6/14

TO: CR
DF

FROM: Andrea

Here's the short version of the Interagency Forum report released @ fatherhood summit. I'm getting full rept from HHS.

Thought the Wash. Times headline on this was pretty interesting -- I guess it refers to the ongoing research/reports called for in attached. I don't recall anything in VP speech about issuing "regular reports" on fatherhood, though (at least the version I saw

NURTURING FATHERHOOD: IMPROVING DATA AND RESEARCH ON MALE FERTILITY, FAMILY FORMATION AND FATHERHOOD

I believe that all children can benefit from the involved presence of a father in their lives. I commend the member agencies of the Forum, the public and private research community and the public and private funders who have made such an outstanding contribution to our understanding of what we know about fathers' involvement in the lives of children and to what more we need to know. Working together I know that we will make a better world for all of America's children.

AL GORE
Vice President of the
United States of America

New research findings underscore the critical male role in fertility and family formation and the role of fathers in child development.

Concern about child well-being has pushed the study of fathers beyond research on nonmarital childbearing, child support and child poverty to the investigation of the quality and quantity of father involvement and its effect on children and families. This growing body of research has called into question the popular assumption that the primary, if not only, contribution fathers make to their children's lives is financial support.

In January of 1996, the Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics began to explore the adequacy of research and data collection on the issue of fatherhood. Building on a request from President Clinton that Federal Agencies do more to support the role of fathers in families, the Forum undertook a review of the capacity of the federal statisticalsystem to conceptualize, measure and gather information from men about their fertility and roles as fathers, as well as to identify ways to improve data collection and research in this area.

Major activities of this review were: a town meeting to explore the research and policy issues related to fathering and male fertility; research conference examining developmental, ethnographic and demographic perspectives on fatherhood; a conference presenting quantitative research findings on father involvement; and a workshop exploring methodological issues in the study of fatherhood. These activities culminated in a conference in March 1997 on improving data and research on fathering, fertility, and family formation.

The report based on these activities, *Nurturing Fatherhood: Improving Data and Research on Male Fertility, Family Formation and Fatherhood,* has now been published. This report contains a summary of the March Conference proceedings, the research papers written for the conference and the recommendations for data collection activities endorsed by the Forum.

These Forum activities and the *Nurturing Fatherhood* report represent the collaborative work of federal staff, noted researchers, advocates and foundation partners. The effort has been a public/private partnership that serves as a model for the Forum's goal of developing a complete and comprehensive picture of family life and child well-being.

The findings from the Forum review indicated that fathers are absent from the lives of many children, and that both father absence and father presence affect child and family development in multiple ways.

- One-third of children are born out of wedlock, and many children born to married couples experience the divorce of their parents. Increases in nonmarital childbearing and divorce reflect complex economic, social and cultural changes that as yet are not completely understood.

- After increasing for several decades, sexual activity among adolescent boys (as well as girls), leveled or declined in the early 1990s. Even though most adolescent males have positive attitudes about responsible sex and parenting, few pregnancy prevention programs have sought to involve them, and contraceptive options and reproductive health services for boys are extremely limited. Much more needs to be known about the factors that influence male sexual and reproductive behavior.

- The circumstances of children's conception and birth affect fathers' support of and relationship with their children. Indeed, the chances that a man will become a father are influenced by the nature of his relationships with women, and being a father affects the course of his intimate relationships. Research shows these interconnections with regard to marriage, but we know very little about how being a father affects and is affected by the relationships of unmarried couples.

- Some fathers spend considerable time with their children, but many men do not live with their children and/or are not highly involved in their children's lives. Fathers who live with their children spend more time taking care of them than non-resident fathers, but divorce and non- marital childbearing have reduced the amount of time that fathers overall spend with their children over the course of childhood. Almost half of non-resident fathers do not have annual contact with their children.

- Marriage confers important health and economic benefits to individuals as well as to the children that married couples raise. However, marriage is increasingly delayed or foregone. This is particularly true in disadvantaged populations, where economic constraints and changing values and norms have increasingly distanced marriage as a viable option.

- The absence of their biological father from the home has adverse consequences for children's school achievement, labor force attachment, early childbearing, and risk-taking behaviors. Family structure makes a difference, even when income is taken into account. While most children raised by dad alone or mom alone make a successful transition from childhood into adulthood, having both parents is better than having one parent.

- Research that separates father involvement from mother involvement indicates that fathers have an independent effect on child well-being. For example, the father's parenting style, level of closeness, monitoring, and other family processes affect the child's development.

- Positive effects of father involvement have been a fairly consistent finding in studies of two-parent families. Now there is a growing body of research that

shows that financial support plus the positive involvement of a father, including cooperation between parents, increases positive outcomes for children who do not live with both of their parents.

- Fathers affect children's behavior, but children affect fathers' behavior as well. Married men with children work more hours and have higher earnings than other men. Competence and satisfaction as a parent are also associated with positive effects on fathers' own development and participation in the larger community.

In addition to identifying what is currently known about fathering, the review identified many ways that data collection and research on male fertility and fathering could be improved. From those findings and recommendations, the Forum identified ten targets of opportunity that represented the most promising federal activities for significantly increasing our understanding of male fertility, family formation and fathering and their effects on child and adult well-being.

Targets of Opportunity

Publish a report based on the Forum's review on the state of data collection and research on male fertility, family formation and fathering. This report *Nurturing Fatherhood* has been published.

Publish in 1999 a baseline fatherhood indicators report that includes information on male fertility, family formation and fathering.

Include measures of whether fathers live with and have contact with their children in surveys and routine administrative data collection systems. Develop additional measures of father-child interaction to be incorporated in data collection and research as feasible.

Increase our understanding of fertility decisions and the dynamics of family formation by including men in the National Survey of Family Growth sponsored by the National Center for Health Statistics.

Expand our understanding of fathers' relationship to child development and school readiness by including a module on the involvement of resident and non-resident fathers in the Early Childhood Longitudinal Birth Cohort Study (ECLS-B) sponsored by the National Center for Education Statistics.

Increase our understanding of how sexual activity, fertility, marriage, and parenthood (including child support and child care responsibilities) affect educational attainment and labor force participation for men by including key fertility and family variables on the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY-97) sponsored by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Conduct basic and methodological research on the meaning and nature of fathering for low-income men and their children using the Early Head Start Research and Evaluation Project as a laboratory for learning.

Test, as part of a national survey, the experimental method for identifying individuals who are tenuously attached to households developed by the Bureau of the Census and piloted in the Living Situation Survey.

Explore with the Departments of Justice and Defense the possibilities of including military and prison populations in some national surveys. A significant group of

fathers are missing from national household surveys because men in the military and men in prison are not interviewed.

Explore the possibilities of using state administrative data to augment national survey data about fathers.

The investment in these ten opportunities will have high payoff for understanding the dynamics of fatherhood and for increasing our understanding of how children are affected by the family and community context in which they live. This effort has already facilitated additional federal agency collaborations in terms of shared financial commitments and joint staff efforts.

CONTINUING THE PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP

The organized interdisciplinary plan adopted by the Forum for improving information on male fertility, family formation and fatherhood has the potential to cost less than ad hoc project development, or to cost no more but offer a substantial increase in the quality and quantity of available information. By building on agencies' existing plans and by coordinating question development across agency surveys, inefficiencies and redundancies can be reduced. Up-to-date and complete data about the role of men who are or who may become fathers will serve to inform public policy in years to come.

The ultimate success of these opportunities will depend on the continued participation of foundation and academic and nonprofit research partners. The development of an overall plan and the publication of *Nurturing Fatherhood* will mobilize resources and focus the attention of foundations and research experts on activities likely to produce substantial payoffs. Support for this effort has been strong and is expected to continue.

There are many other surveys, data collection activities, and research efforts that will continue to be very important in increasing our understanding of male fertility, family formation and fathering. It is important that this work be recognized, discussed, and incorporated into the ongoing fatherhood activities of the Forum. By working together to push the analytic limits of our current data collection efforts and to thoughtfully expand new data collection efforts, we can all contribute to the well-being of the children of the twenty-first century.

The report *NURTURING FATHERHOOD* is the result of a monumental effort by government staff, the research community, and foundation partners to improve data collection and research on male fertility, family formation and fathering.

Especially appreciated are the contributions of the following: the National Partnership for Reinventing Government, the NICHD Family and Child Well-being Research Network; the Conference Co-ordinating Committee; the March Conference Work Groups (Work Group on Family Formation and Male Fertility, Work Group on Conceptualizing Male Parenting, Work Group on Methodology, and the Work Group on Targets of Opportunity and Tradeoffs); and the funders: the National Institute for Child Health and Human Development, the Ford Foundation, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and the Kaiser Family Foundation.

Copies of the report can be purchased for $19.95 from:

Child Trends, Inc.
4301 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20008
fax: 202-362-5533

The executive summary of the report is available at <www.childtrends.org>. The full text of the report is available at *<http://aspe.os.dhhs.gov/ fathers/ fhoodini/ htm>*.