

# **NH Commission on the Status of Men**

Public Meeting: August 25, 2004

1:00 – 4:00 Legislative Office Building, Room 208, Concord

Minutes taken by Ron Blankenstein, Secretary

Commission Members Present: Gerard Boyle, Ron Blankenstein, Larry Colby, and Steve Gorin, Michael Geanoulis, Joseph Mastromarino, and Scott Garman.

Chairman Boyle welcomed those present for the eleventh commission meeting. Gerard welcomed our newest commissioner, Scott Garman.

Gerard also notified the commission that Ron Blankenstein's term expires prior on 9/25/04 and that Ron has elected not to be considered for another term of office. Gerard thanked Ron for his service to the commission and for his work as secretary. Gerard suggested that commissioners spread the word about this latest opening and submit recommendation to Gerard directly. It was noted that Dr. Milton Burnett from the Seacoast Mental Health Center, is interested in serving on this commission.

Minutes for the July meeting were approved prior to this meeting and, with one correction, will be posted to the commission website.

Suicide Task Force – Joseph Mastromarino reported that this group will meet in September. Data is in the template and will be reviewed at this meeting.

Website Update - Scott Garman reported that no new requests have been made of the website manager.

Men's Health Issues Task Force – Gerard Boyle reported that we have received "Facts about Prostate Cancer" pamphlets from the Men's Health Network that contain the Commission's information. He asked that these be distributed widely at health care

provider agencies, colleges, and public health agencies. Gerard will send a letter to the Men's Health Network thanking them for their support in this endeavor.

Jimmy Boyd and Gerard Boyle drafted a letter for Senator Gregg's signature in support of the recommendation that establishes an office for men's health at Health and Human Services.

Treasurer's Report – Larry Colby received unanimous approval from the commission to develop and purchase commission stationery, envelopes, and business cards for commissioners.

Larry noted that a letter was sent to the Commission by Major James Mac Farland.

Larry also spoke about the Head Start program that provides services to over 1500 kids and families in the 6 NH Head Start programs. Head Start is considering a one day seminar in February, 2005 on Parental Involvement, specifically male involvement in support of the education of young children. Larry distributed a draft outline of the seminar. Recommended edits and changes were made by commissioners and the commission generally supported the idea. Larry will bring back a revised outline for the next commission meeting.

Larry also mentioned the 6<sup>th</sup> annual New England Men's Conference in Marlboro, MA this coming March and that it would be good to involve the commission in this 3 day conference.

Mike Geanoulis noted that the National Fatherhood Initiative has great resource material on the importance of fathers in children lives and that material is available to members. He suggested that the commission consider becoming affiliate members. He will bring membership information to the next meeting.

Family Law Task Force (FLTF) – David Bickford attended the last meeting and reported that a discussion centered on the question 'should psychologists do custodial evaluations?' The general consensus was that they should not in that psychologists are not sufficiently trained for this type of evaluation. Additionally, the HB 298 was mentioned again as referenced to the Wisconsin Act on shared parenting. Geanoulis reports that a claim was made at a FLTF meeting that joint custody/shared parenting

was repealed in Wisconsin because it wasn't working. He asked for evidence but has not yet received it. HB 447 discussed was deferred until the next meeting.

The commission asked Rep. Bickford to discuss the current methodology for determining child support payment. Rep. Bickford noted that the current method is based on lifestyle (income) rather than basic needs (cost). Rep. Bickford thinks that alternative methodologies should be discussed and considered. Mike Geanoulis noted the need for a rebuttable presumption of 50-50 parenting. Questions were raised about the connection between the Child Support Commission and the Family Law Task Force. The Child Support Commission is a separate group that is connected to the Family Law Task Force. Rep. Bickford feels that an economist should be made available to assist this commission. Mike Geanoulis expressed his belief that child support guidelines should be abolished and done on a case by case basis.

Commission budget – Barry Bodell, Administrative Services, joined us to provide guidance and information concerning the budget of the commission. He reviewed our current budget and the placement of available funds in various class codes. He noted that the filing period for the next fiscal year is upon us and any request to change the current terminology of the statute must be done very soon. The original sponsor of the bill should be contacted to recommend any particular changes. Two questions were asked by Barry with accompanying answers noted below:

- How are decisions made regarding the allocation of commission funds? The Treasurer directs the action of the commission after having consulted the Chair. (Unanimous).
- How should he handle the two current requests for reimbursement? Two reimbursements are to be sent back to the Treasurer.

VIP/SAFE – Lee Newman reported:

- 10279 total website hits to date with 249 attributable to the commission. 381 phone calls received in the first 15 months and 600 received in the following 8.5 months.
- DCYF district supervisors have asked for VIP/SAFE information for referral purposes.

- Gov. Benson has passed along VIP/SAFE letter to the Attorney General's Office.
- Jimmy Boyd of the Men's Health Network is listing Lee as the point person for VIP/SAFE and will support the conference in non-financial ways.
- The National Men's Health week is in June – a good month for the conference.
- The conference was again discussed at length. The commission recommends expanding the nature of the conference to include men's health, suicide, education, fatherlessness, in addition to domestic violence. Lee will draft a tentative draft agenda, with input requested from the commission, for discussion at the next meeting.

Other Business – Agenda items to be included for September include: Treasure's Report, National fatherhood Initiative (update), Male Involvement Conference (update).

Larry Colby questioned the agenda item concerning the Domestic Violence Update when this issue is not directly a part of the mandated work of the commission. Gerard Boyle made the case that domestic violence is connected to all of the issues of the commission

Mike Geanoulis questioned the lack of media involvement and suggested more press releases on the work of the commission. Gerard Boyle reviewed the current press release methodology.

The meeting adjourned at 4:00 p.m.

The next meeting of the commission will be held on September 29, 1:00 – 4:00 p.m. in room 208 of the Legislative Office Building in Concord, NH.