
**A Public Policy Plan
for the
National Council on Family Relations**

Prepared by the NCFR Public Policy Committee
Roger H. Rubin, Chair
Draft #1, March, 1992

National Council on Family Relations

Statement Concerning Families and Family Policy

Families are the basic units of society and our most valuable resource. Healthy, well-functioning families provide members of all ages with rewarding, caring relationships, and with essential mutual support which is sustaining throughout the life course. Families are the major producers and consumers of goods and services. They make a central contribution to the nation's present and future work force and enhance the quality of our society. Conversely, the society has a critical effect on families. Therefore, it is essential that family policy makers recognize the reciprocal influences that families and society have upon each other.

Family members are best able to perform their vital caring functions when their own basic social, psychological, physical, spiritual, and economic needs are being met. Children develop into competent, productive loved and loving adults with devoted and sustained parenting. The later years of life are made more productive and satisfying when families are empowered with the resources to provide support and care as it is needed. Strong families provide intimacy, security and commitment to their members and need to be supported, not supplanted in their caregiving roles throughout the life course.

Well-formulated family policies empower family members to perform their functions and to meet their individual and family needs. These policies provide resources and help create environments that prevent or ameliorate societal conditions that seriously threaten or diminish familial competence. Effective policies and practice are implemented through well-financed, appropriately staffed programs and organizations at local, state and federal levels which are consciously designed to take into account the pluralism and rich diversity of American family structures and life styles. All public policies no matter how seemingly unrelated to family life must be evaluated in terms of their intended or unintended impacts on family functioning.

Policy-oriented, applied, and basic research on families can help to identify the aspects of public policy, societal and familial conditions that warrant action to protect families and individuals. Members of the National Council on Family Relations contribute to families and sound family policies in a variety of ways. These include, but are not limited to:

- **Research:** on the course of family life and its challenges.
- **Publication:** of findings, theory and program and policy analysis.
- **Family life education:** in formal and informal settings, training and certification.
- **Practice:** provision of professional guidance, counseling and therapy.
- **Program:** development and evaluation of programs designed to enhance family well-being.
- **Consultancy:** translator of research for action, programs and policy.
- **Advocacy:** for sound family policies and programs at local, state, federal and international levels.

Written by the Public Policy Committee and amended and passed by the NCFR Board April, 1993.

kmt:B. Settles, Nov, 1993

Public Policy and the National Council on Family Relations

NCFR STATEMENT OF BELIEF CONCERNING FAMILIES

Families are the basic units in our society. When families function well, they provide their members with intimate caring relationships and mutual support throughout the life cycle. This enhances the larger society's well-being and ability to function. As families affect the larger society, so also they are affected by that society. Thus, family policy must recognize both directions of cause and affect.

Families need to be supported, not supplanted in their caregiving role of children. The development of individuals who are stable, productive, loved and loving can best come from devoted and sustained parenting.

Families also provide the setting for the continuing growth of children as adults. Those who enter into and continue in marriage have responsibilities to their spouses. Adults continue their attachment and support of their parents. As children leave the home, the marital relationship resumes its salience and older parents provide support for each other. When one of the parents becomes widowed, their children become their support system. Helping parents deal with their own aging process may provide children with an opportunity to come to terms with their own aging and to resolve problems of their own childhood.

Public attitudes need to recognize the importance of parenting and support those who are engaged in the vital task of shaping self-actualized, responsible members of society.

Public policy aimed at families is of utmost importance because of the effects on families of the actions of business and other social and political institutions. Public policy should therefore be designed to combat harmful effects upon families by all such activities. Policies should be coherent and comprehensive to assure that all families needing external supports are appropriately served.

Social and economic conditions which are devastating to family life are poverty, unemployment, inadequate education, catastrophic physical and mental illness, dislocation and unequal opportunity. Means for preventing, alleviating or eradicating these conditions is needed.

NCFR recognizes the pluralism of family structures, its complexity of ethnic origins and a number of lifestyle options which characterize North American culture.

Delegation of Policy Responsibilities

V.P. for Public Policy. To be elected by the national membership for a two year term. Nominees are to be drawn from the Washington, D.C. Metropolitan area.

Duties:

1. To chair the Public Policy Committee.
2. To report to the Board and Executive Director of NCFR the activities of the Public Policy Committee.
3. To work closely with the Washington Representative on all matters of NCFR policy initiative.
4. Work closely with other NCFR Sections, especially the Association of Councils to further policy objectives of NCFR.

Public Policy Committee

The Public Policy Committee is a Washington, D.C. based committee, chaired by the Public Policy Vice President. The Public Policy Committee shall consist of at least six members, two of whom should be student/new professionals. A minimum of 75% of Public Policy Committee members must be willing to meet approximately every six weeks or more and attend regular meetings, at their own expense, in Washington, D.C.

Duties:

1. To suggest to the Board a public policy agenda for NCFR.
2. To keep NCFR apprised of and to represent NCFR with respect to pending national legislation.
3. To assist in determining the coalitions in Washington, D.C. to which NCFR should belong.
4. To develop ways to help NCFR members become active in the policy arena by providing training opportunities at the Annual Conference.
5. To work with the Association of Councils to get information to state NCFR members to encourage advocacy efforts needed to further NCFR agenda items.
6. To work closely with the Washington, D.C. Representative in order to further the interests of NCFR and its members with Washington, D.C. based coalitions, agencies, professionals, and legislators.

Washington, D.C. Representative:

Duties:

1. To represent NCFR on all Washington, D.C. coalitions and to work with coalitions to further the agenda determined by the Public Policy Committee and approved by the Board.
2. To be the Washington, D.C. NCFR member of the Consortium of Family Organizations and take leadership roles in that organization in turn with representatives of the other COFO

organizations.

3. To be the Washington, D.C. contact for NCFR and to respond to congressional requests for support on bills within the mission of NCFR. Close consultation is to be maintained with the Executive Director and President of the NCFR Board.
4. To be an ex-officio member of the Public Policy Committee and work closely with the V.P. for Public Policy in furthering NCFR's policy interests.
5. To be the contact point for the FAMILY FAX program.

Family Policy Section

Duties:

1. Develop more structure for the section.
2. Encourage more research directed to policy issues and provide a forum for dissemination of this research both at Annual Meetings and to the public.
3. Co-sponsor a major session with program committee for annual conference.
4. Explore ideas of publishing an occasional newsletter of abstracts on family policy.
5. Review abstracts for the annual conference.

