

Center for Family Policy and Practice

2010 Annual Report



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Fiscal Year 2010 Annual Report

Founded in 1995 as the policy arm of the *Strengthening Fragile Families Initiative*, the Center for Family Policy and Practice (CFFPP or the Center) examines the impact of national and state welfare, fatherhood, and child support policy on low-income parents and their children. The Center is a progressive policy think tank that advocates on behalf of low-income families and increases public awareness of their needs. Because of limited advocacy and policy analysis from the perspective of very low-income and unemployed men of color, the Center focuses on their perspective with regard to these issues. In particular, the Center's work concentrates on noncustodial parents who are in financial positions equivalent to custodial parents who qualify for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and other public assistance programs. These parents typically have very low earnings and have *unstable* and *intermittent*, if any, employment. While this scope may seem narrow, it includes large numbers of people who are frequently the subject of economic and family policy in the United States. CFFPP seeks to foster public policies at every level that promote and contribute to the well-being of children, parents, and families.

The mission statement reads as follows:

The *mission* of the Center for Family Policy and Practice (CFFPP) is to strengthen society through the expansion of opportunities for low-income parents—mothers and fathers—to protect and support their children. CFFPP operates as a policy think tank to remove the unique barriers and negative public perceptions that affect low-income men of color. Through technical assistance, policy research and analysis, and public education and outreach, CFFPP works to support low-income families and develop public awareness of their needs.

Fundamental to this mission are the following principles:

- In order to preserve the well-being of children, public policy must preserve the well-being of children's parents and caretakers.
- Individuals and communities have the right to live and exist free from all forms of violence, including interpersonal and structural violence.
- Public policy must actively and effectively promote the economic viability of families.
- Public policy must address the impact of race, class, and gender on people's lives by developing and promoting social systems that are culturally relevant and responsive.
- Public policy must support individuals as they create families of their own choosing.
- Public policy must support social justice and reflect respect for humanity.

(revised June, 2009)

Staff

Jacquelyn Boggess, Co-Director (Programs and Policy)
Jill Groblewski, Senior Project Manager
Magda Kmiecik, Project Manager
Rebecca May, Consultant
Carol Medaris, Senior Legal Analyst
Louisa Medaris, Manager of Operations
David Pate, Co-Director and Founder (Administration)

Interns

Savina Balasubramanian, Colby College
CFFPP housed Colby College intern Savina Balasubramanian during the summer months of fiscal year 2010. She was a senior majoring in Sociology. She was a recipient of Linda K. Cotter Grant.

Shabnam Lotfi, University of Wisconsin Law School
The Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Child Support Enforcement housed CFFPP intern Shabnam Lotfi during the summer of 2010. She was a second year law school student.

Caroline Gomez, University of Wisconsin-Madison, School of Social Work
Caroline Gomez is a graduate student in the School of Social Work who began as a CFFPP intern in May 2010. Her focus is on current poverty policy trends and TANF reauthorization.

Board of Directors

The Board of Directors for the 2010 fiscal year were as follows:

- Daniel Ash, Chicago Public Radio (WBEZ) (Treasurer)
- Tonya Brito, University of Wisconsin Law School
- Adrienne Brooks, Youth Guidance
- Carole Doeppers, Independent Consultant (Secretary)
- Earl Johnson, The California Endowment (Vice President)
- Floyd Rose, Wisconsin Supplier Development Council, Inc.
- Margaret Stapleton, Sargeant Shriver National Center on Poverty Law
- Gerald Smith, University of Illinois-Chicago (President)
- Alvin Starks, NAACP
- Bobby Verdugo, Bienvenidos Children's Center
- Oliver Williams, National Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community, University of Minnesota – School of Social Work

***Select Center Activities
July 2009 – June 2010***

- The CFFPP website averaged 130,000 hits per month and had over 85,000 visits for the year.
- Jacquelyn Boggess received a special invitation from the White House to participate in a meeting with the *Domestic Policy Council* and the *Advisor to the Vice President on Domestic Violence* in Washington, D.C. She was identified as an invited expert on the topics of Marriage, Fatherhood, and Domestic Violence and their intersectionality.
- Invited by the law firm of WilmerHale based in Washington, D.C. to submit an amicus brief in support of a petition for certiorari to the United States Supreme Court in a family-law case (*Turner v Price*) arising from South Carolina. An amicus brief was prepared by Board Member Tonya Brito and submitted in July 2010.
- Invited by the National Women’s Law Center based in Washington, D.C. to participate in an amicus-brief in *Flores-Villar v. United States*. The case revisits issues presented in an earlier case *Nguyen v INS*. The primary legal concern was the problem of basing legal rules on stereotypes about mothers’ roles versus fathers’ roles related to unwed fathers’ connection to their children. We signed on as a supported as of the amicus brief.
- Continued to attend WISCONSIN’s quarterly *Child Support Policy Advisory Committee* meetings at which the Department and county child support agencies discuss and decide child support policy and procedure for child support enforcement.
- At the request of the *Wisconsin Department of Children and Families*, Carol Medaris submitted comments on a proposed, comprehensive paternity bill intended for introduction in the 2011–12 legislative session. The bill would establish an administrative process for paternity cases. Among other comments, CFFPP particularly urged the Department to explicitly preserve domestic abuse protections provided in current statutes and to excuse very low-income men from any additional costs resulting from the new procedures.
- Participated in the monthly policy meetings of the *Covering Kids and Families Coalition*, a statewide coalition of more than 65 organizations committed to reducing the number of uninsured children and families in Wisconsin by ensuring that those who are eligible have information about and access to Wisconsin’s public health insurance program.
- Invited to the first *White House Community Roundtable and Town Hall Meetings* on Responsible Fatherhood and Healthy Families in Chicago.
- Magda Kmiecik served on the Community Advisory Board of the Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin’s *Project Cuidándome*. Project Cuidándome is a three year project funded by the Wisconsin Partnership Program “to decrease barriers Latina women in Dane County face regarding accessing and participating in breast and cervical cancer preventive screenings.”

- Jacquelyn Boggess served as one of three keynote speakers at the YWCA Madison's 2009 *Racial Justice Summit* on the "School to Prison Pipeline." Other keynote presenters were Mitchell Hammer, Ph.D. of Intercultural Conflict Resolutions and Professor Charles Ogletree of Harvard University. David Pate moderated two panels at the Summit, one comprised of local Wisconsin experts and the other of national experts.
- Magda Kmiecik participated in the *Latino Health Council*, a coalition of Dane County organizations and agencies whose mission is to promote and support the health and well-being of the Latino Community through education, advocacy, and networking.
- Invited as national experts by the *Minnesota Fathers and Families Network* to assist the State of MINNESOTA with their vision, mission, and strategic plan (2008-2010) on healthy fathers = healthy families = healthy communities.
- The *Fathers' Support Center* sought the expertise and policy analysis of the Center to learn the policy options for service delivery to men in the State of MISSOURI.
- David Pate was invited to be the keynote speaker in the State of MICHIGAN by the *Michigan Fatherhood Coalition* for their closing reception honoring state senators and congressmen who have supported the work of fatherhood practitioners.
- Invited by the *U.S. Department of Health and Human Services/Administration on Children and Families* to be a facilitator for their annual spring conference on welfare policy, soliciting discussions on fatherhood and welfare policy.
- David Pate collaborated with Professor Waldo Johnson (University of Chicago) on the *21st Century Foundation's 2025 Campaign* as experts on fatherhood and social welfare policy.
- Engaged in year-round discussions at the national, state, and local levels about the intersectionality (or lack of) social welfare policy and males.
- Continued to monitor and analyze State of WISCONSIN legislation and administrative rules on economic support issues affecting low-income families, including the areas of welfare or TANF policy, child support policy, and food stamp and Medicaid programs.

***On-going Center Activities
from the previous fiscal year***

- Continuing member of the steering committee of the *21st Century Foundation*'s roundtable discussion and conference addressing the current status of black men and boys in America.
- Continuing participation in the national Annie E. Casey Foundation initiative, *Women in Fatherhood*, to address the role of women within the fatherhood movement and fatherhood programming, including attendance at several seminars in Baltimore, Maryland. Jacquelyn Boggess was elected to serve as Board President for the initiative.
- Ongoing participation in numerous national and state level efforts to address fatherhood, domestic violence, and the social service and policy advocacy needs of low-income families, including involvement in The Masculinity Project (sponsored by ITVS); as faculty for the Batterers Intervention Services Coalition of Michigan Conference; as a speaker for the New York State Fatherhood Conference; and as keynote speaker for the Michigan Responsible Fatherhood reception.
- Continuing provision of organizational assistance and substantive trainings to a coalition of faith-based and community leaders in Dane County, Wisconsin on the social service needs of low-income fathers and their families in the state. With initial support from CFFPP, the agencies have come together as a standing coalition to address these needs through the provision of both direct services and policy advocacy.
- Served on the Board of Directors for the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families, Community Shares of Wisconsin, and the YWCA of Madison, Wisconsin.
- Continue to serve on the YWCA Madison's Racial Justice Committee, including the Racial Justice Summit and Racial Justice Curriculum Subcommittees.
- Continue to serve on the Board of Directors for Community Shares of Wisconsin as a member agency. Additionally, Jill Groblewski chairs the CSW External Communications Subcommittee and co-chairs the Communications Committee.
- Continue to participate in the *Formando Lazos Familiares* committee, a collaboration of service providers, advocates, and educators whose mission is to educate and increase awareness of domestic violence affecting Latino children and families in Dane County by conducting monthly community workshops/dialogs on couple's communication, family integration, and resources in the community as well as sponsoring brown bag discussions for area service providers, and providing outreach to the Latino community through a "Radio Novela" in Spanish.

PROJECTS

Comprehensive Advocacy for Low-Income Men

Through a grant from the Open Society Institute, CFFPP conducted and disseminated research, and convened a national conversation on advancing a comprehensive advocacy agenda on behalf of low-income black men and fathers. In part, this project included expanding the distribution (in both number and frequency) of the Center's policy briefings that summarize current research, policy developments, and practice in the fields of economic support, criminal justice, child support, child welfare, and other issues affecting low-income families. CFFPP also investigated the well-being of black men and fathers across an array of indicators, which contributed to the creation and publication of a concept paper that focuses on the structural underpinnings of poverty and unemployment, titled *Comprehensive Advocacy for Low-Income African American Men and Their Communities*. The project culminated in a national meeting of thought leaders from across the country and diverse disciplines to discuss developing a "comprehensive advocacy" campaign on behalf of low-income African American men. That conversation, like the concept paper, focused on addressing the structural barriers that impede low-income men's ability to make their desired contributions to their families and their communities.

Domestic Violence and Fatherhood

Since its founding in 1995, the Center has been reaching out to women's organizations and domestic violence advocates. The Center's first grant from the federal Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) resulted in a guidebook called *Collaboration and Partnership: Fatherhood Practitioners and Advocates Against Domestic Violence Working Together to Serve Women, Men, and Families* (Boggess, May, Roulet, June 2007). This guide can be used to facilitate discussion concerning the wide ranging needs of low-income communities, and, in particular, it explores providing services for low-income men while simultaneously promoting the safety of women. A subsequent OVW-funded project allowed CFFPP to partner with domestic violence agencies and coalitions in four states (MO, MN, TX, WI) where we held listening sessions with more than 235 people. The participants were predominantly women of color (mostly African American, and also Latina) who are domestic violence victims, survivors, and advocates. Other community service providers also participated.

In fiscal year 2010, CFFPP completed a paper summarizing the listening session feedback regarding 1) domestic violence and economic support services for low-income women of color and 2) social services for the men who also live in low-income communities. We have spent the year working to disseminate this information and share the listening session participants' desire for services that address the needs of both women and men in low-income communities of color.

CFFPP was also invited to help plan, present, and participate in the Women of Color Network's first National Call to Action Institute and Conference.

Economic Support Policies and Programs and Low-Income Families

The Center provides national- and state-level analysis and advocacy on public support policies and legislation affecting low-income families, including such areas as welfare or TANF policy, child support policy, and food stamp and Medicaid programs. This represents a central part of the Center's policy advocacy efforts.

The Center is conducting a project on debt reduction (particularly as it pertains to child support debt), and asset development. While there are many programs that provide financial literacy education and debt management services, there are currently no national programs that directly address the situations of low-income mothers and fathers who are struggling with child support issues. Involvement with the system of child support fundamentally affects the ability of individuals to develop savings, establish financial plans, or gain good credit standing. The Center's project examines the child support enforcement system and the workforce investment act to examine how these policies present challenges or opportunities to help low-income noncustodial parents attain greater financial stability and be in a better position to support themselves and their families.

In April of 2010, a meeting was held with primarily fatherhood programs representing eight states. The purpose of the meeting was to gather information on the current policy and practice challenges to economic security for low-income non-custodial fathers.

FY 2010 Funders

Charles Stewart Mott Foundation
Community Shares of Wisconsin
Ford Foundation
Madison Community Foundation
Office on Violence Against Women (Department of Justice)
Open Society Institute
State of Michigan (DHS, Michigan Domestic Violence Prevention and Treatment Board)
Twenty-First Century Foundation

A copy of the 2010 annual financial audit (prepared by Ritz, Holman, Butala, Fine LLP) will be available upon request.

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