

**GOVERNING**  
*for Children*  
**AND Families**  
A Social Policy Web Conference Series

**Dads in the Mix**  
The Future of Responsible Fatherhood Initiatives  
March 19, 2008  
1 pm ET / 12 pm CT / 11 am MT / 10 am PT

 **CHAPIN HALL**  
CENTER FOR CHILDREN  
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

 **NGA Center for  
BEST PRACTICES**

**Speakers**

	<b>Patrick Boyle</b> <i>Youth Today</i>		<b>Matthew W. Stagner</b> Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago
	<b>Robert D. Johnson</b> National Fatherhood Leaders Group		<b>Gardner Wiseheart</b> Healthy Families San Angelo

For detailed speaker information, please refer to the handout with panelist bios.



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## **Fathers' Involvement with Their Children Myths vs. Facts**



Matthew W. Stagner  
Executive Director

### **Myths about low-income non-resident fathers**

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- **Unmarried births are the product of casual relationships.**
- **Unmarried fathers don't care about their children.**
- **Unmarried fathers are dangerous and mothers don't want them around.**

Source: "Dispelling myths about unmarried fathers,"  
Fragile Families Research Brief Number 1, Princeton NJ.



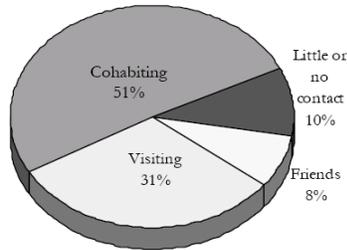
Matthew W. Stagner



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## 90% of unmarried fathers are still connected to mothers at the time of child's birth

Figure 2. Relationship Status of Unmarried Parents



Source: The Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study  
Baseline National Report Revised - March 2003

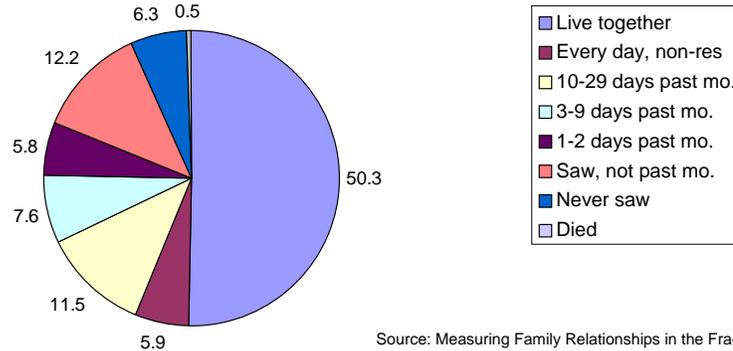


Matthew W. Stagner



## Low-income, non-resident dads play major role in children's lives

Unmarried Father-Child Contact about One Year after Baby's Birth



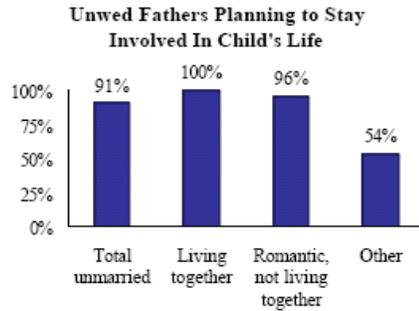
Source: Measuring Family Relationships in the Fragile Families Study, Marcy Carlson, Columbia University, July 16, 2004, *Fragile Families Summer Data Workshop*



Matthew W. Stagner



## Fathers plan to stay connected to their children



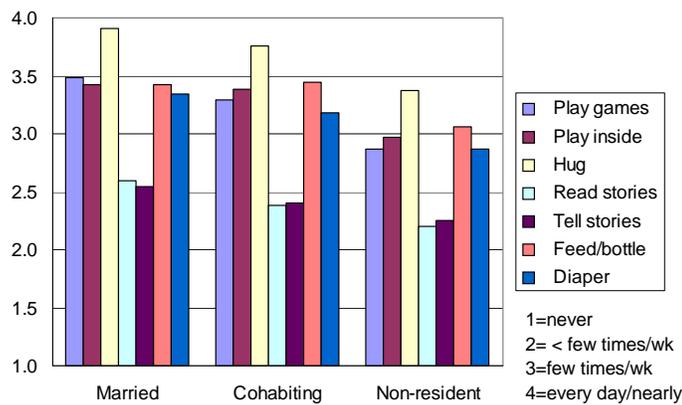
Source: *Father Involvement, Maternal Health Behavior And Infant Health*, Fragile Families Research Brief Number 5, January 2001.



Matthew W. Stagner



## Even non-resident fathers are engaged in a variety of ways



Source: Marcy Carlson, *Measuring Family Relationships in the Fragile Families Study*, 2004.



Matthew W. Stagner



## Children benefit from involved fathers

- “When nonresident fathers find ways to maintain high-quality relationships with their children and engage in responsive parenting practices, their children appear to benefit.”
- Fewer externalizing and internalizing problems among adolescents

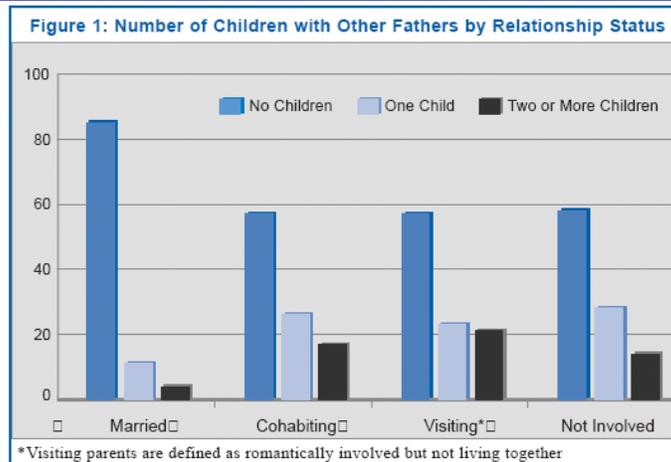
Source: “Nonresident Fathers’ Contributions to Adolescent Well-Being,” Valarie King and Juliana M. Sobolewski.  
*Journal of Marriage and Family* 68 (3), 537–557, August 2006.



Matthew W. Stagner



## “Multi-partner fertility” challenge



Matthew W. Stagner

Source: *Multiple Partner Fertility*,  
Fragile Families Research Brief  
Number 8, June 2002.



## Facilitating Fathers' Engagement with their Families



Gardner Wiseheart  
Director, Programs and Services

*Healthy Families San Angelo*

...because the first years last forever

[www.hfsatx.com](http://www.hfsatx.com)

## We Focus On...

- Supporting healthy mother-child and father-child interaction
- Supporting healthy child development
- Increasing family functioning by improving:
  - Couple relationship skills
  - Problem solving skills
  - Moms' and dads' ability to provide financially

## Through...

- Home visits
- Groups
- Social activities/family outings
- Connecting folks to community services



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## Program Moms and Dads

- Services begin pre-natally or at birth of child
- Mom and Dad both agree to be in the program
- More than 400 couples have entered the program
- 74% Hispanic – 9% African American – 15% Anglo
- 18 or older
- Unmarried or married after conception
- Both agree “they are in a relationship”



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## MOST Moms and Dads

- Are under-educated
- Are under-employed or unemployed
- Have children by other partners
- Have limited interpersonal skills
- Have had several previous unsuccessful relationships
- Have no successful couple role models
- Have no successful professional role models
- Have a very limited support system



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## SOME Moms and Dads

- Are involved with the legal system
- Have a history of drug use/abuse
- Have a history of violence (in school, within the family, and/or in social settings)
- Are inherently bright
- Have an adequate income
- Are in college or trade school

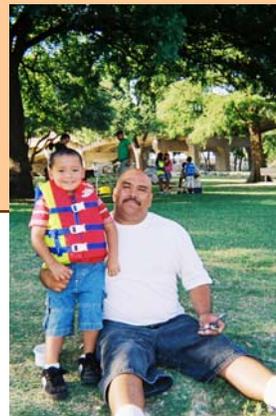


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## Key Elements

- Focus on “What’s best for kids”
- Evolve your program
- Appreciate how gender impacts what you do



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## Key Elements (cont.)



- Use positive and persistent outreach
- Develop relationships with both Moms and Dads
- Support complimentary styles of parenting



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## Key Elements (cont.)

- Use specific community resources that fit the needs of participants
- Provide ongoing support for your program and staff with training and technical assistance



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## Building a Statewide Fatherhood Network

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### Connecting Agencies and Programs



Robert D. Johnson

NATIONAL  
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LEADERS  
GROUP

### Georgia: A Return-on-Investment Program Design

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- Uncollected child support in Georgia was estimated at \$500 million annually
- Georgia Fatherhood Program initiated with
  - leadership from governor and 4 department directors
  - strategic approach to problem solving
  - potential return on taxpayers' investment
- Demonstration began in 1996 in seven areas of the state
- Collaboration with departments of Technical and Adult Education, Labor, Pardons and Parole, Child Support Enforcement



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## Strategic Objectives Connected to State Objectives

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10-Year Strategic Plan	State Objective
Judicial support	Enforce child support
Interagency coordination	End dependency/gov't benefits
Return on investment	Reduce tax payer burden
Part of agenda: welfare reform	Reduce out of wedlock births
Evaluation framework	Economic self sufficiency



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## Outcomes

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- Fatherhood incorporated into Georgia's agenda for children and welfare reform
- Provided alternative to incarceration for more than 20,000 participants since 1996
- Successful job placement for more than 60% of participants
- Provided millions of dollars of economic support to Georgia's children
- Improved relationship with father and child



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## Rhode Island Collaborating Partners

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### Federal

Administration for Children and Families-Boston Regional Office

### Rhode Island

Office of the Governor  
Department of Children Youth and Families  
Department of Corrections  
Department of Health  
Department of Human Services  
DHS Office of Child Support  
Department of Labor and Training  
Department of Education  
DOA Office of Housing and Community Development  
Department of Elderly Affairs  
Department of Mental Health and Retardation



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## For More Information

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- Georgia Fatherhood Program  
[fatherhood.georgia.gov](http://fatherhood.georgia.gov)
- Rhode Island Fatherhood Coalition  
[www.rifatherhood.org](http://www.rifatherhood.org)
- National Fatherhood Leaders Group  
[www.nflgonline.org](http://www.nflgonline.org)



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## Question and Answer Session



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Please use the Q&A window to type in your questions.  
Your name will appear automatically; please include your affiliation and location.

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If you have questions about the web conference, contact Jelene Britten at [jbritten@chapinhall.org](mailto:jbritten@chapinhall.org).

