

**Ohio Commission on
Fatherhood
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, February 13, 2025
Time: 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon**

Attendance

Commissioners

Mr. Dion Baines
Director Susan Brown
Senator Hearcel Craig
Dr. Mike Davis
Ms. Jessica Lavelle
Rep. Riordan McClain
Lt. Col. Pedro Munoz
Mr. Scott Neely
Exec. Director Ann Ream
Mr. Ronald C. Todd II
Mr. Randi Malcom Thomas, Esq.
Ms. Colleen Tucker
Mr. Jeff Van Deusen
Mr. Tarik White

Presenters

Ohio House of Representatives

State Representative White

Montgomery County Strategic Initiative

Dr. Michael Newsom

OCF Staff

Exec. Director Kimberly Dent
Mr. Joshua Counciller, Manager of Operations
Mr. Ashiko Hudson, Program Administrator
Ms. Terri Simons, Admin. Professional IV

In-Person Guests

Dr. Michael Newsom, Fatherhood Director of Montgomery County Strategic Initiative
Mr. Kamron Arif, Administrator, Ohio Dept. of Mental Health and Addiction Services
Mr. Ethan Kash, Leg. Aide to Rep. Riordan McClain
Mr. Joe Scrutchen, Social Program Developer, Franklin CSEA
Mr. Isaac Cano, Intern from Cristo Rey School, Franklin CSEA
Mr. John Erby, Director, William H. Adams Youth Foundation

Mr. Andrew Price, Legislative Aide, Sen. Hearcel Craig
Mr. Aaron Jones, Reg. Coordinator, The Ridge Project
Ms. Tiffany Chinn, Program Consultant, ODJFS/Office of Child Support
Ms. CeCe Norwood, CEO, Black Survivors of Sexual Assault Institute
Mr. Eric Harmon, Chaplain, Mansfield Ohio Correctional Institution
Mr. John Irving, Adams Youth Foundation
Ms. Melissa Harris, Policy Associate, Groundwork Ohio
Ms. Theresa Varrasso, DCY Liaison Officer 2, Dept. of Children and Youth
Mr. Anthony Sussex, Program Coordinator, ODJFS/Office of Child Support
Mr. Frank Tackett, Recreation Director, ODRC, CCI
Mr. Isaac Cano, Office of Child Support
Mr. Tim Turney Snone, Project Director, The Ridge Project
Mr. Bryan Stout, Legislative Director, DCY, Legislation,
Mr. Damon Butts, Chaplain, ODRC- Marion
Mr. Daniel Pastor, Compliance Agent, DOLC

Online Guests

Mr. Alex Gonia
Ms. Bethany Galloway, Guernsey County FCFC
Ms., Bria Oden, DCY
Christine Lindeman, Summit County Domestic Relations Court
Ms. Cynthia Douglas
Ms. Diana Riffe, LCCDA HeadStart,
Dr. Jesse Sanders
Mr. Eric Potts IV, FullTime Father LC
Ms. Emily Crabtree, Gallia-Vinton County JFS, ESC
Ms. Fannisha Page, FullTime Father LC
Mr. Harold Howard, Talbert House
Ms. Irene C. Lyons
Ms. Janine Sanders, Redefined Behavioral Health
Ms. Jennifer Blackston
Mr. Jeremy Langham
Mr. Jerrold Nash, Bright Beginnings
Ms. Jessica
Mr. John Ellis
Mr. Josie Mills
Mr. Justin Koralewski- Zepf Center Northwestern Fatherhood Connection
Ms. Kim Rosa, Parent and Youth Ambassador/Starting Point
Kwasi Crawford
Ms. Marisa Cruz, Mahoning County Children Services/Ohio Means Jobs (OMJ)
Ms. Natalee Andrews, Athens County Childcare
Mr. Rick Dencer, Kinnect Ohio
Mr. Sean L. Walton, Sr., Miami Valley Child Development Center
Mr. Steve Killpack, OPNFF
Mr. Steve Makofka (MDIVFPS CFLC, Kettering Health)
Talbert House

Ms. T. Mason
Mr. Antuan Johnson, Lucas County Children Services
Ms. Troy Mason, Valor Family Connections
Ms. Melshanique Collins

I. Call to Order & Welcome

10:01 | **Chair Scott Neely**

Commissioner Neely began the meeting at 10:01 a.m.

II. Introductions/Welcome

10:01-10:05 | **Chair Scott Neely**

Commissioner Neely opened the meeting, welcomed everyone, and called the role to verify Commissioner attendance. Commissioners introduced themselves and the agencies they represent. Our newly appointed Commissioners are Ms. Jessica Lavelle, Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, and Ms. Colleen Tucker from the Department of Children and Youth/Ohio Family and Children First (OFCF)-Family and Children First Councils (FCFC).

III. Approval of the 7/11/2024 & 11/12/2024 Meeting Minutes

10:05-10:10 | **Chair Scott Neely**

Quorum was established. There were 12 Commissioners present. Commissioner Randy Malcolm Thomas said there needs to be a correction on July 11th and November 12, 2024, due to minutes showing that he attended the meeting in person and not online. Both meeting minutes were approved by Commissioner Randy Malcolm Thomas and seconded by Rep. Riordan McClain.

IV. Ohio House of Representatives

10:10 – 10:45 | **State Representative White**

Commissioner Neely introduced State Representative White. She is in her second term as Chair of the Children and Human Services Committee, and she represents House District 36, which includes Kettering, Lorain, Oakland, Belmont, Montgomery County in Dayton. Rep. White discussed House Bill 257 and House Bill 7 from the last General Assembly. Rep. White discussed her passion for children and families as well as her work on important legislation. House Bill 257 was signed into law that allows virtual meetings for public bodies, which is our understanding of that law. She believes that it will not go into effect until April 2025, and she will keep it on her radar.

Rep. White stated the fact that you are all working together to elevate, recognize, and celebrate fathers, and the important and critical roles that play in not only in our children's lives and families, but also in the communities. Rep. White said you probably know these numbers, but every time she reads them, when fathers are not engaged in the family, they are four times at a greater risk of poverty, seven times more likely to be pregnant as a teen, more likely to face abuse and neglect, and two times the risk of infant mortality. She discussed the importance of fathers in families and in communities, highlighting the challenges faced by families without engaged fathers.

Rep. White shared her experiences in healthcare, developmental disability, and politics, emphasizing the need to address poverty and support families. She also discussed her work on House Bill 7, which aimed to provide Medicaid coverage for Doulas to improve infant and maternal mortality rates. Rep. White emphasized the need for a holistic approach to address poverty and improve the lives of families, and she encouraged the audience to share their thoughts on the biggest needs that aren't being addressed.

Rep. White discussed the progress and future plans of the Department of Children and Youth, which was created to streamline services and improve access to care for children. She highlighted the importance of early childhood mental health, the need for better coordination between various state agencies, and the goal of reducing infant mortality and improving kindergarten readiness. Also emphasized the need for more fathers to be engaged in early childhood and early learning, and the importance of community and family networks in supporting families. Rep. White mentioned the Dolly Parton Imagination Library and the need for more people to say "yes" to fostering children due to the high cost of childcare. Rep. White concluded by stating that the department's main goal is to help children and families thrive.

Please send questions to Rep. White's e-mail: andrea.white@ohiohouse.gov

To hear more about the Ohio House of Representatives presentation, please visit <https://www.fatherhood.ohio.gov/about/our-commission/commission-meetings/>.

V. Montgomery County Strategic Initiative

10:45 – 11:30 **Dr. Michael Newsom, Executive Director**

Commissioner Neely introduced Dr. Michael Newsom, who is the Executive Director at Montgomery County Strategic Initiatives located in Dayton, Ohio. Dr. Newsome discussed the needs of fathers in Ohio, emphasizing the importance of family and community. He mentioned the Children's Trust Fund Board and their work on positive parenting, and the need for additional funding for programs that engage fathers in prisons. Dr. Newsom also highlighted the importance of addressing infant mortality, safe sleep, smoking cessation, and financial stability. He mentioned a pilot program with early childhood research centers and the need for more funding to support programs in state prisons. Dr. Newsom also discussed the issue of unequal treatment of parents in the court system, which he believes hinders the effectiveness of fatherhood programs. He concluded by stating that until the root cause of unequal treatment is addressed, these programs will not be able to reach their full potential.

The discussion focused on strategies to support fathers, particularly those facing poverty and legal challenges. Dr. Newsom emphasizes the need to educate professionals about poverty and provide evidence-based curriculums for those in prison or involved with children's services. The group discusses the importance of legal representation for fathers in court proceedings and the challenges fathers face in maintaining relationships with their children due to financial constraints. They also highlight the need for support services for young fathers released from juvenile custody and suggest engaging reentry coalitions to assist these fathers. The participants agree on the importance of educating judges and attorneys about fatherhood issues through judicial conferences and

Commented [SB1]: Who is Shad?

Commented [TS2R1]: Hi Susan, Shad is our IT guy. But his name should not be there. I thought I deleted his name.

continuing education programs.

The meeting involved discussions about the child support system, its evolution, and its role in connecting with families and fathers. Dr. Newsom emphasized the importance of the child support system as a resource for connecting with families, especially fathers. He also mentioned the availability of federal financial participation for employment and training services for non-custodial parents. Montgomery County Staff, who deal with fathers daily, encouraged continued efforts to keep fathers connected with their children. Dr. Newsom also suggested that the child support system could be a conduit for more community programs. The conversation ended with Dr. Newsom presenting information about their program and how the OCF SEE Fathers Program has enhanced their work.

Dr. Newsom discussed the importance of community outreach and engagement in their fatherhood initiative, which started in 2010. He emphasized the need to make services accessible and visible to all, particularly fathers who may face unique challenges within the system. He also highlighted the importance of collaboration with local agencies and the need to hold the system accountable. He mentioned their work in prisons, high schools, and churches, and the need to educate the public about the consequences of having children out of wedlock. Dr. Newsom also stressed the importance of financial support for children and the need for legal representation in court. He concluded by expressing his skepticism about changing hearts and minds, suggesting a more practical approach.

Dr. Newsom discussed the importance of engagement in helping fathers and their children. He emphasized the need for fathers to be involved in their children's lives, even if they have made mistakes in the past. He also mentioned the SEE Father's Grant, which helps with various expenses such as license reinstatement fees and transportation costs. He highlighted the role of the Montgomery County office of reentry in providing holistic services, and he stressed the need for fathers to take responsibility for their actions and to engage with their children, rather than being disengaged or ignored. He concluded by noting the challenges of working in a female-dominated industry, but he emphasized that it doesn't mean it's anti-male.

Dr. Newsom discussed the organization's annual Fatherhood Banquet and other events aimed at engaging fathers and their families. He highlighted the Produce Perks program, which sends fathers two boxes of fruits and vegetables per month, and the Fatherhood Club, which meets monthly for discussions and activities. The Montgomery County Strategic Initiative will have an upcoming Lego event, the Dayton Dragons game, and the Story Chain program, which involves reading books to children in institutions. He emphasized the importance of education and engagement in helping fathers overcome barriers and improve their self-esteem. Dr. Newsom also provided statistics on the organization's current grant cycle, highlighting the challenges faced by the fathers they serve.

Montgomery County has served 170 fathers during the current grant cycle. They served 170 fathers previously, which is pretty good too. There is a mix as far as race: 48% of fathers are black and 47% of fathers are white. There are 42% of fathers who have never been married and only 12% are currently married. Some fathers live in shelters, halfway houses, and treatment centers. 18% of fathers are incarcerated in prison, and 85% of fathers have a felony conviction. That gives you an idea that there must be more fathers who need holistic services, especially around reentry. 47% have none of their children living with them. 41% of fathers have children with only one woman.

70% of fathers don't have legal or physical custody of their children. These statistics highlight the fact that these guys are starting from behind. Montgomery County staff try to level the playing field by not only putting the programs out there for fathers to attend, but help fathers stay engaged, and to help them where they are.

Dr. Newsom emphasized the importance of making people feel welcome and valued, particularly in the context of fatherhood programs. Fathers need easy access to these programs and the lack of obligations associated with them. The challenges of changing the cultural mindset within the judiciary, particularly in relation to equal parenting. He suggested that legislative changes might be necessary to achieve equality in the court system. He also mentioned ongoing efforts to address these issues, including working with local judges and representatives.

Dr. Newsom discussed the county's fatherhood mobilization efforts and the need for stronger relationships between education and social services. He also mentioned the county's involvement in Morrow County, which previously lacked a program. He expressed a desire to strengthen relationships with local school districts, particularly superintendents.

Joshua Counciller clarified the four specific purposes under TANF, explaining that funding can be used for one or more of these purposes. He further explained that performance-based bonuses can be used to cover fees not typically covered by TANF. The team agreed to further discuss these points to better understand how TANF works and how it can be used to empower the community.

TANF 4 Purposes:

BMV Licenses are not allowed

#2 = Re-instatement

#3 = Out of Wedlock pregnancies

#4 = Strengthening fathers

Question:

Commissioner White asked, "What's your relationship with the schools and PTO meetings?"

Response: Dr. Newsom said they attend some of them throughout the year.

To hear more about the Montgomery County Strategic Initiative, please visit

<https://www.fatherhood.ohio.gov/about/our-commission/commission-meetings/>.

VI.	Executive Director's Report
11:40-11:50	Executive Director, Kimberly Dent

In SFY25 OCF is Funding: \$215,000 for the SEE Fathers Program grantees and serving 200 fathers.

- 9 SEE Fathers Program grantees
- 7 Pilot projects
- June is Responsible Fatherhood Month (JRFM)
- 2 pending County Fatherhood Mobilization Initiatives (CFMI) Knox and Morrow Counties

Executive Director Dent discussed the transition of the Ohio Putative Father Registry to the Commission on Fatherhood and the hiring of a human services developer to manage it. She also announced plans for a funding opportunity for June's Responsible Fatherhood Month and the release

of another SEE Fathers grant funding opportunity for the next biennium.

Executive Director Dent stated that staff sent out the proclamation request to the Governor's Office, as June is Responsible Fatherhood Month. She asked the Commissioners to consider attending June Responsible Fatherhood Month events once funding recipients are determined.

The importance of ensuring dads are included in conversations and initiatives, as well as the upcoming Fatherhood Summit at Cuyahoga Hills DYS facility. Exec. Director Dent also mentioned the upcoming Motherhood Conferences at Vinton Correctional Institute and Northeast Reintegration, with a focus on human trafficking scheduled for May 30-31st.

The Ohio Commission on Fatherhood's Project Manager attended the Ohio Domestic Violence Network's (ODVN) quarterly DELTA Leadership meeting. The purpose of this team is to help guide the work of ODVN while it receives the federal grant from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and prevention (CDC).

Commissioner Susan Brown announced a Soul Talks event that's scheduled for February 27th, focusing on men's mental health and youth.

The Commissioners approved the Commission Meeting Calendar dates for the year.

Fathers Served Thus Far in SFY 2025:

SEE Programs - Fathers Served:

The total number of program participants / TANF eligible fathers served: **7,466**. The total number of fathers served irrespective of his TANF eligibility is 8,097. The data is reflected from 7/1/2024 through 01/31/2025.

Pilot Programs - Fathers Served:

The total number of fathers served under the Pilot programs. The total number of times a TANF-eligible father was served so far in SFY 2025 is **965**. The total number of fathers served irrespective of TANF eligibility is 614.

Please visit the OCF website for more information about Exec. Director Dent's presentation.

<https://www.fatherhood.ohio.gov/about/our-commission/commission-meeting/>.

VII.	Announcements and New Business
11:50-11:55	Chair Scott Neely

Commissioner Neely asked if there was any other new business. None provided.

Commissioners are required to attend in-person to be counted for a quorum. Commission meetings will continue to be hybrid.

VIII.	Adjournment
11:55-12:00	Chair Scott Neely

The meeting was adjourned at 12:00 pm. Commissioner Neely asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Ronald Todd motioned to adjourn the meeting and Commissioner Michael Davis seconded it.

The next ***In-Person*** Commission Meeting: **Thursday, May 8, 2025, from 10 am-12 pm,**
Vern Riffe, 31st Floor, Conference Room West B & C.

2025 Commission Meeting Dates

Location: Vern Riffe Building
 77 S. High St. Columbus, OH 43215
 Time: 10:00 am – 12:00 noon

NOTE: Conference Room locations will change this year.

Visit our website: <https://www.fatherhood.ohio.gov>

Thursday, February 13, 2025	19 th Floor, Conference Room 1948
Thursday, May 8, 2025	31st Floor, Conference Room West B & C
Thursday, July 17, 2025	19th Floor, Conference Room 1960
Thursday, September 11, 2025	19 th Floor, Conference Room 1952
Thursday, November 13, 2025	31st Floor, Conference Room WEST B & C