, Children, & Fathers* would have not been possible without the continuing support of the Administration for Children and Families, Region III, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and the dedication of members of the Philadelphia Strong Families Coalition Core Group.

Dr. Rufus Sylvester Lynch, Stoneleigh Foundation Fellow and Chair of the Core Group, provided the leadership essential to the realization of the completion of this landmark project that focuses attention on the inclusion of fathers in the well-being of Philadelphia's children.

Core Group Sub-Committee Chairs readily assumed the task of eliciting the stakeholder feedback that so richly contributed to the Profile. Core Group members Ms. Anita Kulick, Ms. V. Chapman-Smith, and Mr. Carl Montoya contributed editing that helped shape the final version of the data analysis. Bryn Mawr Student Carolyn Shank served as researcher on the project.

Special Acknowledgement is extended to the Honorable W. Wilson Goode, Sr., former mayor of the City of Philadelphia and the Honorable Nelson A. Diaz for support and encouragement to pursue the formation of the Coalition, the development of this Profile, and the launch of a campaign to eliminate systemic barriers to the inclusion of fathers in the lives of their children.

Philadelphia Strong Families Coalition

Core Group Chair:

Dr. Rufus Sylvester Lynch, ACSW
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September, 2014

My Dear Fellow Philadelphians:

Please accept this open letter as an indication of my sense of shared community with you. I write to express the pleasure that I have experienced shepherding the report you are about to read, **“Child Well-Being in Philadelphia: Profiles of Children, Families & Fathers.”**

During the last two and half years, I and my colleagues listed toward the end of this report have spent countless hours attempting to understand what is happening to Philadelphia’s children, families, and communities. Interestingly enough, it did not seem to matter to us that we were from different academic disciplines, professional areas of expertise, or whether we were members of the for-profit or non-profit community.

However, what did seem to matter to us was that we were all concerned with the deluge of statistical reports informing us that families in Philadelphia were increasingly at risk of losing stability in employment, housing accommodations, and loss of family members to either the juvenile or criminal justice system, behavioral health system, and/or the child welfare system. For example, the 2010 census reported that more than half of Philadelphia’s children do not have both parents “present” in their lives; and that 44% of the City’s children live in households without an adult male or father. The Annie E. Casey Foundation Kids Count Report indicated that, between April 2012 and March 2013, the City served over 6,000 children in foster care.

As I think about our ability to release this report, I feel obligated to share with you that a special thank you must go out to retired senior administrator David J. Lett, from Region III, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. It was Mr. Lett who hosted the initial meeting of six child and family stakeholders who were brought together specifically to consider the question of the value of increasing the involvement of fathers in the life of their children. Fatherhood literature seems to be of one opinion regarding this issue: “Father Involvement does Matter.”

The original group of six stakeholders who came together for the first time in David’s office has now grown into a twenty-one member citizen’s group referred to as the Philadelphia Strong Families Coalition (PSFC), and a participating collection of stakeholders totaling 85 individuals from Metropolitan Philadelphia.

Although David's retirement was an unforeseen occurrence, leaving the group feeling ill-prepared to move forward, we all felt relieved that the new administrator, Essey Workie, brought the same interest, enthusiasm, and commitment to the work of the Coalition – advocating for strong healthy family relationships that improve child well-being for Philadelphia's children.

We cannot thank our Federal government enough for its continued support of this important initiative. At the same time, there are others who played an equal, but different role in PSFC's success to-date that should be mentioned in the context of major contributors; they include the Stoneleigh Foundation and Bryn Mawr College's Graduate School of Social Work and Social Research (GSSWSR).

Foremost, the Stoneleigh Foundation should be recognized for its willingness to support the development of PSFC through its award of a fellowship to support a project titled "The Integration of Responsible Fatherhood within Foster Care Service Delivery and Other Children and Youth Servicing Systems of Care." Early on it was clear that the sustainability of the fellowship project was compatible with the long term goal of PSFC. Consequently, after two years of integrated work, PSFC's mission has been shaped by the vision of the Foundation's Fellow. The work of the Fellow has been similarly strengthened by the integration of PSFC's ultimate goal of forming an independent city-wide advocacy vehicle to foster and monitor the City's child well-being perspective on the essentiality of involving Fathers in the promotion of strong and healthy children and families.

Secondly, the faculty at Bryn Mawr College Graduate School of Social Work and Social Research (GSSWSR) has, as an Institutional Quality Assurance Partner on the fellowship, been unselfishly helpful by providing counsel throughout the process of expanding and integrating the two initiatives. Dean Bailey has especially supported the mission and the independent work of the coalition since its conception. In fact, Dean Darlyne Bailey identified and supported two of the School's graduate students to assist with the work of both projects.

Like all successful campaigns, there is normally a face associated with the movement. We are fortunate in that we have two of Philadelphia's "more outstanding leaders" as the face of our campaign: former mayor the Honorable Dr. W. Wilson Goode, Sr.; and former Common Pleas Judge the Honorable Nelson A. Diaz. Both Judge Diaz and Dr. Goode have been kind enough to share their own message to you directly in the following pages. However, let me say that these men are symbols of individual triumph, symbolizing the type of victory we hope to achieve for families through the work of the Coalition.

As we all know, none of what PSFC has been able to achieve thus far would have happened without the commitment of the "Core Group" membership of the Coalition, especially Anita Kulick, who was a strong voice of encouragement and a key recruiter of Core Group members who might have not otherwise agreed to participate. Nonetheless, this group of professional and civic minded individuals has contributed time, talent, and collective intellectual abilities to produce the resource base from which the report is pulled and framed. As you review this report, please remember your fellow citizens who worked tirelessly to see this initiative come to fruition.

Finally, I would like to thank my colleague and friend Dr. Jacquelyn Mitchell who edited this body of work. Dr. Mitchell has been a confidant and advisor since our days at the University of Pennsylvania many years ago. Together, we have spent decades pushing for social change, she in law and me in social work. Some battles we have won, others not. However, the issue of fathers becoming more involved in the life of their children is an issue we are not likely to give up on any time soon.

By way of ending, I thank all of you in advance for joining the Coalition's vision and mission, in the coming days, weeks, and months, with the goal of supporting children and youth servicing systems that are inclusive of fathers in their service delivery models.

Cordially,

Rufus Sylvester Lynch

Dr. Rufus Sylvester Lynch, ACSW

NASW Social Work Pioneer ®

A Stoneleigh Foundation Social Change Fellow

GSSWSR Research Associate, Bryn Mawr College

Executive Summary

Philadelphia Strong Families Coalition (PSFC)

PSFC is a collection of *Core Group Members* who

- Reside and/or work within the City of Philadelphia
- Support strengthening families and improving child well-being for Philadelphia's children and youth
- Are committed to advocacy and community partnership
- Are volunteers and receive no financial compensation from PSFC
- Participate in face-to-face, as well as virtual meetings

PSFC Vision: Improved out-comes for children and strong resilient families through advocacy and community partnerships.

PSFC Mission: Strengthen families and improve child well-being through advocacy for effective policies and programs for leveraging resources, and for encouraging collaboration among Philadelphia's organizations that are family focused and inclusive of fathers.

Child Well-Being in Philadelphia: Profiles of Children, Families & Fathers

PSFC commissioned *Child Well-Being in Philadelphia: Profiles of Children, Families & Fathers* as an information and advocacy tool for the Philadelphia community.

The project was developed using available data, feedback on that data, and stakeholder experience and expertise regarding Philadelphia's children and families. It specifically addresses the conditions and issues facing Philadelphia's children, youth, families and fathers.

The project report includes data from an analysis that profiles “Children in Philadelphia”; “Families in Philadelphia,” and “Fathers and Adult Males in Philadelphia,” as well as the “Stakeholder Process”; “Findings and Conclusions”; Recommendations”; “References”; and an Appendix, that lists Philadelphia Strong Families Coalition Core Group Members and Campaign Co-Chairs.

Data Analysis

The data analysis used population statistics, family structure, employment, education, income, physical and mental health, incarceration, social services involvement, and other important descriptive variables to develop a nuanced portrayal of children, families, and fathers in Philadelphia. Empirical research touching on questions of interest also informed the analysis.

The analysis does have limitations. For example, only public health data was available to inform conclusions about physical and mental health and drug and alcohol use. Additionally, comprehensive data on the implementation of the Affordable Care Act was not yet available.

Portraits

The “Portrait of Children in Philadelphia” was developed through the lens of data related to the following factors: Demographics and Family Structure; Employment and Income; Homelessness; Health Indicators; Child Involvement in Social Services; Juvenile Justice; and Public Education.

The “Portrait of Families in Philadelphia” advances data related to some of the factors that contribute to the insecurities too many Philadelphia families face, through consideration of data that address: Demographic and Family Structure; Employment, Education, and Income; Physical Health; Mental Health of Adults; Use of Social Services; and Housing and Homelessness.

The “Portrait of Fathers and Adult Males in Philadelphia” offers a description of fathers and adult males in Philadelphia. Father-specific data is of limited availability and is augmented by data on males generally. The resulting Portrait was developed through the lens of data related to the following factors: Demographics and Family Structure; Employment, Education, and Income; Physical Health; Behavioral Health; Substance Abuse; and Justice-System Involvement and Incarceration.

Stakeholder Feedback Process

Between June 2014 and July 2014, Core Group Committee Chairs elicited stakeholder feedback, using Core Group-designed frames that emerged from the data analysis. The Sub-Committee Chairs used various methodologies to elicit comments, guided by the following frames: 1) “Breaking through Barriers”; 2) “Building Healthy Families”; 3) “Education, Training, and Life-Long Learning”; 4) “Expanding Financial Opportunities for Families” 5) “; 5) “Housing and Homelessness; and 6) “Strengthening Services for Families.” Methodologies employed by the Sub-Committee Chairs included survey, face-to-face group session, e-mail communication, telephone interview, and in-person individual interview.

Stakeholder feedback was outlined within the context of issues addressed by profiles developed by the data analysis. The feedback provided rich input regarding Philadelphia’s children, contextualized in identified parameters of family and father well-being. Without a doubt, the feedback enriched the insight provided by the data analysis.

Findings and Conclusion

PSFC embarked on an innovative effort to move toward generation of an integrated picture of child well-being in Philadelphia. By design, the undertaking reflects an appreciation for the quantitative data that drives policy and, ultimately, practice in systems that serve children, youth, and families in Philadelphia. Moreover, the project took the additional step of eliciting input from related practitioners on frames that emerged from the data. This duality approach has enriched the information cache upon which PSFC can pursue its vision of strengthening families and child well-being via policies that support programmatic effectiveness and coordination that integrates fathers in the delivery of services to the City's children and families.

A central message that emerged from the project was that child well-being in Philadelphia is dependent on manifest interconnected factors. More specifically, the dual data pointed to the interplay between child well-being, the strength of families, and opportunities and resources that support involvement of parents, including fathers, in the lives of their children and family constellation. Therefore, it seems likely that child well-being in Philadelphia would be better served by integration of services for children, i.e. safety, and permanency; around a perspective that actively respects that interconnection.

Indeed, the data sources essentially raise a central question: If it is accepted that child well-being is intimately tied to strengthening families and that father involvement is important for children, why should fathers be excluded from that effort, whether or not the parents are married, separated or live apart? It seems logical that, as repeatedly posited by various sources, exclusion essentially thwarts the possibility of strong families in which child well-being can be realized.

The perils that potentially emerge from not unequivocally focusing on what is more authentically “family” can have both present and future significance. Not only does the dual data point to current deficits that emerge from lack of father involvement— e.g., lower family incomes, higher percentages of income assistance, compromised childhood achievement in school, health disparities, poor housing, and precarious neighborhoods, risks for drug use, gang involvement and teen parenthood —the

literature suggest those deficits are more likely to color future outcome potential for children.

Clearly, leadership is needed to spearhead the integration of the application of resources to address the identified interconnection of dynamics that thwart realization of strengthening Philadelphia's families to ensure child well-being is a reality. Families can only be strengthened, if the total family unit is the unit of focus. Indeed, project data echo advisements contained in the literature—i.e., the welfare of children is only preserved in strong families in which all components have the benefit of economic and social self-sufficiency, and the healthy involvement of *both* parents, whether or not they share a residence. That is the challenge for the welfare of the children of Philadelphia; that is the challenge for the City, in the interest of a stronger Philadelphia for generations to come.

Recommendations

Based on project findings, as augmented by other empirical sources, and in the interest of the present and future well-being of Philadelphia children and families; the Philadelphia Strong Families Coalition respectfully issues a **Consequential Call** to the Philadelphia community, including City government, to:

- Support the PSFC mission to strengthen children and youth servicing systems that play a crucial role in child well-being, including the promotion of effective policies and programs, resources, and collaboration that champion the inclusion of fathers in the delivery of services to families;
- Acknowledge and support the launch of an independent city-wide advocacy alliance to foster and monitor child well-being in the City, and join the alliance to promote fathers as essential to strong, healthy children and families;
- Endorse the independent city-wide advocacy alliance as a public repository for information, data, and resources that contribute to building healthy families in which each child is entitled to a father-child relationship;
- Consider the inclusion of fathers and father well-being in all aspects of family-based programming;
- Join a City-wide campaign to make Philadelphia America's most "Father Friendly Urban City" in the United States by encouraging, supporting, and promoting the PSFC mission in all aspects touching on the present and future well-being of children and families, including fathers, in Philadelphia; and
- Position Philadelphia as a governmental model for elimination of systemic impediments to father involvement in child and family well-being initiatives, including but not limited to affordable health care, education, employment, social services and housing.