

**A Rapid Ethnographic Assessment of  
Programs & Services (REAPS) for Fathers  
in Benton-Franklin, WA Counties**

Prepared By:



**National  
Fatherhood  
Initiative<sup>®</sup>**

[www.fatherhood.org](http://www.fatherhood.org)

**An Initiative of the Benton-Franklin Health District**

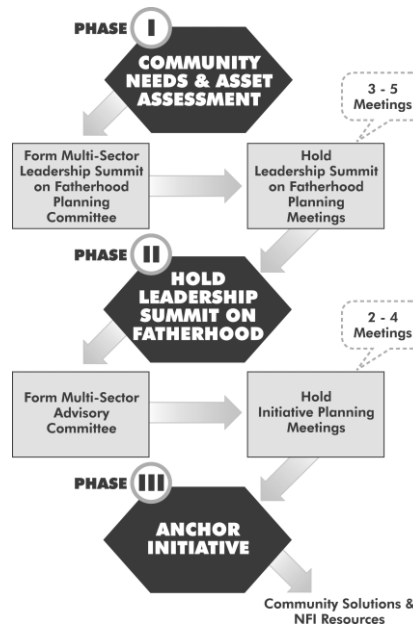
April 2019

## Introduction

The Benton-Franklin Health District (BFHD) has partnered with National Fatherhood Initiative (NFI) to create a Benton-Franklin Fatherhood Initiative (BFFI). The framework for the BFFI is NFI's Community Mobilization Approach (CMA), which has been successfully implemented in several states (e.g. Texas, Indiana, Ohio, Rhode Island), counties (e.g. Prince George's, MD, Wapello, IA) and cities (e.g. Milwaukee, Pittsburgh, Sioux Falls) across the United States.

NFI's CMA, which is diagrammed in Figure 1 below, consists of 3 phases: (1) a needs and assets assessment of Benton-Franklin county's abilities to promote responsible fatherhood; (2) a Leadership Summit on Fatherhood attended by Benton-Franklin leaders; and (3) implementing an action plan for a fatherhood initiative generated by a broad cross-section of Benton-Franklin county sectors.

Figure 1



This report, called a **Rapid Ethnographic Assessment of Programs and Services (REAPS)** for fathers is the culmination of Phase 1 of this ongoing initiative in Benton-Franklin counties. This REAPS will help Benton-Franklin county leaders:

- Identify the need to address father absence
- Identify the services and programs for fathers that exist in the community, and the service and program gaps
- Identify the assets in the community that can be mobilized to promote responsible fatherhood
- Identify potential strategies to weave the promotion of responsible fatherhood into the social fabric of the community
- Collect information critical to attract funds for a sustainable community-wide fatherhood initiative.

The REAPS methodology is comprised of the four following components:

1. Gathering of secondary data
2. Conduct focus groups with leaders in different sectors
3. Analysis and report writing
4. Create a community “assets” map as a result of components 1 through 3.

## **Secondary Data on Fatherhood**

The first component of this REAPS report involves compiling secondary (existing) data on issues related to father absence and involvement from a national, state, and local perspective.

### **Father Absence**

In 1960, only 11% of children lived in father-absent homes.<sup>1</sup> In 2017, the U.S. Census Bureau data reported a marked increase in this number with 19.7 million children living without a father in the home. That is more than 1 out of every 4 children in America. These numbers are even more staggering when looking at the father absence rates by race.

- (64%) African American children live in father-absent homes.
- (34%) Hispanic children,
- (25%) white children live in father-absent homes

The national percentage of female householders with no husband present living with their own children under 18 years is 24%. Washington State and Benton County comes in at 21%, 3% lower than the national average, while Franklin County’s is 20%, 4% lower than national average.

<b>Female households with no husband present living with their own children under 18 years</b>	
National	24%
Washington	21%
Benton County	21%
Franklin County	20%

The annual cost of father absence in America is staggering. The Federal Government spent at least \$99.8 billion providing assistance to father-absent homes in 2006. This is a conservative estimate; it does not include federal benefit programs for communities, indirect costs related to poor outcomes of children from father-absent homes, and long-term costs in reduced tax income from low-earning single-parent families.<sup>2</sup>

Children in single parent families have not varied by more than 2% over the past ten years in the state of Washington. In 2017, Washington had a rate of 29% vs. a national average of 34%.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> National Fatherhood Initiative, 2011, *Father Facts 6th Edition*.

<sup>2</sup> Nock, Steven L., and Einolf, Christopher J. 2008. “The One Hundred Billion Dollar Man.”

<sup>3</sup> Washington Kids Count, 2017.

Children who live absent their biological fathers are, on average, at least two to three times more likely to be poor, to use drugs, to experience educational, health, emotional and behavioral problems, to be victims of child abuse, and to engage in criminal behavior than their peers who live with their married, biological (or adoptive) parents.<sup>4</sup> In our nation, this effects nearly 26% of the population.

In the *Annual Review of Sociology* published in July of 2013, researchers reviewed nearly 50 studies that employed innovative, rigorous designs to examine the causal effects of father absence. Although these studies varied in the use of analytical approaches and found different effect sizes, they prove beyond reproach that father absence **causes** poor outcomes for children in the areas of: educational attainment, mental health, relationship formation and stability, and labor force success. So, the old adage, “correlation does not imply causation” does not apply to the effects of father absence on children.

Research shows that the cooperative input and influence of a male parent and a female parent is essential for proper child development. As fathering expert Dr. Kyle Pruett of Yale Medical School explains in *Fatherhood: Why Father Care is as Essential as Mother Care for Your Child*, “fathers do not mother.” *Psychology Today* explains, “fatherhood turns out to be a complex and unique phenomenon with huge consequences for the emotional and intellectual growth of children.” A father, as a male parent, brings unique contributions to the parenting project. Likewise, a mother, as a female, uniquely impacts the life and development of her child, as Dr. Brenda Hunter explains in her book, *The Power of Mother Love: Transforming Both Mother and Child*.

Erik Erikson, a pioneer in the world of child psychology, explained that father love and mother love are qualitatively different kinds of love. By eight weeks of age, infants can tell the difference between a male or female interacting with them. This diversity, in itself, provides children with a broader, richer experience of contrasting relational interactions—more so than for children who are raised by only one gender. Whether they realize it or not, children are learning at the earliest age, by sheer experience, that men and women are different and have different ways of dealing with life, other adults and children. Fathers tend to play *with*, and mothers tend to care *for*, children. Fathers encourage competition; mothers encourage equity. One style encourages independence while the other encourages security; both provide security and confidence in their own ways by communicating love and physical intimacy. One can tend toward encouraging risk without consideration of consequences. The other tends to avoid risk, which can fail to build independence, confidence and progress. Joined together, they keep each other in balance and help children remain safe while expanding their experiences and confidence.<sup>5</sup>

## Fatherhood and Poverty

There’s no doubt that father absence and poverty are strongly related. Data shows that it’s more difficult to get fathers to provide financial support when they are not married to the mother and when they lack an emotional connection to their children. Children in father-absent homes are five times more likely to be poor. In 2002, 7.8% of children in married-couple families were living in poverty, compared to 38.4 % percent of children in female-householder families.<sup>6</sup>

## Incarceration and Recidivism

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<sup>4</sup> National Fatherhood Initiative, 2011. *Father Facts 6th Edition*.

<sup>5</sup> Kyle D. Pruett, *The Nurturing Father*, (New York: Warner Books, 1987), p. 49.

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, *Children’s Living Arrangements and Characteristics: March 2002, P200-547, Table C8*. Washington D.C.: GPO, 2003.

The absence of fathers, and father figures in a community, is a predictor for children engaging in criminal activity. Research suggests that there are differences in whether or not father absence affects delinquency based on gender, with father absence being closely linked to criminal activity for young men but not for women. While there are no specific studies on how father absence affects female engagement in crime, research suggests that the absence of a father is a greater risk factor for delinquency for young men.

Fatherhood programming addresses men at their key vulnerability. It can provide them with motivation and purpose for all other educational and rehabilitative initiatives (housing, getting a job, staying off drugs, etc.). The D.C. based Center for Law and Social Policy has noted: “The desire of parents to reunite with their children is often the key motivation for helping them turn their lives around.”

**“The desire of parents to reunite with their children is often the key motivation for helping them turn their lives around.”**  
**-Center for Law and Social Policy**

## Juvenile Justice

A recent study, using data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, examined the effect of father absence on adolescent boys and girls as well as adults. The study found that:

- Adolescent boys with absent fathers are less likely to engage in delinquency than those with fathers who are present.
- Father absence was not found to have a statistically significant effect on adolescent girls’ likelihood of engaging in delinquent behavior.
- For men aged 25-32, those who lived with their biological fathers in adolescence are less likely to engage in delinquency than those without a father figure.
- While growing up with an involved biological father does have some protective factors for women, growing up with a father does not affect the likelihood of engaging in delinquent behavior.

Juvenile arrests in Washington State have dropped from 50 per 1000 offenses in 2007 to 33 in 2011. Benton County has dropped from 92 per 1000 offenses in 2007 to 65 in 2011 and Franklin County has dropped from 86 per 1000 offenses in 2007 to 56 in 2011.<sup>7</sup>

<b>Juvenile Arrests in Washington State (Per 1,000 Offenses)</b>		
	2007	2011
Washington	50	33
Benton County	92	65
Franklin County	86	56

## Teen Pregnancy

In 2016, Washington State teen birth rate was 16.6 live births per 1,000 females aged 15-19. That ranks 35<sup>th</sup> nationally against the national average of 20.3.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Kids Count Data Center, *Selected Kids Count Indicators for Counties in Washington*, 2011.

<sup>8</sup> Center for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, 2016.

There is a clear connection between father absence and teen pregnancy since a father's behavior and values uniquely influence a girl's expectations about boyfriends and husbands. In addition, boys learn from their fathers what kind of husband and father they should become and how to treat girls and women. Research shows that boys raised in single-mother homes are at a higher risk of teen pregnancy<sup>9</sup> and teenage girls without fathers were twice as likely to be involved in early sexual activity and seven times more likely to get pregnant as other adolescents.<sup>10</sup>

Teen Birth Rate (Live Births per 1,000 Females Aged 15-19)	
National	Washington State
20.3	16.6

## Child Abuse

Children who grow up without their fathers are at greatest risk for child abuse. In fact, the presence of a child's father in the home lowers the likelihood that a child will be abused. Compared to living with both parents, living in a single-parent home doubles the risk that a child will suffer physical, emotional, or educational neglect.<sup>11</sup>

In 2011, 46,636 individual children in Washington state were in accepted referrals to Child Protective Services (CPS), for a rate of 30 per 1,000 children under age 18.<sup>12</sup> Only a portion of child maltreatment is reported to CPS, and not all referrals are investigated. Therefore, the number of child maltreatment cases is underestimated. Because states process and report cases differently, we do not know if the Washington State CPS rate and the United States' rates are comparable.

**In 2011, 46,636 individual children in Washington state were in accepted referrals to Child Protective Services**

## Domestic Abuse

On a single day in 2014, Washington domestic violence programs served 1,930 victims/survivors; 549 were turned away due to a lack of resources.<sup>13</sup> In 2014, intimate partners perpetrated almost 20% of aggravated assaults and over 32% of simple assaults.<sup>14</sup> Intimate partners were responsible for 41% of abductions in the state of Washington in 2014.<sup>15</sup> An estimated 28.3% Washingtonian women will face stalking victimization in their lifetime.<sup>16</sup> 44 Washingtonians were

<sup>9</sup> Teachman, Jay D. "The Childhood Living Arrangements of Children and the Characteristics of Their Marriages." *Journal of Family Issues* 25 (January 2004):86-111.

<sup>10</sup> Ellis, Bruce J., John E. Bates, Kenneth A. Dodge, David M. Ferguson, L. John Horwood, Gregory S. Pettit, and Lianne Woodward. "Does Father Absence Place Daughters at Special Risk for Early Sexual Activity and Teenage Pregnancy?" *Child Development* 74 (May/June 2003): 801-821.

<sup>11</sup> *America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being*. Table SPECIAL1. Washington D.C.: Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 1997.

<sup>12</sup> Washington State Department of Health, *Child Abuse and Neglect Brief*, 2011.

<sup>13</sup> National Network to End Domestic Violence (2015). "14 domestic violence counts Washington summary. Retrieved from

<http://nnedv.org/downloads/Census/DVCounts2014/2014-census-WA.pdf>.

<sup>14</sup> Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs (2015). 2014 crime in Washington. Retrieved from <http://www.waspc.org/assets/CJIS/ciw%202014%20small.pdf>.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>16</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2010). The national intimate partner and sexual violence survey. Retrieved from [http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/nisvs/state\\_tables\\_73.html](http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/nisvs/state_tables_73.html).

killed in domestic violence homicides in 2014.<sup>17</sup> 51.9% of Washington domestic violence femicides are committed with guns.<sup>18</sup>

**On a single day in 2014, Washington domestic violence programs served 1,930 victims/survivors**

## Education

Education is another critical issue that father absence affects. Students living in biological father-absent homes are twice as likely to repeat a grade in school; 10% of children living with both parents have ever repeated a grade, compared to 20% of children in stepfather families and 18% in mother-only families.<sup>19</sup>

Graduation and dropout rates are important indicators of the status of K–12 education in Washington. The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) reports annually on rates for all students and sub-categories in the online state Report Card. OSPI uses the “adjusted cohort rate” methodology as required by the U.S. Department of Education. Beginning with the 2016–17 school year results were produced for 4-, 5-, 6- and 7-year cohorts—or groups—of students. A student's cohort is based on the year they enter 9th grade for the first time. The calculation adjusts for students who transfer into a Washington public high school for the first time and join a cohort. Students are removed from the cohort if they transfer out of public school in Washington. The adjusted cohort method tracks individual students over time and does not rely on estimates. It generally aligns with what most people think of as a graduation rate: Among a group of students who started high school together, what percent graduated in four (or five, or six, or seven) years? Washington’s 4-year graduation rate is 79.3 percent for the Class of 2017, students who entered 9th grade for the first time in 2013–14. The rate is a slight increase from the Class of 2016, which had a 4-year graduation rate of 79.1 percent. The 5-year graduation rate for students who entered 9th grade for the first time in 2012–13 is 82.4 percent. This is an increase from the previous year’s 5-year rate, which was 81.9 percent. OSPI produced the 6- and 7-year rates for the first time in the 2016–17 school year. The 6- year graduation rate for students who entered 9th grade for the first time in 2011–12 is 83.1 percent and the 7-year graduation rate for students who entered 9th grade for the first time in 2010–11 is 82.9.<sup>20</sup>

Washington State Graduation Rates for Classes of 2010-2017			
4-Year Rate	5-Year Rate	6-Year Rate	7-Year Rate
79.3%	82.4%	83.1	82.9

## Employment

The increase in time fathers spend with children has, ironically, contributed to an increase in family-work conflict among fathers. Fathers now report more family-work conflict than do mothers. Moreover, greater family-work conflict leads to lower quality father-child relationships. Half of

<sup>17</sup> Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence (2015). 2014 domestic violence fatalities in Washington state. Retrieved from <https://fatalityreview.files.wordpress.com/2015/04/2014-washington-domestic-violence-fatalities2.pdf>.

<sup>18</sup> Center for American Progress & Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence (2014). Fact sheet: Washington domestic violence and guns. Retrieved from <https://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/CAP-DV-WA.pdf>.

<sup>19</sup> Nord, Christine Winqvist, and Jerry West. Fathers’ and Mothers’ Involvement in Their Children’s Schools by Family Type and Resident Status. (NCES 2001-032). Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Studies, 2001.

<sup>20</sup> Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction Graduation and Dropout Statistics, 2018.

fathers report difficulty balancing work and childcare responsibilities. Full-time employment negatively affects father time. On the other hand, a supportive work environment reduces family-work conflict. And yet very few companies offer paid paternity leave. Nearly 9 in 10 fathers take leave after the birth of their child, but most of them take a week or less of time off. Nontraditional work schedules may have a negative effect on unmarried fathers' family-work balance compared to married fathers who work such schedules.<sup>21</sup>

**Fathers now report more family-work conflict than do mothers**

## **Drug and Alcohol Use**

Drug and alcohol use has a negative impact on Benton-Franklin's community health. Family structure significantly impacts adolescent substance and alcohol use, particularly for young men. Children from father-absent homes are more likely to engage in substance or alcohol use. Children with fathers who abuse drugs are also at greater risk for substance use. Research points to the importance of parental involvement as a protective factor against alcohol and substance abuse.<sup>22</sup>

Parents with risk factors received less residential time with their children. 11% of fathers who filed Residential Time Summary Reports (RTSRs) in Washington had at least one risk factor. The most common risk factor was chemical dependency at 5%.<sup>23</sup> This shows how chemical dependency can create a barrier in fathers spending time with their children.

## **Physical Health**

Children who experience a lack of father involvement are at increased risk for adverse health outcomes. Father absence negatively affects birth weight and infant mortality rates. Father absence leads to a range of poor health outcomes, including a higher risk for obesity. Nontraditional family structure, and father absence in particular, is a strong indicator of poor physical health outcomes for children.<sup>24</sup>

In Washington, 38% of adults do not meet the CDC recommendations for moderate or vigorous physical activity at work or during leisure time and no significant change in physical activity has been observed over the past eight years.

Since 2001, the percentage of Washington adults that have met or exceeded recommendations for moderate or vigorous physical activity has been consistently higher than the national average.<sup>25</sup>

## **Mental Health/Suicide**

Suicide is linked to weak paternal bonds, including father-child conflict, and to father absence that results from military deployment. Lower perceived parental care and paternal support predict suicidal ideation, and men whose fathers committed suicide are more likely to commit suicide. While research is limited, there is some evidence pointing to the role of fathers and paternal care in predicting suicide risk.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Father Facts 7<sup>th</sup> Edition. National Fatherhood Initiative. 2015.

<sup>22</sup> Father Facts 7<sup>th</sup> Edition. National Fatherhood Initiative. 2015.

<sup>23</sup> Washington State Center for Court Research, *Residential Time Summary Report*, 2013.

<sup>24</sup> Father Facts 7<sup>th</sup> Edition. National Fatherhood Initiative. 2015.

<sup>25</sup> Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System.

<sup>26</sup> Father Facts 7<sup>th</sup> Edition. National Fatherhood Initiative. 2015.



## Trauma

The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) Study has shown that ACEs, including child abuse and neglect, are related to poor mental and physical health outcomes in adults. The stress of ACEs leads to these poor outcomes, including negative impact on brain development and weakened immune systems. The Family Policy Council and Community Networks, many local public health agencies, and communities in Washington have been working to prevent and reduce the negative impact of ACEs for many years now.<sup>27</sup> Helping men improve their fathering skills can help reduce the amount of ACEs their child experiences.

## Behavioral

Family structure is a significant predictor of children's cognitive development, emotional well-being, externalizing behaviors, and adolescent risk behaviors. Multiple transitions experienced by children in single-mother households can have adverse affects on children's behavioral health. Studies point to differences based on gender, with some studies pointing to increased risk for girls. Father absence impacts children as young as toddler age and continues to lead to adverse behavioral outcomes through adolescence.<sup>28</sup>

## Spiritual Development

A study in 2000 showed that if a father does not go to church, no matter how faithful his wife's devotions, only one child in 50 will become a regular worshipper. If a father does go regularly, regardless of the practice of the mother, between two-thirds and three-quarters of their children will become churchgoers (regular and irregular). If a father goes but irregularly to church, regardless of this wife's devotion, between a half and two-thirds of their offspring will find themselves coming to church regularly or occasionally.

A non-practicing mother with a regular father will see a minimum of two-thirds of her children ending up at church. In contrast, a non-practicing father with a regular mother will see two-thirds of his children never darken the church door. If his wife is similarly negligent that figure rises to 80 percent!<sup>29</sup>

## Marriage/Divorce Rates and Relationship with Mom

In 2014, more than three million children lived with cohabiting parents; nearly triple the number in 1996. Children born to cohabiting parents are much more likely than children born to married parents to experience their parents' separation or divorce, which often leads to father absence. Despite that fact and that a much higher proportion of Americans believe that cohabitation is bad for society than believe it is good for society, there has been, since the 2000s, an increase in nonmarital birth rates to cohabitating, unwed parents. There is increased father involvement with children when fathers live with their children's mothers, regardless of whether fathers are married to mothers. Additionally, some recent research finds unwed cohabitating fathers are equally as involved as married fathers.

Divorce continues to be a significant driver of father absence despite the fact that the rate of divorce has plateaued in recent decades. In 2012 the divorce rate was 3.4 per 1,000 people in the United States. For families that experience divorce, it is a difficult transition and one that affects every member of the family. Divorced fathers have to overcome additional hurdles—

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<sup>27</sup> Washington State Department of Health, *Child Abuse and Neglect Brief*, 2011.

<sup>28</sup> Father Facts 7<sup>th</sup> Edition. National Fatherhood Initiative. 2015.

<sup>29</sup> *Population Studies* No. 31, Volume 2; *The Demographic Characteristics of National Minorities in Certain European States*, ed. Werner Haug, Paul Compton, and Youssef Courbage, published by the Council of Europe Directorate General III, Social Cohesion, Strasbourg, January 2000.

including their view that the court system favors mothers—in order to have the level of involvement they want with their children. There is a split regarding how divorced fathers view their level of involvement with their children based on whether they identify as a full-time or part-time parent.

Slightly more than 40% of all births in the United States are to unmarried women. Antecedents of nonmarital fatherhood include race and ethnicity, education, and socioeconomic disadvantage. Additionally, females born to unmarried parents are statistically at higher risk for having a nonmarital birth than their counterparts. While there has been a decrease in nonmarital childbearing among teen mothers, there has been a rapid increase in the proportion of nonmarital births to women in their twenties and thirties. As children of unmarried fathers age, they experience declining involvement of their fathers.<sup>30</sup>

## **Cultural Beliefs and Fatherhood Related to Immigration**

Data has emerged around the concept of the “new” father. With this emergence, societal expectations and role strain for fathers is increasing. Fathers are still expected to be the breadwinner, but also an equal partner in caring for the home. Fathers are expected now more than ever to spend ample time with their children. There have been recent shifts among fathers in their attitudes on fatherhood with more fathers developing nontraditional attitudes. Studies on lower-income fathers indicate that while these fathers feel marginalized, they still want to provide financial assistance to their children. Most fathers, including lower income fathers, place importance on the ability to financially provide for their children.<sup>31</sup>

A small but growing body of research suggests the presence of distinct fatherhood and fathering experiences among Latino families. Latino fathers have strengths, but also face challenges likely linked to their own and their children’s well-being. The majority of Hispanic fathers live with all their children and their romantic partner. Few have fathered children with more than one woman, and most are employed – characteristics that are associated with positive child and adult well-being. On the other hand, most Latino fathers are low-income and few have obtained more than a high school education – characteristics associated with poorer child outcomes and limited economic mobility. There was also divergent patterns of opportunity and risk (e.g., educational attainment, interactions with the criminal justice system) by immigration status, highlighting important variability among Latinos that researchers, practitioners, and policymakers should be aware of to better understand and serve Latino populations in the United States.<sup>32</sup>

In nearly two-thirds of families who filed the Residential Time Summary Reports (RTSRs) in Washington, nearly two-thirds (65.6%) of children were scheduled to spend more time with their mother than their father.<sup>33</sup>

## **Benton-Franklin’s Leader Focus Group Results**

19 Benton-Franklin community leaders participated in two focus groups held in Kennewick, WA on March 5, 2019. These individuals represented a variety of sectors of the community as well as organizations serving children and families.

The community sectors represented included:

- Community Activist
- Social Service

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<sup>30</sup> Father Facts 7<sup>th</sup> Edition. National Fatherhood Initiative. 2015.

<sup>31</sup> Father Facts 7<sup>th</sup> Edition. National Fatherhood Initiative. 2015.

<sup>32</sup> *A Portrait of Latino Fathers: Strengths and Challenges*, National Research Center on Hispanic Children & Families, 2017.

<sup>33</sup> Washington State Center for Court Research, *Residential Time Summary Report*, 2013.

- City/County Government
- Health
- Faith
- Law Enforcement
- Education
- Business

The purpose of these two-hour focus groups was to collect data from community leaders that would help to identify the existing needs and the local assets that can be mobilized to promote responsible fatherhood. In addition to informing the mobilization process (e.g. *Leadership Summit on Fatherhood, Benton-Franklin Action Plan to Increase Responsible Fatherhood*), the data collected will be used to complement the secondary data in this report and in the development of the “community assets map” for Benton-Franklin.

The objectives of the focus groups are to identify the following areas: 1) the need to address father absence in the counties; 2) the services and programs for fathers that exist in the counties and the service and program gaps; 3) the assets in the community that can be mobilized to promote responsible fatherhood; 4) the leaders and organizations in sectors that are often a challenge to get to attend a Leadership Summit on Fatherhood (LSF) to ensure that these leaders and organizations are invited to attend the LSF; and 5) the collection of information critical to attracting funding for a sustainable statewide fatherhood initiative.

The focus groups were asked the following questions which are based on the objectives of the focus groups. A summary and an analysis of the group’s responses are under each question.

*The first four questions are specific to identifying the need to address father absence in Benton-Franklin counties.*

- **Is there a need to address father absence in Benton-Franklin Counties?**

**Summary:** 100% of participants agreed that there is a need to address father absence in Benton-Franklin counties.

- **What are the most pressing needs in Benton-Franklin in addressing father absence?**

**Summary:** The following list captures all of the leaders’ responses:

- Supporting healthy relationships between moms and dads (e.g. healthy marriages, co-parenting)
- Listening to the voices of children who are asking for their absent fathers to be more involved
- Education on how important engaged fatherhood really is, especially for fathers who are physically present, but emotionally absent for a variety of reasons.
- Employers have tremendous power on younger men if they would use it, both in modeling and setting expectations
- Identifying teen dads and connecting them with support
- For teen dad population, it’s showing up to school every day. Do counselors know their dads? It’s not as easy to identify boys who are dads as it is when girls are pregnant. They don’t know what to do and if they don’t have support, they will run from their responsibilities
- Integrating education into high schools for young men (e.g. what it means to be a dad, what it means to be in a relationship, how to interact with mom)
- Resources for kids who don’t have fathers (e.g. positive male role models, unified and strong sex education)
- Audit of the larger community systems that can make being an involved father harder (government, private, societal)

- A clear answer to “Why not be an absentee father?” (e.g. “What’s wrong with me doing my own thing and leaving a trail of kids behind me?”) The answer needs to be accessible across cultures, social networks and faith
- Education and awareness for single moms who are overwhelmed trying to raise kids on her own, she isn’t performing the way she would like to and understanding the impact not having dad’s support has on her parenting
- Increasing father-friendliness and male staff in healthcare and education
- Identifying resources for dads and letting dads know where they can turn so they can make healthy choices
- A secure family or non-family social structure for dads of all ages (e.g. mentors, parents)
- Help dads understand their responsibilities
- Have a parenting classes available for new dads and dads going through a divorce to learn what the other parent’s role is in their child’s life.
- Dads struggling to find work (e.g. provide support in the process of training, apprenticeship, exploration of his skill sets). Help them to navigate and know where to go for this support
- Legal support
- Fatherhood advocacy, like DARE. Put all resources for dads in one place
- Does 211 (community resource number) know about all of the local fatherhood resources if a someone calls looking for them

**Analysis:** All of these answers fall into the following four themes:

- 1) Education and awareness on why fathers are important**
  - a. Messages, services, and programs should target young men in high schools, dads, single moms, organizations, and businesses
  - b. Education and awareness efforts should explore using NFI’s Father Friendly Check-Up™ to assess the father-readiness of social service, healthcare, and education organizations
- 2) Education for dads on what it means to be a great man and great dad**
  - a. Need to address critical areas to help dads accomplish this:
    - i. Healthy marriages
    - ii. Co-parenting
    - iii. Sex education
    - iv. Mentorship
    - v. Parenting skills
    - vi. Employment
    - vii. Legal issues
- 3) Need to establish one place where dads can go to find whatever resources or services they need**
  - a. Some strategies to consider:
    - i. 211 is a community resource that should include all programs and services for dads
    - ii. Create a fatherhood advocacy group similar to DARE, where all resources are in one place
- 4) Need to address systemic barriers that prevent involved, responsible, and committed fathers**
  - a. Employers
  - b. Government
  - c. Societal

These four areas provide a great framework to prioritize tasks during the Phase 3 action planning. Different objectives and tasks could be categorized under the sector that would be best positioned to address the tasks. Moreover, some objectives could cross over into multiple sectors. A campaign to hire more male teachers, for example, could cross over

the social service, media, and education sectors. This would allow a more integrated approach to changing social norms around the issue.

- **If you had to pick one need that is the greatest, what would be picked and why?**

**Summary:** Empowerment in exposing dads to know the benefits of being an involved father. Defining what involvement is. Getting all of the sectors involved in increasing father involvement. Helping dads challenge the “power of the normal” (e.g. turning off the TV to spend time with his child) and understanding the power of the moment. Community institutions need to take a proactive approach to engage fathers. Father-friendly schools are critical in breaking intergenerational father absence.

**Analysis:** Most of the leader’s responses relate to inspiring dads to improve their fathering skills and be more “in the moment” with their children. This is no easy task, given it requires a lot of self-awareness and changes in behavior that has been their status quo for their entire lives. Programs like NFI’s 24/7 Dad® provide the means to facilitate this development in a group-based setting, while Fathering in 15™ can be a great resource for dads not able or willing to attend a group. Leaders may want to look at expanding or adding these programs. The local media can play a critical role by providing donated airtime, billboards, and print space for a public service campaign to send consistent messages of what it means to be an involved, responsible, and committed father.

- **Is there a type of father in Benton-Franklin who is most in need of being a responsible father?**

**Summary:**

- Dads who grew up without a father
- Teen dads
- Dad who were just recently released from jail or prison
- Dads who don’t know they need help
- Divorced dads
- Dads who are recovering addicts

**Analysis:** Research shows that boys who grow up without their fathers are more likely to fall into all of the other categories that leaders stated in the focus group. So, by focusing on the teen dads, incarcerated dads, divorced dads, and dads who are recovering addicts, leaders will be able to break the cycle of intergenerational father absence. It is difficult for a man to know what being a good dad looks like if he didn’t have a good model growing up. So, leaders should look at connecting dads to existing mentoring programs or creating new ones specifically for dads. Peer-to-peer support groups are another great way to help dads create new support networks that can help them break patterns of unhealthy behavior.

- **Do other leaders in Benton-Franklin County believe that there is a need to address father absence?**

**Summary:**

- There’s more of a vale, like out of sight, out of mind. Inspire responsible fathers to inspire fathers who aren’t involved. Issue isn’t talked about by school leaders
- They appreciate the importance of fatherhood, but there’s an overemphasis on the provider role at the exclusion of nurturing and guiding roles
- Some community leaders don’t know where to start and there’s a capacity issue
- They’re not typically aware during their daily activities, but once someone tells them, they respond that it is important

- Small businesses are taking action on other issues, but not with responsible fatherhood
- In education field, need to be made aware that it's an issue, but then they agree
- Business leaders know father issues exist, but it's not on their radar
- Sheriffs and law enforcement know it's an issue, but don't know what to do about it

**Analysis:** The overarching theme here is that leaders know fatherhood is important, but either have competing priorities or don't know where to start. Phase 2 of the CMA can help by giving leaders who don't know how to get involved with an easy next step of simply attending the Leadership Summit. By attending this event, previously uninvolved leaders will become part of facilitated discussions that will inform the action plan and help them see which tasks they have the capacity to fulfill.

*The objective of questions 5 through 8 is to identify current services and programs for fathers that exist in the state and any gaps in the existing continuum of services and programs.*

- **Has there ever been a countywide initiative or an initiative in any community in Benton-Franklin to address father absence/promote responsible fatherhood?**

**Summary:** No one was aware of a city or countywide initiative, however, there is a statewide initiative that is just getting started in May of 2018. A bunch of community leaders, activists, organizations, and state department heads got together at a roundtable discussion around the same things that were discussed at this focus group (e.g. what are the roadblocks? what are we lacking?) DSHS sponsored the kick-off and developed some next steps. Had a couple of meetings since reinforcing things that needed to stay focused on. The keynote speaker focused a lot on the message "pay your child support, your child will be happy. Trying to interface the departments between DSHS and DCS because they are currently siloed. The location of these initiative meetings is logistically hard for Benton-Franklin leaders to attend.

**Analysis:** Benton-Franklin leaders should look for ways to integrate the objectives of the statewide initiative into the county action plan. Likewise, there may be objectives of the county action plan that can be integrated into the statewide plan. For example, the state initiative may be able to impact local policies and systems that can help local leaders accomplish their goals.

- **Please tell me about the services and programs for fathers in Benton-Franklin County**

**Summary:**

- You Medical has services that target new and expectant dads, training in Benton-Franklin jail
  - Learning and earning program for new and expectant dads
  - Fathering in 15™ for one-on-one situations
  - 24/7 Dad®
  - InsideOut Dad®
- Kennewick School District offers WatchDOGS. It's not in all schools yet, but it's growing
- Richland School District offers All Pro Dads
- RISE UP for young men has masculinity topics
- Bethel church co-denominational collaborative to address critical issues dads face in small groups, for mentorship and discipleship
- Catholic Charities Prepared Program that has a fatherhood component
- Grads program at Tri-Tech

**Analysis:** You Medical is currently providing most of the father-specific programs and services in Benton-Franklin counties. Leaders should assess You Medical's capacity to serve the demand of dads, especially as other sectors get involved and demand increases. A question to consider is whether You Medical should expand or if additional programs and services should be provided by other organizations. The education sector could also look at expanding the WatchDOGS program since it's not in all schools yet and already has a track record.

- **Are there any monthly or annual events for fathers in the state or in any of the communities in Benton-Franklin?**

**Summary:**

- Columbia and Calvary churches hold Father/Daughter Dances

**Analysis:** This is an area of opportunity for Benton-Franklin counties since fatherhood events are a great way to reinforce the value of responsible fatherhood. It says to the fathers that they matter and the important role they play in their families. One leader said these events are hard to mobilize. If dads have their kids, they don't want to go and do something else. One great strategy is do an event on Father's Day weekend similar to NFI's Golden Dads event. Leaders can select one, or multiple locations, where dads are likely to be (e.g. the zoo, sporting events, movie theaters) and have volunteers looking for men in the act of being a good dad (e.g. holding their kids' hands, laughing or talking with his kids). When they identify a good dad, provide them with a bag of goodies, gift certificates, and tip cards on how to be a great dad. Many of the different sectors can be engaged, such as: local media, businesses, social service agencies, and faith-based sectors.

- **Are there services or programs for fathers that don't exist that are needed in Benton-Franklin?**

**Summary:**

- Not aware of services outside of their normal existence that they could identify
- Don't know what you don't know
- Everything is on the table because they don't know. Could go into any setting and help them be more father-friendly
- Substance abuse services
- CDC has women's centers, workforce programs, and scholarships for single moms, but not for dads
- Reentry programs and support
- Spanish-speaking groups
- Someone to go into the schools and talk to the kids; to be available
- Relationship and sexual education training for teens and young men

**Analysis:** Some leaders stated that they weren't sure if any services or programs needed created because they didn't know what already existed. While this REAPS report has started to address that issue, this response indicates that an ongoing effort should be put into place to update the services and programs identified as new ones are discovered. This also reinforces the importance of establishing one place for dads and service providers to go to find such services and programs. The specific programs and services listed in this section should be prioritized during the action plan stage.

*The objective of the following question is to identify the assets in the community that can be mobilized to promote responsible fatherhood. The responses are divided into various sectors since the hallmark of the CMA is to broaden the number of sectors actively involved in this initiative and increase the engagement level.*

- **What assets or resources exist in Benton-Franklin that can be mobilized or used to promote responsible fatherhood?**

**Social Service Sector**

- WIC
- Nurse-Family Partnership
- Engaging broader family units to work with dads
- UMedical
- Mentorship for boys (Ignite program)

**Education Sector**

- Preschools and Head Starts

**Business Sector**

- Chamber of Commerce is doing another community revisioning effort called “My Try 2013” a vibrant livable community as one of its six targets
- Local businesses

**Faith Sector**

- Church small groups

**Courts/Legal/Judicial Sector**

- None identified

**Media Sector**

- None identified

**Civic Sector**

- None identified

**Health Sector**

- Hospitals (e.g. getting them information and resources that are designed specifically for dads)
- OB offices

**Philanthropic Sector**

- None identified

**Analysis:** Leaders should focus on the existing assets listed here to mobilize in the social service, education, business, faith, and health sectors, while engaging those sectors that were not identified as having any existing assets and identify possible ones that were missed. This will become easier after Phase 2, since the LSF will expand leaders in those missing sectors.

*The objective of the following questions is to identify leaders and organizations in sectors that are often a challenge to get to attend a Leadership Summit on Fatherhood (LSF) to ensure that these leaders and organizations are invited to attend the LSF.*

- **Which organizations should send a representative to the summit?**

- Nursing educators
- Law enforcement (chiefs and sheriffs)
- County commissioners
- Pick A Hand Contractor (business)
- CH2M (business)
- Mission Support Alliance (business)



- Radio stations (Children’s Miracle Network does a week-long campaign for NICU parents)
  - Local KEPR TV (President of the school PTO)
  - VFW and VA for veterans
  - Assistant superintendents and publicity staff from school districts
  - Providence Hospital (hospital administrators)
  - Women’s Leadership Business Council
- **Which individuals/people in the following sectors should attend the summit?  
Please give me their names**
    - Bill Lapropsin (Local business)
    - Craig Urkses (Local business)
    - Mission Support Alliance CFO
    - Dennis Yule (Retired judge)
    - Judge Cameron Mitchell
    - Kedrick Jackson (CBC Board)
    - Pastors from Bethel
    - Pastors from C3
    - Mayor Matt Watkins
    - Rowara Alvarez (Pasco City Council)
    - Martin Valdez (Tri Cities Community Health)
    - Hime Silvo
    - Sheriff Hatcher
    - Broetje Orchard Family
    - Bethel outreach director
    - Pediatrician
    - OB
    - Prison representative
    - Chamber of commerce, all 3 members
    - One of the bigger wineries (business and philanthropic)
    - Alexandria Berks (KEPR local news anchor)
    - Jessie Campos (used to run gangs, but now helps others get out of gangs)
    - Health club owners

**Analysis:** These lists should be referred to during the LSF planning.

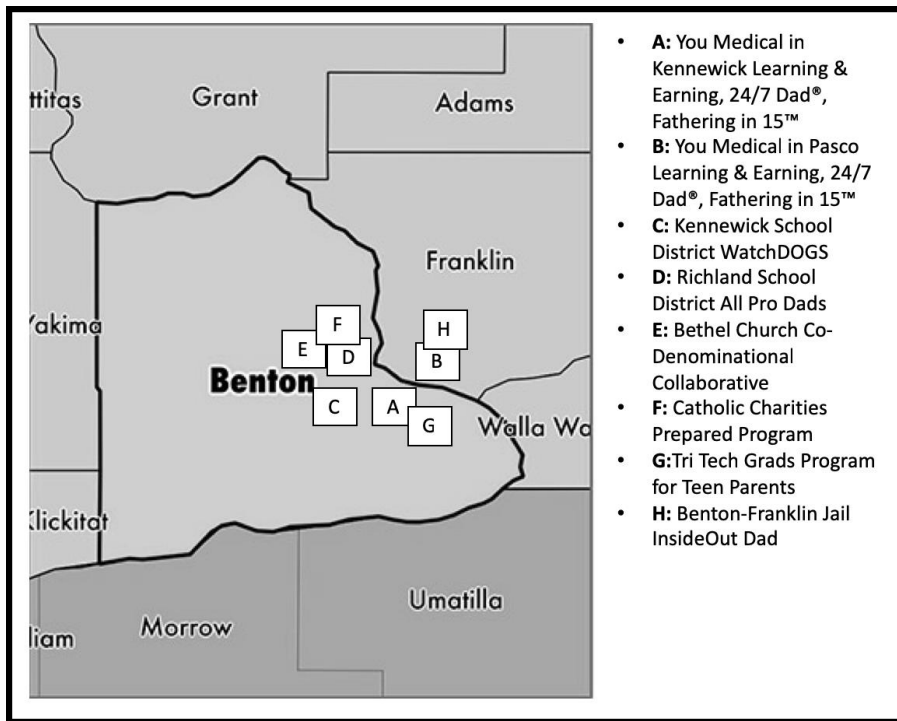
*The objective of the following questions is to collect information critical to attracting funding for a sustainable countywide fatherhood initiative.*

- **Are there any private family or community foundations that could be approached to fund an initiative?**
  - Three Rivers Community Foundation
  - United Way Workplace Giving
- **Are there any corporate giving programs or foundations that could be approached to fund an initiative?**
  - Three major contractors
- **Are there any philanthropists/wealthy individuals who might be open to funding an initiative?**
  - Jordan Chaney works with young boys and written books
  - Broetje family

- **Are there any communities within the county with leadership that would be open to funding a position that would focus on promoting responsible fatherhood and could attract funders to fund it? For example, one with a mayor, county executive, or state legislator who has a passion for father involvement or improving child well-being?**
  - None identified
- **Do any of the funders within the county or a community within the county have a history of collaborating to fund services, programs, or initiatives?**
  - Law and Justice Tax Money (Benton County)
- **Is there an influential organization that secures a lot of funding from multiple sources (e.g. public and private), that operates across the county or in one of the communities, and that would be willing to seek a large amount of funding to implement a countywide initiative?**
  - None identified

**Analysis:** Once leaders have put together the first draft of the Benton-Franklin Action Plan, these funding sources should be explored to fund portions of the initiative. As a reminder, NFI provided a PowerPoint presentation (with facilitator’s notes) to participants of the CMA workshop entitled, “The 7 Knows of Fundraising” that should be presented to the Advisory Committee as soon as the action plan is completed.

## **Benton-Franklin County Assets Map**



## **Conclusions**

Benton County has a father absence rate 3% below the national average, while Franklin County is 4% below the national average. Even though rates are slightly better than the national average, there are still significant numbers of absentee fathers in Benton-Franklin counties and still illustrates that father absence is a significant force at work within the two counties.

Research shows a direct correlation between father absence and many of the social challenges facing Benton-Franklin Counties' families such as: poverty, teen pregnancy, child abuse, domestic abuse, education, and drug and alcohol abuse. Although members of the focus groups agreed that there is a need to address father absence in Benton-Franklin Counties and that father absence affects the entire community, there is still a lot of work to do engaging leaders outside of this leadership group. The more awareness is raised around the vital role that fathers play in breaking the cycle of these issues crucial to the health of Benton-Franklin Counties, the more community leaders will be motivated to become part of the solution.

Four themes emerged around the most pressing needs surrounding fatherhood in Benton-Franklin Counties: 1) Education and awareness on why fathers are important; 2) Education for dads on what it means to be a great man and dad; 3) Need to establish one place where dads can go to find whatever resources or services they need; and 4) Need to address systemic barriers that prevent involved, responsible, and committed fathers. NFI believes Benton-Franklin Counties are in a great position to address each of these needs based on the assets mapping process revealed in this report.

The biggest assets that are already engaged around fatherhood fall under the social service sector and include the Benton-Franklin Health District as the current lead agency for this initiative, and a successful 24/7 Dad® and InsideOut Dad® group network run by You Medical. There are many assets available that aren't currently doing any father-specific activities that can be expanded to reach fathers such as: Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) programs that serve birth to 5; Nurse-Family Partnership; Ignite mentoring program; preschools & Head Starts; Chamber of Commerce; local businesses; and hospitals.

This report also reveals that there are many sectors vastly under-represented in the fatherhood work. NFI recommends focusing on the following gaps within the first 6 months of Phase 3:

- Engage the local school districts since there are clear father factors in a child's educational development;
- Share with business leaders how involved fathers can affect their bottom line;
- Create formal partnerships with local judges who either mandate or strongly encourage dads to attend fatherhood programs in exchange for the judges' assistance in addressing the fathers' wants or needs (e.g. gaining access and visitation to see their children more frequently);
- Ask media outlets to cover father-friendly events and stories and serve on the multi-sector planning committee that will shape the *Benton-Franklin Action Plan to Promote Responsible Fatherhood*;
- Work with civic organizations to integrate responsible fatherhood resources and raise awareness through their meetings, events, and activities;
- Create additional fatherhood events throughout the year to celebrate fathers and raise awareness about their irreplaceable role in children's lives; and
- Target maternity wards and pregnancy centers to implement a program for new and expectant fathers.

In summary, Benton-Franklin Counties are well ahead of the majority of counties that NFI has worked with across the country due to the great work of the Benton-Franklin Health District and You Medical, which have stepped up and taken ownership of the CMA process.

This report concludes Phase 1 of Benton-Franklin Counties' CMA process. The focus will now turn to Phases 2 (e.g. Leadership Summit on Fatherhood) and 3 (*Benton-Franklin Action Plan to Promote Responsible Fatherhood*).