

AAHMI MISSION

The mission of the African American Healthy Marriage Initiative (AAHMI) is to promote and strengthen the institution of healthy marriage in the African American community.



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April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month! Healthy Adults Can Mean Less Child Abuse By: Sandy Naatz

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Most of us have seen the alarming statistics: A report of child abuse is made every ten seconds; 90% of child sexual abuse victims know the perpetrator in some way; 68% are abused by family. Child abuse occurs at every socioeconomic level, across ethnic and cultural lines, within all religions and at all levels of education.

We all wonder what we can do to help the children. Certainly, addressing a problem that is so multi-dimensional can be somewhat daunting. Heartfelt efforts to change or eliminate the problems give way to feelings of helplessness, hopelessness and despair. Still, everyday there are individuals within families, churches, organizations and institutions who are completely dedicated to saving even one child. But what happens when that "child" is an adult?

As practitioners, we have become keenly aware of the profound numbers of adult children of child abuse. More statistics emerge: 30% of abused and neglected children will later abuse their own children; 80% of 21 year olds that were abused as children meet criteria for at least one psychological disorder; children who experience child abuse are 59% more likely to be arrested in their youth and 28 % more likely to be arrested as an adult. Drug abuse, alcohol abuse, suicidal ideation, depression, anger, to name a few can be adult manifestations of child abuse left unaddressed.

One of the more profound and helpful ideas is that the world would be a much better place if adults would treat each other as if they were children. When adults are dedicated to helping children, they are patient, kind, understanding and forgiving; often gracious and generous in thought and action. But sometimes it seems that when someone reaches "adulthood," somewhere between 18-24 years, the line in the sand has been drawn. There is less tolerance for adults when they manifest symptoms that might be connected to one's abuse. Adults start telling adults to "get over it!"

That's where Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood programs are also contributing to child abuse prevention. As people enter these programs and learn

how to communicate more effectively, that knowledge gives way to a greater understanding. Over time we end up with more husbands who understand why his wife acts the way she does because of her abuse; we have wives who understand why her husband has difficulty being a father because of his abuse; we have grown men and women who make an effort to step out of avoidance or denial of their painful histories. We also begin to see divorced or separated parents who are willing to engage with each other more positively, because they have gained some insight that they have never had time to explore in the past.

We help both children and adults heal by helping them to see that they are not their abuse. An adult who learns how to take ownership of his/her past will no longer have a past which has ownership of them...*the cycle breaks*. This takes patience, kindness and understanding from one adult to another. So, as we take a moment to ponder issues of child abuse, let's take a moment to remember that there are also adult children among us. Let's develop a way of being that is profound for adults, our children and their futures.

Recognizing Child Abuse. There are several types of abuse—physical, sexual, emotional and neglect—and each has associated signs. The presence of a single sign is not always indicative of child abuse, but investigation may be warranted when these signs appear repeatedly or in combination. Know what they are!

Physical Abuse. Unexplained burns, bites, bruises, broken bones, or black eyes and/or other fading marks; shrinks at the approach of adults and/or reports injury by a parent or another adult caregiver.

Sexual Abuse: Has difficulty walking or sitting; refuses to change for gym or participate in physical activities; reports nightmares or bedwetting; sudden change in appetite; becomes pregnant or contracts a venereal disease; runs away and or reports sexual abuse by a parent or another adult caregiver.

Focus on Fathers: Fathers, Child Support Enforcement and Financial Assets

By: Karen Elliott, PhD

BLACK MARRIAGE DAY (BMD) is the 4th Sunday of March (March 27th). Tell us how your church, organization or family celebrated BMD and be featured in the next edition of the AAHMI Newsletter! Send your article (and pictures) to Darlene.Tart@acf.hhs.gov.

(Please indicate in your e-mail permission to use any photos or likenesses; we cannot print articles without explicit permission!

If a non-custodial father saw the words child support enforcement (CSE) and financial assets in the same phrase he would probably quickly jump to the conclusion that CSE is coming after him and his money. Well, maybe not.

Building Assets for Fathers and Families (BAFF), part of the Assets for Independence program, is a new federal demonstration initiative provided by a partnership of the Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) and the Office of Community Services (OCS) to provide asset-building strategies specifically for parents in the child support system. The objective of BAFF is to strengthen families by providing financial literacy education, assistance in the use of mainstream financial services, access to credit and debt counseling, access to tax credit filing assistance and access to other federal benefits. Other project partners include the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE), The Urban Institute, The Lewin Group and ECONorthwest.

Income alone is not enough for families to obtain economic stability. It also takes assets (savings, homes, business and education). The BAFF hopes to help families move out of poverty by providing asset-building tools to parents in the CSE caseload. Such tools include:

- Financial education, including information specifically to child support.
- Help with building credit or repairing credit.
- Partnering with child support agencies to file realistic orders or to modify orders.
- Avoiding the use of higher cost alternative financial vehicles like predatory lenders-pay day loans and check cashing institutions.
- Getting banked so parents can benefit from mainstream banking methods.
- Assistance with tax preparation and drawing down the refundable credits such as EITC.

When non-custodial parents have appropriate child support orders and their debts are well-defined and managed, they are more likely to provide financial support to their children. The BAFF through programming efforts can make a double contribution—helping low-income individuals build assets and helping their non-custodial children achieve a decent living standard. These steps, in turn, may promote father engagement and ultimately boost the economic and social environment of the communities served.

Information for this article was obtained on the BAFF website (<http://www.idaresources.org/page?pageid=a04700000ArRPP>) and the Assets for Fathers and Families website (<http://www.idaresources.org/>).

Focus on Fathers: 12th Annual National Fatherhood and Families Conference: “Celebrating Diversity—Celebrating Fatherhood”

By: Callen Kurpinski



The 12th Annual National Fatherhood and Families Conference “Celebrating Diversity—Celebrating Fatherhood,” was held in San Francisco, California on March 1-4. Keynote speakers included: David Hansell, Acting Assistant Secretary for the Administration for Children and Families; Vicki Turetsky, Commissioner of the Office of Child Support Enforcement; Helen Mitchell, Office of U.S. Congressman Danny Davis, Chicago, Illinois and Ben O’Dell, Center for Faith Based and Neighborhood Partnerships, U.S Department of Health and Human Services. Over 550 people attended, including representatives from faith-based organizations, non-profits, government agencies and fathers. Several hundred more attended the conference via live stream video. Live stream attendees were able to view some of the sessions, keynote speakers and plenary panels. Sessions addressed challenges and successes in designing fatherhood involvement programs; best practices and models for community-based programs working with incarcerated parents and their families; lessons learned from pilot projects involving asset building for non-custodial fathers and increasing the involvement of non-residential fathers with their children and how to develop a multi-ethnic and cultural approach to effective family services that engage fathers. To view highlights from the conference from the taped live video stream, please visit:

<http://fathersandfamiliescoalition.org/gallery/live-stream-video.html>

Spotlight on ACF: Emerging Findings on Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood Grant Programs

By: Darlene Tart

As many of you know, ACF through the direct administration of the Office of Family Assistance (OFA) was authorized in 2006 to provide competitive funding for demonstration projects that promoted healthy marriages through any of several activities. In addition, competitive responsible fatherhood grants were authorized to develop and implement projects in the areas of healthy marriage, responsible parenting and economic stability. OFA awarded 226 grants in total. This year (2010—2011) marks the last year of funding for those grantees.

Several projects were successful; some more than others. James Bell Associates (JBA) recently released a report of programs that show evidence of positive participant outcomes. In addition to demonstrating positive outcomes, the grantees in the report were also selected because of their ability to articulate program activities and service models. A few projects that show exemplary promising practices are highlighted below.

Healthy Marriage Grantees

The *Alabama Community Marriage Initiative* is a university-community partnership whose project included a public awareness campaign and marriage and relationship education for youth, non-married parents, premarital couples, unmarried individuals and married couples. Areas of statistically significant positive change in youth and adults include self esteem, conflict management skills, realistic beliefs about relationships, trust, commitment, positive relationship interactions and parenting practices and efficacy.

The *Hispanic Active Relationships Project* (Texas) began with a multi-media public awareness campaign on the value of marriage and marriage education, followed by ongoing marriage education and relationship skills seminars. Results of pre- and post assessments indicate a 12% increase in marital satisfaction; a 12% increase in assessed communication skills and a 19% decrease in relationship aggression.

Marriage Works! Ohio project is a partnership with four other community service providers; it offers free classes, seminars and special events for couples at every state of their relationship, focusing on marriage enrichment and building healthy relationships. Comparisons of pre-and post test data demonstrate increases in knowledge of basic relationship skills, communication skills, commitment to the relationship and positive conflict resolution.

Responsible Fatherhood Grantees

The *South Carolina Center for Fathers and Families Promoting Responsible Fatherhood* Project works with local fatherhood programs to provide a 24-week holistic program for low-income, non-custodial fathers who are primarily African American. Preliminary data analysis indicated that 63% of participants unemployed at intake obtained employment; 27% of those who were employed at intake increased their earnings; 79% who had child support arrearages decreased their arrearages and 68% who did not have a visitation order were able to increase their contact with their children.

The *Jefferson County Fatherhood Initiative* is a collaborative project designed to strengthen the parenting and relationship skills of fathers reentering the Louisville, Kentucky community, with a focus on men in substance abuse recovery. Ninety-percent of post-course survey respondents reported improved skills in giving positive feedback, which includes validating and affirming their children; 90% indicated that they felt better about creating expectations and enforcing consequences for their children and 89% “strongly agree” or “agree” that their personal use of alcohol and/or drugs decreased.

The *Latin American Youth Center Responsible Fatherhood Program* primarily serves young immigrant fathers and mothers who reside, work or attend school in the multi-cultural neighborhoods of Washington, DC. The goals of the program are to increase the ability of young people to be responsible, involved parents who have meaningful relationships with their children; to be emotionally and financially supportive of their children and partners/spouses and make healthy decisions for themselves, their families and their communities. Qualitative data collected suggest significant improvements related to knowledge acquisition, self reported perception and behavior and relationship with their child’s other parent.

Other projects are highlighted in the report. They include: *Northwest Family Services Lasting Relationships*; *Enriching Marriages in Indiana Project*; *Public Strategies, Inc. Family Expectations*; *Arizona Youth Partnership Healthy Marriages/Strong Families*; *Florida State University Project Relate*; *Promoting Optimal Parenting Skills (P.O.P.S.)*; *New Mexico State University Strengthening Families Initiative*; *Strong Fathers/Strong Families Project*; *The Council on Crime and Justice Family Strengthening Project* and *The RIDGE Project, Inc. Keeping Faith*.

The full report can be downloaded from:

http://www.fatherhood.gov/sites/default/files/HM_RF_EmergingFindings_JBA_2009.pdf

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Youth Insights!: Getting Off To A Good Start - Jobs For Youth

By: Elma Z. Goodwin

If you have not done so already, now is the time to get started looking for summer employment. You need to kick into high gear since the suggested time to start the search is January.

Your economic employment future is tied to the economy just like it is for everyone. You need to prepare for the future by finding out what you are good at, what jobs are available in the career field that you are interested in and the type of education required. But most importantly, a shift in attitude may be necessary. This would be the willingness to realize that you may not start at the top making big bucks right out of the gate and being open to all available jobs in the industries that have them, even if not in your desired field. This is not to say that you should lose sight of your dream job in your desired fields. All jobs before you get that "perfect" job will benefit your growth and development in some way. Additionally, depending on your industry, if you really shine all summer you may wind up with an offer for full- or part-time employment all year long.

Be the early bird who gets the gig: get your job experience, references and list of job prospects together now so you can be first in line when opportunities arise. Use this information to create a resume. There is an abundance of resources for resume writing and other job seeking aids online and can be found by typing "resume writing for teens" in your Internet browser.

Once you have completed the preliminary analysis and steps, you are now ready to find that summer/part-time job by considering the following tips:

- Check out the website, "Got a Job" at <http://www.gotajob.com>. *Got a Job* allows job seekers to look for jobs via their online database and provides great job search tips for teenagers.
- Also, check out www.usajobs.gov for summer opportunities with federal agencies across the nation. Explore the internet!
- Ask your school counselor about any job openings in your community. Sometimes employers will tell local administrators if they are hiring for the summer.
- Interested in a job as a summer counselor? The website called *My Summer Camps* at <http://www.mysummercamps.com/jobs> provides a database full of camps that are looking to fill summer job positions.
- Ask local businesses and stores in your area about summer employment, even if you do not see a "Now Hiring" sign.
- If unable to find a job through traditional means, be creative, e.g., consider freelancing—tutoring (crafts, computer skills, academic skills), house cleaning, photography, etc.

Good Luck. Believe in yourself and your confidence will shine through to potential employers!

NEXT ISSUE: What to do with that newly-found income-- financial education tips to help you get a head start on your financial future.

Questions or comments?

Please e-mail them to Darlene Tart at

Darlene.Tart@acf.hhs.gov

or contact the Program Specialist (see page 3) in your State!

All Around The Regions: Leadership Summit on Family Financial Stability—Region VII

By: Karen Elliott, PhD

The Leadership Summit on Family Financial Stability hosted by Region 7 of the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) was held December 8 and 9, 2010, in Kansas City, Missouri with 57 participants from Kansas, Missouri, Iowa and Nebraska attending. In addition to the community attendees, staff from the central office in Washington, DC, and the regional office were present.

Diann Dawson, Director, Office of Regional Operations, ACF, welcomed attendees and introduced Joan Lombardi, PhD, Deputy Assistant Secretary and Inter-Departmental Liaison for Early Childhood Development, ACF. Dr. Lombardi spoke about the importance of asset building for family stability and child well-being.

Other speakers for the summit included Leigh Tivol, CFED, who spoke about research and practice in her presentation "On the Cutting Edge of Asset Building for Families: Research and Practice." Stephanie Whorton, AFI Resource Coordinator, Office of Community Services, provided "Assets for Independence Program Overview." After a working lunch, Karen Heisler, Rural Dynamics, spoke on "Strategies for Family Financial Stability," followed by two interactive panels on "Asset Building Strategies." Panel members included Greg Housel, FDIC; Erika Ramirez, Kansas Federal Reserve Bank; Mary Solomon and Kate Lett-Deathe, IRS Stakeholder Partnerships, Communication and Education; Julie Riddle, Family Conservancy; Jana Root, Apprisen Financial Advocates and Yolanda Bowman, United Way of Greater Kansas City.

On the second day of the summit, attendees divided into state action planning teams to develop state plans to further promote asset building in local communities. Participants were directed to discuss opportunities for collaboration between the asset building and early childhood communities, challenges the states face, goals for further actions and support needed to achieve the goals. **Continued on Page 5**

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Emotional Abuse. Shows extremes in behavior, such as overly compliant or demanding behavior, passivity, or aggression; inappropriately adult or inappropriately infantile; physically or emotionally developmentally delayed; has attempted suicide and/or reports a lack of attachment to the parent.

Neglect. Frequently absent from school; begs or steals food or money; lacks needed medical or dental care, immunizations or glasses; consistently dirty and has severe body odor; lacks sufficient clothing for the weather; abuses alcohol or drugs and/or states that there is no one at home to provide care.

If you suspect a child is being abused, report it so that the child and family can get help. For more information about where and how to file a report, contact your local child protective services agency or police department.

Portions of this article were taken from **Child Welfare Information Gateway Recognizing Child Abuse and Neglect: Signs and Symptoms** as is available on-line at:

<http://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/signs.cfm>

Spotlight on Health: Weight! Weight! Don't Tell Me! By: Barbara Andrews, MPH, CPH

Overweight! Underweight! Despite what seems like a societal obsession, weight is often a sensitive issue and one of the subjects that people don't like to talk about. Society may seem preoccupied with weight, but often the reasons for this concern may be misplaced. It's fine to want to look good, but the most important issues about weight are far more critical than appearance. When it comes to weight, the most crucial issues are about health. Weighing either too much or too little can be hazardous to your health, but this month, the focus is on overweight. Being overweight or obese can have profound implications including increasing the risk of developing heart disease, type 2 diabetes, hypertension, stroke, arthritis, respiratory difficulties and some cancers. The good news is that you do not need to become an Olympic athlete or never ever eat another piece of cake. You can make small but steady changes in your eating and physical activity habits that over time, may help you lose weight and improve your health. According to the National Institutes of Health, if you are obese, losing even 5 to 10 percent of your weight can delay or prevent some of these diseases.

"Obesity" means having too much body fat. It is different from being "overweight," which refers to an excessive amount of body weight that includes muscle, bone, fat and water. Obesity or overweight is often measured with a calculation of body mass index (BMI), which shows the relationship of weight to height. Although BMI is not a perfect indicator of obesity, it is considered to be a valuable screening tool. Adults with a BMI between 25.0 and 29.9 are considered overweight, those with a BMI of 30 or more are considered obese, and those with a BMI of 40 or more are considered extremely obese. For children and adolescents, these BMI categories are further divided by sex and age, due to the physical changes that occur during growth and development. For children, growth charts from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) are used to calculate BMI.

Overweight and obesity affect every racial and ethnic group in the United States. Today, African American women have the highest rate of overweight and obesity compared to other groups in the United States. But weight is not an adults-only issue. The current generation of American children could be the first generation with a shorter life expectancy than their parents! Today, almost one in every three children in our nation is overweight or obese. The numbers are even higher in African American and Hispanic communities, where nearly 40 percent of the children are overweight or obese.

Many factors can contribute to becoming overweight or obese including eating too many calories, not getting enough physical activity, environment and genetics. Compared to years ago, today's lifestyle often includes more sedentary activities, like watching TV and computer surfing. Eating healthily can be a challenge when fruits and vegetables are not readily available. Some cultures may traditionally prepare foods with more fat and salt. Getting exercise can be difficult when playgrounds aren't well maintained or neighborhoods are unsafe. Some illnesses, like hypothyroidism, or medications, such as steroids, may also contribute to weight gain.

Being the healthiest YOU possible is an important and valuable goal. It's not an easy task, but you have the power to reverse the current situation. More information is available from the Weight-Information Control Network, a service of the National Institutes of Health, at <http://www.win.niddk.nih.gov/>, the Office of Minority Health at <http://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/> and the National Women's Health Information Center at www.womenshealth.gov. First Lady Michele Obama is leading *Let's Move!*, a special nutrition and physical activity effort to combat childhood obesity and raise a healthier generation of kids. You can hear Mrs. Obama's personal message and get tips and materials to organize your community for a healthier future at www.letsmove.gov.

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Common themes from the four state discussions were:

- *Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) sites are local resources the early childhood community can refer parents for income tax preparation.
- *VITA sites can connect parents to other asset building services, such as financial coaching, bank accounts and individual development account (IDA) programs.
- *Asset building can be incorporated into processes and procedures with which the early childhood community is already familiar, such as Family Partnership Agreements.
- *Staff need to be trained before they can educate families.
- *Financial issues need to be presented to families in language they can understand.
- *A coordinated public outreach/marketing campaign would greatly facilitate getting the message to communities.

Rae Anderson, National Child Care Information Center, concluded the summit with a challenge to attendees to continue the family financial stability efforts in their communities.