



Today's Dads

NEWSLETTER OF WISCONSIN FATHERS FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
(<http://www.wisconsinfathers.org>)

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Sue Pfeiffer, State Director of Child Support Bureau, Speaks at WFCF Meeting

James Wendt
Editor Today's Dads

After meeting with WFCF president, Steve Blake and secretary Tom Pfeiffer in September, Sue Pfeiffer (no relation to WFCF secretary Tom Pfeiffer), agreed that there were many issues and misunderstandings about the child support system in Wisconsin.

Ms. Pfeiffer agreed to be the guest speaker at the November WFCF general members at the Coliseum restaurant in Madison and to also participate in a question and answer session.



Sue Pfeiffer

The meeting was very well attended and Ms. Pfeiffer was able to answer a wide variety of questions and concerns about the child support system in general as well as sharing important details on the steps a payer needs to take if he loses his job or if his income is reduced due to work-related cut-backs.

We all appreciate Ms. Pfeiffer taking the time to meet with us and hopefully can welcome her back again in the future.

WFCF Annual Meeting to be Held in Milwaukee on Tuesday, January 12

James Wendt
Editor Today's Dads

On Tuesday, January 12 from 7:00 pm to 9:30 pm, WFCF will be holding its annual meeting at the Crowne Plaza Hotel - 10499 Innovation Drive, Wauwatosa, WI 53226.

State senators Jeff Plale and Lena Taylor have been invited to be guest speakers. Senators Plale and Taylor are both significant players in our continuing efforts to pass an equal placement bill and it is critical that your voice is heard calling for a positive change in our family laws.

The annual meeting will also feature the election of our board members and we will decide on the various positions of WFCF board officers. Take this opportunity to meet other members of WFCF as well as the current and future leaders of the organization.

Anybody concerned about the unfair treatment of fathers by the legal system is encouraged to attend, members and non-members alike.

Snacks and beverages will be provided. We look forward to seeing you there.

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Steve Blake
President WFCF

WFCF has met the director and is working with the state Bureau of Child Support to improve the services provided to non-custodial parents. We have designed a brochure that will help guide parents who have lost their jobs due to the economic downturn and which will be made available in all the CS offices across the state. We have met with

Finally, I would like to invite you all to attend the annual meeting of WFCF which will be held in Milwaukee this year on January 12th. We have invited Senators Jeff Plale, author of the current equal placement bill and Lena Taylor who is a strong supporter of the fatherhood initiative in Milwaukee. You can find details elsewhere in this newsletter. I hope to see you there.

***Located just off Highway 45
and Watertown Plank Road
Also served by Milwaukee Transit***

Help, I Lost My Job! What Do I Do About My Child Support?

Re-Printed from WFCF Brochure

Tell the other parent right away. If possible, reach an agreement on a new support amount. If both parents agree to a different support amount, the process will go much more quickly. A child support calculator to help parents estimate the new amount is available on the Department of Children and Families website at: http://cf.wisconsin.gov/bcs/guidelines_tools.htm.

As soon as your income drops, tell your child support office. Ask them how to have your support order changed. Child support staff cannot change your order. Only the court can. If the support amount would change at least 15%, and if the 15% equaled \$50 or more, the child support agency will help you change your order. If a court hearing is needed, it can take up to 180 days for the child support agency to change your order.

If you and the other parent agree to the new amount, tell the child support agency. The child support order can be changed with a stipulation (legal agreement) signed by both parents, and then signed by the court.

If you need to go to court to get your payments changed and you cannot afford a lawyer, you can do it yourself. But you must see that it gets done. No one will do it for you. Talk with the clerk in the courthouse.

You can also download the needed forms from the WI Courts website at <http://wicourts.gov/forms1/circuit.htm>.

Courts cannot change any amount due in the past. The court may revise the amount of support owed from the date that you, your attorney, or the child support agency files a legal motion to change the order with the Clerk of Courts.

Make sure you ask to have your order adjusted as soon as possible. Your existing child support order will not go down until the court changes it. Get the review done as quickly as possible. If you and the other parent have agreed to a new support amount, the process will go much more quickly. Once again, you do not need a lawyer to do this.

You can find the forms online or from Wisconsin Fathers for Children and Families.

If you cannot pay the full amount, keep paying as much support as you can. If your income drops, try to pay the same percentage of every dollar as you paid before your income fell. For instance, if you were paying 15% of your gross income for support, try to pay 15% of what you make now, whether it is from unemployment or your wage from a lower paying job.

Continue to make all payments through the Wisconsin Support Collections Trust Fund. This is the only way you get credit for payments. Child support can take 50% - 65% of your gross income. Do not expect your wage withholding to go down at a lower paying job. This will only change if your support order is changed by the court.

Keep a record of your efforts to find a new job. You want to show the courts that you are trying to find work. If it is no longer possible to find a job that pays what you used to make, you will want to show that you have tried, and that jobs that pay as much as you used to make are not available. Looking for a new job shows the child support agency and the court that your lower income or hours worked are not your choice. If the court decides you are cutting your hours or pay on purpose, the court may set your support amount based on your old income. Volunteer for and take part in job programs offered.

Get your records in order for the review. Have your old pay stubs and your new pay stubs or unemployment information available. If possible, get letters from your old employer showing that you were laid off – that you did not quit.

Even if you cannot pay support, keep seeing your children. Your presence in their lives means more to them than a check. Placement cannot be denied because you cannot pay your full support payments.

If and when your income rises, file with the courts again so that your child can benefit from your improved income, not just when they are with you, but also when they are with their other parent.

Fathers Gain Respect From Experts (and Mothers)

By Laurie Tarkan

Originally Published in the New York Times 11/3/2009

Re-printed with Permission

It used to irk Melissa Calapini when her 3-year-old daughter, Haley, hung around her father while he fixed his cars. Ms. Calapini thought there were more enriching things the little girl could be doing with her time.

But since the couple attended a parenting course — to save their relationship, which had become overwhelmed by arguments about rearing their children — Ms. Calapini has had a change of heart. Now she encourages the father-daughter car talk.

“Daddy’s bonding time with his girls is working on cars,” said Ms. Calapini, of Olivehurst, Calif. “He has his own way of communicating with them, and that’s O.K.”

As much as mothers want their partners to be involved with their children, experts say they often unintentionally discourage men from doing so. Because mothering is their realm, some women micromanage fathers and expect them to do things their way, said Marsha Kline Pruett, a professor at the Smith College School for Social Work at Smith College and a co-author of the new book “Partnership Parenting,” with her husband, the child psychiatrist Dr. Kyle Pruett (Da Capo Press).

Yet a mother’s support of the father turns out to be a critical factor in his involvement with their children, experts say — even when a couple is divorced.

“In the last 20 years, everyone’s been talking about how important it is for fathers to be involved,” said Sara S. McLanahan, a professor of sociology and public affairs at Princeton. “But now the idea is that the better the couple gets along, the better it is for the child.”

Her research, part of a project based at Princeton and called the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study, found that when couples scored high on positive relationship traits like willingness to compromise, expressing affection or love for their partner, encouraging or helping partners to do things that were important to them, and having an absence of insults and criticism, the father was significantly more likely to be engaged with his children.

Uninvolved fathers have long been accused of

lacking motivation. But research shows that many societal obstacles conspire against them. Even as more fathers are changing diapers, dropping the children off at school and coaching soccer, they are often pushed aside in ways large and small.

“The walls in family resource centers are pink, there are women’s magazines in the waiting room, the mother’s name is on the files, and the home visitor asks for the mother if the father answers the door,” said Philip A. Cowan, an emeritus professor of psychology at the University of California, Berkeley, who along with his wife, Carolyn Pape Cowan, has conducted decades of research on families. “It’s like fathers are not there.”

In recent years, several fathers’ rights organizations have offered father-only parenting programs and groups, and studies have shown that these help men become more responsive and engaged with their children.

But a new randomized, controlled study conducted by the Pruett and the Cowans found that the families did even better if mothers were brought into the picture.

In the study, low-income couples were randomly placed into a father-mother group, a father-only group and a control group of couples. The controls were given one information session; the other two groups met for 16 weeks at family resource centers in California, discussing various parental issues.

In both of those groups, the researchers found, the fathers not only spent more time with their children than the controls did but were also more active in the daily tasks of child-rearing. They became more emotionally involved with their children, and the children were much less aggressive, hyperactive, depressed or socially withdrawn than children of fathers in the control group.

But notably, the families in the couples group did best. They had less parental stress and more marital happiness than the other parents studied, suggesting that the critical difference was not greater involvement by the fathers in child-rearing but greater emotional support between couples.

“The study emphasizes the importance of couples’ figuring parenting out together and accepting the different ways of parenting,” Dr. Kline Pruett said.

Fathers tend to do things differently, Dr. Kyle Pruett said, but not in ways that are worse for the chil-

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Fathers Gain Respect From Experts (and Mothers)

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dren. Fathers do not mother, they father.

Dr. Kyle Pruett added: "Dads tend to discipline differently, use humor more and use play differently. Fathers want to show kids what's going on outside their mother's arms, to get their kids ready for the outside world." To that end, he said, they tend to encourage risk-taking and problem-solving.

The study was financed by the California Office of Child Abuse Prevention, which is looking for ways to involve fathers more at the state's many family resource centers. Experts say improving the way fathers are treated in many settings, public and private, is an important public health goal.

For example, they say, pictures of families on the walls of clinics and public agencies should have fathers in them. All correspondence should be addressed to both mother and father. Staff members should be welcoming to men. Steps like these promote early and lasting involvement by fathers.

"We want people to think about how positive father engagement in this co-parenting model would work in their foster care agency, local health clinic, pediatric office, adoption agency or school," Dr. Kyle Pruett said. "That's where an awful lot of the barriers are."

At home, the experts recommend that couples keep talking about parenting issues and do their best to appreciate each other's strengths. A recurring argument among couples is that each partner thinks he or she knows what is right; a mother may accuse the father of allowing too much television, while a father may tell a mother she isn't strict enough with discipline.

"Instead, they should be saying, 'How can each of us be the kind of parent that we are?'" Dr. Philip Cowan said. "I don't think it's abuse for a dad to sit with that little kid watching TV."

These experts agree that parents should not focus solely on the children.

"Parents work all day, and feel as if they need to give every other minute to the kids," Dr. Cowan said, "but if they don't take care of the relationship between them, they're not taking care of the whole story."

Letter to the Editor from Child Support Investigator, Miguel Morga

Editor,

I felt compelled to write a response to your "Summary of Recent WFCF Activity" article, which was in the July/August/September issue of Today's Dad. I am the Child Support Investigator for Crawford County in Southwest Wisconsin and we receive one of your newsletters quarterly.

I am quite disappointed with the tone and stereotypes of your article towards child support workers throughout the state. Specifically I take issue with your comments regarding Child Support workers obligation towards unemployed Non-Custodial Parents (NCP). Your position is that just by fact of layoff, the child support worker should inform the NCP what he/she can do to get their support reduced.

In fact, in that paragraph, you make the claim that we should feel guilty due to the fact that we are employed to begin with ("and still employed during these hard economic times") and that somehow that it is illogical that child support workers wouldn't give this information out to NCP's without being prompted to do so.

Child support workers are to remain objective, neutral enforcers of the court order. Every three years, a notice for a right to review is sent out by the state giving both parties (custodial and non-custodial) an opportunity to have a review of their child support order conducted with no questions asked. If outside of that time period a child support worker would suggest to a NCP that he/she should do XYZ to get their child support order, in my opinion, that would be the equivalent of working on behalf of the NCP, which would be a violation of our responsibility.

Instead of lambasting child support workers, you should be working to inform NCP's throughout the state that they should ask the question of how to get their child support order modified. Anytime an NCP asks me, or anyone in our agency, how to get their child support modified,

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Letter to the Editor from Child Support Investigator, Miguel Morgia

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they are given specific step by step instructions of how to do so. But in the end, it is, and should be, the responsibility of the paying party to ask for the information rather than make the assumption that someone else is, or should, take care of the problem for them.

Now I would like to give you a few examples of what occurs in our county. I have had several NCP's contact our agency to inform us that they are unemployed and ask us if there is any way for their support to be reduced. In each of those instances, I have sent out the appropriate forms to be filled out to request our agency do a review (outside of the three year cycle). In roughly 70% of the instances, the paperwork does not get returned to us. Out of the roughly 30% that do return the form, almost all of them have had their child support order reduced.

That's an overview, now I would like to give you two specific, recent examples of individuals requesting that their child support be reduced.

NCP 1 contacted our office and spoke with me directly about his child support obligation. He has felt for several years that he has been overpaying child support. I told him, point blank, that I can send him some paperwork to fill out and if he returns it to our agency then we will review his income and see if a reduction is warranted. At that point he said, "That won't do me any (curse) good and hung up the phone". Reviewing the case notes, I have found out that about every 6 months or so, this individuals contacts our agency to complain his child support is too high and has been told each time that we can send him the forms to fill out for a modification and he becomes extremely rude and tells us not to bother with it.

NCP 2 contacted our office and spoke with me directly to inform me that he had notice that he was going to be laid off in a month and wanted to know what he needed to do to get his child support reduced. I explained that he had to fill out the paperwork, provide a statement from unemployment with his weekly benefit and we would review to see if a reduction is warranted. This indi-

vidual filled out the paperwork, sent me the statement from unemployment and I reviewed it, found that a reduction was warranted and his child support order was cut in half.

I would also like to add that out of the two individuals in questions, NCP 1 has made several contacts with our State Legislator (and I would presume to think your organization as well) to complain about how unfairly he has been treated. As you can see, with a little more personal responsibility and mature behavior, NCP 1 could have had the same result as NCP 2.

I am relatively new in my position as Child Support Investigator but in my short period of time here, I have made several visits to our local prison's parenting class to talk about child support and the options that are available for these parents with regards to their child support obligation. Unfortunately what I find from them, and other groups that I have met with, is a lot of the same negative stereotypes about child support workers that I find in your newsletters. I strongly believe that your newsletter does a disservice to NCP's and scares them from trying to have a working, productive relationship with their child support worker. I strongly believe that your newsletter minimizes the crime of not paying child support (which to me, is be the equivalent of stealing from your child).

I am requesting one of two things. Either start to provide more of an objective attitude towards child support workers in Wisconsin by educating NCP about how to work with their child support worker or stop sending our agency a copy of your newsletter.

Miguel Morgia

Child Support Investigator / Crawford County

Letters to the Editor...

As editor of Today's Dads, I personally invite you to share any feedback, thoughts, suggestions or copies of any interesting articles on father and family issues you may have.

Please e-mail: editor@wisconsinfathers.org

Crouching Tiger / Hidden Dragon

James Wendt

Editor Today's Dads

In the last issue of Today's Dads, I wrote an editorial cleverly titled, *A "Sticky Situation" Indeed*, which touched on the "Superglue Case" from last summer where four women tied up a man and glued his penis to his belly in some sort of convoluted plot of revenge over the man's on-going infidelity with three of the four women (one of the women being his wife).

The point of my writing was not to re-hash the event itself but to point out the circumstances surrounding what happened to this man at the hands of four women and how people who would not tolerate similar behavior if the victim were female and the perpetrators were four men turn a blind eye to violence perpetrated by women against men.

Now we are some months down the road and the "Superglue Case" is safely fading away in our collective rearview mirrors. What's the big deal right? Some poor SOB in some rural Midwestern town gets himself into a "sticky situation" in some dumpy motel along a country road. There's probably at least one trailer involved here somewhere.

This is the stuff that only happens to people likely to be included in a Jeff Foxworthy performance right? "You might be a redneck if four women tie you up and glue your penis to your stomach..." (Mr. Foxworthy, if you are reading this and use it in your act, please send a small donation to WFCF...)

Fast forward to 2:25 am on November 30, 2009 when Tiger Woods, a world-renowned, billionaire sports hero was in a "car accident" in his driveway causing him to have lacerations on his face to lose consciousness and require hospitalization.

I wasn't there, but speculation is that his wife, model Elin Nordegren, violently attacked her husband after hearing that he had been unfaithful to her. It also sounds as if Mr. Woods was trying to escape the attack in his SUV and that the injuries he suffered occurred before he got into the vehicle.

It has been reported that the Florida police had unsuccessfully attempted to interview Woods

about the incident a total of three times but each time, they have been put off by Woods' wife saying that he was "sleeping" or "unavailable."

Woods himself reported to a friend that his wife, "went ghetto" on him, scratched his face and attacked him with a golf club. While it is likely that nobody will ever really know what actually transpired in the wee hours of the morning inside and in front of the Woods mansion, it would appear that Tiger Woods, a wealthy and powerful man, was a victim of a violent attack at the hands of his wife and now he is protecting the very person who perpetrated the violence against him.

Tiger Woods is essentially telling the world that he, "bumped into a door" or "slipped on the stairs" to protect his abuser and to avoid the shame that is associated with being a victim. This saddens me because not only is Tiger actively "hiding the dragon" of violence by protecting his abuser, he is telling the whole world that violence perpetrated by women against men does not have any consequences for the perpetrator and is actually a source of shame for the victim.

The incident involving an SUV and a golf club that occurred in Florida with Tiger Woods is a thousand miles and millions of dollars separated from the incident involving a different man, a tube of Superglue and rope that occurred in a Wisconsin motel room. These are both cases of men being physically attacked by women and both are cases where there appears to be a different set of rules for incidents with male victims of female perpetrated violence than there are for female victims of male perpetrated violence.

Violence is violence and it is important to realize that it doesn't matter who you are; female, male, young, old, rich or poor... whether you live in a trailer or a mansion... perpetrators truly believe in delivering harm in an "equal opportunity" fashion.

It is our responsibility as a society to punish perpetrators of violence in an "equal opportunity" fashion regardless of their gender or the gender of their victims and to send a message that victims of violence should not feel a sense of shame just because they are "not women."

WFCF Annual Meeting

Tuesday, January 12, 2010

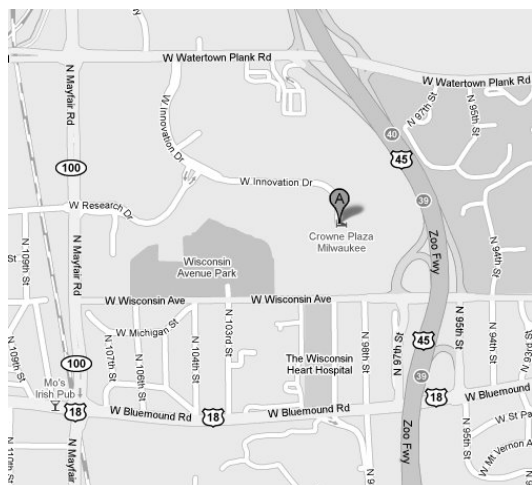
7:00 pm to 9:30 pm

At the Crowne Plaza Hotel

10499 Innovation Drive

Wauwatosa, WI 53226

(414) 475-9600



Located just off Highway 45
and Watertown Plank Road
Also served by Milwaukee Transit

Fathers Night Out

Support and Social Dinner Meeting

Milwaukee: Milwaukee area meetings are held the first Monday of the month at 7:00 PM at **The Chancery Restaurant** 7615 W. State St. - Wauwatosa, WI (*between corner of Harwood and 75th*)

Madison: Madison area meetings are held the third Monday of the month at 6:15PM at the **Yes Buffet** 3038 Fish Hatchery Rd. — Madison, WI (*approximately half a mile south of the Belt-line*)

Call 608-ALL-DADS or visit www.wisconsinfathers.org
for more information

Wisconsin Fathers for Children and Families



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