

Implementation & Lessons Learned from the FRPN State Planning Grant Initiative

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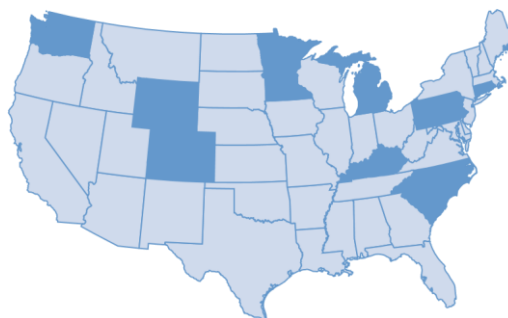
Father engagement in family programs and policies at the state level is frequently overlooked by administrators and policy makers, and opportunities to include fathers in family programs and policies and support services with existing funding sources are missed. For example, while TANF funding is permitted for Fatherhood and Two-Parent Family Programs, national spending on fatherhood programs accounts for less than 0.5% of total TANF spending (Office of Family Assistance, 2018), and in FY 2017, 33 states had \$3.3 billion in unobligated TANF balances, some of which could have been utilized to support fatherhood services and programs (Falk, 2019). Only four states have a statewide fatherhood commission to advocate for father inclusion in human services agencies and promote the growth of fatherhood programs, of which only one is reliably funded and staffed. And while there are more state- and county-level programs that offer workforce services to unemployed and underemployed fathers in the child support program, fewer than a dozen states offer such programs in more than one jurisdiction, with even fewer combining help with jobs with parenting assistance (Pearson & Fagan, 2019).

As part of its six-year effort (2013–2019) to build research, practice, and policy in the fatherhood field, the Fatherhood Research & Practice Network (FRPN) developed a statewide planning initiative to support states in developing long-term plans to enhance father inclusion. This brief describes FRPN's State Planning Grant Initiative and the activities that funded states pursued to begin the process of achieving systemic change aimed at father inclusion. It also describes the challenges they encountered, their early accomplishments, and the next steps that they plan to take.

RFP Process, Application Requirements, Awards, FRPN Support

In October 2019, FRPN released a Request for Proposals inviting states to apply for small planning grants to develop long-term plans to promote systematic change aimed at enhancing father inclusion in state programs and policies. Eligible applicants included nonprofit father and/or children's advocacy organizations, universities, and government agencies. To maximize policy outcomes, applicants were required to create state planning teams that included the State Child Support Director, a fatherhood or family-policy researcher, and at least one other high-level state leader such as a director of a state agency or program that serves fathers and families. Only one application could be submitted per state. Twenty states applied for a nine-month FRPN planning grant and in January 2019, FRPN made awards of \$10,000 to 11 states:

- Colorado • Pennsylvania
- Connecticut • Rhode Island
- Kentucky • South Carolina
- Michigan • Washington
- Minnesota • Wyoming
- North Carolina



Grantees included states that were just initiating their father engagement efforts (e.g., **Wyoming** and **Michigan**), as well as states that were seeking to augment existing multi-agency coalitions and enhance funding (e.g., **Connecticut**). Grantee organizations included community-based organizations (**Minnesota, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Wyoming**), a faith-based organization (**Kentucky**), universities (**Michigan, North Carolina**), two fatherhood service agencies (**Colorado, South Carolina**), and two state government agencies (**Connecticut Department of Social Services, Office of Child Support Services, and Washington DSHS Economic Services Administration, Office of the Assistant Secretary**).

Grant funds were flexible and could be used for a variety of activities that the planning team determined to be relevant in developing and implementing an action plan to further father inclusion. They included participant incentives for focus groups with fathers and key stakeholders, food costs for breakfasts with legislators and agency leaders to promote awareness about fatherhood issues and cultivate support, stipends for students to perform data collection to create centralized databases on fatherhood programs and services, duplication costs for materials to be distributed at press conferences, and consulting fees for professional researchers and facilitators to conduct strategic planning processes.

FRPN funders/researchers supported the statewide planning teams throughout the nine-month project in a variety of ways. Based on submitted proposals, FRPN researchers prepared an initial logic model for each planning site highlighting their proposed goals and activities and revised them during the first check-in call with each planning team. Next, FRPN researchers held two additional bimonthly check-in calls with each planning team to monitor their progress, identify successes and challenges in the course of implementing action plans, track changes, and provide feedback and suggestions. At the conclusion of the planning grant in September 2019, FRPN held a final check-in call with each planning team to review their accomplishments, challenges, and next steps.

In addition to check-in calls, the FRPN research team hosted three webinars for state planning teams that covered topics of interest to multiple sites: the origins and structure of fatherhood commissions, conducting fatherhood summits, and engaging



with state legislators. Finally, the FRPN research team connected team members with other planning teams and experts, provided ad hoc technical assistance, and directed teams to relevant resources and research materials. At the conclusion of the nine-month grant period, each team was required to submit a written “Goals, Activities and Feedback Report” (the “Action Plan”), in which they provided a final summary of their activities and accomplishments as well as their anticipated next steps.

The next sections of this brief provide an overview of the key goals, activities, challenges, accomplishments, and plans for activity of each state planning team. Appendix A contains brief state-specific summaries, contact information for team leaders, and members of each planning team.

Key Goals

Table 1 shows the key planning grant goals that each state posited. The most frequently chosen were creating multi-agency partnerships (7 states), collecting data (7 states), and securing high level support (6 states). Four states aimed to create a permanent and structural support for father advocacy such as a commission. Another four sought to develop data from fathers concerning the needs and benefits of such advocacy.

Table 1. Key Goals Posited by FRPN Planning Grant Teams

	Creating a Lasting Organizational Structure	Cultivating High Level Support	Pursuing Funding	Creating Multi-Agency Partnerships	Obtaining Father Input	Collecting Data
CO	x			x		
CT		x			x	x
KY	x	x	x	x		
MI	x		x			x
MN				x		x
NC		x				x
PA	x	x		x		x
RI		x			x	x
SC			x			
WA		x			x	x
WY				x	x	

Creating a Lasting Organizational Structure to Further Father Inclusion

With the exception of **Connecticut**, which has had the legislatively established Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative (CFI) since 1999, all the planning states lacked a permanent organizational entity for statewide fatherhood advocacy at the outset of the project. Accordingly, the creation of a formal structure was a priority for several states. **Pennsylvania’s** planning grant



was led by an incorporated entity known as the Strong Family Commission, and its project goal was to further formalize it by obtaining support from all three branches of Pennsylvania government and a funding appropriation. **Kentucky** sought to establish a permanent agency or coalition that came to be called the Commonwealth Center for Fathers and Families. Other states, such as **Michigan** and **Colorado**, posited the goal of creating an ongoing state-level structure to support father involvement efforts at a later point in time.

Cultivating High-Level Legislative and Executive Supporters for Father Inclusion

Understanding the eventual necessity to obtain sponsors to draft and enact enabling legislation, several teams sought to cultivate fatherhood champions both within the legislature and state agency leadership. **Connecticut, Kentucky, Washington,** and **North Carolina** aimed to accomplish this through holding fatherhood summits, while other teams, including **Pennsylvania** and **Rhode Island**, planned to engage in more targeted education and advocacy with key legislators. **South Carolina** pursued support from the legislative and executive branches, as well as high-level administrators in state agencies by conducting faceto-face meetings.

Obtaining Funding, Submitting Proposals, and Forging Alliances for Funding

In tandem with exploring legislation, many teams hoped to use the project and the planning efforts they pursued to obtain sustainable sources of funding. This was an explicit and central goal for teams in **Kentucky**, which hoped to obtain funding from a legislative appropriation as well as private resources; **Michigan**, which hoped to leverage TANF funds; and **Rhode Island**, which sought to pass father engagement legislation with a funding appropriation. **South Carolina** planned to forge alliances with other state agencies to broaden both the range of fatherhood services delivered by the South Carolina Center for Fathers and Families and its sources of financial support through fee for service arrangements.

Building Multi-Agency Alliances and Partnerships

A major goal of nearly every statewide team was to create and strengthen multi-agency partnerships representing the diverse areas intersecting with fatherhood issues. In some states, such as **Minnesota**, this involved overcoming past fractures in coalition organizing. **Wyoming** and **Colorado** were at the nascent stage of coalition building, while other states such as **Kentucky, South Carolina, Pennsylvania,** and **North Carolina** sought to expand partnerships to previously uninvolved entities, including child support agencies.

Engaging Fathers to Provide Authentic Input to State Agencies and Programs

Multiple states noted the importance of uplifting fathers' direct experiences and expertise to the policymaking level as a guide for strategic planning and identifying priorities. **Rhode Island** and **Washington** hoped to develop leadership among impacted fathers and cultivate them as long-term advocates on planning and advisory committees. **Connecticut** conducted focus groups with fathers across the state to highlight their experiences with various state agencies because "having quotes and actual stories really helps people get this issue and connect with it emotionally." **Wyoming** sought to coordinate with state partners to establish a statewide Parent Advisory Committee to provide a voice for father engagement in multiple program and policy areas.



Collecting Data on Barriers to Father Engagement, Unmet Needs, Service Gaps, and Mapping Fatherhood Resources and Services at the State Level

Recognizing the lack of data on fatherhood as a key impediment to making a case for funding or other supports, most teams established data collection as a central goal. Half of the states (**Connecticut, Michigan, Minnesota, Rhode Island, Washington**) aimed to collect data on father engagement needs through focus groups or individual interviews with fathers and stakeholders. **Rhode Island** and **Washington** planned to develop survey tools that could be replicated in the future to track agency progress in father engagement. Multiple states (**Kentucky, Michigan, North Carolina, Pennsylvania**) aimed to engage in a “resource-mapping” effort to identify and publicize statewide resources available to fathers and to highlight service “deserts.”

Main Activities

Each planning team selected activities to pursue to achieve father engagement goals. The most common activities pursued were data collection via interviews and focus groups with fathers and stakeholders (9 states) and organizing fatherhood summits and conferences (8 states).

Table 2. Main Activities Pursued by FRPN Planning Grant Teams

	Interviews & Focus Groups	Multi-Agency Coalition Building	Strategic Planning & State Policy Review	Fatherhood Summits & Conferences	Legislator Education & Cultivating Champions	Trying to Create a Fatherhood Commission & Funding
CO	x			x	x	x
CT	x	x		x	x	x
KY	x	x	x	x	x	x
MI	x	x	x			x
MN	x			x		
NC	x	x		x	x	
PA	x	x	x	x	x	x
RI			x		x	x
SC	x	x			x	
WA	x	x		x		
WY			x			

Collecting Data on the Status of Fatherhood Services and Needs

Connecticut, Minnesota, and Washington conducted focus groups, surveys, and interviews with impacted fathers to better understand their experiences utilizing state and county services. **Colorado** and **South Carolina** conducted stakeholder interviews as well as “site visits” to key agencies to learn more about their services and identify their priority issues concerning



father engagement. **Kentucky** and **Michigan** conducted interviews and focus groups with both fathers and stakeholders, and **Michigan** additionally launched a statewide online survey to map fatherhood programs and resources across the state. Other states, including **North Carolina** and **Pennsylvania**, worked to develop online guides capable of providing comprehensive, centralized information about state and county resources for fathers.

Planning and/or Convening a Statewide Fatherhood Summit

Colorado elected to add a fatherhood track to a planned statewide conference on families in the fall of 2020. **Connecticut** used a Fatherhood Summit co-organized by three state-level agencies to present the results of its focus groups to a wider and influential audience of agency, executive, judicial, and legislative attendees. **Kentucky** organized a day-long fatherhood summit for which it enlisted the financial support of the child support agency and a local foundation. **Minnesota** generated plans to disseminate the results of its data collection activities at the 2020 Summit of the Minnesota Fathers and Families Network. **Pennsylvania** collaborated with the School District of Philadelphia to conduct a statewide conference on early childhood development and the role of fathers. **North Carolina** partnered with the child support agency and the North Carolina Fatherhood Development Advisory Council to augment an annual, statewide fatherhood conference sponsored by the Family Resource Center South Atlantic. **Rhode Island** will be the site of the annual, regional New England Fathering Conference in 2020 and 2021, during which it will disseminate father engagement information to neighboring states. **Washington** conducted a summit focused on the intersection of father inclusion and maternal and child health.

Multi-agency Coalition Building

A number of states went beyond the FRPN grant requirement to create multi-agency planning teams and brought more organizations to the table. **South Carolina** considered over 70 potential agencies for partnerships, held an introductory meeting with 20, and conducted site visits with 14 to better understand their potential fatherhood integration needs. **Michigan** created a statewide advisory group comprised of representatives of multiple agencies across the state which met monthly to discuss a vision for a fatherhood commission and identify resources and gaps. **Washington** created an Interagency Fatherhood Council comprised of agency and stakeholder representatives as well as fathers. In addition to hosting a multi-agency summit during the planning project, the Child Support Director of **North Carolina** represented the planning team at monthly interagency meetings of the Department of Health and Human Services. **Pennsylvania** built support for a statewide fatherhood commission by collaborating with state- and county-level child support agencies, legislators, members of the Governor's Cabinet, the judiciary, and business leaders. **Connecticut** strengthened its existing multi-agency coalition by building relationships with additional community agencies as well as executive and legislative branch partners.



Strategic Planning and State Policy Review

Wyoming organized a formal, two-day, multi-agency strategic planning retreat that was facilitated by the National Fatherhood Initiative to help the planning team develop a short-, mid-, and long-term vision for fatherhood advocacy. **Kentucky's** strategic planning effort consisted of monthly meetings of a multi-agency planning group that was facilitated internally and led to the development of plans for a fatherhood summit, strengthened relationships with child support, and the creation of the Commonwealth Center for Fathers and Families. **Michigan** examined how current policies impact fathers and developed internal policy briefs for potential action in the areas of child support, child welfare, and criminal justice. **Rhode Island** held monthly steering committee and monthly workgroup meetings to develop a plan outlining eight top priority areas for action to be met over the next two years. And **Pennsylvania** worked with its child support director to develop a project to enhance father engagement by analyzing the current policies and practices of its local and state offices and by establishing Advisory Councils to guide the agency on new policy.

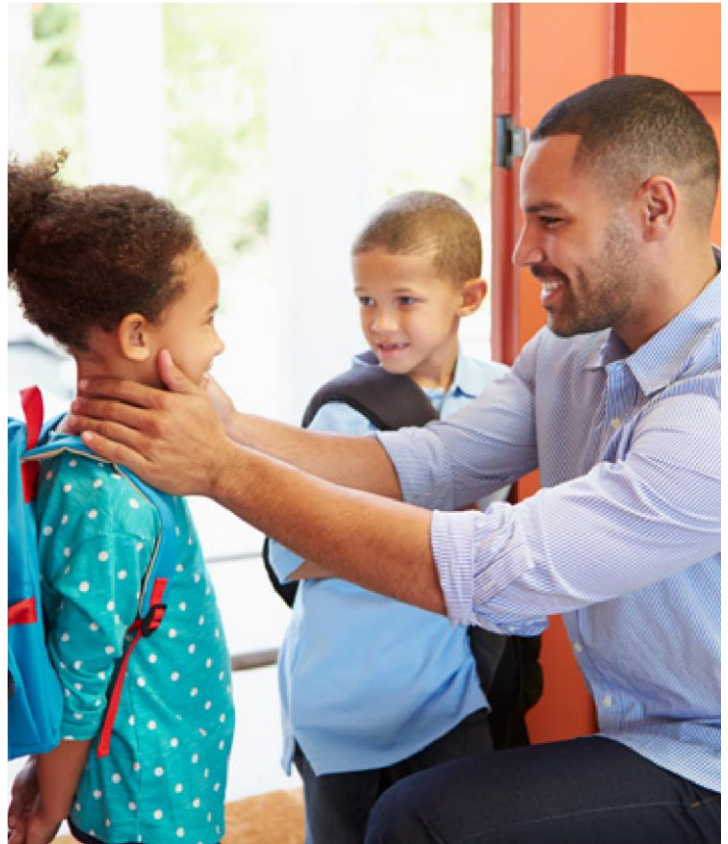
Legislator Education and Cultivation of Legislative Champions

The planning team in **Pennsylvania** organized meetings with key representatives from all three branches of government to educate state elected leaders on the value and urgency of fatherhood advocacy. **Rhode Island** held a “legislative policy roundtable” that brought together impacted fathers and state legislators to engage in conversations about fatherhood policy, held an outreach table at the State

House in connection with a Family Policy Academy, and met with the policy director of the Governor’s Children’s Cabinet. **North Carolina** held a policy breakfast the day before its annual fatherhood conference for similar educational and relationship-building purposes. **South Carolina** held 12 breakfasts for elected leaders to discuss a vision for proactive fatherhood policy and met with the Governor and heads of eight cabinet agencies to discuss a public/private partnership for father inclusion. **Connecticut** and **Kentucky** connected with legislators and state leaders at Fatherhood Summits that they organized or joined.

Funding and Creation of a Permanent Statewide Fatherhood Commission

Colorado, **Kentucky**, and **Michigan** began discussions about the types of entities that could host a statewide fatherhood commission, comparing the relative benefits of housing such a commission within a state agency versus a private non-profit. In tandem with this, state teams worked to uncover funding opportunities to sustain their long-term fatherhood work. **Colorado** obtained a \$1.8 million annual appropriation of state TANF funds to support county-initiated work programs for noncustodial parents. **Connecticut**, **Kentucky**, **Michigan**, and **Rhode Island** all began exploring the possibility of applying for



unobligated TANF funds. The **Pennsylvania** Strong Families Commission plans to introduce legislation in 2020 that includes an appropriation.

Challenges

Social change efforts are complex, and the planning teams faced a variety of challenges as they attempted to build coalitions, identify priorities, collect information, cultivate supporters, and organize large-scale events like a fatherhood summit. The most common challenges involved overcoming geographic and time constraints, and the competing priorities of key agency partners. Other common challenges were changes in political administration and agency personnel.

Table 3. Main Challenges that FRPN Planning Teams Encountered

	Political & Organizational Issues	Difficulty Engaging Fathers	Geographic Distance & Time Constraints	Lack of Data on Fatherhood
CO	x		x	
CT		x		x
KY	x		x	x
MI		x	x	x
MN		x		
NC	x		x	x
PA	x		x	
RI				x
SC	x			
WA	x	x	x	x
WY		x	x	

Time and Distance

Colorado, **Pennsylvania**, **Michigan**, and **North Carolina** reported that geographic distance made statewide organizing difficult. For example, while **Colorado** hoped to address the father inclusion needs in rural counties, project activities were conducted in only three of 64 counties. States came up with different strategies to overcome geographical challenges.

Michigan held planning meetings in different parts of the state and discussed the possibility of regionalizing future organizing efforts. **Pennsylvania** hosts its annual statewide conferences in different parts of the state and created regional citizens' policy teams to work with state leaders on barriers to father involvement. And **North Carolina** realized it needed to host meetings in locations that are central to multiple state-level agency directors, in order to best accommodate various schedules. As to time constraints, **Washington** reported it was challenging to keep state agency policy level leaders "in the room and engaged." **Wyoming** learned that it needed to give potential attendees more advance notice of meetings and do more reminder calls and emails. **Pennsylvania** reported the need to reschedule meetings with legislators about fatherhood when other events occurred that turned their attention elsewhere.

While **Colorado** hoped to create a statewide fatherhood commission, the new administration appears to want to reduce the number of Governor-initiated commissions. **Kentucky** enjoyed strong state-level participation and support during the planning process and seeks to maintain key partnerships and endorsements despite a November 2019 change of Governor and Cabinet leadership. **South Carolina** described the difficulty of working with elected leaders when the legislature was out of session or was conducting a shortened session (**Pennsylvania**). And following four changes in the director of the Department of Social Services in six years, **South Carolina** decided to focus its planning efforts on middle managers in various state agencies who are influential but tend to be more stable than top leadership.

Lack of Data on Fatherhood

Since there are few indicators of father inclusion and absence at the state level, many planning teams feel that fathers are “invisible,” and that there are few “baseline measures” against which a father inclusion initiative might be measured. **Rhode Island** used the planning initiative (in part) to work with data managers of various state agencies to create a State Father Engagement Dashboard that will include measures of father engagement drawn from established data sets maintained by state agencies. They also developed and circulated a Father Friendliness Index to assess father engagement in state and local agencies and programs. **Kentucky** cited the lack of data on father engagement as a challenge for their efforts to create a father engagement initiative and to identify the laws, policies, and procedures within different agencies that need to be changed. The lack of information of fathers’ experiences with the perinatal period, or the “transition to fatherhood,” led **Washington** to create and deploy a statewide electronic survey that elicited 338 responses, 85 of which involved fathers with a child age 3 or younger. The lack of information on fatherhood services and resources led **Michigan** and **North Carolina** to collect and map information on existing efforts to engage fathers through programs and supports across their states. And **Connecticut** used the Fatherhood Summit to highlight the issue of data development/sharing.

Difficulty Engaging Impacted Fathers

Connecticut was interested in hearing from fathers who were not affiliated with an existing fatherhood program but faced challenges recruiting them for focus groups and interviews. **Minnesota** and **Washington** conducted focus groups and surveys with fathers but reported that participation was either not broad enough to be representative of fathers throughout the state or needed to include more marginalized populations since they are overrepresented in state systems. **Wyoming** hopes to engage fathers in an advisory capacity in the development of agency priorities and programs but struggles with obtaining the “authentic voice” of fathers. **Michigan** decided not to conduct surveys with fathers due to a lack of incentive funds. **Washington** had the opposite problem: so many fathers were interested in being leaders in statewide advocacy, the planning team is working on how to effectively engage them.

Accomplishments

Many state teams used this nine-month project to kick-off initiatives that will take many more months or even years to complete and measure. Nevertheless, a great deal was accomplished, especially with respect to establishing, strengthening, and broadening multi-agency coalitions and relationships.

Table 4. Accomplishments Achieved by FRPN Planning Grant Teams

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	Increased Knowledge	Information Databases & Tools	Multi-Agency Coalitions	Strategic Plans & Strategies	Press Coverage	Fatherhood Summits
CO			X			
CT	X		X		X	X
KY			X		X	X
MI	X	X	X	X		
MN		X	X			
NC	X		X			X
PA			X			X
RI	X		X	X		
SC	X		X		X	
WA		X	X			X
WY			X			

Increased Knowledge About Statewide Barriers, Resources, and Needs of Fathers and Fatherhood Programs

As a result of broad efforts to identify existing resources and interview impacted fathers and stakeholders, all statewide teams attained a deeper and more current awareness of the key problems facing fathers. In some cases, this was the result of conversations directly between impacted fathers and policymakers, such as in **Rhode Island**, where the planning team invited the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) Director to meet with fathers to hear about their concerns. Other teams convened or interviewed state policymakers and service providers to gain information about statewide services. **South Carolina** convened a meeting of 13 key statewide agencies, followed by site visits to 11, which resulted in new contacts and identification of gaps and areas for cross-agency collaboration. **Connecticut** conducted interviews and focus groups with 38 fathers throughout the state to highlight barriers that fathers face in a variety of state agencies and thereby increase accountability for father engagement. **Michigan** conducted 22 stakeholder interviews to identify barriers to father engagement, unmet needs, and service gaps. **North Carolina** retained two graduate research assistants to help identify fatherhood resources that exist across the 100 counties in the state resulting in the identification of 34 programs within 21 counties.

Creation of Information Databases and Data Collection Tools

In addition to gathering data through interviews and focus groups, several states also developed “resource maps” and public-facing databases of statewide resources. **North Carolina** pursued a pioneering partnership with United Way and the Department of Health and Human Services to create “NCCARE360,” a statewide coordinated care network and resource directory that will be available to fathers and service providers to identify state and county-level programs and resources for fathers. **Minnesota** and **Michigan** also surveyed statewide programs with the intent to create or update existing fatherhood resource databases and map them so that they can be accessed by practitioners and the public. Perhaps even more

significantly, some states developed survey and interview tools that can be conducted annually to begin establishing a stronger dataset about fatherhood issues and changes over time. **Rhode Island** created a web-based “Father Friendliness Index” survey tool, **Washington** developed a father survey focused on supports and service gaps for new fathers, and **Michigan** created an online survey to identify fatherhood programs throughout the state based on a similar instrument used by the Ohio Commission on Fatherhood. All three states intend to repeat the surveys in the future, which will support efforts to identify trends and chronic issues impacting fathers.

Development of Broad, Multi-Agency Coalitions

Every state created or strengthened diverse statewide partnerships to elevate and address fatherhood issues. By the end of the initiative, most states had made significant progress in discovering pockets of fatherhood activity they had not known about and breaking down walls between different agencies. **Pennsylvania** went from having only two counties connected to statewide fatherhood efforts to ten counties connected, built strong relationships between state agencies, elected policymakers, business leaders, and impacted fathers, and supported the development of the Pennsylvania Fathers, Families and Service Provers’ Network, to promote communication, collaboration and the use of best practices in the fatherhood field. The **Minnesota** team made progress on repairing fractured relationships among fatherhood programs that have historically competed for limited funding, as well as identifying new partners to work with on fatherhood issues. **South Carolina, Michigan, Washington, and Wyoming** noted that they had made important new connections with a variety of state- and county-level agencies and programs as well as realizing a new sense of energy and excitement for collaboration on fatherhood advocacy. **Wyoming** engaged 15 representatives from 11 organizations to participate in a two-day strategic planning session facilitated by the National Fatherhood Institute. **Colorado** engaged human services agencies and providers in three contiguous rural and urban counties in the western part of the state that are typically excluded in statewide planning initiatives. **Kentucky** expanded its planning team to include 30 individuals in 20 organizations which evolved into the Commonwealth Center for Fathers and Families (CCFF). **Rhode Island** held monthly meetings with both a multi-agency steering committee and workgroup to develop a strategic plan with multi-year goals. Although **Connecticut** has long-standing formal memoranda of understanding with 10 state agencies through its legislatively established fatherhood commission, directors believe that the information about experiences and service gaps in sister agencies gleaned from grant-funded focus groups will strengthen their commitment to father inclusion and improve accountability.



Development of Long-Term Strategic Plans and Funding Strategies

At the conclusion of the FRPN project, all states submitted a statewide “action plan” that outlined their goals, activities, accomplishments, and steps they planned to take over the next 12 months. Some states, however, pursued a more systematic strategic planning process. For example, **Wyoming** retained the National Fatherhood Initiative to facilitate a two-day planning process (“The Fatherhood Experience”) with 15 critical stakeholders. The result is a list of “Top Ideas” and “Action Plan” that the group, which named itself the Empowered Fathers Alliance, will continue to implement. **Kentucky** conducted a strategic planning process that was facilitated by a member of its planning team. The planning team evolved into the Commonwealth Center for Fathers and Families (CCFF), and



per the strategic plan, will seek to formalize the CCFF and pursue funding from state, local, and private services, including TANF. **Michigan** held a policy forum to develop policy ideas and priorities and prepared a policy brief to support consideration of a statewide Fatherhood Commission that would disburse TANF funds for fatherhood programs. **Rhode Island** developed a strategic plan with priority goals to be met over the next two years.

Press Coverage

Given the brief, nine-month duration of the planning grant initiative, it is not surprising that only two states held press conferences. Soon after the launch of the initiative, the **South Carolina** Center for Fathers and Families held a press conference at the statehouse to release its annual Impact Report to legislators, which showed the considerable return on investment associated with the agency’s fatherhood services. Media coverage of the press conference also allowed the agency to highlight a 50 percent cut in its previously awarded TANF funds by the Department of Social Services to generate revenue for court-ordered changes for its foster-care program. **Pennsylvania** held a press conference to release a report on fatherhood and roll out its campaign to obtain support for the Strong Families Commission, a statewide entity dedicated to father inclusion. Held in the statehouse, the press conference is credited with generating support for the Commission’s efforts to obtain an Executive Order from the Governor, a Concurrent Resolution from the General Assembly on the value of fathers, and the promulgation of rules and procedures from the Supreme Court ensuring that fathers’ rights receive equal consideration in determining the best interest of the child and family. In **Kentucky**, which is at an earlier stage of fatherhood advocacy, a planning team member was a guest columnist for the state’s newspaper in which he highlighted the importance of fatherhood and efforts to engage fathers.

Conduct of Fatherhood Summits

Most states planned, executed, or participated in a statewide fatherhood summit, which helped them elevate this issue to a broad audience and disseminate the results of their research and strategic plans. In some states, they were a key planning



grant “deliverable.” Thus, the **North Carolina** planning team co-sponsored the 2019 NC Fatherhood Conference and used the event to engage the child support agency, communicate about the planning effort to the nearly 500 father attendees, and to elicit father feedback on their experiences with various social services agencies and programs. **Kentucky** planned and executed the statewide Kentucky

Fatherhood Summit, during which they rolled out their strategic plan for the Commonwealth Center for Fathers and Families (CCFF) to sustain the father engagement effort. **Washington** organized and held a

summit focusing on fathers and the maternal and child health care system during which the results of a grant-supported survey of new fathers was featured. **Pennsylvania** held its third annual statewide conference on fatherhood and child well-being. **Connecticut** presented the results of its focus groups and interviews with fathers at a Statewide Fatherhood Summit organized by the child welfare agency.

Next Steps

While state planning teams made significant headway in achieving their goals and registered strong accomplishments, the bulk of the work lies ahead. States will continue to capitalize on the momentum created through this project, with an emphasis on the development of permanent, funded structures such as a commission or council to unite statewide stakeholders in fatherhood advocacy and programming.

Table 5. Proposed Next Steps for FRPN Planning Grant Teams

	Ongoing Coalition Meetings & Expanded State Partners	Create and/or Pursue Legislative Activity around a Commission or Council	Secure Long-Term Funding	Improve the Image of Fathers & Change Agency Culture around Fatherhood	Data Collection & Policy Evaluation	Conduct Fatherhood Summits
CO				X		X
CT	X		X	X		X
KY	X	X	X	X	X	
MI	X	X	X		X	
MN		X			X	X
NC		X		X	X	X
PA		X			X	X
RI		X				X
SC			X		X	
WA	X	X	X		X	
WY	X		X		X	



Ongoing Coalition Meetings and Expanding Statewide Partners

All teams plan to continue meeting with coalition partners while working to expand their membership to include key agencies that did not participate in the planning effort. **Michigan** identified enough partners throughout the state that they are considering breaking into regional planning groups to promote accessibility. **Wyoming, Washington, and Kentucky** are exploring the development of parent and father advisory committees to elevate the voices and perspectives of impacted families to the policymaking level. **Connecticut** plans to present the official report of findings and recommendations from the planning project to 10 sister agencies at quarterly meetings of the Executive Council of the Fatherhood Commission and will continue to work with them to deepen commitments to father engagement, promote cross-agency collaboration, and to identify and address “service deserts” in the state.

Development of a Fatherhood Commission, Council, or Agency and Obtaining Legislative Support

The steering committee for the planning grant in **Kentucky** evolved into the Commonwealth Center for Fathers and Families (CCFF) that will seek formal creation and funding to execute the strategic plan developed by the planning team and become the vehicle for future fatherhood work in the state. **Michigan** is preparing a policy brief on establishing a statewide fatherhood commission to oversee distribution of any awarded TANF funding to father programs statewide. **Minnesota** will meet with potential partners to revisit the idea of creating a Fatherhood Commission. **North Carolina** is awaiting response from both the Governor and a state Senator to two different proposals to create a statewide fatherhood commission. **Washington** strengthened its newly created Interagency Fatherhood Council and may seek a state agency MOU this coming year. Two states with mature commission initiatives anticipated seeking legislative support in the next 12 months. Thus, **Pennsylvania** anticipates obtaining additional legislative support for Senate Bill 476, which establishes a Fatherhood Commission. **Rhode Island** is in the process of revising legislation originally drafted in 2014 for the development of a fatherhood commission and is seeking sponsors for its consideration in the 2020 legislative session.

Securing Long-Term Funding

The potential for utilizing TANF funds to support fatherhood work is a common theme across all state planning teams, and pursuit of these funds will be a major activity going forward. **Connecticut, Michigan, Kentucky, and Wyoming** have already begun talks with state TANF directors regarding funding, and other states are in the process of doing so. **Colorado** has secured TANF funding for 2.5 years to support workforce programs for noncustodial parents, while other state teams may pursue an OCSE 1115 waiver to obtain funding for the same purpose (OCSE, 2019) but need more information on how to satisfy the state match requirement. Finally, several states including **South Carolina, Washington, and Kentucky** are preparing or have submitted grant proposals to private foundations to support fatherhood work.

Improving the Image of Fathers and Changing the Culture Around Fatherhood

As a result of both stakeholder interviews and coalition-building efforts, several state teams identified a need to improve the image of fathers, support agencies in becoming more father-friendly and facilitate more seamless cooperation among state agencies. **Connecticut, Kentucky, South Carolina, and North Carolina** all plan to offer father friendliness trainings and support to state agency partners. **South Carolina** plans to work with the Department of Social Services to review and rewrite agency policies with the goal of advancing father friendliness. **Colorado** intends to develop a “train-the-trainer” program to train key leaders of state agencies and fatherhood programs in evidence-based practices, which those leaders will then pass on to staff



at their respective agencies. **Washington** is developing a Speakers Bureau to educate elected and appointed leaders about father inclusion and work with state agencies to conduct Fatherhood Friendly Audits.

Further Data Collection, Policy Evaluation, and Dissemination

State teams found the information obtained from interviews, surveys, and focus groups to be extremely useful.

Accordingly, many teams plan to continue data collection efforts. For example, **Michigan** used a “snowball” methodology when conducting stakeholder interviews that resulted in the identification of over 100 additional stakeholders, some of whom will be included in future focus groups. **Minnesota** plans to facilitate additional focus groups with fathers to identify gaps in services. **South Carolina** plans to hold listening sessions with fathers and will continue to convene multi-agency meetings. States that engaged in resource-mapping, such as **Wyoming** and **Kentucky**, will continue to work on compiling fatherhood directories, and **Minnesota** plans to update its website. A few states are developing (**Pennsylvania**), re-energizing (**Minnesota**), or coordinating with (**North Carolina**) practitioner networks to improve communication and move the fatherhood field forward. Others are researching, identifying, initiating, or monitoring implementation of family-friendly policies dealing with child support and family law (**Kentucky, Michigan**). **Pennsylvania** will analyze current child support policies and practices and create an Advisory

Council within the state child support agency to achieve greater father involvement. **Michigan, Washington, Connecticut,** and **Pennsylvania** are exploring ways to disseminate planning grant findings including national conferences, policy briefs, and targeted meetings with legislators and other policymakers.

Conducting Fatherhood Summits

Colorado will add a fatherhood track to a biannual, statewide Strengthening Families conference conducted by the Colorado Department of Human Services scheduled for September 2020. **Minnesota** will disseminate planning grant results at the statewide annual fatherhood summit in February 2020. **Rhode Island** and **Connecticut** will have opportunities to disseminate grant activities and plans at the annual New England

Fatherhood Conference in March 2020 and 2021. **North Carolina** plans to hold a fatherhood summit in February 2020 and its annual Fatherhood Conference in June 2020. **Pennsylvania** will hold its annual Fatherhood Summit in a new region of the state in October 2020.

Conclusions

The FRPN State Planning Initiative shows the appeal and productivity of small, short-term grants of \$10,000 to promote father inclusion at a system level. Eligible applicants in 20 states applied for funding including: community and faith-based organizations, nonprofit organizations, fatherhood organizations, universities, and government agencies. The 11 that were selected consisted of states that were new to fatherhood planning at the state level as well as those that were very experienced such as **Connecticut**, which has had a fatherhood commission for 20 years. FRPN architects structured the Initiative to enhance the resources and clout of the planning effort by requiring each applicant to create a multi-agency planning team that included the State Child Support Director, a fatherhood researcher, and another high-level state official. To enhance accountability, FRPN required team participation in bimonthly check-in calls with FRPN directors, and the submission of an action plan at the conclusion of the nine-month planning period describing goals, activities, achievements, challenges, and next steps. To accelerate the policy development process, FRPN architects organized webinars for planning teams on



fatherhood commissions, engaging with legislators, and organizing fatherhood summits and practitioner networks. FRPN architects also provided site-specific technical assistance and encouraged peer support and exchange.

The most common goals for planning teams were creating multi-agency partnerships, collecting data, and securing high-level support from members of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches at the state level. The most common activities pursued by eight planning teams, respectively, were collecting data from fathers and stakeholders on the status of fatherhood services and needs via interviews and focus groups and organizing fatherhood summits and conferences. The most common challenges involved overcoming geographical distance and the limited time and competing priorities of key agency partners. Other common challenges related to changes in political administration during the planning process and agency personnel.

While it will take many more months or even years to complete the initiatives that state teams began, all teams reported making progress in establishing, strengthening, and broadening multi-agency coalitions and relationships dedicated to father engagement. Another commonly mentioned accomplishment was acquiring deeper and more up-to-date knowledge about the key problems that fathers face, their experiences with statelevel programs, their service needs, service resources, and service gaps. Finally, many states conducted or participated in a fatherhood summit to disseminate their learnings, strengthen their coalitions, and build high-level support. Looking forward, grantee states plan to maintain their coalitions through regular meetings, develop a permanent entity such as a commission or council to unite statewide stakeholders in fatherhood advocacy and programming, pursue long-term funding through a legislative appropriation or TANF funding, conduct additional data collection and/or dissemination, and organize and participate in fatherhood summits during 2020.

Planning team members credit the FRPN planning initiative with creating momentum for father engagement at the state level that went well beyond the \$10,000 award. FRPN funders/researchers helped to galvanize statelevel change by being a catalytic intermediary: providing leadership, a framework for action, supporting expertise, and sharing knowledge across participating states. The federal government has urged states to adopt approaches to enhance paternal involvement in all human service agencies (OFA, 2018). The FRPN Planning Grant Initiative is an example of how the Administration for Children and Families might begin to realize these goals.

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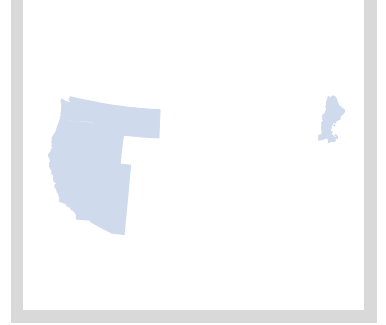


Appendix A: State Summaries

(Continued on next page)



Colorado



The Fatherhood Network, a program of Families First Colorado, used the FRPN planning grant to further three goals: 1) develop an annual Fatherhood Summit focused on fatherhood issues; 2) create a permanent Fatherhood Commission authorized by the state legislature; and 3) bring together three counties on the western slope to provide state agencies with input on the needs/wants of the local communities, while also creating programming that could be implemented in the three-county region. The goal was to reverse the usual “top-down” decision-making process by giving more voice to local communities. Progress on these goals included:

- 1. Annual Summit:** The planning committee determined that embedding the Fatherhood Summit in the biannual Strengthening Families conference conducted by the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) would provide the best opportunity for bringing attention to fatherhood issues. The strategy is to create a fatherhood track within the Strengthening Families conference. It is expected to bring father-serving programs together, reach an established human service and early education audience, and give everyone the opportunity to attend father-focused sessions and learn more about the issues that fathers face.
- 2. Fatherhood Commission:** The planning committee decided to begin identifying state legislators and staff from the Governor’s office with an interest in families and fathers.
- 3. Local community involvement:** The planning committee facilitated a series of meetings in three adjoining counties in Western Colorado (Delta, Mesa, and Montrose). Participants developed input about father engagement for state agencies and agreed to collaborate on a “train-the-trainer” education for county-level staff in two evidence-based parenting programs.

The level of cooperation between the three counties was impressive, especially as they represented different populations: rural, small city, and larger city counties. An obstacle for the project included working on a very limited budget with no full-time staff. Another challenge was a funding crisis at Families First. Fortunately, Families First was able to secure a partnership with another nonprofit, Shiloh House, and continue work on this project.

In the next year, Colorado plans to finalize the fatherhood track for the 2020 Strengthening Families conference and identify topics and presenters for workshop sessions, reach out to key state legislators and Governor’s staff to seek official designation of the Fatherhood Commission, and conduct “train-the trainer” sessions for county-level leaders on two evidence-based parenting programs.

Awardee: Families First Colorado

Project Director: Bert Singleton, Fatherhood Coordinator, Families First Colorado

Contact: bertsingletonfamiliesfirst@gmail.com **Planning Team**

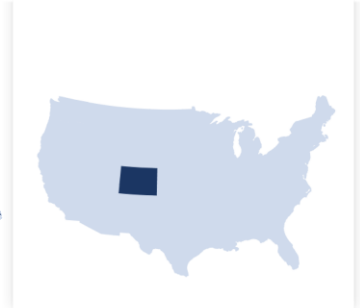
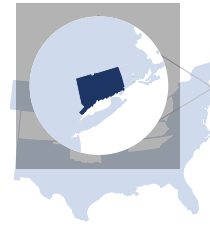
Members:

- Jennifer Richardson, Family Support Director, Families First Colorado
- Adam Robe, Executive Director, Families First Colorado
- Jennifer Bellamy, Associate Professor, University of Denver, Graduate School of Social Work
- Dan Welch, Grant Specialist, Division of Child Support Services, Colorado Department of Human Services
- Keri Batchelder, Programs and Services Section Manager, Division of Child Support Services, Colorado Department of Human Services



Connecticut

The Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative's goal was to assess the strengths and challenges of the services offered by state agencies and programs to fathers and their families, with the findings being used to craft recommendations to inform our strategic plan. To achieve this, we conducted focus groups and with 38 fathers in the cities of Bridgeport, Hartford, New Haven, Norwich, and Danbury. We reached fewer fathers than our original goal (8 focus groups with 64 fathers), but we had a saturation of findings with repetition of key themes and feel that the number of fathers was adequate for achieving the current purpose.



individual interviews

Key themes that arose in the focus groups were:

- Fathers are connected to multiple state agencies, but rarely more than one program, endorsing anywhere from 2–13 different agencies and programs from a list provided, with an average of four.
- Fathers are eager to be involved with their children and to seek out resources and services that would help them.
- There are issues of equity and fairness in the existence of services for fathers as well as access to services that already exist.
- Communication is poor around what rights and resources are available to fathers and about what is going on with their children (e.g., schools, DCF).
- Fathers feel judged based on their gender, prior criminal record, appearance, and race.
- Relationships with agency staff and service providers are key to a father's experience, whether positive, negative, or simply involve people who do not "get it" and do not relate to fathers.

Findings and recommendations were presented at the Statewide Fatherhood Summit on August 8, 2019, to an audience of state legislators, agency commissioners, deputy commissioners, agency staff, federal agency representatives, fatherhood program staff, and fathers. Over the next 12 months, Connecticut will finalize and present the official report of findings and recommendations to the CT Fatherhood Initiative Executive Council at their quarterly meeting in September. Connecticut will also follow up with sister agencies as well as state legislators regarding strategies for implementation of the recommendations.

Awardee: State of Connecticut, Department of Social Services

Project Director: Anthony Judkins

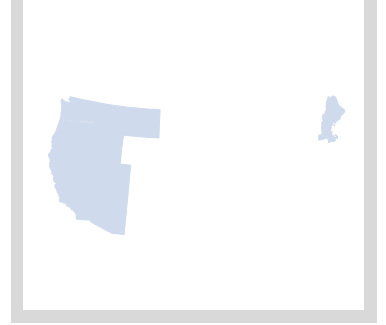
Contact: anthony.judkins@ct.gov

Planning Team Members:

- Kari Adamsons, Associate Professor, Human Development and Family Studies, University of Connecticut
- Diana DiTunno, OSD Consultant & Project Manager, Connecticut Department of Social Services, Office of Organizational & Skill Development in partnership with the UCONN School of Social Work



Kentucky



The Lexington Leadership Foundation (LLF) pursued three concurrent goals with FRPN support. First, LLF sought to develop an ongoing, effective space for service providers interested in promoting fatherhood engagement to gather, share, and establish collaborative efforts. We wanted the space to be diverse and have representation from social services agencies, non-profits, faith-based organizations, the business sector, and governmental agencies. We were able to accomplish this and have a strong group committed to carrying the work forward. The next step is the formal establishment of a non-profit or incubation within an existing agency that will facilitate and advance the effort. FRPN resources ensured the group had supplies and materials needed for this part of the work.

Second, LLF explored funds and strategies to create a statewide initiative promoting child well-being through father engagement. We explored several funding relationships over the project, including Kentucky's statewide child support enforcement agency (Department for Income Support), which joined their funds with the FRPN revenue. FRPN was helpful in encouraging relationships between child support agencies and fatherhood practitioners and helped galvanize our local relationship with Kentucky state agency leadership. These relationships will prove to be vital to our work moving forward.

Finally, we created a name for this project—the Commonwealth Center for Fathers and Families (CCFF)—and sought to establish a permanent agency to execute the new strategic plan and sustain that work moving forward. FRPN assisted by facilitating key connections and relationships across their network. For example, Kentucky stakeholders have been able to forge and strengthen relationships with South Carolina's Center for Fathers and Families, in part as a result of FRPN webinars and Learning Community calls, and expects to continue to learn from the experiences of South Carolina. The director of the South Carolina Center for Fathers and Families spoke at the 2019 Kentucky Fatherhood Summit, which was conducted at the end of September 2019.

Kentucky created a strategic plan that provides a vision for moving forwards and a guide to future action. The strategic plan was presented at the 2019 Fatherhood Summit which attracted a large, diverse array of attendees including “top brass,” service providers, and agency representatives throughout the state.

Awardee: Lexington Leadership Foundation

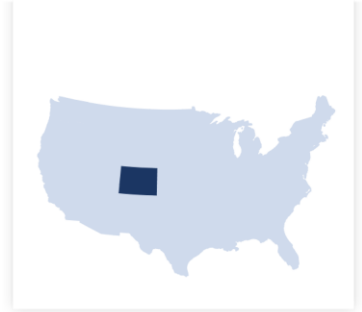
Project Director: David Cozart, Director, Lexington Leadership Foundation Fatherhood Initiative **Contact:**

dcozart@lexlf.org **Planning Team Members:**

- Dr. Anita Barbee, Professor, University of Louisville, Kent School of Social Work
- Dr. Armon Perry, Associate Professor & BSW Program Director, University of Louisville, Kent School of Social Work



Michigan



The Michigan Action Plan for Fatherhood Involvement (MAP-FI) aimed to identify priority areas to achieve greater inclusivity for fathers and sought to develop solution-focused partnerships with community organizations, government entities, practitioners, policymakers, and program participants. To this end, the planning group's activities included stakeholder interviews, focus groups with fathers, reviewing best practices and existing research, and planning a statewide summit on father involvement. Additionally, we intended to develop long-term structure and support for these efforts, including leveraging TANF funds.

We accomplished much of what we set out to do and, in some ways, more. Outcomes included primary data from 22 stakeholder interviews and 48 responses to an online survey of father programs, a set of internal policy briefs on areas for potential action, and compilation of research on existing father engagement efforts. The MAPFI advisory group has met monthly to discuss progress, but also served as a networking space for fatherhood advocates. Members of the MAP-FI team led or participated in multiple outward-facing events, including the Fatherhood Think Tank; Fanning the Fatherhood FIRE: A National Fatherhood Summit; and a local policy forum in Detroit in collaboration with Wayne State University School of Social Work. The policy forum was attended by 45 stakeholders and resulted in the generation of key policy priorities for the Detroit region as well as next steps.

Our next steps for data collection include completion of additional stakeholder interviews and analysis of the data, which is currently being coded and analyzed using Dedoose mixed methods software. We will continue to solicit, analyze, and map data from our survey. Building on our successful Detroit focus group, we will conduct other regional father focus groups in the coming months. We are preparing a policy brief to establish a statewide fatherhood commission to oversee distribution of funding to father programs statewide, presumably leveraging TANF funding for that purpose. The MAP-FI advisory group will continue to meet and prepare a comprehensive plan for moving the state forward in better involving fathers.

Awardee: University of Michigan, School of Social Work

Project Director: Richard M. Tolman, Professor of Social Work, University of Michigan School of Social Work **Contact:** rtolman@umich.edu **Planning Team Members:**

- Ellen Wood, Paternity Establishment Liaison, Michigan Office of Child Support
- Erin Frisch, Director of Opportunity, IV-D Director, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services
- Shawna Lee, Professor of Social Work, University of Michigan
- Laura Lein, Professor of Social Work, Professor of Anthropology, School of Social Work, College of LS&A, University of Michigan

Minnesota

The Minnesota Fathers and Families Network (MFFN) drew upon its network of partners and key stakeholders to conduct five focus groups with family professionals, legislators, state department heads, and fathers to identify priority issues, challenges, best practices, and resources that agencies, departments, and programs have to promote father inclusion. Clarence Jones, the project administrator, also participated in three additional groups outside of the project related to fatherhood issues. Each of the project's groups was audio taped for later compilation that will be used to create an action plan. Key takeaways from focus groups included:

1. There are limited services and funding for programs specifically targeting fathers.





2. Child Support currently does not address the underlying issues facing fathers, including fathers' low financial ability due to limited education, job skills, employment history, criminal record, and substance abuse.
3. Men who do not have access to their children often give up and a sense of shame and lack of support can lead to fathering additional children with multiple partners creating more challenges.
4. Practitioners in social services and other agencies are typically female and have not been prepared to work with fathers and their bias about the men that they may encounter. More emphasis on recruiting male practitioners and more education for practitioners in general would help.
5. Awareness about child support and legal responsibilities of nonresidential fathers is lacking. Information should target young men as well as the general public.
6. There is limited knowledge about services for fathers among practitioners. Greater communication and collaboration among different sectors in communities is needed. MFFN has a role in addressing this issue by updating the information about programs for fathers and supporting local community collaboration among programs.
7. Parenting education for fathers starting in the prenatal period would help fathers in understanding child development and their role in supporting healthy children.

The next steps for this Minnesota project will be to disseminate the focus group findings at the MFFN 2020 Summit to identify how to best address the issues and challenges, recruit new board members who are passionate leaders about father inclusion, conduct a state agency focus group to discuss how we might be part of their statewide plan to better serve fathers and families, explore how TANF funds might be used to assist us in supporting father inclusion, and hire a graphic artist to create an infographic about fatherhood statistics in Minnesota.

Awardee: Minnesota Fathers and Families Network

Project Director: Clarence Jones, Director, Minnesota Fathers and Families Network, Hue-MAN Partnership **Contact:**

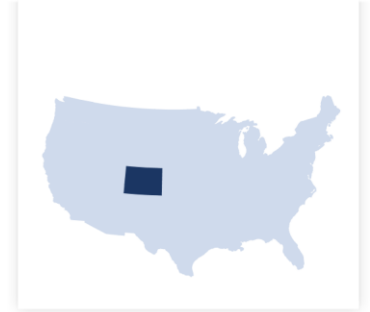
bobcjones@hotmail.com **Planning Team Members:**

- Tammy Dunrud, Associate Manager, Minnesota Fathers and Families Network
- Glen Palm, Professor Emeritus, Child & Family Studies, St. Cloud State University
- Shaneen Moore, IV-D Director
- Charles Dixon, Children's Trust Fund Consultant, Minnesota Department of Human Services

North Carolina

The overall goal of our mini-grant project was to strengthen collaborative efforts to meet the needs of fathers across our state. Our proposed plan of work included assessing the current state of fatherhood programs and initiatives across North Carolina and presenting this information to key stakeholders at two planning meetings/summits as well as the 2019 North Carolina Fatherhood Conference. In addition, we pursued the goals of mapping fatherhood programs and initiatives across the state and improving the web presence and social media infrastructure of the North Carolina Fatherhood Development Advisory Council.





We held a small fatherhood summit on April 5, 2019, for state-level agency administrators and key stakeholders. The conference confirmed a broad desire for multi-agency partnerships and the development of a statewide fatherhood network supported by the state legislature. The group discussed barriers to implementation and noted parties that need to be at the table for future conversation and planning. Our team also co-sponsored the 2019 North Carolina Fatherhood Conference, including a pre-conference legislative breakfast with several members of the North Carolina legislature and a panel entitled “Navigating the Social Service System: Insights from the Experts,” designed to give fathers tangible tools for engaging with and navigating several agencies within the state.

Our team also mapped fatherhood programs across the state, resulting in the identification of 34 programs in 21 counties. We were unable to identify father-specific resources (outside of the Department of Social Services) in 79 counties. We used this data to develop a resource directory to map services across the state, and we are sharing the data with NC Care360 (a statewide coordinated care network). We have also developed an online tool to collect additional program information from practitioners who become aware of our directory and are able to add information we may not have found.

We are currently awaiting responses regarding legislative and/or executive support for the development of a statewide fatherhood commission. In the meantime, we are in the process of planning the second summit for February 2020 (where we expect to host a larger group of stakeholders), and we are planning a session for the 2020 North Carolina Fatherhood conference. Our project team is also in the process of completing the mapping tool for the NCFDA website and developing a survey to be administered to noncustodial fathers. We hope to use this tool to learn more about their experiences within the child support system and other social service entities across the state.

Awardee: North Carolina State University, School of Social Work

Project Director: Qiana Cryer-Coupet, Assistant Professor of Social Work, North Carolina State University **Contact:**

qcryerc@ncsu.edu **Planning Team Members:**

- Carla West, IV-D Director, Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Social Services, Child Support Services
- Verna Donnelly, Deputy IV-D Chief, Department of Health and Human Services
- Deric Boston, Chair, North Carolina Fatherhood Development Advisory Council

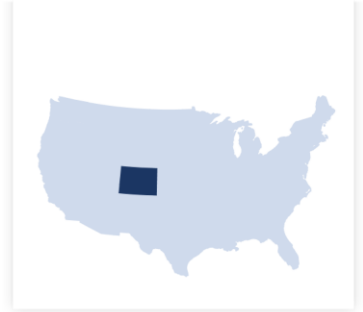
Pennsylvania

The Strong Families Commission aimed to continue our momentum by 1) finalizing recommendations for public dissemination; 2) building a website to share information about systemic barriers to father involvement; 3) sharing findings through network forums on outcomes and recommendations; 4) establishing a permanent infrastructure for the Pennsylvania Fathers, Families & Service Providers’ Network (PFFSPN) as a vehicle for coalescing support and disseminating information on best practices, training, and interagency collaboration; and 5) formalizing a statewide regional citizens’ policy team of father, child, and family advocates to work collaboratively with state leaders on eliminating systemic barriers to father involvement.

The Commission finalized recommendations from previous conferences, workgroups and focus group and presented the results in a press conference at the State Capitol on March 27, 2019. Commission leaders followed up with individual meetings with various members of the General Assembly, Governor’s Cabinet, and the Chief Court Administrator for the PA Unified Court System. Additionally, a planning group of state leaders has met regularly to strategize around establishing permanent support and



infrastructure for PFFSPN. This group created a one-page info sheet about the Network and a strategic plan for the year 2020. The Commission also helped formalize a regional citizens' policy team to work collaboratively with state leaders on existing policies and programs that impede greater father family involvement. Regarding website construction, a prototype design and content were drafted. Finally, the Commission planned our third statewide fatherhood conference in collaboration with the School District of Philadelphia and the PA Symposium Organizing Committee (SOC), scheduled for September 18–19, 2019.



Over the next 12 months, we will continue to urge elected officials to acknowledge the importance of fathers by issuing an executive order and adopting a concurrent resolution. We will additionally seek a promulgation of rules and procedures from the Pennsylvania Supreme Court to ensure that fathers' rights receive equal consideration in determining the best interest of the child and family. The Commission will support upcoming fatherhood conferences and identify leaders to host the conference in different regions of the state. We will continue to use the data we have collected to educate the public about the value of fathers and the systemic barriers they face, including seeking funds to launch an independent website with resources and information about fatherhood. Finally, the Commission will consult with state agencies regarding best practices, training, and interagency program collaboration.

Awardee: The Strong Families Commission

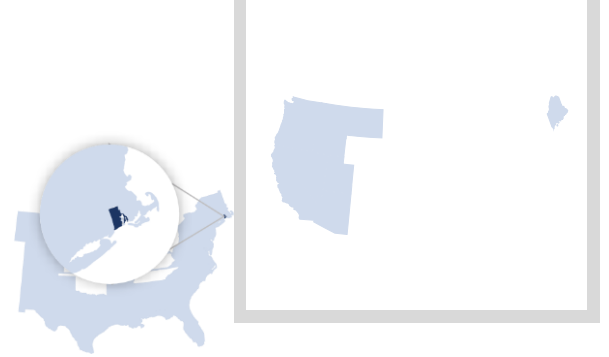
Project Director: Rufus Sylvester Lynch, Commission Chair and Co-Founder, The Strong Families Commission **Contact:** drsrlynchsf@iawfpa.com **Planning Team Members:**

- Kirk Harris, Commission Fellow & Professor, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee
- Rep. Joanna McClinton, PA House Representative, 191st Legislative District
- Robert Patrick, Director, Pennsylvania Bureau of Child Support Enforcement
- Raymond Petren, Assistant Professor, Human Development & Families Studies, Penn State University
- Virginia Smith, Professor, Director of Research, Lincoln University Institute for the Advancement of Working Families



Rhode Island

In 2018, the Rhode Island Fatherhood Initiative (RIFI) worked with the National Fatherhood Initiative (NFI) to complete a community needs assessment, through which RIFI identified eight priority action steps in our planning process:



1. Work with state government to develop and implement fatherhood policies and programs to increase fatherhood outcomes.
2. Develop and implement statewide fatherhood public health awareness campaign
3. Increase father voice and leadership in community and state policy and advisory boards
4. Engage men in family planning, prenatal, birthing, and early childhood states to promote healthy child development
5. Support fathers' ability to economically care for their children
6. Increase education outcomes for boys
7. Increase family stability and well-being
8. Decrease young men and father involvement with the legal/criminal justice system.

Over the past six months, RIFI Steering Committee met biweekly to work on mini-grant action steps. The Committee worked with a research consultant to create our own Father Friendly Index survey tool, which we have started to administer widely to state and local agencies. The Committee additionally held a Legislative Policy Roundtable to engage legislators and community partners, and reviewed fatherhood legislation across states to inform our proposed Rhode Island legislative bill to be submitted in the upcoming legislative session (starting in January 2020). RIFI father leaders participated in a Family Policy Academy (which included having an outreach table at the State House), the 15th Annual Child Support Conference, and conducted legislator education about their policy priorities as well as about RIFI's activities. Finally, the Steering Committee refined our top priorities to develop a two-year state strategic plan, and we are planning to present the final plan at an upcoming Children's Cabinet meeting with state agency chief administrators in attendance.

The RIFI Steering Committee will continue to meet monthly to further work on the implementation of our strategic plan goals and activities. We will work to pass fatherhood legislation that will promulgate our role and provide infrastructure and resources committed to father engagement. We will also develop a public health and awareness campaign to increase awareness of father-involvement across sectors.

Awardee: Parent Support Network of Rhode Island

Project Director: Lisa Conlan Lewis, Executive Director, Parent Support Network of Rhode Island **Contact:**

l.conlan@psnri.org **Planning Team Members:**

- Michael Marks, PhD Researcher, Independent Consultant
- Sharon Santilli, Associate Director, Department of Human Services, Office of Child Support Services
- Colleen Warren, Child Support Administrative Officer, Department of Human Services, Office of Child Support Services
- Kim Sande, Federal Grant Manager, Department of Children, Youth & Families
- Karla Caballeros, Child Support Administrative Officer, Department of Human Services, Office of Child Support Services

South Carolina

The South Carolina Center for Fathers and Families' (SCCFF) proposed to build upon its long-standing partnership with South Carolina Department of Social Services (SCDSS) and engage a broader public partner network to initiate changes in agency policies



and procedures that positively impact fathers. By creating a bigger and more coordinated partner network, we aimed to make policies, practices, and services more cohesive and impactful. Ultimately, our vision is to create a unified voice with partners on behalf of fathers and families and reach beyond government to business and communities, churches, nonprofits, and schools.



SCCFF conducted outreach and convened partners, with 13 agencies attending the first multi-agency meeting. Agencies worked in groups to discuss the needs of fathers (organized around the themes of Economic, Health, Education, and Community Support) and map out potential resources, which were shared at the second multiagency meeting in June. Partners also signed up for onsite visits; SCCFF staff ultimately completed 11 agency visits. These visits resulted in identifying new agency contacts, learning more about the agency's work, and identifying areas where multi-agency collaboration could occur. Throughout the planning process, we were able to help educate our partner agencies on the impact of father absence as well as increasing our own knowledge about partner agencies. We learned that in many cases partner agencies were unaware their policies and practices impacted the engagement of fathers in the family structure. We found partners to be open in their assessments and willing to work with us on improving the agency's knowledge and practices in working with fathers.

SCCFF's next steps include conducting several more agency visits and convening further multi-agency meetings. Within the following year, we intend to identify priority areas around access, service, and policy, and hold a father listening session in early 2020 to help gather information around improving assistance to fathers and families in these areas. SCCFF staff will continue to follow up with partners on requests for training and reviewing and rewriting policies. Specifically, SCDSS has requested to work with SCCFF on reviewing and rewriting certain policies; South Carolina Department of Employment and Workforce will consider whether individuals with a child support order can be treated as a displaced worker; and SC Department of Corrections has indicated an interest in working with SCCFF in creating seamless reentry processes and supports.

Awardee: South Carolina Center for Fathers and Families

Project Director: Richard Barr, Director of Community Development and Programming, South Carolina Center for Fathers and Families

Contact: rbarr@scfathersandfamilies.com **Planning Team**

Members:

- Patricia Littlejohn, President, South Carolina Center for Fathers and Families
- Forrest Alton, President, 1000 Feathers
- Dione Brabham, Data and Quality Associate, Training Coordinator, South Carolina Center for Fathers and Families

Washington



The Washington state planning team aimed to use FRPN resources to support the launch of our new WA State Interagency Fatherhood Council (Council) effort. At our first State Fatherhood Summit in June 2018, fathers and stakeholders generated a list of top priorities, including goals to create a state council and to engage fathers directly in the work. For this project, we aimed to further those goals by 1) conducting a survey of fathers' experiences with family-support programs and state services, particularly at the transition to fatherhood, and 2) hosting a second summit on fathers' voices driving maternal child health transformation.

Leveraging Council members' networks and expertise, we created and deployed a statewide electronic survey of fathers via social media. This yielded an N=338 response rate and broad geographic spread. Of those fathers, 85 reported currently having a child 3 or



younger. In addition to the survey, we planned a “mini-summit” focused on the intersection between father inclusion and maternal child health. The summit took place August 9, 2019, and had over 80 attendees, with roughly one-quarter of those being fathers with lived experience and onethird stakeholders who have been with the group from the first Summit. The Council has also been working to influence key state agencies to incorporate more “lived experience” at the table, and successfully moved multiple state agencies to include father voices in their focus groups and state-level planning teams. Finally, the Council encouraged the incorporation of father-friendly strategies and language for our state’s Title V Block Grant Five-Year Plan update for public health, which is a core plan for resource allocation and priorities for the department.



Our next steps include working to secure champions in the legislature and the Governor’s office. We have scheduled meet-and-greets with key legislators and will begin with education and advocacy on the critical issues of fatherhood by discussing their ties to our state’s goals around poverty reduction, kindergarten readiness, and health. To this end, the Council staff is will craft educational materials incorporating the results from our father survey. We will also use the survey data to pilot our Speakers Bureau strategy to educate our DSHS Expanded ESA Leadership Team around fatherhood inclusion. We have furthermore been invited to speak at the National Fathers and Family Coalition of America in February 2020 to discuss our survey data and experiences of launching a Council.

Awardee: Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, Economic Services Administration (ESA), Office of the Assistant Secretary

Project Directors:

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Wyoming

Wyoming Children's Trust Fund (WYCTF) utilized this funding to initiate the prioritization of father engagement at the statewide level, with the intention of engaging partners to collectively establish a strategic plan for improving outreach and opportunities for fathers in Wyoming. WYCTF attempted to get representation from each state human service agency including the Departments of Family Services, Corrections, Health, Education, and Workforce Services. We also sought to include mental health providers, non-profit organizations, and current fatherhood programs across Wyoming. Additionally, we aimed to establish a statewide Parent Advisory Committee to elevate fathers' voices.

WYCTF made substantial progress on our goals. In May, 15 critical stakeholders from our planning group participated in a two-day strategic planning retreat facilitated by Erik Vecere from the National Fatherhood Initiative. The group had a second meeting on July 22, 2019, where it determined that continuing to engage a facilitator would allow neutrality and shared leadership among the group. The group also worked on creating a mission and vision, as well as shared goals for moving forward. An additional partner was brought in to assist in developing and implementing the fatherhood plan for Wyoming, and a representative from Head Start joined the group. Another meeting has been scheduled for September to establish working committees and goals for each group.

Over the next 12 months, the group is committed to moving the strategic plan forward to accomplish the established goals. WYCTF and the Wyoming Department of Health will continue to focus on establishing the Parent Advisory Committee and strengthening the current planning committee by building relationships and a common vision. We will be seeking assistance from other states, as well as the National Alliance of Children's Trust and Prevention Funds Parent Advisory Group. Current efforts are focused on identifying funding to support hiring a facilitation team.

Awardee: Wyoming Children's Trust Fund

Project Director: Jennifer Davis, Consultant, Wyoming Children's Trust Fund

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- Eric Vecere, Vice President of Program Support, National Fatherhood Initiative
- Kristie Arneson, IV-D Director, Wyoming Department of Family Services

