



# **Fatherhood Research & Practice Network Webinar**

## **Engaging State Legislators about Fatherhood**

### **March 19, 2019**

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### **Presenter's Notes**

#### **How to identify & cultivate legislators who might be influential, champions and supporters?**

1. Understand the structure, role, and purpose of the legislative body of government.
2. Connect with members who you may have something in common with, e.g. geographic location, field of study, faith belief, gender, color, hobby, etc.
3. Be willing to share your passion about a given issue.
4. Be respectful at all times.
5. Don't be afraid to educate or have a strong clear opinion that is supported data, experience and perception.

#### **How to communicate with legislators about Fatherhood**

1. Provide a contextual forum of some type (Symposium, Workshop, Formal Lecture, Conference, Seminar, Webinar and an Informal Discussion) that lays the ground work for why the topic is important.
2. Follow-up in writing (emails, text or formal letter), telephone calls, and visits to provide specific information requested during the contextual forum, including clarification of any items discussed.
3. Be willing to include as a part of your message the concerns of those you seek to advocate for your cause.

#### **How to Pursue Funding Opportunities**

1. Start with research funding opportunities that might support the initiative (Change Episode) in question.

2. Speak to those that manage said funding opportunities
3. Don't be afraid to propose to those who are responsible for the success of systems you would like to see change, e.g. Joint Ventures, Demonstration Opportunities, Program Evaluation Initiatives, and Project Management of all or components of Systems you would like to see change.

### **How do you convince legislators to support Father Engagement?**

1. Tying Fatherhood with issues that impact child and family well-being.
2. Show impact, especially if negative, on Legislators' District and the people that s/he serves.
3. Offer suggestions for reversing negative impact
4. Be willing to assist in the development of a Campaign around the issue, assist in the planning of a Press Conference, sponsor a collaborative stakeholder Breakfast for legislators, conduct a Community Public Hearing on the topic on behalf of the legislator, meet one-on-one with opposition leaders, and hold a Summit on the issue, and perhaps a Town Hall Meeting to bring general attention to the issue, as oppose to a public hearing on a particular topic.

### **Useful Partners for a Legislative Appeal**

1. For THE COMMISSION, it is primarily the Children, Youth and Family Systems of Care including the following: Criminal and Juvenile Justice Systems; Behavioral Health Service Network; Offices of Child Support Enforcement; Dependent & Delinquent Child Welfare Services; Early Childhood Development Programs; Education System K-12; Employment and Training Initiatives; Housing Services for Men; Parent Education Service Providers; and the Public Health System.

### **Can the legislature plan a role? Any advice or ideas you can offer?**

1. Yes and Yes.
  - The legislature and individual legislators can become advocates and champions for Fatherhood – under the banner of gender equity – a principle that our country fundamentally believes in.
  - THE COMMISSION and its Convening Partner the Symposium Organizing Committee (SOC) at next week's Press Conference (Wednesday, March 27<sup>th</sup> 2019) will be urging through formal recommendation that the Pennsylvania General Assembly adopt a concurrent resolution agreeing that prospective legislation regarding children and families will recognize, foster, and promote the value of fathers' contribution to the well-being of their children. There are currently six legislators who serve as supporters of this initiative, three State Senators & three State House of Representatives.