

New York City and Milwaukee Lead the Municipality and County Task Force on Responsible Fatherhood

New York and Milwaukee, Wisconsin are among a growing number of cities that have recognized the need to strengthen fatherhood as part of a strategy to fight many of the most difficult social issues that local governments face. Over 25 million children live apart from their biological fathers. Research over the past two decades has found that they are 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 both of their parents.

The National Fatherhood Initiative (NFI), New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg, and Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett have partnered to launch the Municipality and County Task Force on Responsible Fatherhood. The Task Force brings local government officials together to share ideas on reducing father absence and increasing the financial and emotional support of noncustodial fathers to their children.

New York City Human Resources Administration (HRA) Commissioner Robert Doar convened the Task Force with a “webinar”—a live meeting conducted over the Internet—at which he discussed strategies being implemented in New York City with local government officials from across the country. At the webinar, December 10, 2008, local governments were asked to join the Task Force and commit to conducting outreach or implementing programming for fathers by June of 2009.

The goals outlined for New York City’s efforts on responsible fatherhood include:

- Innovations and reforms to the child support order enforcement process to increase compliance and collections.
- Efforts specifically to address the needs of low-income noncustodial fathers with limited education or employment experience; HRA has begun providing employment services that include case management, parenting classes, and legal assistance. HRA helps low-income workers connect with financial work supports and tax incentives to stretch their income
- Achieving recognition and widespread involvement in a responsible fatherhood campaign. NYC DADS is an HRA citywide initiative focusing on the important role fathers play in their children's lives. NYC DADS will continue to host free events, partner with fatherhood organizations, and increase its public campaign presence.