



**Institute for  
Research on  
Poverty**

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON



CHILD ABUSE & NEGLECT  
**Prevention Board**



# **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

**Research | Training | Policy | Practice**

# 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

# 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?

The screenshot shows a Chrome browser window with the URL [captimes.com/opinion/guest-columns/opinion-fathers-need-paid-family-and-medical-leave-too/article\\_089fdb62-514b-5f47-a716-cf820d134932.html](https://captimes.com/opinion/guest-columns/opinion-fathers-need-paid-family-and-medical-leave-too/article_089fdb62-514b-5f47-a716-cf820d134932.html). The page header includes the CAP TIMES logo and a 'BECOME A MEMBER' button. The navigation menu lists categories: News, Opinion, Food & Drink, Entertainment, Sports, Events, Philanthropy, About Us, Madison.com, and WiscNews. The main article title is 'Opinion | Fathers need paid family and medical leave too' by Tova Walsh and Darryl Davidson, dated Dec 16, 2021. The featured image shows a man in a black cap and a young boy in sunglasses in a park. A sidebar advertisement for CD rates is visible on the right, with rates of 5.09% APY\* for 9 months and 5.35% APY\* for 15 months.

[https://captimes.com/opinion/guest-columns/opinion-fathers-need-paid-family-and-medical-leave-too/article\\_089fdb62-514b-5f47-a716-cf820d134932.html](https://captimes.com/opinion/guest-columns/opinion-fathers-need-paid-family-and-medical-leave-too/article_089fdb62-514b-5f47-a716-cf820d134932.html)

# 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/>



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