

Congressional Testimony: Father Absence as a Causation of Crime and Drug Abuse

THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES SUB-COMMITTEE ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE, DRUG POLICY, AND HUMAN RESOURCES

Jeffery M. Leving, July 29, 2002

The most reliable predictor of crime in America is growing up fatherless. There is a direct correlation between violent crime, juvenile delinquency, drug abuse, and father absence. However, responsible father involvement is a substantial deterrent to these societal ills. Responsible father involvement is a solution, but it needs to be implemented. Accordingly, I suggest the following implementation strategies:

1. Promoting substantial positive father imaging and involvement by use of the media;
2. Providing free parenting education to indigent teen and incarcerated fathers; and
3. Creating a Judicial Task Force on Father Absence to educate judges on the effects of fatherlessness on children, families and society. The necessity of such a task force is based upon my belief that many judges adjudicate the consequences of father absence, but don't have the data concerning these consequences to guide them to correct resources to implement to deter crime and drug abuse.

There is significant supportive data concerning the effects and causal connection of father absence to crime and drug abuse. On July 29, 2002, I submitted such data as part of my written testimony before the U.S. House of Representatives Sub-Committee on Criminal Justice, Drug Policy and Human Resources for their study.

The data is "gut-wrenching" but cannot be swept under the rug and forgotten. Just consider some of these alarming facts:

- "The likelihood that a young male will engage in criminal activity doubles if he is raised without a father..."
Source: Hill, M. Anne and June O'Neill. ***Underclass Behaviors in the United States: Measurement and Analysis of Determinants***. City University of New York, Baruch College (1993).
- One study of adolescents charged with murder found that seventy-two percent grew up without their fathers.

Source: Cornell, Dewey et al. **"Characteristics of Adolescents Charged with Homicide."** Behavioral Sciences and the Law 5 (1987):11-23.

- Fatherless children are at a dramatically greater risk of drug and alcohol abuse.

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. National Center for Health Statistics. **Survey on Child Health.** Washington, DC, 1993.

In conclusion, as delineated in my congressional testimony, implementing proactive father involvement strategies may prevent many males from engaging in crime and drug addiction. Clearly, implementation is necessary now.