



**Institute for
Research on
Poverty**

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON



**CHILD ABUSE & NEGLECT
Prevention Board**



Expanding Inclusion of Fathers in Perinatal and Early Childhood Programs

November 29, 2022

Webinar begins at 2pm EST/1pm CST/12pm MST/11am PST

Research | Training | Policy | Practice

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Outline of Presentation

- What does the research tell us?
- Supporting professionals and organizations that support breastfeeding to strengthen inclusion of fathers
- Increasing support for fathers in home visiting services
- Comprehensive support for new fathers
- Questions and discussion



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Benefits to children

Positive father involvement is associated with positive social, emotional, and cognitive outcomes for children from infancy to adolescence, and into adulthood. Early father involvement is significantly related to later paternal engagement.



Amato, 1994; Cabrera et al., 2008; Deutsch, Servis, & Payne, 2001; Flouri & Buchanan, 2003; McBride, Schoppe-Sullivan, & Ho, 2005; Mosley & Thomson, 1995; Parke et al., 2002; Sarkadi, Kristiansson, Oberklaid, & Bremberg, 2007; Volling & Belsky, 1992; Yeung, Duncan, & Hill, 2000

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Before and after birth...

Fathers' support is associated with positive maternal and child outcomes

- Earlier entry into prenatal care
- Fewer health problems in pregnancy
- Fathers can help identify changes in their partner's mental health and offer important support
- Closer relationships are associated with lower levels of maternal stress – even when parents are not romantic partners
- The quality of the relationship between parents predicts how each will nurture and respond to the needs of their child

ACOG, 2009; Eboh et al., 2018; Garfield & Isacco, 2009; Guterman & Lee, 2005; Marsiglio, 2008; Walsh et al., in press; Yogman, M., Garfield, C. F., & Committee on Psychosocial Aspects of Child and Family Health, 2016

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Fathers and prenatal care / services

- Mothers and fathers want and expect fathers to be involved
 - Mothers are dissatisfied with their care when providers do not include fathers
 - Fathers can play a key role as advocates
- Participation is highly meaningful to fathers
- Dual role as parent and partner
- Some fathers feel marginalized or uncertain of how to engage
- Fathers identify specific knowledge needs related to engaging with infants / toddlers / very young children

Walsh et al., 2014; Walsh et al, 2021; Walsh et al., in press

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Fathers and home visiting

Fathers have generally not been well engaged in home visiting services...

...but father participation is associated with greater retention and outcomes for mothers and babies, and may increase fathers' continued involvement with children over time

Dads Matter-HV intervention

- Training on how to better engage fathers increases fathers' participation in services
- Does not compromise workers' relationships with mothers

Bellamy et al., 2020; Bellamy, Thullen, & Hans, 2015; Holmberg & Olds, 2015;
Navaie-Waliser et al., 2000; Olds et al., 1986; Thullen et al., 2014

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Dads Matter-HV modules guide home visitors to...

1. engage fathers and assess their roles in ways that can be improved, managed, or enhanced within the family context
2. work with fathers and mothers to clarify each parent's role and expectations with regard to their co-parenting and support
3. identify areas of parental conflict or challenge and work with fathers and mothers to jointly and productively address such concerns
4. improve communication between fathers and mothers to enhance the co-parenting process and teamwork
5. work with fathers to support them in managing the stresses of fathering
6. work with fathers to manage anger and to extend their support and help-seeking skills when needed.

Bellamy, J., Harty, J., Guterman, N., Banman, A., Morales-Mirque, S., Massey Combes, K. (2020) *The engagement of fathers in home visiting services: Learning from the Dads Matter-HV study*. Fatherhood Research and Practice Network
<https://www.frpn.org/asset/frpn-grantee-report-the-engagement-fathers-in-home-visiting-services-learning-the-dads-matter>

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Strategies for expanding inclusion of fathers

- Recognize the perinatal period as a moment of opportunity
- Communicate with fathers, including nonresident
- Address practical barriers to engagement
- Create a father-friendly environment
- Reinforce fathers' contributions
- Normalize screening and discussing father-centered health concerns (e.g., depression)
- Offer resources to achieve parenting & related goals
- Collaborate with other providers
- Advocate for family friendly policies



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Thank You!

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<https://www.diversityoffatherhood.com/>



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