

**BEST PRACTICES SUBMITTAL FORM**  
**OCDA Fall Conference 2007**

County: Hamilton County Dept. Of Job and Family Services – Child Support Enforcement Agency
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Best Practice: CSEA Collaboration with Lighthouse Youth Services – The REAL Dads Program
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***Please Explain Your “Best Practice Procedure” And Summarize The Results Which Have Been Achieved Through This Process:***

Please E-Mail Your Submittal Summary to Rob Pierson, Stark County CSEA via GroupWise or [piersr01@odjfs.state.oh.us](mailto:piersr01@odjfs.state.oh.us)

**BACKGROUND:**

Last year, the Child Support Division of HCJFS working closely with Lighthouse Youth Services of Cincinnati was successful in garnering a grant for \$2.5M (\$500,000/Y for 5 years) for its Skills for Young Fathers program. Many young fathers in Hamilton County, Ohio provide neither financial nor emotional support to their children due a lack of employment readiness/experience and deficits in life management skills, including parenting and responsible decision-making. These young fathers often do not have the natural supports and skills needed to overcome obstacles and barriers that prohibit them for being the most effective and nurturing of parents. Through counseling, job coaching, and providing information about child support on personal basis, these young fathers can support their children, increase their parenting and life management skills, as well as their family’s economic stability.

We believe that every father wants to be a **Responsible, Effective, Accountable, and Loving - (REAL) Dad**. The Child Support Division of HCJFS identified a select number of absent parent fathers who range in age from 17-24 years old and who are at least \$2000 in arrears. Child Support committed to providing those individuals participating in Lighthouse's program a direct point of contact that will assist the absent parent fathers with any and all questions regarding their child support.

**ACTIONS:**

- Refer potential participants to Lighthouse Youth Services. These individuals have been determined to fit the criteria established for participation and are in need of skills to become parents, partners, and workers.
- Assist Lighthouse Youth Services in securing release of information forms approving participation.
- Dedicate one child support staff person to meet face-to-face with each participant and manage a specialized caseload.
- Appoint a Child Support Technical Support staff person and a Community Relations Liaison staff person.
- Provide Lighthouse Youth Services with a summary of case statuses, pending actions, and payment histories.
- Participate in the transition planning process for participants referred to the program.
- Meet collaboratively with Lighthouse Life Coaches and staff.

- Conduct meetings, presentations, and interviews with the media.

## RESULTS:

- To date, 37 fathers participating in the program.
- 18 fathers have either reported recent employment or now are making payments.
- Success and Trust have bred more of the same. New referrals are being generated from television, radio and newspaper features about the collaboration, as well as word of mouth endorsements from the participants.