



Department of  
Youth Services

**Message from DYS Director Harvey Reed**  
Celebrating Responsible Fatherhood Month  
June 8, 2016



As the father of a son in college and stepdaughter in high school, I know that being a father is a fulfilling role, but it certainly comes with many challenges! Being a responsible father means taking an active role in a child's development and well-being. I'm fortunate that I had a great example in my own father who was a good and honest man and who always put his family first. With a strong model in my life, I have had many tools to draw from as I have set out to be the best dad I can be.

Some of the youth we serve, approximately 13%, are themselves fathers. We strive to carry out our core value of being good role models. We hope that youth will look back and remember us as being present in their lives and helping them meet their needs. We do all that we can to prepare youth through treatment, education, and job training to help youth get on the right track for adulthood and be ready for the responsibilities that come their way.

Governor Kasich recently issued a proclamation declaring June to be "Responsible Fatherhood Month," and I thought it was a good time to share some highlights of what we're doing at DYS to help youth be prepared to raise healthy, strong children.

First off, it's worth noting that our agency is committed to reducing teenage pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases, and risky sexual behavior among adolescents. DYS is beginning

to oversee the PREP (Personal Responsibility and Education Program) grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Management of this grant will transition over the next year from the Ohio Department of Health to DYS. We look forward to building on the good work that has been done educating youth within Ohio's juvenile justice and child welfare systems to reduce teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted infection rates among these high-risk populations.

For the youth we serve who are already fathers, the Just Beginning - Baby Elmo Program, at all three juvenile correctional facilities, provides a parenting and structured visitation program to build bonds between children and their dads. This is important because research indicates that the absence of a father figure has been linked to poor developmental outcomes. Activities focus on hands-on learning and building a relationship between the teen and his child, rather than just talking about parenting.

We are excited to be expanding efforts to our youth on parole. The Baby Elmo Reentry Program, a joint effort of the Healthy Fathering Collaborative, Just Beginnings, and the Council of Neighborhood Leaders, serves youth returning to Cuyahoga County or who have children in Cuyahoga County. Program providers get linked with youth as early as possible to support them in positive relationships with their young children as they return home. In addition, the providers help with additional reentry needs and even offer assistance to the mothers of the young children.

The Ohio Commission on Fatherhood received a federal [grant](#) to serve our youth between the ages of 16-24, returning to Cleveland, Columbus, Cincinnati, Dayton, and Springfield, who meet program criteria. The goal is to help our young men become more effective and nurturing parents, improve their long-term economic stability, and build strong, lasting relationships with their children. Participating fathers will receive job training, parenting classes, and healthy marriage and relationship education.

Thanks to a small grant from the Ohio Commission on Fatherhood, on June 18, Circleville JCF will host a special Father's Day event that includes young men and their children, the children's mothers, and grandparents. The lineup includes activities that encourage playing together, family photos and decorating frames, and community providers on hand to help inform families about available resources. Each young child will receive an audio book with his dad's voice reading a story, and each family will be given a gas card to help defray the travel expense to the event.