Supporting Engaged Fatherhood and Family Wellbeing: The Role of Policy From the Community Level to the Federal Level

November 29, 2023

Webinar begins at 1pm EST/12pm CST/11am MST/10am PST
Overview of Presentation

- What does the research tell us?
  - Dr. Tova Walsh, Sandra Rosenbaum School of Social Work, University of Wisconsin–Madison
  - Dr. David Pate, Jr., School of Human Ecology, University of Wisconsin–Madison

- Policy at the community level
  - Mr. Darryl Davidson, Director of the Milwaukee Fatherhood Coalition and the City of Milwaukee Community Engagement and Achievement Collaboratives

- Policy at the federal level
  - Congressman Jimmy Gomez (CA-34), Founder and Chair of the Congressional Dads Caucus

• Questions and discussion
Why focus on fathers?

• Fathers play a key role in the health and well-being of children and families
  • Child development across the lifecourse
  • Co-parent well-being and parenting

• Including fathers is a matter of equity
  • Barriers – especially for fathers who have low income, minoritized, unmarried
  • Service systems frequently do not recognize or engage men in their role as a parent

Amato, 1994; Cabrera et al., 2008; Coakley et al., 2014; Deutsch, Servis, & Payne, 2001; Flouri & Buchanan, 2003; Harris Professional Development Network Fatherhood Engagement Committee, 2020; Lamb, 2012; McBride et al., 2005; Mosley & Thomson, 1995; Parke et al., 2002; Sarkadi et al., 2007; Volling & Belsky, 1992; Yeung et al., 2000
Locating Fathers in Maternal and Child Health
Research with expectant and new parents

• Mothers and fathers want and expect fathers to be involved in prenatal and pediatric care

• Fathers are increasingly involved in pregnancy, prenatal and pediatric healthcare

• 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

• Black mothers and fathers identify a key role for fathers as partners and advocates in confronting racism in healthcare

Walsh et al., 2014; Walsh, 2020; Walsh et al., 2021; Walsh et al., 2022
Policy implications

• Consider and include fathers in assessing and defining maternal and child health priorities

• Promote inclusion of fathers in child and family services, ensuring fathers’ needs are considered in policy and program development

• Invest in the necessary training and capacity building within child and family services to facilitate and strengthen fathers’ engagement in services

• Establish equitable national data collection practices that are inclusive of fathers in key public health surveillance (Garfield, 2018)
Increase support for fathers to be “a presence, not just a provider”
Fathering young children through the pandemic

This study aimed to better understand the specific experiences of low-income and noncustodial fathers – a group of parents often marginalized or overlooked in both research and practice – parenting infants, toddlers, and young children during the pandemic.
One key finding and policy implications

The pandemic as a time of discovery

I’m a father of four... [my youngest is] a pandemic baby. Uh, as far as my children I, maybe I didn’t realize how they wanted the power of my presence. Uh, so I, before the pandemic... I woke up at 6 o’clock in the morning, [straight to work and] I was at work to 7 at night... Uh, since the pandemic... now I work from home. And to just watch how happy they are because I’m home, kind of gives me joy.
How can we support fathers to be the parents and co-parents that they want to be?
State level policy to support engaged fatherhood

https://www.frpn.org/fatherhood-policy
Thank You!

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Photo credit:
Alameda County Father Corps’ Fatherhood Photo Bank
https://www.diversityoffatherhood.com/

www.preventionboard.wi.gov
References


References


