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ABSTRACT

The past 10 years have been a period of enormous growth in efforts around father involvement, with local government systems attempting to meet the needs of the diverse father population. The Bay Area Fathering Indicators Data System (BAYFIDS) Project is designed to track and analyze the operation and impact of fathering programs and describe the nature of local and county policy efforts around fatherhood in the San Francisco Bay Area. This report expands in two ways on an earlier study conducted in 2000: (1) it offers through the directory an updated count of programs; and (2) it addresses directly policy changes in the nine counties as they relate to program development, implementation, expansion, and devolution. Chapter 1 of the report, the BAYFIDS directory, updates the findings regarding programs in the Bay Area as of Spring 2003. Chapter 2 summarizes data from telephone surveys with policymakers in county child support services, social services agencies, and county departments of education and with practitioners representing the "master group" from the 2000 study; the survey was to determine ways in which they have experienced change, problems, and possibilities. Chapter 3 discusses cross-cutting themes and offers conclusions. Survey findings revealed that fatherhood, male involvement, and unwanted fatherhood prevention were of relatively low priority for the social service agencies in the Bay Area. Practitioners suggested that child and family service organizations may have internalized some key ideas from the fatherhood movement and integrated them into their programs. Balanced against this picture for fathering efforts was the retrenchment found in publicly sponsored father support programs. (KB)

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FATHERHOOD INITIATIVES:

Policymaker and Practitioner Perspectives on Integrating Fathering Efforts

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A Report from the
Bay Area Fathering Integrated Data
System (BAYFIDS) II Project

Produced by



National Center on Fathers and Families

The National Center on Fathers and Families (NCOFF)
Graduate School of Education
University of Pennsylvania

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BAY AREA

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Policymaker and Practitioner Perspectives on Integrating Fathering Efforts

The Bay Area
Fathering Integrated Data
System (BAyFIDS) II Project
www.bayfids.org

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The William and Flora
Hewlett Foundation

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ABOUT NCOFF

The National Center on Fathers and Families (NCOFF) was established in 1994 at the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education with core support from The Annie E. Casey Foundation. An interdisciplinary, practice-derived research center, NCOFF's primary goals are to:

- **Expand the knowledge base** on father involvement, family efficacy, and child well-being within multiple disciplines through research and development, integrated discussion, and information building;
- **Strengthen practice** through practitioner-targeted conversations, information dissemination, and collaborative activities; and
- **Contribute to critical policy discussions** by creating a coherent agenda of work that is built around existing and emerging local, state, and federal efforts.

NCOFF's research agenda includes a range of studies that use multiple methodological approaches. We focus on diverse populations of fathers and families—for example, minority families, two-parent families, those living in poverty, and those affected by welfare reform. Our primary research objective is to augment an existing, cross-disciplinary knowledge base on children, mothers, and families by encouraging the investigation of father-related issues that have emerged and those that have yet to be explored.

With few exceptions, the traditional assumption has been that knowledge flows from research to practice. NCOFF believes this perspective minimizes the potential of practice as a source of information and collaboration. Instead, we support the notion that the relationship between research and practice is bidirectional and reciprocal. Such a relationship can be achieved best by strengthening the links between researchers and practitioners, by establishing relationships of mutual learning, and by contributing to policy formulation.

NCOFF CORE LEARNINGS

NCOFF's research, practice, and policy activities have been developed around seven Core Learnings, which were distilled from the firsthand experiences of practitioners serving fathers, mothers, children, and families. The Core Learnings now serve as an organizing framework around which the Center conducts its work. They also provide the field with guidelines for examining, supporting, testing, and interrogating key issues.

The seven Core Learnings offer an important lens through which policymakers might learn more about the implications and impact of legislation and policy decisions on the lives of large numbers of fathers, mothers, children, and families. They also capture salient issues experienced and felt deeply by many fathers and families—those who are financially secure as well as those who are the most vulnerable to poverty and hardship.

The Seven Core Learnings on Fathers and Families

1. **Fathers care**—even if that caring is not shown in conventional ways.
2. **Father presence matters**—in terms of economic well-being, social support, and child development.
3. **Joblessness and unemployment** are major impediments to family formation and father involvement.
4. **Systemic barriers**—in existing approaches to public benefits, child support enforcement, and paternity establishment—operate to create obstacles and disincentives to father involvement. The disincentives are sufficiently compelling as to have prompted the emergence of a phenomenon dubbed “underground fathers,” men who acknowledge paternity and are involved in the lives of their children but who refuse to participate as fathers in the formal systems.
5. **Co-parenting**—a growing number of young fathers and mothers need additional support to develop the vital skills needed to share parenting responsibilities.
6. **Role transitions**—the transition from biological father to committed parent has significant development implications for young fathers.
7. **Intergenerational learning**—the behaviors of young parents, both fathers and mothers, are influenced significantly by intergenerational beliefs and practices within their families of origin.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Work on both Phase I and Phase II of the Bay Area Fathering Integrated Data System (BAyFIDS) projects could not have been achieved without the generous support of a number of individuals and organizations. For Phase I, we extend our gratitude to our collaborators at the University of California-Berkeley Survey Research Center and SRI International. We also want to thank our project consultants, including Stanley Seiderman of the Bay Area Male Involvement Network; the individuals who served as practitioner-liaisons in the Bay Area; members of the National Practitioners Network for Fathers and Families; Ed Pitt of the Families and Work Institute; and Burt Barnow, an NCOFF-affiliated researcher, from the Institute for Policy Studies at Johns Hopkins University. We also wish to thank NCOFF staff who assisted in the production of this report: Susan Haidar, Dana Jones Robinson, Brendan Skwire, Herbert Turner, Jeong-Ran Kim, Kathy Brown, Michael Coffey, Jeanine Staples, and Jennifer Turri.

For Phase II, we extend our gratitude to the respondents in the county offices of health and human services, education, and child support services as well as practitioners in programs in the nine counties. In addition, several staff contributed to different aspects of this project: Natalie Helbig (SUNY-Albany), Sonya Gwak, Jeanine Staples, Teresa Wojcik, Susan Haidar, and Millicent Minnick.

We are deeply appreciative to the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, which funded this project, and particularly to our program officer for Phase I, Alvertha Penny, and our program officer for Phase II, Renu Karir, who both offered tireless support. We also thank NCOFF's core funder, The Annie E. Casey Foundation, as well as the Ford Foundation and the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, for special support that informed our work on both phases of the BAYFIDS project.

We owe a special debt to the practitioners and policymakers who spoke with us and completed exhaustive—and exhausting—telephone and mail surveys. Several practitioners allowed us to visit their programs and, along with other staff members and program participants, shared with us their vision and expertise. For their support, we are deeply and immeasurably appreciative.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The past ten years has been a period of enormous growth and change in efforts around father involvement and child and family well-being.

The past ten years has been a period of enormous growth and change in efforts around father involvement and child and family well-being. The issues facing government systems designed to address the needs of this diverse population represent a range of concerns, issues, and problems that are likely to denote both local and national agendas and changes. This report addresses some of these issues at the local level. It provides data on views and efforts of social service, child, educational, and family support agencies in nine counties in the San Francisco, California, Bay Area as they relate to the nature of fatherhood efforts; approaches being used to integrate fatherhood into existing and newly created agencies serving children and families; and projections of future efforts, including perspectives on topics such as welfare reform and marriage promotion legislation.

This report expands on an earlier study conducted in 2000, BAYFIDS I, which reported data on the number, diversity, content, and missions of programs and the participants in them in the Bay Area. The purpose of BAYFIDS I was to track, document, and analyze the operation and impact of fathering programs, as well as the nature of county policy efforts around fatherhood. We sought to develop baseline data on participant needs, program capabilities, and agency effort. In addition, we were interested in capturing information on the attitudes and values held by program participants, program staff, and government agencies regarding the challenges of supporting men in their roles as fathers, reducing father absence, and enhancing the welfare of children and families when fathers and their families face hardships.

The profiles of fathers and fatherhood initiatives that emerged from BAYFIDS I underscored the diversity inherent among fathers and in fathering itself—the range of experiences and needs that fathers exhibit: i.e., their different stations in life, different ages, different cultural and personal histories, and different lenses through which each views the world.

In the earlier report, we were reminded that the simple dichotomy of fathers as present or absent, as good or bad, is increasingly being challenged by new demands to examine critically the continuum of fathers that exists: those who are residential or nonresidential, from a range of cultures and ethnicities, with varying relationships to the mother of their children, and with different socioeconomic backgrounds. Such a nuanced view of fathers and their experiences requires an examination of the complex relational factors involved in identifying and measuring appropriate fathering and parenting behaviors.

The current report, BAYFIDS II, extends the earlier report in two ways. First, it offers through the BAYFIDS directory an updated count of the number of programs still in existence since the original study as well as new programs. It also offers information on shifts in the operation of and services provided by these programs in response to the diverse populations served. Second, BAYFIDS II addresses directly policy changes in the nine counties as they relate to program development, implementation, expansion, and devolution. In addition, it provides perspectives from primary child and family services offices as well as education systems in the nine counties about the critical issues being faced by the counties, the role of fathering within the larger domain of child and family support, the integration of fatherhood issues into different segments of their work, and the implications of legislative discussions at the national level, such as legislative proposals on marriage. By highlighting these issues, this document seeks to identify the efforts of county agencies, changes that have occurred in both programming and planning, and the future of fatherhood efforts within government agencies serving children and families.

The first section of the report updates our findings regarding programs in the Bay Area. The next section summarizes data from a telephone survey with policymakers in child and family-serving agencies and departments in the nine counties: California Department of Child Support Services, California Department of Social Services, and county Departments of Education. We then present the results of a telephone survey of practitioners from the original study, to determine the ways in which they have experienced change, problems, and possibilities. Lastly, we provide a discussion of the cross-cutting themes and a conclusion.

Programs in the Bay Area—Then and Now

To realize the designated outcomes of this project, we developed two distinct tools. The first was a comprehensive, updated directory of fathering programs for individuals, agencies, organizations, and governments within the nine counties. The Bay Area Fathering Programs Directory is intended to serve as a catalogue of organizations that address fathering issues, broadly defined. In addition to offering contact and referral information, the Directory also included data on the primary and secondary populations

A nuanced view of fathers and their experiences requires an examination of the complex relational factors involved in identifying and measuring appropriate fathering and parenting behaviors

served, the duration of programs, and the services offered.

The second tool was a series of telephone interviews with directors or director-designees of programs with a fathering component—to determine the range and scope of effort to integrate fathering into existing systems. Two surveys of Bay Area fathering programs were used to gather information on programs and participants. The goal was to collect data from program directors about their programmatic efforts, program participants, and the program's relationship to public agencies and fathering efforts. The survey included both a mail and a telephone survey.

Bay Area Programs in 1999

In collecting data for BAYFIDS I, we soon learned that programmatic efforts in the Bay Area had evolved in a variety of settings and for a range of purposes. Some were distinctly developed in order to respond to an immediate need for children, parents, or families. Some programs had been organized and formally sanctioned by parent organizations or governmental agencies—through registration as a nonprofit organization, for instance—while others operated informally in churches, homes, and similar grassroots venues. Programs tended to have a high mortality rate in the early years of development; some were listed in the telephone directory one day, but their doors were closed the next. However, the most daunting prospect we faced was to define what actually constituted or could be considered a “fathering program.”

Given the variety of effort and lack of consensus regarding definitions, the BAYFIDS project used a broad set of criteria to determine program eligibility in order to identify the greatest range of organizations possible. We included any organization that involved men or boys in a program relating to parenting, pregnancy prevention, or male roles as fathers and parents/caregivers for children. We arrived at the final set of 89 programs.

Bay Area Programs in Phase II: 2000-2002

During Phase II of BAYFIDS, project staff re-surveyed the programs identified during Phase I. The re-survey was designed to allow programs to update contact and programmatic information for the new edition of the Directory. Of all Phase I programs, 25 responded to the first mailing; six additional programs responded to follow-up mailings and telephone calls. To solicit additional entries for the Directory, NCOFF contacted all 235 organizations in our Phase I database of potential program sponsors by telephone. In total, only 5 of 89 entries in the first Directory dropped out—5.6% of the population. If the organizations that were unreachable are included and those that chose not to participate, the “mortality” rate was 7.9%. However, we did not find any new efforts being founded, despite extensive telephone interview efforts and searches of the Internet. We say more about what this portends for the field in the conclusion to this report.

Of those that updated their entries, very few made major changes to their statement of mission, their program definition, their objectives, their service offerings, or their service populations. The most often requested

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change was to increase the number of services that were listed as available by referral. However, most programs did seem to have substantial turnover in personnel. Of those that returned the re-survey, 63% changed some or all of their contact information. About 22% of programs listed updated phone numbers and/or addresses. We have no data on why address changes were requested, though some conversations with practitioners suggested that organizations were forced to move into smaller, less expensive quarters in some cases. In the main, the number of fathering and male involvement programs and their mission and service sets seem to be relatively stable—no change, no increase, no decrease. It is difficult to tell whether this represents a transition from a turbulent time of rapid growth and experimentation to one of deepening and strengthening of those efforts that survived the “early years” or whether it is that weightless moment before a massive fall begins.

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Assessing Policy and Programmatic Efforts

The second part of Phase II concentrated on an assessment of policy and programmatic efforts in the nine counties surrounding San Francisco Bay. The environment in which fathering support and male involvement programs were founded appears to be non-existent; indeed, post-September 11, fathering support and male involvement programs are now in competition for resources with other efforts. Concurrently, the Bush Administration has entered the debate on social services with a new set of priorities that will potentially have a transformative effect on the goals that fathering support and male involvement efforts may promote and the financial pool that they may draw from. Local, state, and federal budgets are in a state of chaos that seems unlikely to abate for several years. At this moment, we decided to ask county officials who have responsibility for fathering support and male involvement programs as well as private sector practitioners to reflect on what they have done, key issues that the new environment has thrust upon them, and their plans for the effort over the next five years.

Findings

In general, fatherhood, male involvement, and unwanted fatherhood prevention seem to be a relatively low priority for the social service/human service agencies in the Bay Area. Even those counties that offer some services do so through external grants—there is no “core funding” from these agencies invested in fathering, male involvement, or unwanted fatherhood prevention programs. Those programs that do exist tend to focus on reducing barriers (e.g., child support orders, “unfriendly” agency services, etc.) to participation and to promoting fathering and male involvement through education and one-time inducements (e.g., events where fathers are encouraged to bring children in order to receive some incentive). Among those counties that offer services, very little planning for TANF reauthorization has occurred. Currently, there is no intention to provide marriage

promotion programs. Only one county has any cross-agency collaboration regarding fathering, male involvement, or unwanted fatherhood prevention.

California Department of Child Support Services: County Field Offices

The DCSS field offices are responsible for establishing paternity and obtaining and enforcing child and medical support orders. DCSS also supports a number of fatherhood and family oriented programs, including three initiatives: (1) the Paternity Opportunity Program, (2) the Noncustodial Parent Project, and (3) the Responsible Fatherhood effort. The Responsible Fatherhood effort works with major league sports teams and local media outlets to encourage responsible fatherhood.

1. Link between male involvement and child outcomes. The creation of DCSS is the most important and momentous event in the fathering support, male involvement, and early/unwanted fatherhood prevention movement in the Bay Area. Under the old structure centered in the District Attorney's office, the goal was to increase child support collections, regardless of men's ability to pay or the impact support orders had on the willingness and ability of men to participate in their children's lives. Now, however, most offices generally see a reciprocal link between paying child support and male involvement with their children: that is, involvement begets payment which begets involvement. They see their mission as ensuring that payment occurs, but they view the ability and willingness to pay as a complex problem that requires a more varied and nuanced solution than has been offered in the past.

2. Most important services that encourage male involvement or discourage unwanted fatherhood. Many field offices believe that there is a link between child support compliance and male involvement. In their view, being in compliance reduces one barrier to involvement; therefore, trying to increase compliance will increase involvement. Their strategy, then, begins with an analysis of barriers to compliance. However, a reputation for focusing on collections has carried over to the new Department and presented a barrier to compliance itself. To resolve this issue, field offices have tried to instill a customer service focus among their staff, where the customer is the father. Most offices understand that their physical location is often a logistical and psychological barrier to men receiving services or actively managing their support obligations. To overcome this problem, most offices have created an automated child support information system so that gaining information about payments and requirements is easier.

3. Planning for TANF reauthorization. No DCSS field office made mention of any specific plan related to TANF reauthorization. Many agencies are taking a wait-and-see approach, though some did note a concern that some fathering-related activities that depend on federal grants are due to run out of money soon. A larger issue that six of nine counties raised was the looming five year deadline for many women on TANF.

In general, fatherhood, male involvement, and unwanted fatherhood prevention seem to be a relatively low priority for the social service/human service agencies in the Bay Area.

4. Marriage Promotion. The county field offices were all familiar with the proposed emphasis on marriage promotion. However, the DCSS field offices universally stated they had no interest in pursuing grants under the proposed funding for marriage promotion in various versions of the TANF reauthorization. Field offices generally construct themselves as the agency responsible for making a workable situation after marriage has failed or when it was not feasible at the outset.

5. Major initiatives over the next three to five years in fathering support, male involvement, and unwanted fatherhood prevention. There was very little consensus among field offices about what constituted the most important initiatives over the next three to five years. The highest level of agreement was on the need for outreach to young adults, teens, and even elementary school-aged children (five counties). The philosophical thrust of this outreach is again consequences-oriented, passing the message that the decision to engage in sexual activity carries with it the chance of long-term moral, social, and legal obligations that DCSS and others will forcibly impose. Across these various priorities, a majority of the DCSS offices cited public attitudes as a primary barrier to implementation.

6. Partnerships with private sector agencies. Because DCSS is newly formed, sufficient time may not have passed for the agency to embed itself in the private sector fathering and male involvement efforts in the Bay Area. Like the District Attorneys before them, it seems that most DCSS field offices have little or no contact with the private sector efforts, with two notable exceptions.

California Department of Social Services: County Social Service Offices

The mission of the California Department of Social Services field offices is “to serve, aid, and protect needy and vulnerable children and adults in ways that strengthen and preserve families, encourage personal responsibility, and foster independence.” Of the nine counties, only two county welfare departments reported having or having had any type of fathering support, male involvement, or unwanted fatherhood prevention program: San Mateo and Contra Costa. San Mateo was the only county that had ongoing programs in fathering and fatherhood initiatives. Contra Costa County’s program was a state demonstration program that ended in July 2001.

1. Link between male involvement and child outcomes. Both counties linked child welfare to father presence and involvement. In general, respondents in both counties stated that children benefit financially and emotionally from having the support and attention of fathers. One of the respondents noted that children with involved fathers have less involvement with the criminal justice system later in life.

2. Most important services that encourage male involvement or discourage unwanted fatherhood. Each county nominated an integrated

The creation
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prevention
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Bay Area

package of services as their key service. Significantly, both packages are dependent on grant funding and were not supported with core Department of Social Services resources. Contra Costa participated in the state-wide Noncustodial Parents project, which tested the hypothesis that increased male involvement would increase payments. Of the program completers, 64% paid their child support consistently. The county would like to continue the program, but has no source of funding currently.

3. Planning for TANF reauthorization. Neither county is planning to alter its fatherhood/male involvement initiatives to account for changes in TANF. San Mateo County is actively analyzing their experience with TANF over the last five years to identify issues related to noncustodial parents.

4. Marriage Promotion. Neither county is currently offering or planning to offer marriage promotion activities. The respondent from San Mateo County stated that marriage promotion is part of the general discussion of improving their programs, but it is not a focus. A higher priority for the county is determining how to improve relationships between fathers and the welfare system, fathers and children, and fathers and mothers.

5. Major initiatives over the next three to five years in fathering support, male involvement, and unwanted fatherhood prevention. Only San Mateo County noted any major initiative it wished to enhance. San Mateo County has attempted to promote responsible relationships as part of a program for adolescents. They hope to expand and enhance this program. In general, though, the San Mateo respondent felt that making the department more accessible and user-friendly for fathers was their highest priority. They also view “empowering” fathers as advocates for their children as a goal for the future.

6. Partnerships with private sector agencies. Only San Mateo reported any partnership with respect to fathering or male involvement services, through its Fatherhood Collaborative.

Respondents from both San Mateo and Contra Costa counties stated that children benefit financially and emotionally from having the support and attention of fathers.

California Department of Education: County Offices of Education

The county boards of education and county offices of education are responsible for providing elementary and secondary education to the students living in each county. The county offices of education work closely with the California Department of Education’s Child, Youth and Family Services Branch, which helps schools and communities design responsive family service delivery systems—including healthy parenting adolescent programs, service learning, and foster youth services—to improve students’ school success and foster their healthy growth and development. The Branch promotes accessible and meaningful parent education and parent involvement in schools and coordinates family-school partnership strategies throughout the department. In general, there seems to be a lack of commitment to fathering support, male involvement, or pregnancy prevention within the school districts, as evidenced by the small number of programs, large turnover in staff who work on these issues, and general reliance on external funding for those efforts that do exist.

1. Links between male involvement and child outcomes. Those schools that do offer programs tend to focus on the link between father involvement and the child's school performance. The schools that have programs seem to assume a deficit on the part of the father. That is, the teen father is expected to be a less able as caregiver because of lack of contact with his own father.

2. Most important services that encourage male involvement or discourage unwanted fatherhood. Among the schools that offer no programs directly, five of the six counties make some effort to refer young men to community-based programs that could address their needs. However, the degree to which these referrals are based on the young men seeking support on their own rather than the school district identifying those with needs is unknown. Our impression from the interviews is that most referrals are based on the young man making an effort to find and get help.

3. Planning for TANF reauthorization. None of the county offices of education reported specific plans related to TANF reauthorization. Most were unaware of any impact to the services they are offering, with the exception of one county, where TANF money is used to provide transportation for some of its participants.

4. Marriage Promotion. Marriage promotion was not a component of the programs in the three counties that offer some type of fathering/male involvement services. Two of the three school informants were openly skeptical about the idea, noting that "bad" marriages between young people often prove to be poor environments for children. Another viewed marriage promotion as a form of "values promotion"—activity that is often unwelcomed or disallowed in school settings.

5. Important initiatives within the next three to five years. In general, it seems that schools are withdrawing from fathering and male involvement as a form of social service. As noted before, six of nine counties offer no services whatsoever. Of the three that do, two seemed more consumed with attempting to maintain the services that they have established thus far. All three programs rely to varying degrees on external grants for their programmatic activities.

6. Private sector relationships. As noted before, the three counties that offer services do so through external grants. The grants are provided by both private sector foundations and through state funding initiatives. In general, all nine counties rely heavily on private sector organizations to provide services. The six non-providing counties all rely on referrals to external providers. The three providing counties receive their funding from external sources and often take their curriculum from private sector initiatives.

*Child, Youth ar.
Family Services help
schools ar.
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healthy parentir.
adolescent programs-
to improve student
school success ar.
foster their health
growth ar
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Practitioner Perspectives

For Phase II we contacted the same set of practitioners from Phase I to solicit information about the fathering and male involvement efforts in their counties in light of TANF reform, the emphasis on marriage promotion, and the shifting economic fortunes of the region. The practitioners inter-

One practitioner in a school setting noted the need to reform school procedures to help generate greater male involvement. One simple reform they made was making sure to invite men to participate more regularly.

viewed differed considerably with respect to the type of programs they offered. The degree to which each program focused specifically on fatherhood or male involvement also varied greatly. Three issues that seemed to influence the variations between and among organizations include: (1) the age group of children the organization served, (2) the type of services provided for the children, and (3) the model (or ideology, if one existed) that the organization followed. For this reason, the degree of agreement regarding all six questions was relatively low.

1. Linkages between male involvement and child outcomes. Among those interviewed the following linkages were said to be important to and necessary for the child's overall well being:

- To increase male involvement in and connection with communities, organizations, and schools
- To educate fathers and mothers on responsible parenting and becoming a leader and role model for their children
- To integrate the father into the child's life

Because the programs are situated in a variety of organizational settings, these goals are somewhat differentiated by program. For instance, one practitioner in a school setting noted the need to reform school procedures to help generate greater male involvement. One simple reform they made was making sure to invite men to participate more regularly. Most practitioners noted a combination of structural barriers to male involvement (e.g., hours of operation, the legal exclusion of non-biological fathers from schools, etc.) and attitudinal impediments (e.g., staff opinions about non-custodial fathers, fathers own sense of discouragement in the face of resistance to their participation, past history of dysfunctional relationships with the men's own father, etc.). Most practitioners seem to believe that children will perform better in school and in life generally if both the structural and attitudinal barriers are addressed.

2. Most important services that encourage male involvement or discourage unwanted fatherhood. In general, most practitioners thought the development of male involvement activities was their most important service or initiative; however, the nature of these activities varied quite substantially. Some focused on creating opportunities for men and their children to interact; others focused on training that was intended to help men recognize what types of services, support, and discipline they should provide to their children; still others sought to work with institutions to reduce barriers to participation—legal or programmatic. Similarly, most programs described initiatives that were intended to help men negotiate more effectively relationships with their partners and the birth mothers of their children or noted the development and wide acceptance of a family integration perspective.

3. Planning for TANF reauthorization. No practitioner reported specific plans related to TANF reauthorization. Two programs mentioned the five-year deadline for many recipients on TANF as a looming concern. Others fear that TANF "time outs" in the context of a weak economy and

growing unemployment will adversely affect family life for both custodial and noncustodial parents.

4. Marriage Promotion. No practitioner stated that marriage promotion is a high priority for his or her program. They indicated that marriage promotion is not something that their agencies offered and that it was not something that they were likely to build into their programs. Several practitioners suggested that they were opposed to the concept from an ideological standpoint.

5. Important initiatives within the next three to five years. None of the programs suggested that they planned major changes to their operations, nor did they anticipate funding increases for the next three to five years that would significantly enhance or enlarge their existing program agenda. Many practitioners viewed the state's economic outlook as a barrier to starting new initiatives. Many programs seem to be locked into a "survival" mode currently, spending a great deal of time and energy searching for funding to "keep the doors open."

6. Public sector relationships. As we found in BAYFIDS I, practitioners collaborate almost exclusively with other private sector agencies, universities, or similar parent services organizations. There is minimal public sector collaboration or partnership. If there is contact, it is mostly in the form of referrals to private sector programs by public sector agencies or through speaking arrangements where public sector agencies (e.g., the Department of Child Support Services) are invited to speak at informational meetings. There is one notable exception: Sonoma County's long-term partnership with the California Parenting Institute, which provides a wide variety of services to the Sonoma County Department of Child Support Service field office.

Conclusions

The findings from our final data collection indicate that social service efforts focused on fathering support, male involvement, and prevention of early or unwanted fatherhood have faced and are facing challenges that at least portend shifts in the nature of these efforts and may undermine their continued existence.

In any population of community-based organizations, there are bound to be losses over the course of three years; this level of loss is not at all surprising. However, a growing and expanding field would generally be expected to have new and replacement efforts. Our extensive attempts to find new programs in the Bay Area yielded virtually no results. The new members of the Directory were discovered shortly after publication of the first edition. Follow-ups with over 250 contacts generated during Phase I of the BAYFIDS project yielded no new names. Thus, overall we found a decline in total number of programs.

Does this finding portend a period of slow growth and entrenchment or a sharp plummet? The evidence across our data collection efforts is decidedly mixed. Our practitioner liaisons and agency informants seem to

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feel that child and family service organizations around the Bay Area have begun to internalize some key ideas from the fatherhood/male involvement movement: e.g., fathers need to be involved with their children; families include fathers; noncustodial fathers need not be deadbeat dads. During Phase I, we found much interest in furthering this process. The Bay Area Male Involvement Network (BAMIN) actively encourages day care centers, schools, and other child and mother-serving organizations to take seriously the need to include fathers in activities that are ultimately child-focused. It is interesting to note that the programs whose existence seems most secure and that seem to have the most impact are those that have tried to integrate fathering support and male involvement into pre-existing child-focused efforts.

Given the economic and budgetary distress of California and the country generally, what we may have found in our programs data is the cresting of interest in the first model. It may simply be too expensive to create efforts that are often duplicative of other child-serving initiatives. It is not that fathering support and male involvement efforts have stalled; they may have moved into locations that are harder to find and measure. If true—if BAMIN and the Hewlett Foundation have helped to make fathering support part of a child service “mind-set”—then the effort is set for a period of slow growth and entrenchment. The current programs remain because some men are better served outside the “usual” social service environments (e.g., schools, day care centers, etc.) and because the programs serve men’s needs that are separate from their status as fathers.

Recent reforms in child support enforcement—but especially creation of the Department of Child Support Services (DCSS)—suggest this conclusion may be supportable. Most DCSS field offices seem to have a broader, more sophisticated view of how child outcomes are related to fathering and male involvement. Most are trying to make a major conceptual leap: from enforcement and punishment to service, rehabilitation, and family integration through support of and care for noncustodial parents. Though the field offices are not yet “fully formed,” they tend to offer support services to noncustodial parents (e.g., parenting education, job training, job placement, etc.), in the hopes that greater ability to meet child support obligations will lead to greater male involvement with their children and more stable support systems for children.

Balanced against this more hopeful and promising picture is the retrenchment found generally in publicly sponsored fathering support and male involvement efforts. Most counties have scaled back fathering support and male involvement efforts in their social service and education departments. The reduction in effort in the education departments is most acute: not one of our original contacts was still on the job three years later. The two counties with programs rely totally on external funding for their continuation. Schools tend to offer programs to pregnant girls but do little to identify and support teen fathers and fathers-to-be. Similarly, efforts in departments of social service are generally funded from state or private

Balanced against a more hopeful and promising picture for fathering efforts is the retrenchment found generally in publicly sponsored fathering support and male involvement programs.

foundation grants, not from “core” allocations from the county or state budget. For these departments, fathering support and male involvement is not a sufficiently high priority to merit core support.

One particularly acute pressure that may divert DCSS’ efforts is the looming issue of TANF “time-outs” (i.e., people who have exhausted their five years of TANF support). For single mothers who lack a job and are about to lose their TANF payments, the noncustodial father will become the primary source of support. Some DCSS field offices fear that political pressure from above coupled with economic pressure from below (i.e., single mothers without other sources of support) will cause the department to ratchet up pressure for full and prompt collections, undermining efforts to foster a working custodial unit and stopping efforts to modify support orders down to levels that impoverished men can afford. In the context of these pressures, efforts to expand fathering and male involvement promotion programs are likely to be cut.

At first blush, it might seem reasonable for fathering support and male involvement programs to seek marriage promotion grants to “keep the doors open.” However, our most recent data collection indicates that most programs are unwilling to pursue this line of funding.

Whether the fathering support and male involvement “message” and “mind-set” has reached the broader social service community is beyond the scope of this work. There are both positive and negative signs in our data. On the positive side is the work of BAMIN and others to make fathering support an acceptable focus in child and mother serving institutions and the truly colossal reorientation of child support enforcement activities under DCSS. Yet our earlier field work and data collection during Phase II have reinforced the belief that many key institutions (maybe most especially schools) have changed very little. The fact that schools make little effort to identify teen fathers is one very discouraging example.

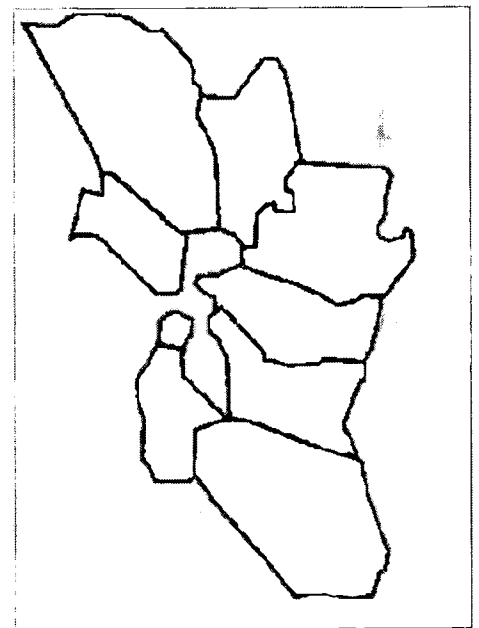
From a service delivery perspective, then, the future is cloudy at best. It may be that the effort has successfully planted the seeds of change in child and mother serving institutions. If so, the effort may have succeeded not through creating new programs but through reform of existing structures. If, however, the work on fathering support and male involvement must persist through separate programmatic efforts, the future may well be bleak. Resource constraints make even maintenance of effort a questionable proposition.

From a service delivery perspective the future is cloudy at best. It may be that the effort has successfully planted the seeds of change in child and mother serving institutions

POLICYMAKER AND PRACTITIONER PERSPECTIVES ON INTEGRATING FATHERING EFFORTS IN THE BAY AREA

For too long, references to "families" meant "mothers." The result? Fathers receded into the background—in their importance to the child and his or her mother, except as a source of financial support. To correct this imbalance... [we must] reach schools and community-based organizations and...raise their awareness of the barriers they place in the way of father involvement.

Stanley Seiderman, San Anselmo Preschool Center



INTRODUCTION

THE EVOLVING FIELD OF FATHERHOOD AND FAMILIES

The past ten years has been a period of enormous growth and change in efforts around father involvement and child and family well-being. The issues facing government systems designed to address the needs of this diverse population represent a range of concerns, issues, and problems that are likely to denote both local and national agendas and changes. This report addresses some of these issues at the local level. It provides data on views and efforts of social service, child, educational, and family support agencies in nine counties in the San Francisco, California, Bay Area as they relate to the nature of fatherhood efforts; approaches being used to integrate fatherhood into existing and newly created agencies serving children and families; and projections of future efforts, including perspectives on topics such as welfare reform and marriage promotion.

The past ten years has been a period of enormous growth and change in efforts around father involvement and child and family well-being.

This report expands on an earlier study conducted in 2000: BAYFIDS I. BAYFIDS I reported data on the number, diversity, content, and missions of programs and the participants in them. The profiles of fathers and fatherhood initiatives that emerged from BAYFIDS I underscored the diversity inherent among fathers and in fathering itself—the range of experiences and needs that fathers exhibit: i.e., their different stations in life, different ages, different cultural and personal histories, and different lenses through which each views the world. In the earlier report, we were reminded that the simple dichotomy of fathers as present or absent, as good or bad, is increasingly being challenged by new demands to examine critically the continuum of fathers that exists: those who are residential or nonresidential, from a range of cultures and ethnicities, with varying relationships to the mother of their children, and with different socioeconomic backgrounds. Such a nuanced view of fathers and their experiences requires an examination of the complex relational factors involved in identifying and measuring appropriate fathering and parenting behaviors.

It is against this backdrop that NCOFF pursued the BAYFIDS project—to track, document, and analyze the operation and impact of fathering programs, as well as the nature of county policy efforts around fatherhood. The purpose of BAYFIDS I was to develop baseline data on participant needs, program capabilities, and agency effort. We also sought to

Carlos is a married 27-year-old father of three who emigrated from Central America. He has attended a male involvement program focused on fathering for two years. His goals reflect those of thousands of other men who are fathers: He wants a good life for his family and children, as well as for himself. He describes these goals with deliberateness to demonstrate his increasing facility with and fluency in English and his marketability for the workforce. His enthusiasm and smile are noticeable as he talks about his visions and hopes, his images of a time when he can move his wife and children out of public housing and into a “good neighborhood,” and about his unassailable aspirations to be a good father—to talk to his children, read to them, ensure that they receive a good education, and “be there” for them in ways that approach his most basic motivations for coming to the United States.

Pedro, another father in the program, is about the same age as Carlos. Although he echoes Carlos’ sentiments, it is unclear whether he is motivated by the same passions or the same knowledge of possible goals and options for the future. He is separated from the mother of his son and usually sees his son once a week. He is experiencing some difficulty gaining access to his son, who as a first-grader is having problems with classwork in school. From his description, which he provides in Spanish, he is visibly concerned. His words about his son and the problems he is facing in school are threaded with a clear query to the interviewers, asking implicitly what he can do to help his son in the face of opposition to his involvement and his limited knowledge of English and the educational system.

Jim, the director of the program that Carlos and Pedro attend, is a middle-aged father of adolescent and young adult children. Middle-class and white, Jim’s life experiences appear on the surface to be markedly different from those of Carlos and Pedro. Jim has the educational, linguistic, and social access to increase his ability to provide for his children and family. Similar to Carlos and Pedro, Jim has struggled with the issues of what it means to be a “good father,” making decisions about the quality of life he should pursue and what he wants to make possible for his children. His commitment to fathering, to his spouse and family, and to the work of improving the well-being of children are practiced in the private sphere of his home, where his own fathering practices are on display. These practices are also evident in the public sphere through the program and among the families and communities that witness the fathering behaviors that Carlos and Pedro exhibit, whether their behaviors are positive and noncombative or negative and potentially harmful.

—*Descriptions of three men in a Bay Area fathering program, 1999,
from the BAYFIDS I Project*

BAYFIDS II addresses directly the issues of policy changes in the nine counties as they relate to program development, implementation, expansion, and devolution.

capture information on the attitudes and values held by program participants, program staff, and government agencies regarding the challenges of supporting men in their roles as fathers, reducing father absence, and enhancing the welfare of children and families when fathers and their families face hardships.

The current report, BAYFIDS II, extends the earlier report in two ways. First, it offers through the BAYFIDS directory an updated count of the number of programs still in existence since the original study as well as new programs. It also offers information on shifts in the operation of and services provided by these programs in response to the diverse populations served. Second, BAYFIDS II addresses directly the policy changes in the nine counties as they relate to program development, implementation, expansion, and devolution. In addition, it provides perspectives from primary child and family services offices as well as education systems in the nine counties about the critical issues being faced by the counties, the role of fathering within the larger domain of child and family support, the integration of fatherhood issues into different segments of their work, and the implications of legislative discussions at the national level, such as legislative proposals on marriage. By highlighting these issues, this document seeks to identify the efforts of county agencies, changes that have occurred in both programming and planning, and the future of fatherhood efforts within government agencies serving children and families.

Context of the Issues Leading to BAYFIDS

Despite the development of independent initiatives within states, most state-level activity around fatherhood has been linked to the devolution of welfare programs and related activities. In 1997, for example, former President Clinton and U.S. Department of Labor Secretary Alexis Herman announced that the Department would award \$186 million to 49 grantees in 34 states to develop innovative projects serving welfare recipients who were hardest-to-employ. The programs would help recipients acquire the skills, work experience, and resources they needed to find and keep good jobs. Among the initiatives funded were a number focusing on noncustodial fathers. These programs were intended to provide skills training and jobs to help fathers support their children and build a stronger future for them. At the same time, the 1997 Budget Reconciliation Act allocated \$2.2 billion noncompetitively during the same two-year period to states, based on the population of poor citizens and adult recipients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) money. Programs such as TANF converged with new initiatives on fatherhood, subsequently connecting the once-isolated issues of father absence, child support, and family and child welfare (Nightingale, Trutko, & Barnow, 1999).

Within recent years, the scope and direction of the efforts on fatherhood and initiatives focused on noncustodial fathers have received consider-

ably less public attention—perhaps the natural course of events for new initiatives or the result of significant and positive changes in federal, state, and local efforts to integrate fatherhood into existing and developing programs serving children and families. By 2000, state activities on fatherhood had increased; however, state agencies by and large still remained unfamiliar with fatherhood efforts “on the ground” or with strategies to reduce problems and redundancy in the social services systems intended to engage fathers in support of their children. State efforts can be disconnected from programmatic efforts at the local level. There is no paucity of reasons, which include: the traditional divide between policy and practice; the distrust of participants in some community-based programs of child support and paternity establishment systems; the perceptions among some agencies that a focus on fathers means a reduction of effort for children and mothers; and the problems faced by these agencies regarding where and how to respond to requirements and expectations around increased father involvement.

Nonetheless, states often look to, if not rely upon, counties and the municipalities within them to implement efforts and build connections between and among activities focused on child welfare, family support, and father involvement. On the one hand, county-level policymakers are advantaged by the close physical proximity that exists between agencies and programs, a proximity that provides greater opportunities for identifying fathering programs and practitioners and for determining effective ways of engaging fathers. On the other hand, county and municipal agencies can be equally limited in their knowledge of the issues or programs intended to increase father involvement.

To understand the structure and operation of fathering programs at the county level and to determine the degree of county agency involvement in programs in the San Francisco Bay Area, NCOFF launched the BAYFIDS project, with support from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and assistance by SRI International and the University of California-Berkeley.

In addition, we were aware that there is still relatively little knowledge among policymakers and social services or educational agencies about the content of existing programs, which reduces the likelihood that coherent and meaningful agendas around child well-being, family support, and father involvement will be established. A lack of knowledge on the part of municipal and county agencies can prevent services from becoming integrated and inhibit the sustainability of programs, particularly small initiatives that do not receive government support.

Thus, the purpose of the larger project has been to deepen the field’s knowledge of fathers and families programs and their potential for contributing to integrated activities that support children and families. The project has been intended to produce two broad outcomes. First, it was designed to provide local intervention activities with new knowledge and promote

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county-level partnerships among regional stakeholders by disseminating information on fathering services in the San Francisco Bay Area and fostering cooperation between public sector agencies and private sector service providers with an interest in fathers, children, families, and communities. Second, it has emphasized the expansion of knowledge in the fatherhood field, both within and outside the Bay Area. Because the region is broadly representative of the state of California and the United States as a whole, studying programs in the nine-county region has allowed us to develop and extend the field's knowledge of programs and their relationship to father, family, and community outcomes.

Why Focus on the San Francisco Bay Area?

California and the Bay Area possess unique features that make this region an appropriate focus of our study on fathers and families programs and their relationships to county fatherhood initiatives. Just as the fathering programs in the Bay Area are evolving, California as a state has been described as a “work in progress” (Baldassare, 2000). Like most states, it divides responsibility for child support and services to fathers among a variety of state departments, county offices, and local agencies. Although stable for many years, the system recently underwent a major revolution with the creation of the California Department of Child Support Services (CDSS) on January 1, 2000.

California is the most populated state in the nation, with a census count indicating a citizenry of more than 33 million. Demographic projections for population growth over the next few decades are as high as 50 million. An increase in the size of the population is occurring in conjunction with an increase in diversity as well. The rise in the number of nonwhite citizens and those emigrating from outside the United States—coupled with growing income inequality and relative uncertainty about sectors of the state's economy—make California a compelling case to compare with other regions in the nation, particularly those with large urban and metropolitan areas. Accordingly, California's challenges represent concerns shared by other states, such as transportation, public schools, and higher education. In many ways, the conditions in California appear to make these problems more severe in this state than in others; and, compared to other states, California ranks considerably lower in spending in these areas: 48th on highways, 37th on higher education, and 31st on public school spending (Baldassare, 2000).

The San Francisco Bay Area, in Northern California, is an especially unique region within California. The nine counties of the Bay Area account for 20 percent of the state's population and include almost 100 suburban locales. The region is home to Silicon Valley and many counties with the highest incomes in the state and most expensive housing in the nation. It contains the most adults with college degrees (49 percent), almost one-half

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of whom are likely to earn \$60,000 or more annually. Approximately 30 percent of the region's residents are 35 years old or younger, and about 66 percent own a house. The area's population is diverse—however, a diversity that varies by county and within counties. For example, San Francisco continues to be a racially diverse setting; Marin County is a largely white suburb with little growth; and Contra Costa and Silicon Valley are growing, predominantly white suburbs.

Despite the concentration of wealth in this region, other demographic data imply that many Bay Area fathers and families are in need of high-quality support services. For example, the KIDS COUNT data show that, in California, 13.6 percent of children in 1995 lived in households with no adult male and 32.6 percent of all men between the ages of 25 and 34 earned less than the poverty level for a family of four. In 1999, five counties had California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) counts of 17,000 people or more: Alameda, Contra Costa, San Francisco, Santa Clara, and Solano. Four of these counties (Alameda, Contra Costa, San Francisco, and Solano) also have the highest percentage of families in poverty. We cannot know how many fathers need or seek services, but we do know that poverty, use of welfare support systems, and separation of the father from his family are related to decreases in fathering efficacy. If, as our BAYFIDS work leads us to believe, there are too few resources available to serve this population, it is extremely important to deploy those that are at hand in the most efficacious manner possible. Because current research provides us with only limited guidance, we designed the BAYFIDS project to help inform such efforts.

Organization of This Report

This report is divided into six sections. The first section updates our findings regarding programs in the Bay Area. Through the BAYFIDS Directory, we provide an updated listing of programs in the region as of Spring 2003. A copy of the BAYFIDS Directory can be obtained by accessing the BAYFIDS home page: <http://www.BAYFIDS.org>. Next, in three separate sections, we summarize data from a telephone survey with policymakers in child and family-serving agencies and departments in the nine counties: California Department of Child Support Services, California Department of Social Services, and county Departments of Education. We then present the results of a telephone survey of practitioners, who represented the “master group” from the original study, to determine the ways in which they have experienced change, problems, and possibilities. Lastly, we provide a discussion of the cross-cutting themes and a conclusion.

CHAPTER 1

FINDINGS FROM BAYFIDS I: AN UPDATE

To realize the designated outcomes of this project, we developed two distinct tools. The first was a comprehensive, updated directory of fathering programs for individuals, agencies, organizations, and governments within the nine counties. The Bay Area Fathering Programs Directory is intended to serve as a catalogue of organizations that address fathering issues, broadly defined. In addition to offering contact and referral information, the Directory also included data on the primary and secondary populations served, the duration of programs, and the services offered.

The second tool was a series of telephone interviews with directors or director-designees of programs with a fathering component—to determine the range and scope of effort to integrate fathering into existing systems. Two surveys of Bay Area fathering programs were used to gather information on programs and participants. The goal was to collect data from program directors about their programmatic efforts, program participants, and the program's relationship to public agencies and fathering efforts. The survey included both a mail and a telephone survey. To ensure that both instruments were sensitive to language and usage concerns in the field, both were field-tested with practitioners, located in sites similar to those in the Bay Area and drawn from the National Practitioners Network for Fathers and Families. The surveys were the primary source of information for both the BAYFIDS Directory and Father Program Dataset. Because we were tasked with developing a comprehensive directory, the goal of our data collection methods was not to create a statistically valid sample but to conduct a census of every program in the Bay Area.

The goal was to collect data from program directors about their programmatic efforts, program participants, and the program's relationship to public agencies and fathering efforts.

Programs in the Bay Area—Then and Now

Bay Area Programs in Phase I: 1999

In collecting data for BAYFIDS I, we soon learned that programmatic efforts in the Bay Area had evolved in a variety of settings and for a range of purposes. Some were distinctly developed in order to respond to an immediate need for children, parents, or families. Some programs had been organized and formally sanctioned by parent organizations or governmental agencies—through registration as a nonprofit organization, for instance—while others operated informally in churches, homes, and similar grassroots venues. Programs tended to have a high mortality rate in the early years of development; some were listed in the telephone directory one day, but their doors were closed the next. However, the most daunting prospect we faced was to define what actually constituted or could be considered a “fathering program.” On several occasions, field-level practitioners’ descriptions of their programs were consistent with definitions that the BAYFIDS staff had developed for fathering programs, but the programs would often decline to participate because their contact person did not want to define or describe the program as such.

Given the variety of effort and lack of consensus regarding definitions, the BAYFIDS project used a broad set of criteria to determine program eligibility in order to identify the greatest range of organizations possible. We included any organization that involved men or boys in a program relating to parenting, pregnancy prevention, or male roles as fathers and parents/caregivers for children. We arrived at the final set of programs listed in the Directory through a five-stage process.

First, we identified resources on father involvement programs and activities and met and talked with our existing program contacts within and outside the Bay Area. Those partners included individuals at the Claremont Institute; the National Center for Strategic Nonprofit Planning and Community Leadership; the Bay Area Male Involvement Network (BAMIN); community foundations; social services and educational agencies in the Bay Area; Head Start programs; and churches, schools, and community centers.

Second, we identified and contacted practitioners within each county—one per county—to serve as liaisons for the project and to assist us in identifying programs, reaching practitioners, and providing information to practitioners in their vicinity who wanted to know about our work. Such liaisons, we believed, were crucial not only to help identify programs but also to contribute to our strategies for conducting data analysis and discussions with county and municipal policymakers. With the assistance of Stanley Seiderman of BAMIN, a longtime champion of early childhood education and fathering efforts, we were able to establish a network of practitioner-liaisons for the project.

Third, we collapsed information from the lists provided by Bay Area practitioners with information from several other sources—e.g., NCOFF’s

Some fathering effort were developed to respond to a immediate need for children, parents, and families; some have been organized and sanctioned by parent organizations and governmental agencies; while others operated informally in grassroots venues.

existing programs database, Head Start programs and other early childhood programs, school systems, and social service agencies—which we contacted initially either by telephone or mail. Collectively, these sources yielded the names of 319 potential programs.

Fourth, we attempted to contact (or re-contact) all 319 potential programs by telephone. Of this initial set, 38 could not be contacted by telephone or mail, 125 did not offer relevant services, and two ceased operation between initial and follow-up contact. The revised list consisted of 154 potential programs located across the nine Bay Area counties.

In the final stage, we contacted all 154 potential programs by telephone and mail to collect data for the Directory and other aspects of the BAYFIDS research project. Eighty-four programs (54 percent) provided at least basic contact information; of these, 48 completed and returned the detailed mail survey (for this reason, information on 48 of the programs is more complete). After a more in-depth telephone interview, we determined that approximately one-quarter of the programs did not offer relevant services. The remaining 25 percent were not responsive after multiple telephone calls and mailings.

Bay Area Programs in Phase II: 2000-2002

During Phase II of BAYFIDS, project staff re-surveyed the 89 programs identified during Phase I. The re-survey was designed to allow programs to update contact and programmatic information for the new edition of the Directory. Programs were advised that if they chose not to respond to the re-survey, their original information would be published in the new edition of the Directory. Of all Phase I programs, five were unreachable by telephone or mail and deemed to be no longer active. Four programs requested that their information not be included in the new directory (in part, because their mission had changed due to the creation of the California Department of Child Support Services). Twenty-five programs responded to the first mailing; six additional programs responded to follow-up mailings and telephone calls. Twenty-eight programs eventually indicated that they did not wish to make changes to their entry or only wished to change contact information. The remaining 21 programs did not respond to our two mailings and multiple telephone contacts. Since the mailings were successfully delivered and messages were left with the appropriate contact person, we assume that these programs simply elected to leave their entry unchanged.

To solicit additional entries for the Directory, NCOFF contacted all 235 organizations in our Phase I database of potential program sponsors by telephone. Many of these organizations no longer seem to exist (i.e., their previously listed telephone numbers were not in service). When contact was established, the organizations were asked once again if they sponsored a fathering support, male involvement, or early fatherhood prevention program. In almost all cases, these organizations responded that they did

not support such programs. In a few cases, organizations identified efforts that did not fit our definition. Thus, the final copy of the Phase II Directory contains 86 entries.

In total, only 5 of 89 entries in the first Directory dropped out—5.6% of the population. If the organizations that were unreachable are included and those that chose not to participate, the “mortality” rate was 7.9%. However, we did not find any new efforts being founded, despite extensive telephone interview efforts and searches of the Internet. We say more about what this portends for the field in the conclusion to this report.

Of those that updated their entries, very few made major changes to their statement of mission, their program definition, their objectives, their service offerings, or their service populations. The most often requested change was to increase the number of services that were listed as available by referral. However, most programs did seem to have substantial turnover in personnel. Of those that returned the re-survey, 63% changed some or all of their contact information. About 22% of programs listed updated phone numbers and/or addresses. We have no data on why address changes were requested, though some conversations with practitioners suggested that organizations were forced to move into smaller, less expensive quarters in some cases. In the main, the number of fathering and male involvement programs and their mission and service sets seem to be relatively stable—no change, no increase, no decrease. As we will discuss in the conclusion, it is difficult to tell whether this represents a transition from a turbulent time of rapid growth and experimentation to one of deepening and strengthening of those efforts that survived the “early years” or whether it is that weightless moment before a massive fall begins.

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CHAPTER 2

ASSESSING PROGRESS:

Reflecting on Five Years of Growth in Fathering and Male Involvement Policy and Programs

The second part of Phase II concentrated on an assessment of policy and programmatic efforts in the nine counties surrounding San Francisco Bay. This was an appropriate moment to reflect on successes, disappointments, and prospects for continuing—or shutting down—these efforts. The environment in which fathering support and male involvement programs were founded appears to be non-existent. The tragic events of September 11 changed the social priorities of both state and federal government. Before September 11, no one had given much thought—or funding, for that matter—to something called “homeland security” or “the war on terrorism.” Yet, fathering support and male involvement programs are now in competition for resources with these efforts. Concurrently, the new Administration has entered the debate on social services with a new set of priorities that will potentially have a transformative effect on the goals that fathering support and male involvement efforts may promote and the financial pool from which they may draw. Local, state, and federal budgets are in a state of chaos that seems unlikely to abate for several years. At this moment, we decided to ask county officials who have responsibility for fathering support and male involvement programs as well as private sector practitioners to reflect on what they have done, key issues that the new environment has thrust upon them, and their plans for the effort over the next five years.

In the next three sections, we offer background on how each type of agency intersects with the fathering support/male involvement effort and then catalogue their responses to a series of reflective and prospective questions.

The environment in which fathering support and male involvement programs were founded appears to be non-existent. The tragic events of September 11 changed the social priorities of both state and federal government.

California Department of Child Support Services: County Field Offices

Background¹

The Department of Child Support Services (DCSS) was established on January 1, 2000 and became fully operational in the Bay Area counties during 2002. DCSS is a department within the California Health and Human Services Agency that works with other departments such, as the Department of Social Services, the Franchise Tax Board (FTB), and the Employment Development Department, to administer the Federal Title IV-D program (e.g., federal child support enforcement programs). DCSS oversees field offices of the department in each county. Formerly, the District Attorneys of each county were responsible for child support enforcement and management of the Family Support Divisions in their respective counties.

The DCSS field offices are responsible for establishing paternity and obtaining and enforcing child and medical support orders. DCSS also supports a number of fatherhood and family oriented programs, including three initiatives: (1) the Paternity Opportunity Program, (2) the Noncustodial Parent Project, and (3) the Responsible Fatherhood effort. The Responsible Fatherhood effort works with major league sports teams and local media outlets to encourage responsible fatherhood. The Oakland Raiders, San Francisco Giants, Anaheim Angels, and San Diego Padres participate in these publicity campaigns.

The Paternity Opportunity Project works with hospitals, birthing facilities, prenatal clinics, county welfare offices, vital records offices, and courts to promote paternity acknowledgments. This effort focuses on obtaining a formal *Declaration of Paternity* from unmarried men by emphasizing the rights fathers gain and the benefits children enjoy when men establish paternity early in the child's life. POP also runs 30-second public service announcements on California television stations.

The NCP Demonstration Project is probably the most substantial and well-funded of the three initiatives, although it has only recently come under DCSS control. Under Section 3558 of the California Family Code (implemented on January 1, 1997), judges may order noncustodial parents who (1) have children receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits and (2) are appearing before the court for the nonpayment of child support to attend job training and to seek job placement and vocational rehabilitation services. Provided through a collaboration of local child support agencies, county welfare departments, the Employment Development Department, Job Training Partnership Act Agencies and a variety of community-based organizations, the NCP Project offers parents employment and training services, mediation, parenting classes, and other supportive services. The project is designed to increase employment and

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¹ Some materials extracted from the California Department of Child Support Services website: <http://www.childsup.cahwnet.gov/>

earnings of unemployed NCPs to a level at which they can support themselves and their children, reduce the need for welfare benefits for the children of NCPs, and increase noncustodial parents' ability to pay child support. The project has completed two of its scheduled three years. During Phase I (initiated in December 1998) programs were established in Contra Costa, Napa, San Francisco, and Santa Clara Counties. Phase II (initiated in January 2001) established programs in Alameda County. San Mateo County began a demonstration effort in 1997 that was folded into Phase II funding.

Method

BAYFIDS staff members contacted the director of each county field office to request a 20- to 30-minute field interview. In most cases, a time was set to speak with the director or a designee (often the outreach coordinator for the county office). In some cases, the directors requested information about the project and a copy of a signed confidentiality statement before proceeding. In these cases, materials were sent by fax or electronic mail.

The interviews were conducted by telephone using a fixed protocol which included both basic questions and prompts for additional information. The interviews were conducted by telephone using a fixed protocol that included both a core of basic questions and prompts to seek additional information. Each interview ended with a brief discussion of the project and a review of any issues raised by the initial questions that needed clarification. Information about the research project and required confidentiality and informed consent statements were provided to each interviewee prior to the interview and/or at the time of the telephone interview. Notes of each interview were typed and saved in electronic format.

Eight of nine counties participated in the interview process; interviews lasted for 20 to 45 minutes. One county chose to provide written answers to the questions, which were submitted to the co-author by electronic mail.

Findings

1. *Link between male involvement and child outcomes.* The creation of DCSS is the most important and momentous event in the fathering support, male involvement, and early/unwanted fatherhood prevention movement in the Bay Area. Under the old structure centered in the District Attorney's office, child support enforcement was viewed as an adversarial, punitive, and coercive process, where the single and unifying goal was to increase child support collections, regardless of men's ability to pay or the impact support orders had on the willingness and ability of men to participate in their children's lives. Our previous focus groups with men and program directors hinted darkly at the District Attorney's use of increased child support collection as a political tool to justify re-election and/or movement into the judiciary or higher public office.

BAYFIDS asked county officials and private sector practitioners in fathering support and male involvement programs to reflect on their accomplishments, the key issues in a new environment, and their plans over the next five years.

Uniformly, the Bay Area field offices cast their mission and the link between child outcomes and child support as broader than the old structure:

- To make sure that children receive the financial support that they need;
- To help create “family units” that can cooperative care for these children;
- To support men’s efforts to provide for their children through training, job placement, and (in some cases) treatment of mental and physical illnesses;
- To seek other modifications where needed so that arrearages do not become a barrier to men playing an active role in their children’s lives
- To make more widely known to men and women (a) their rights within the system and (b) the consequences of becoming involved with their department, should they have children out of wedlock or decided to dissolve an existing marriage.

At the most general level, most offices see a reciprocal link between paying child support and male involvement with their children: involvement begets payment which begets involvement.

In short, the new Department has abandoned what one informant called the “collect and redirect” focus of the District Attorneys to a more holistic approach which, at least rhetorically and ideologically, is committed to the idea that the Department is meant to further the interests of children. That there is uniformity in outlook is not terribly surprising. The state has done extensive training for those working in the field offices. Major components of the field offices’ work (for instance, outreach) are supported by central planning efforts in Sacramento. Yet, each field office does seem to have some latitude to innovate and improvise as their local needs dictate.

Strikingly, the Department’s goals and approach—at the level of rhetoric and planning, at least—closely follow some of the major findings in NCOFF’s Core Learnings. See Figure 1 for a list of the Core Learnings and the corresponding goals articulated by the Department.

At the most general level, most offices see a reciprocal link between paying child support and male involvement with their children: that is, involvement begets payment which begets involvement. They see their mission as ensuring that payment occurs, but they view the ability and willingness to pay as a complex and multi-dimensional problem that requires a more varied and nuanced solution than has been offered in the past. Most offices also believe they have a subsidiary goal: to reduce the number of men — especially young men — who need to enter “the system” through outreach efforts designed to discourage unwanted fatherhood through consequences training.

2. Most important services that encourage male involvement or discourage unwanted fatherhood. Many field offices believe that there is a link between child support compliance and male involvement. In their view, being in compliance reduces one barrier to involvement, so trying to

Figure 1

A Comparison of NCOFF Core Learnings to Department of Child Support Services Goals

Fathers care—

even if that caring is not shown in conventional ways.

The Department understands that fathers wish to express their care for children outside the cash nexus that most child support enforcement operations emphasize; they wish to encourage such behaviors.

Father presence matters—

in terms of economic well-being, social support, and child development.

The Department is actively seeking a set of activities that help men extend their presence beyond simple financial transactions. They also realize that systemic barriers (see below) such as arrearages may interrupt the ability of men to be present in more complex ways.

Joblessness

Unemployment, underemployment and joblessness are major impediments to family formation and father involvement.

The Department realizes this may be the most important barrier to father involvement. It creates relational difficulties with mothers and custodial families when men are unable to contribute. Joblessness can also create other systemic barriers to participation through legal sanctions related to unpaid support. Most offices assume there is strong correlation between jobs and payment. Most offices also assume there is strong correlation between being able to pay and being involved with the child.

Systemic Barriers

Existing approaches to public benefits, child support enforcement, and paternity establishment operate to create obstacles and disincentives to father involvement. The disincentives are sufficiently compelling as to have prompted the emergence of a phenomenon dubbed “underground fathers”—men who acknowledge paternity and are involved in the lives of their children but who refuse to participate as fathers in the formal systems.

The Department is cognizant of its potential to create disincentives to male involvement with their children. Yet, most informants were honest enough to pose the disincentives as a dilemma. As one put it, “We want to make better family units by helping fathers, but the bottom line is still the bottom line: We are responsible for collections.”

Co-parenting

A growing number of young fathers and mothers need additional support to develop the vital skills needed to share parenting responsibilities.

The Department’s focus on creating workable co-parenting arrangements helps inform its approaches to mediation, support order modification, and other service efforts.

Role Transitions

The transition from biological father to committed parent has significant development implications for young fathers.

The Department’s “preventive” outreach efforts take seriously the idea that teens and young men are generally unready for the transition from student/adolescent to father. Their approach—which might be likened to the now-discredited “scared straight” approaches to crime prevention that emphasize consequences—is nonetheless a real effort to address the needs of young fathers.

Intergenerational Learning

The behaviors of young parents, both fathers and mothers, are influenced significantly by intergenerational beliefs and practices within their families of origin.

Implicit in their outreach strategy seems to be a belief that many young men are getting the wrong message—or no message at all—from their families and “the street” about their responsibilities as fathers. The Department’s strategy is informational and consequences-oriented. Some service programs are specifically designed to change the intergenerational experience of children. As one county noted, “Introducing fathers to the world of services empowers them to move forward with life, picking up skills to make them better fathers. If we are successful, those values and beliefs that the fathers learn to nurture will be handed down to their children.”

increase compliance will increase involvement. Their strategy, then, begins with an analysis of barriers to compliance. Universally, field offices viewed the past reputation of the District Attorneys offices and the nature of the DAs focus on collections as a barrier in and of itself. This reputation has carried over to the new Department. Field offices all acknowledge that DCSS is viewed as an adversary by noncustodial parents. To resolve this issue, field offices have tried to instill a customer service focus among their staff, where the customer is the father. Most offices understand that their physical location is often a logistical and psychological barrier to men receiving services or actively managing their support obligations. To overcome this problem, most offices have created an automated child support information system so that gaining information about payments and requirements is easier. Some offices also support “call centers” that are equipped to handle issues that might otherwise require an office visit. One county indicated that it placed the most competent “front-line” workers in the call center, noting that “our hardest-to-reach-and-handle cases usually only want to communicate by phone. I want our ‘crisis experts’ to handle those calls.” Some counties now have their staff “on the road,” making them available in non-threatening locations to men who may have questions or issues but are afraid to enter DCSS facilities. Some of the most advanced efforts use video and audio conferencing to communicate with men who are either unwilling or unable to come into a DCSS facility.

A related initiative is the creation of ombudsmen in each field office. This person’s responsibility is to help parents prepare for state hearings on child support orders and to advise them of their rights and responsibilities under the law. Most field offices cited this program, which is still being deployed across the state, as one of the most important efforts to improve customer service. Ombudsmen are also responsible for educating both parents regarding what the Department can and cannot do and the services the Department is prepared to provide.

For those men who are not in compliance with their orders, most counties now use a case management philosophy rather than a punitive approach. Six of the nine counties have individual case workers who are tasked to understanding the reasons for non-compliance and developing a plan to bring the men (and in rare cases women) into compliance. The number of services that a county offers as part of its case services seems to vary widely. All offer some assistance with job placement; most offered job training. Many offer parenting classes, mediation, anger management classes, and/or “healthy behaviors” instruction. A minority offer assistance with mental and physical health issues. In two of the nine counties case management is subcontracted to a private organization. All six counties with case management use outside contractors for some of their services. However, just as we found in our earlier report (Gadsden, Rethemeyer, & Iannozi, 2000), few field offices offer educational support. All but one of the agencies failed to mention any referral to basic skills, literacy, or con-

Most office understand that their physical location is often a logistical and psychological barrier to men receiving services or actively managing their support obligations.

As with private sector fathering/male involvement programs, most agency programs focus on parenting and job placement without addressing educational issues that may inhibit job placement and constructive engagement with children.

tinuing education. As was true of private sector fathering/male involvement programs (described in the earlier report), most agency programs focus on parenting and job placement without addressing educational issues that may inhibit job placement and constructive engagement with children. Also, it is an open question as to how effective, more broadly, the service offerings are. Of the counties that reported their monthly or yearly service population, no county reported serving more than 15% of the men who have child support orders.

Another strategy six of nine counties are using is aggressive modification of orders. DCSS was ordered to study the issue of “collectibility,” but the field offices themselves are beginning to seek modification actively as a way to motivate parents (mostly men) to pay what they can rather than being discouraged by huge arrearages and monthly orders. Most counties reported general support from the Family Courts in their counties, though some did note resistance.

Four counties are also attempting to reach parents who are in prison. Men often leave prison with huge arrearages; in many cases, modifications can be requested. The county offices in these four counties tend to seek out prisoners in order to advise them of their rights with the hope of motivating them to pay what they can once they leave prison.

Eight of nine counties reported some effort at outreach and education in the community; it is expected that the ninth county will begin outreach soon (their field office was organized late in the process). The state DCSS office actively coordinates outreach efforts. Most county field office supports what is essentially a “speakers bureau” that makes officials available to speak at community organizations, schools, and firms. Some counties also do advertising—in movie theaters, for instance—regarding the services they offer to parents and children. Outreach activities of this sort are used to explain what DCSS is and what it does as well as providing basic education about parent’s rights and responsibilities. Some counties seek out forums in which to speak; many wait for invitations from interested organizations. In all cases, the efforts are aimed at raising awareness of DCSS services and requirements, not generating interest in a particular fathering or male involvement program.

Five of nine counties make extensive efforts to reach teens in junior high and high school. The purpose of these programs is to emphasize consequences to sexual behavior. In two counties, DCSS has trained groups of teen “peers” to make presentations about the financial, social, emotional, and moral responsibilities that accompany having a child. As noted before, these efforts seem to be modeled on the “scared straight” process of consequences training. Two field offices noted that gaining access to schools can be difficult; the schools do not necessarily view this type of information-giving as appropriate. One informant noted that schools in her area thought the DCSS presentation made the assumption that teens were already sexually active, which was, in the view of the schools officials, inappropriate.

Field offices are also experimenting with outreach through other forums. Two counties noted relationships with local Headstart programs. DCSS officials in these counties regularly make presentations on agency services to parents at the Headstart programs.

In summary, most field offices feel that their most important contributions to responsible fathering are (1) to make their operations more accessible to men; (2) to offer services to men who are unable to comply with child support orders so that they can meet their obligations; and (3) the offer informational programs that demystify the agency's work and discourage unwanted fatherhood through demonstration of the consequences of early sexual behavior. While there is clearly sufficient capacity to cover most outreach needs, the generally low percentage of the total population offered intensive services seems to indicate that many men in need of these services are unable to get them.

3. Planning for TANF reauthorization. No DCSS field office made mention of any specific plan related to TANF reauthorization. Many agencies are taking a wait-and-see approach, though some did note a concern that some fathering-related activities that depend on federal grants are due to run out of money soon.

A larger issue that six of nine counties raised was the looming five year deadline for many women on TANF. DCSS views this as a new challenge for the agency because it places increased pressure on the agency to collect from fathers. If a person has "timed out," child support may be the only type of financial transfer available to them. As one informant noted, TANF time limits may put in jeopardy their more holistic focus. Informants argued that TANF leavers need some form of continuing support; in most cases the father is the only other source of support. "For some women, DCSS will become their sole means of support." Thus, the father is again treated primarily as a source of economic support. On the other hand, another respondent noted that the "time out" phenomenon has redoubled their efforts to ensure that men successfully complete their job training and placement programs, since it will give the mother and child their best opportunity to realize support payments.

4. Marriage Promotion. The county field offices were all familiar with the proposed emphasis on marriage promotion. However, the DCSS field offices universally stated they had no interest in pursuing grants under the proposed funding for marriage promotion in various versions of the TANF reauthorization. Field offices generally construct themselves as the agency responsible for making a workable situation after marriage has failed or when it was not feasible at the outset. Three counties expressed concern that the push toward marriage promotion may divert money that would otherwise be used for fathering activities or training and job placement services. One county field office informant noted that his unit felt a mar-

Many agencies are taking a wait-and-see approach to TANF reauthorization though some do note a concern that some fathering related activities that depend on federal grants are due to run out of money soon

There was little consensus about what constituted the most important initiatives over the next five years. The highest level of agreement was on the need for outreach to young adults, teens, and even elementary school-aged children.

riage promotion initiative could interfere with successful programs aimed at unmarried men and women. Another characterized marriage promotion as a distraction to those DCSS serve: "They have already failed at marriage; we are trying to get them to focus on other things, not their failed marriage." Another informant noted what they felt was a logical error in the thinking behind marriage promotion: "If a man or woman has children by two or more partners, who should we suggest they marry? How might advocacy for marriage of one partner affect payments to other partners?" Still another informant noted the difficulty of advocating one family structure over another in the Bay Area, where the variety of living arrangements is quite extensive. One field office suggested that marriage promotion would be better cast as "pre-marriage counseling," where DCSS or other educational agencies would provide consequences training for men and women seeking marriage licenses. In general, marriage promotion has not been a priority for the field offices and has no prospect of becoming one, even if funding is offered in the TANF reauthorization bill.

5. Major initiatives over the next three to five years in fathering support, male involvement, and unwanted fatherhood prevention. There was very little consensus among field offices about what constituted the most important initiatives over the next three to five years. The highest level of agreement was on the need for outreach to young adults, teens, and even elementary school-aged children (five counties). The philosophical thrust of this outreach is again consequences-oriented, passing the message that the decision to engage in sexual activity carries with it the chance of long-term moral, social, and legal obligations that DCSS and others will forcibly impose. Four of nine counties felt that continuing advocacy in the legislature and the executive branch for reform of the child support order process was a top priority. The field offices that noted this need felt that a less adversarial administrative procedure would better serve all parties and remove some sources of tension that may undermine incentives for men to stay involved with their children. Two counties felt that additional funding for services of all types was the top priority; two other counties felt that the agency should focus on co-parenting training in particular. One county informant suggested that the agency needed to develop better relationships with the other social services agencies. The informant from this county noted both a need to develop services networks and a need to legitimize their services. As one respondent stated, the public and men particularly still think DCSS is part of the District Attorney's offices and are thus highly adversarial. For this reason, potential clients do not trust the agency and forego the chance to use their services. Alliances with other social service agencies might anchor the new agency more firmly in the social service community and the social service (rather than enforcement) ethic. Similarly, one county stressed the continuing need to offer services in a low-threat, highly accessible location.

Across these various priorities, a majority of the DCSS offices cited public attitudes as a primary barrier to implementation. “Noncustodial parent” has become synonymous with “deadbeat dad” in the popular press and mind. It is still politically controversial to provide services and assistance to men who are unable or unwilling to pay their child support. Without a better political climate, all reforms may be difficult to achieve.

6. Partnerships with private sector agencies. Because DCSS is newly formed, sufficient time may not have passed for the agency to embed itself in the private sector fathering and male involvement efforts in the Bay Area. Like the District Attorneys before them, it seems that most DCSS field offices have little or no contact with the private sector efforts, with two notable exceptions. Three counties use private sector contractors to provide many of their social service offerings. In one case, the field office acts as the case manager, selecting service providers from a menu of private sector organizations. In the other cases, the county contracts all services to a large non-profit organization that provides both case management and services.

Two counties have limited cooperative relationships across agencies and communities. One county works closely with a collaborative established and coordinated by the local Private Industry Council (PIC). Through PIC, the county office identifies organizations to which they may refer men for services. However, the office does not provide direct funding of those services—access depends on the availability of free services, “scholarship” grants in aid from other sources, or private payment by the program participants. This county also works with the local Bar Association to secure legal counsel. Another county has funded individual private sector efforts on an *ad hoc* basis, for example, a literacy program in a prison.

Four other counties reported little if any collaborative work with private sector organizations or other public sector agencies.

Many DCSS field offices belong to collaborative groups that include both public and private organizations that discuss and attempt to coordinate child and family services, but these efforts generally do not reach the level of financial transfers or sharing of resources.

Many DCSS field offices belong to collaborative groups that discuss and attempt to coordinate child and family services, but these efforts generally do not reach the level of financial transfers or sharing of resources

California Department of Social Services: County Social Service Offices

Background²

The mission of the California Department of Social Services field offices is “to serve, aid, and protect needy and vulnerable children and adults in ways that strengthen and preserve families, encourage personal responsibility, and foster independence.” The Department fulfills this

¹ Some materials extracted from the California Department of Child Support Services website: <http://www.childsup.cahwnet.gov/>

mission through 51 state-funded offices and 58 county welfare department offices. Services for children include Adoptions, Cal- Learn, Child Care (provided to help parents transition off welfare), Foster Care, Foster Parent Program, Protective Services, Child Abuse Prevention, and Child Support. Services for families include the California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) (which is the primary post-reform welfare program), Food Stamps, Emergency Food Assistance Program, and Protective Services. For adults, they include Continuing Care, Welfare-to-Work, In-Home Supportive Services, and Protective Services.

As a strategy for reducing teen pregnancy rates and long-term welfare dependency, the Cal-Learn program was designed to assist teen parents participating in CalWORKs. The Cal-Learn program helps pregnant and parenting teens to attend and graduate from high school or its equivalent. This effort consists of three coordinated services designed to help teens become self-sufficient adults and responsible parents. Intensive case management assists teen parents to obtain education, health, and social services, as well as payments for necessary child care. Transportation and educational expenses enable pregnant/parenting teens to attend school. Finally, bonuses and sanctions encourage school attendance and good grades. Four \$100 bonuses/sanctions per year may be earned/applied based on report card results, plus a one-time \$500 bonus for graduating or attaining an equivalent high school diploma.

Pregnant/parenting teens who are receiving CalWORKs are required to participate in Cal-Learn if they are under the age of 19 and have not graduated from high school or its equivalent. Effective January 1, 1998, an otherwise eligible teen who is 19 years of age may continue to participate in the Cal-Learn Program on a voluntary basis until he or she earns a high school diploma or its equivalent or turns 20 years old. Pregnant/parenting teens may apply for Cal-Learn services at any welfare office located in the county where they live.

Of the nine counties, only two county welfare departments reported having or having had any type of fathering support, male involvement, or unwanted fatherhood prevention program: San Mateo and Contra Costa.

Method

BAYFIDS staff members contacted the director of each county welfare office to request a 20- to 30-minute field interview. In some cases, the directors requested information about the project and a copy of a signed confidentiality statement before proceeding. In these cases, materials were sent by fax or electronic mail

The interviews were conducted by telephone using a fixed protocol that included both a core of basic questions and prompts to seek additional information. Each interview ended with a brief discussion of the project and a review of any issues raised by the initial questions that needed clarification. Information about the research project and required confidentiality and informed consent statements were provided to each interviewee prior to the interview and/or at the time of the telephone interview. Notes of each interview were typed and saved in electronic format.

Eight of nine counties participated in the interview process; interviews lasted for 8 to 45 minutes.

Findings

Of the nine counties, only two county welfare departments reported having or having had any type of fathering support, male involvement, or unwanted fatherhood prevention program: San Mateo and Contra Costa. San Mateo was the only county that had ongoing programs in fathering and fatherhood initiatives. Contra Costa County's program was a state demonstration program that ended in July 2001.

1. Link between male involvement and child outcomes. Both counties linked child welfare to father presence and involvement. In general, respondents in both counties stated that children benefit financially and emotionally from having the support and attention of fathers. One of the respondents noted that children with involved fathers have less involvement with the criminal justice system later in life. This respondent also noted that welfare systems are often viewed as biased against fathers and in favor of mothers. The informants indicated that to improve services and child outcomes, the county offices needed to address this question.

2. Most important services that encourage male involvement or discourage unwanted fatherhood. Each county nominated an integrated package of services as their key service. Significantly, both packages are dependent on grant funding and were not supported with core Department of Social Services resources. Contra Costa participated in the state-wide Noncustodial Parents project, which tested the hypothesis that increased male involvement would increase payments. To promote male involvement, the Department created an array of services to help fathers learn how to be effective and involved with their children. Of the program completers, 64% paid their child support consistently. However, funding for the program was terminated in 2001 (at the end of the grant). The county would like to continue the program, but has no source of funding currently.

San Mateo created the Initiative Fatherhood Project with support from the Stewart Foundation. The project started in June 2001 and is funded for three years. The project is geared at promoting male involvement among men who are involved with the child welfare system. San Mateo has also participated in a local Fatherhood Collaborative, a loose association of agencies created by the Board of Supervisors involving health services, human services, the courts, child services, etc. The respondent did not mention any particular service or initiative that is coordinated by this initiative.

In general, San Mateo focused mainly on creating and providing "user friendly" services for fathers, while Contra Costa used social events to create venues for father-child(ren) interactions.

In general respondents in both counties stated that children benefit financially and emotionally from having the support and attention of fathers

3. Planning for TANF reauthorization. Neither county is planning to alter its fatherhood/male involvement initiatives to account for changes in TANF. San Mateo County is actively analyzing their experience with TANF over the last five years to identify issues related to noncustodial parents.

4. Marriage Promotion. Neither county is currently offering or planning to offer marriage promotion activities. The respondent from San Mateo County stated that marriage promotion is part of the general discussion of improving their programs, but it is not a focus. A higher priority for the county is determining how to improve relationships between fathers and the welfare system, fathers and children, and fathers and mothers.

5. Major initiatives over the next three to five years in fathering support, male involvement, and unwanted fatherhood prevention. Only San Mateo County noted any major initiative it wished to enhance. San Mateo County has attempted to promote responsible relationships as part of a program for adolescents. They hope to expand and enhance this program. In general, though, the San Mateo respondent felt that making the department more accessible and user-friendly for fathers was their highest priority. They also view “empowering” fathers as advocates for their children as a goal for the future.

6. Partnerships with private sector agencies. Only San Mateo reported any partnership with respect to fathering or male involvement services, through its Fatherhood Collaborative (see above service initiatives above).

In general, fatherhood, male involvement, and unwanted fatherhood prevention seem to be a relatively low priority for the social service/human service agencies in the Bay Area. Even those counties that offer some services do so through external grants – there is no “core funding” from these agencies invested in fathering, male involvement, or unwanted fatherhood prevention programs. Those programs that do exist tend to focus on reducing barriers (e.g., child support orders, “unfriendly” agency services, etc.) to participation and promoting fathering and male involvement through education and one-time inducements (events where fathers are encouraged to bring children in order to receive some incentive). Among those counties that offer services, very little planning for TANF reauthorization has occurred. Currently, there is no intention to provide marriage promotion programs. Only one county has any cross-agency collaboration regarding fathering, male involvement, or unwanted fatherhood prevention.

In general, fatherhood, male involvement, and unwanted fatherhood prevention seem to be a relatively low priority for the social service/human service agencies in the Bay Area.

California Department of Education: County Offices of Education

Background

The State of California supports a State Board of Education, headed by an elected State Superintendent of Public Instruction. The State Superintendent is Secretary and Executive Officer of the Board and Chief Executive Officer of the California Department of Education.

Each county has a Board of Education that mediates between the State Board of Education and the local districts. The county board advises and assists school districts in the following areas: managing their budgets; supervising and supporting school districts in complying with state and federal laws; providing services to school districts that they could not offer on their own; educating groups of students not served by local school districts through the Juvenile Court and Community Schools, School Age Mothers Program, and the Infant Programs; and assisting teachers by providing training opportunities, curriculum development, and technology resources. The services selected and used depend on the demands of either the State Board or the local districts.

Each county supports one or more school districts. School districts, on a case-by-case basis, may offer parenting prevention programs to men and women (especially in communities with large “at-risk” populations), parenting skills classes, and special programs to assist teens who become mothers or fathers. Many schools also offer more traditional health and sex education classes that address sexuality and reproduction. The California Department of Education’s Child, Youth and Family Services Branch helps schools and communities design responsive family service delivery systems—including healthy parenting adolescent programs, service learning, and foster youth services—to improve students’ school success and foster their healthy growth and development. The Branch promotes accessible and meaningful parent education and parent involvement in schools and coordinates family-school partnership strategies throughout the department.

The Child, Youth and Family Services Branch broadens the base of support for education by developing interagency relationships at the state level in order to establish common goals and focus resources on issues of children and families. The Branch also helps to coordinate Head Start, Healthy Start, reduced-price lunches, and other programs.

Method

BAYFIDS staff members contacted Board of Education staff members in each county to request a 20 to 30 minute telephone interview. We attempted to contact our Phase I informant first. *In 100% of cases the original contact was either no longer employed by the school district or no longer assigned to fathering support, male involvement, or unwanted fatherhood prevention efforts*

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prevention efforts. We then asked to speak with the informant's replacement, if any. If no replacement was available, project staff asked high-ranking Board officials to recommend another informant. The interviews were conducted by telephone using a fixed protocol that included both a core of basic questions and prompts to seek additional information. Each interview ended with a brief discussion of the project and a review of any issues raised by the initial questions that needed clarification. Information about the research project and required confidentiality and informed consent statements were provided to each interviewee prior to the interview and/or at the time of the telephone interview. Notes of each interview were typed and saved in electronic format.

All nine county departments provided some information. However, six of nine county education agencies offer no relevant programs. Five of these five programs referred us to fathering or male involvement programs operated by other county agencies or by private community based organizations.

Findings

In general, there seems to be a lack of commitment to fathering support, male involvement, or pregnancy prevention within the school districts, as evidenced by the small number of programs, large turnover in staff who work on these issues, and general reliance on external funding for those efforts that do exist. There also seems to be a difference by gender in the nature of services offered by schools to teens. The most obvious example of this is found in the San Francisco Unified School District, where the district coordinates closely with a privately-run school for pregnant female teens. This program offers no services or outreach to young men, some of whom are the fathers of the children on the way. The responses seem to indicate that childbearing and childrearing is viewed by many in the schools as primarily an issue for young women.

1. Links between male involvement and child outcomes. Those schools that do offer programs tend to focus on the link between father involvement and the child's school performance. The schools that have programs seem to assume a deficit on the part of the father. That is, the teen father is expected to be a less able as caregiver because of lack of contact with his own father. One program noted the importance of promoting healthy behaviors, such as avoidance of drugs, violence, and high-risk sexual behavior.

2. Most important services that encourage male involvement or discourage unwanted fatherhood. Among the schools that offer no programs directly, five of the six counties make some effort to refer young men to community-based programs that could address their needs. However, the degree to which these referrals are based on the young men seeking support on their own rather than the school district identifying those with needs is unknown. Our impression from the interviews is that most referrals

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are based on the young man making an effort to find and get help.

Among those schools that do offer service, peer support groups (usually moderated) are the key service offered. The peer support groups are generally used to provide training and a “discussion space” for the following issues:

- Parenting skills, including education to help fathers and their children become literate
- Consequences training (with respect to sexual behavior)
- Sex education
- Job skills training
- Peer group counseling

Peer support groups are usually held in the schools, though one county did note that its support groups are offered off-campus.

Depending on the level of funding, schools offer more elaborate services. One county offers case management for fathers, aged 12 to 21, and for the younger brothers of mothers and fathers in their teen parenting program. Another county offers job training workshops that are available to those who participate in the peer support group.

3. Planning for TANF reauthorization. None of the county offices of education reported specific plans related to TANF reauthorization. Most were unaware of any impact to the services they are offering, with the exception of one county, where TANF money is used to provide transportation for some of its participants.

4. Marriage Promotion. Marriage promotion was not a component of the programs in the three counties that offer some type of fathering/male involvement services. Two of the three school informants were openly skeptical about the idea, noting that “bad” marriages between young people often prove to be poor environments for children. Another viewed marriage promotion as a form of “values promotion” that is often unwelcomed or disallowed in school settings. One district commented that it might try to incorporate marriage promotion into its curriculum, but that such an effort is not being contemplated now. One informant said that districts in their county did mention marriage as a possibility if out-of-wedlock children are on the way, but schools do not actively promote it. Finally, one county informant noted that most of their participants have so much “baggage” (e.g., abuse, poverty, deficient parenting, etc.) that they are emotionally unprepared for assuming such a momentous commitment.

Marriage promotion was not a component of the programs in the three counties that offer some type of fathering/male involvement services.

5. Important initiatives within the next three to five years. In general, it seems that schools are withdrawing from fathering and male involvement as a form of social service. As noted before, six of nine counties

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offer no services whatsoever. Of the three that do, two seemed more consumed with attempting to maintain the services that they have established thus far. All three programs rely to varying degrees on external grants for their programmatic activities. Of the programmatic initiatives mentioned by the informants, one county lists as a target greater outreach to Hispanics in their schools and community. Another focused on enhancing the safe sex initiative in its existing program.

6. Private sector relationships. As noted before, the three counties that offer services do so through external grants. The grants are provided by both private sector foundations and through state funding initiatives.

In general, all nine counties rely heavily on private sector organizations to provide services. The six non-providing counties all rely on referrals to external providers. The three providing counties receive their funding from external sources and often take their curriculum from private sector initiatives (for instance, the CALSAFE program or “Dads Make a Difference”). In most cases (with the exception of the county that provides some case management for young men), the schools only provide referrals; they do not provide grants in aid to the students they refer or provide direct funding for the programs to which they refer.

On the Ground: Practitioner Perspectives

Background

During Phase I of the BAYFIDS project, the project team worked with a small group of “practitioner liaisons” in each county to assist with our data collection. Liaisons were recommended by project staff and our project partners, including the Bay Area Male Involvement Network (BAMIN) and SRI International. Selections were based on both the quality of the practitioners’ programmatic work and their degree of involvement and familiarity with the larger fathering, male involvement, and early/unwanted fatherhood efforts in their respective counties. For Phase II we contacted the same group of “master practitioners” to solicit information about the fathering and male involvement efforts in their counties in light of TANF reform, the emphasis on marriage promotion, and the shifting economic fortunes of the region.

Method

BAYFIDS staff members contacted practitioner liaisons in each county to request a 20- to 30-minute telephone interview. As is often true in developing areas of social service, we found that only 5 of 9 liaisons were still working for the same organization. When turnover had occurred, we asked to speak with the liaison’s replacement. If no replacement was avail-

able, the BAYFIDS staff selected another practitioner from the “pool” of practitioners known to be highly capable and involved in their county’s fathering efforts. The interviews were conducted by telephone using a fixed protocol that included both a core of basic questions and prompts to seek additional information. Each interview ended with a brief discussion of the project and a review of any issues raised by the initial questions that needed clarification. Information about the research project and required confidentiality and informed consent statements were provided to each interviewee prior to the interview and/or at the time of the telephone interview. Notes of each interview were typed and saved in electronic format.

Practitioners in seven of nine counties responded to the request for a telephone interview. Two counties did not respond to our telephone inquiries or return messages.

Findings

The practitioners interviewed differed considerably with respect to the type of programs they offered. The degree to which each program focused specifically on fatherhood or male involvement also varied greatly. Three issues that seemed to influence the variations between and among organizations include: (1) the age group of children the organization served, (2) the type of services provided for the children, and (3) the model (or ideology, if one existed) that the organization followed. For this reason, the degree of agreement regarding all six questions was relatively low.

1. Linkages between male involvement and child outcomes. Among those interviewed the following linkages were said to be important to and necessary for the child’s overall well being:

- To increase male involvement in and connection with communities, organizations, and schools
- To educate fathers and mothers on responsible parenting and becoming a leader and role model for their children
- To integrate the father into the child’s life

Because the programs are situated in a variety of organizational settings, these goals are somewhat differentiated by program. For instance, one practitioner in a school setting noted the need to reform school procedures to help generate greater male involvement. One simple reform they made was making sure to invite men to participate more regularly. Practitioners from a community-based organization noted the need to broaden their hours of operation to accommodate fathers who are working odd hours. Most practitioners noted a combination of structural barriers to male involvement (e.g., hours of operation, the legal exclusion of non-biological fathers from schools, etc.) and attitudinal impediments (e.g., staff opinions

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about non-custodial fathers, fathers own sense of discouragement in the face of resistance to their participation, past history of dysfunctional relationships with the men's own father, etc.). Most practitioners seem to believe that children will perform better in school and in life generally if both the structural and attitudinal barriers are addressed.

In general, most practitioners thought the development of male involvement activities was their most important service or initiative. The nature of these male involvement programs varied quite substantially.

2. Most important services that encourage male involvement or discourage unwanted fatherhood. In general, most practitioners thought the development of male involvement activities was their most important service or initiative. The nature of these male involvement programs varied quite substantially. Some focused on creating opportunities for men and their children to interact (e.g., outings, homework clubs, parties, etc.); others focused on training that was intended to help men recognize what types of services, support, and discipline they should provide to their children; still others sought to work with institutions to reduce barriers to participation—legal or programmatic (e.g., holding all parent-teacher conferences during daylight hours). Similarly, most programs described initiatives that were intended to help men negotiate more effectively relationships with their partners and the birth mothers of their children (i.e., co-parenting education). Most programs also noted the development and wide acceptance of a family integration perspective—that is, the need to work with men and women to improve the unit as a whole, not simply the involvement of men in that unit. Two programs (one is a school-based day care center and the other provides technical support to Headstart programs) noted the effort to hire male staff as a key initiative. One practitioner stated that male involvement in schooling is highly correlated to the presence of male staff; thus, their primary strategy is to recruit and train male staff. The director suggested that this “provided a clear message to kids about males in nurturing roles and also tells other fathers, uncles, and grandfathers that children need men in their lives—this is how we specifically draw more men into our program.” One program focused on leadership development among both men and women as the key to increasing responsible fatherhood. This initiative, which is being replicated in several sites around the county, focused on providing leadership training to teams of men and women whose mission was to provide community leadership generally and educational leadership more specifically.

3. Planning for TANF reauthorization. No practitioner reported specific plans related to TANF reauthorization. Two programs mentioned the five-year deadline for many recipients on TANF as a looming concern. Others fear that TANF “time outs” in the context of a weak economy and growing unemployment will adversely affect family life for both custodial and noncustodial parents. One practitioner mentioned his concern about proposed TANF changes that include extending work hour requirements for recipients. The informant suggested that their program would probably

have to extend their hours of operation to accommodate the increased work requirements that may be imposed.

4. Marriage Promotion. No practitioner stated that marriage promotion is a high priority for his or her program. They indicated that marriage promotion is not something that their agencies offered and that it was not something that they were likely to build into their programs.

Several practitioners suggested that they were opposed to the concept from an ideological standpoint. For example, one agency suggested that they “look at parents as a leadership unit,” and another suggested that they “don’t judge parents’ relationships.” Another agency director stated, “We are somewhat at a paradox between promoting abstinence and promoting responsible parenting. We go out and tell them don’t get pregnant, but then when they do, we have to turn around and tell them that it is a good thing in order to get them involved as parents.” The director of the leadership program suggested that a focus on marriage was contrary to their approach, which focuses on developing leadership teams, regardless of their marital status. This director also pointed out that marriage promotion may actually be damaging and disempowering to those singles who are engaged and involved with their children by stigmatizing their single parent status. For some practitioners, marriage promotion is not possible because the state does not sanction marriages between the fathers they serve—gay men. Another practitioner noted that state welfare programs actually discourage marriage by counting both partners income when calculating eligibility, making marriage promotion a “non-starter” for most of his participants. Some practitioners fear stigmatizing their involved non-custodial fathers through any mention of marriage promotion. Overall, there was no push toward trying to develop programs to secure additional grant funding.

5. Important initiatives within the next three to five years. None of the programs suggested that they planned major changes to their operations, nor did they anticipate funding increases for the next three to five years that would significantly enhance or enlarge their existing program agenda. Many practitioners viewed the state’s economic outlook as a barrier to starting new initiatives. Many programs seem to be locked into a “survival” mode currently, spending a great deal of time and energy searching for funding to “keep the doors open.”

One practitioner stated that his organization was “going back to basics and trying to weather the economic outlook,” while another stated that his program was going to “continue to encourage day-to-day involvement of males in the child’s life and try to provide tools to do that.”

One program, as part of a new grant it is writing, is going to begin to promote case management as an integral part of its program agenda. Those practitioners who did expect some shifts in programmatic focus noted a greater emphasis on co-parenting and communication between parents,

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using “the welfare of the child” as the motivating factor to encourage better and less contentious co-parenting. In addition, practitioners expected that their focus might shift toward more emphasis on families and away from a specific focus on fathering and male involvement.

A few practitioners commented on the lack of local resources—including legal assistance—for their clients, as well as the need for legislative reform in areas such as child support orders and child support enforcement.

6. Public sector relationships. As we found in BAYFIDS I, practitioners collaborate almost exclusively with other private sector agencies, universities, or similar parent services organizations. There is minimal public sector collaboration or partnership. If there is contact, it is mostly in the form of referrals to private sector programs by public sector agencies or through speaking arrangements where public sector agencies (e.g., the Department of Child Support Services) are invited to speak at informational meetings. There is one notable exception: Sonoma County’s long-term partnership with the California Parenting Institute, which provides a wide variety of services to the Sonoma County Department of Child Support Service field office.

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CHAPTER 3

CONCLUSIONS

The findings from our final data collection indicate that social service efforts focused on fathering support, male involvement, and prevention of early or unwanted fatherhood have faced and are facing challenges that at least portend shifts in the nature of these efforts and may undermine their continued existence. If one were to graph the growth of the movement over time, there are two possible paths. One is a classic “S” curve, where a period of rapid growth is followed by a period of slowing but still positive increase in services. However, another possibility is that the curve might look something like a cannonball’s flight—rapid growth for a period, a period of coast at the highest point of flight, and then a plummet to the ground. We believe the field is at a critical point in its developmental history, at least in the Bay Area and possibly across the country. There has unquestioningly been rapid growth over the last five years. But it is too soon to tell whether the plateau the effort seems to have reached presages a period of slower—but deeper—growth or a plummet back to earth. This summary attempts to review some of the indicators we have found in our recent work.

Social services focused on fathering support, male involvement, and prevention of early or unwanted fatherhood are facing challenges that portend shifts in the nature of these efforts and may undermine their continued existence.

Our efforts to collect new data for the Bay Area Fathering Programs Directory was designed not simply to update existing entries in the Directory but also to see if (a) the effort has grown or shrunk, as measured by the number of programs we could identify and (b) to determine if there are commonalities between the programs (if any) that dropped out of the Directory. From a positive perspective, only 5 of 89 entries in the first Directory dropped out—5.6% of the population; if you include those organizations that were unreachable and those that chose not to participate, the “mortality” rate was 7.9%. Analysis of the data suggests that there is no particular pattern to the program losses we found. One program run by a District Attorney as part of their child support enforcement work was discontinued and subsumed into the new Department of Child Support Services. (The other programs tended to be in counties where there were many service providers – perhaps they simply were unable to compete. It may also be that programs that relied heavily on one charismatic leader lost that leader and were unable to find a replacement.) In any population of

community-based organizations, there are bound to be losses over the course of three years; this level of loss is not at all surprising.

However, a growing and expanding field would generally be expected to have new and replacement efforts. Our extensive attempts to find new programs in the Bay Area yielded virtually no results. The new members of the Directory were discovered shortly after publication of the first edition. Follow-ups with over 250 contacts generated during Phase I of the BAYFIDS project yielded no new names. Thus, overall we found a decline in total number of programs.

Does this finding portend a period of slow growth and entrenchment or a plummet back to earth? The evidence across our data collection efforts is decidedly mixed. Our practitioner liaisons and agency informants seem to feel that child and family service organizations around the Bay Area have begun to internalize some key ideas from the fatherhood/male involvement movement: e.g., fathers need to be involved with their children; families include fathers; noncustodial fathers need not be deadbeat dads, etc. During Phase I, we found much interest in furthering this process. The Bay Area Male Involvement Network (BAMIN) actively encourages day care centers, schools, and other child and mother-serving organizations to take seriously the need to include fathers in activities that are ultimately child focused. It is interesting to note that the programs whose existence seems most secure and that seem to have the most impact are those that have tried to integrate fathering support and male involvement into pre-existing child-focused efforts.

There are two models of fathering support and male involvement programs. One model suggests that, because child and mother-focused efforts are at least indifferent to fathers (especially noncustodial fathers) and sometimes hostile, the only way to pursue this work is through independent organizations that focus solely on fathering and male involvement. A second model suggests that the real issue is reforming child-centered efforts to take into account the contributions and needs of fathers. In this model, the effort focuses on changing attitudes and approaches to serving children so they are more “father-friendly.”

Given the economic and budgetary distress of California and the country generally, what we may have found in our programs data is the cresting of interest in the first model. It may simply be too expensive to create efforts that are often duplicative of other child-serving initiatives. It isn't that fathering support and male involvement efforts have stalled; they may have moved into locations that are harder to find and measure. If true—if BAMIN and the Hewlett Foundation have helped to make fathering support part of a child service “mind-set”—then the effort is set for a period of slow growth and entrenchment. The current programs remain because some men are better served outside the “usual” social service environments (e.g., schools, day care centers, etc.) and because the programs serve men's needs that are separate from their status as fathers.

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Recent reforms in child support enforcement – but especially creation of the Department of Child Support Services (DCSS)—suggest this conclusion may be supportable. Most DCSS field offices seem to have a broader, more sophisticated view of how child outcomes are related to fathering and male involvement. Most are trying to make a major conceptual leap: from enforcement and punishment to service, rehabilitation, and family integration through support of and care for noncustodial parents. Though the field offices are not yet fully formed, they tend to offer support services to noncustodial parents (e.g., parenting education, job training, job placement, etc.), in the hopes that greater ability to meet child support obligations will lead to greater male involvement with their children and more stable support systems for children. Our Phase I work also suggested that a growing set of practitioners in the field believe that their greatest contribution would come from working with schools and day care centers to help them identify barriers to child support enforcement.

Balanced against this more hopeful and promising picture is the retrenchment found generally in publicly sponsored fathering support and male involvement efforts. Most counties have scaled back fathering support and male involvement efforts in their social service and education departments. The reduction in effort in the education departments is most acute: not one of our original contacts was still on the job three years later. The two counties with programs rely totally on external funding for their continuation. Schools tend to offer programs to pregnant girls but do little to identify and support teen fathers and fathers-to-be. Similarly, efforts in departments of social service are generally funded from state or private foundation grants, not from core allocations from the county or state budget. For these departments, fathering support and male involvement is not a sufficiently high priority to merit core support. In part, we believe retrenchment is occurring because DCSS exists. Social service and education departments have come to see the “fathers problem” and “noncustodial parents problem” as outside the scope of their work. Yet, DCSS is only able to do so much. As one DCSS informant stated, “the bottom line is still the bottom line.” Internally, DCSS may have an ideological commitment to the family integration and social support perspective but is subject to external pressures that force it closer to the “collect and forget” ethic followed by the District Attorneys before they existed.

One particularly acute pressure that may divert DCSS’ efforts is the looming issue of TANF “time-outs” (i.e., people who have exhausted their five years of TANF support). For single mothers who lack a job and are about to lose their TANF payments, the noncustodial father will become the primary source of support. Some DCSS field offices fear that political pressure from above coupled with economic pressure from below (i.e., single mothers without other sources of support) will cause the department to ratchet up pressure for full and prompt collections, undermining efforts to foster a working custodial unit and stopping efforts to modify support

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orders down to levels that impoverished men can afford. In the context of these pressures, efforts to expand fathering and male involvement promotion programs are likely to be cut.

TANF reauthorization and increasing claims on the system may have a second contractionary effect. Over the first five years of TANF reform, many public and private fathering support and male involvement programs have come into being because there were “spare” dollars in TANF block grants for such activities. The reauthorization legislation coupled with greater demand for TANF may well dry up this type of support. In the past, TANF funding was “earmarked” for fathering support programs. The status of such support is highly questionable at this writing. Early version of the reauthorization included set-asides for fathering support and male involvement programs; more recent versions included support only for “marriage promotion” programs—totaling \$1.5 billion over five years in some drafts.

At first blush, it might seem reasonable for fathering support and male involvement programs to seek marriage promotion grants to “keep the doors open.” However, our most recent data collection indicates that most programs are unwilling to pursue this line of funding. In the main, private-sector fathering support and male involvement programs do not view marriage promotion as an appropriate goal. Most programs do not wish to privilege one family structure over another—in no small part because of the incredible diversity of living and child-rearing arrangement in the Bay Area. Other private and public sector programs “construct” their mission so that marriage promotion makes no sense. For instance, DCSS field offices see their job as dealing with the aftermath of marriage *dissolution*. By the time men and women enter the child support system, it is too late. Those schools that offer any fathering support or male involvement programs are highly skeptical that teen marriages are good for either the teen or the children involved. Programs across all types and sponsorship structures seem more committed to the ideal of working childrearing units than the type of institutional sanction that exists for that unit.

In fact, our research team is unclear what type of organizations would seek the marriage promotion funding. Some practitioners suggested that faith-based organizations would likely seek the funding. However, we found no faith-based fathering support or male involvement programs that wished to include marriage promotion in their curriculum. It seems likely that marriage promotion grants will go to organizations that currently have no involvement in fathering or male involvement efforts.

Whether the fathering support and male involvement “message” and “mind-set” has reached the broader social service community is beyond the scope of this work. There are both positive and negative signs in our data. On the positive side is the work of BAMIN and others to make fathering support an acceptable focus in child and mother serving institutions and the truly colossal reorientation of child support enforcement activities under DCSS. Yet our earlier field work and data collection during Phase II have

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reinforced the belief that many key institutions (maybe most especially schools) have changed very little. The fact that schools make little effort to identify teen fathers is one very discouraging example.

From a service delivery perspective, then, the future is cloudy at best. It may be that the effort has successfully planted the seeds of change in child and mother serving institutions. If so, the effort may have succeeded not through creating new programs but through reform of existing structures. If, however, the work on fathering support and male involvement must persist through separate programmatic efforts, the future may well be bleak. Resource constraints make even maintenance of effort a questionable proposition.

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