



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Administration for Children and Families
Office of Family Assistance

National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse (NRFC) Technical Assistance Webinar

Tuesday July 28, 2009 ~ 2:00 – 3:45 EDT

**Working with Dads Prenatally and Early Years:
Encouraging Early Bonding and Addressing Health and
Safety Issues**

Moderator:

Nigel Vann: NRFC Director of Training & Technical Assistance

Presenters:

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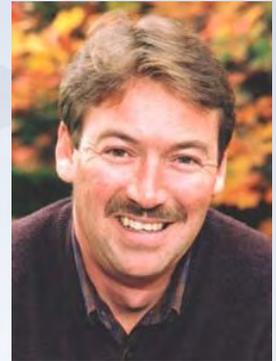
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Encouraging Early Bonding and Addressing Health and Safety Issues

“Ways to Engage Fathers Prenatally”

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Changing the trajectory of fatherhood

- National average of births where there is a man involved
- How far “up stream” can we get?
- We need to re-work the definition of *fathering*
 - What do most men feel they can contribute to kids?
 - How/what has society told him?
- We must responsibly prepare him for the role



What is “normal” for new fathers?

It is “normal” for new dads to

- Be at the birth of their child (86% of Early Head Start Fathers*)
- Be present at the hospital after the birth (95% of EHS Fathers*)
- Have little or no experience with babies
- Struggle for relevance

* Mathematica Policy Research Inc., Study of Early Head Start Fathers – May 2003



Why *Expectant* Fathers?

- 80% of men on the eve of fatherhood have no significant experience with a baby six months or younger
- 60% of these men have either a negative or non-existent model for their own fathering
- 10% will have never held a baby before



How it's presented

- Fathering CPR framework
- Learning their baby's 5 basic needs
- Understanding baby's cycle of care
- Practice holding, handing off, diapering and burping techniques
- Recognizing the opportunities for partnership



Encouraging them to define *their* Fatherhood

- Children as catalyst for change
- Help in sustaining the change
- Moving them to strength based
 - From incompetent, to confident
 - From potential perpetrator, to advocate
- Encourage separate streams of thought
 - First as Father, the Noun
 - Second as Fathering, the verb



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Encouraging Early Bonding and Addressing Health and Safety Issues

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Bonding

–noun

- 1. *Psychology, Animal Behavior.*** **a.** A relationship that usually begins at the time of birth between a parent and offspring and that establishes the basis for an ongoing mutual attachment. **b.** The establishment of a pair bond.
- 2.** A close friendship that develops between adults, often as a result of intense experiences, as those shared in military combat.
- 3. *Dentistry.*** A technique or procedure for restoring the discolored or damaged surface of a tooth by coating it with a highly durable resinous material that adheres to the existing enamel.



“Out of the Box “Definition

“*Dadistry.*” A technique or procedure for restoring the damaged surface of a father by equipping him with the skills and tools he needs to adhere to the existing man.



Barriers to Bonding

- Physical Location
- Maturity/Age
- Drugs/Alcohol
- Relationship with Mother
- Established Paternity



Stages of Adoption

- Awareness
I know there is a problem.
- Interest
I want to find out more.
- Decision
I have to do something.
- Implementation
I am....



ABCDE's of Critical Thinking

A = Assumptions: Recognize Assumptions

B = Biases: Examine Biases

C = Closure: Analyze the Need for Closure

D = Data: Manage Data

E = Evaluate: Other Factors

- Emotional Factors
- Environmental Factors



Funnel Everything to the Mission

NFI's Mission:

To improve the well-being of children by increasing the proportion of children growing up with involved, responsible and committed fathers in their lives.





Awareness – “There’s a problem.”

Share research on how father involvement improves health outcomes for children.

- Newsletters
- Websites
- Newspaper articles
- Blogs
- Billboards
- At meeting provide “Dad’s Matter” info.



The Father Factor in Childhood Obesity

In a study that looked at family lifestyle and parent's Body Mass Index (BMI) over a nine year period:

- Father's Body Mass Index (BMI) predicts son's and daughter's BMI independent of offspring's alcohol intake, smoking, physical fitness, and father's education
- Furthermore, BMI in sons and daughters consistently higher when fathers were overweight or obese
- Physical fitness of daughters negatively related to their father's obesity
- Obesity of fathers associated with a four-fold increase in the risk of obesity of sons and daughters at age 18

Source: Burke V, Beilin LJ, Dunbar D. "Family lifestyle and parental body mass index as predictors of body mass index in Australian children: a longitudinal study." Department of Medicine, Royal Perth Hospital, University of Western Australia, and the Western Australian Heart Research Institute; Perth, Australia.



The Father Factor in Childhood Obesity (cont.)

Two studies that have looked at the determinants of physical activity in obese and non-obese children found:

- Obese children are less likely than non-obese children to report that their fathers are physically active. This determinant not found for mothers.
- Father's inactivity strong predictor of children's inactivity.

Source: Trost SG, Kerr LM, Ward DS, Pate RR. "Physical activity and determinants of physical activity in obese and non-obese children. School of Human Movement Studies, The University of Queensland, Brisbane, Queensland 4072, Australia.

Source: Fogelholm M, Nuutinen O, Pasanen M, Myohanen E, Saatela T. "Parent-child relationship of physical activity patterns and obesity." University of Helsinki, Lahti Research and Training Centre, Finland.



Father Factor in Asthma

Children who live apart from their fathers are more likely to be diagnosed with asthma and experience an asthma-related emergency even after taking into account demographics and socioeconomic conditions.

Source: Harknett, Kristin, *Children's Elevated Risk of Asthma in Unmarried Families: Underlying Structural and Behavioral Mechanisms*. Working Paper #2005-01-FF. Princeton, NJ: Center for Research on Child Wellbeing, 2005: 19-27



Father Factor in Childhood Injuries

Toddlers living in stepfamilies and single-parent families are more likely to suffer a burn, have a bad fall, or be scarred from an accident compared to kids living with both of their biological parents.

Source: O'Connor, T.,L., Davies, J. Golding, ALSPAC Study Team, "Differential Distribution of Children's Accidents, Injuries, and Illnesses across Family Type." *Pediatrics* 106 (November 2000): e68



Interest – “I want to learn more”

- Discussions on relationship barriers
- History of Fatherhood in America
 - “Did You Know” Articles. For example: The US did not send fathers of young children into war until WWII.
 - Upon return, father’s were physically present; emotionally detached.
 - A seed was planted: “do we need fathers?”



Mom as Gateway/Gatekeeper

- Overall, the implication is that the relationship between fathers' perceived investment in the paternal role and their actual levels of paternal involvement are moderated by mothers' beliefs about the role of the father.
- There is a strong implication that mothers' perceptions of the paternal role are better predictors of father involvement than fathers' own perceptions of the paternal role.

Paternal Identity, Maternal Gatekeeping, and Father Involvement (Family Relations, 54 (July 2005), 360-372. Blackwell Publishing. Printed in the USA. Copyright 2005 by the National Council on Family Relations)



Marriage Readiness

- Marital status is the strongest predictor of father presence/father absence.
- Discussions: Why should people get married?
- Discussions: How can people stay married?
- Personality differences similar to Myers Briggs.



Decision: “I have to do something.”

- Attend Prenatal Visits
- Fatherhood Workshops
- Mentoring
- Marriage Education
- Child Development Knowledge
- GED
- Collaborative Parenting Skills
- Change friends
- Rehab





Implementation: "I am ...

- Valued
- Capable
- Present
- An Involved, responsible, and committed father.





“Out of the Box” Definition

BONDING:

“***Dadistry***”. A technique or procedure for restoring the damaged surface of a father by equipping him with the skills and tools he needs to adhere to the existing man.



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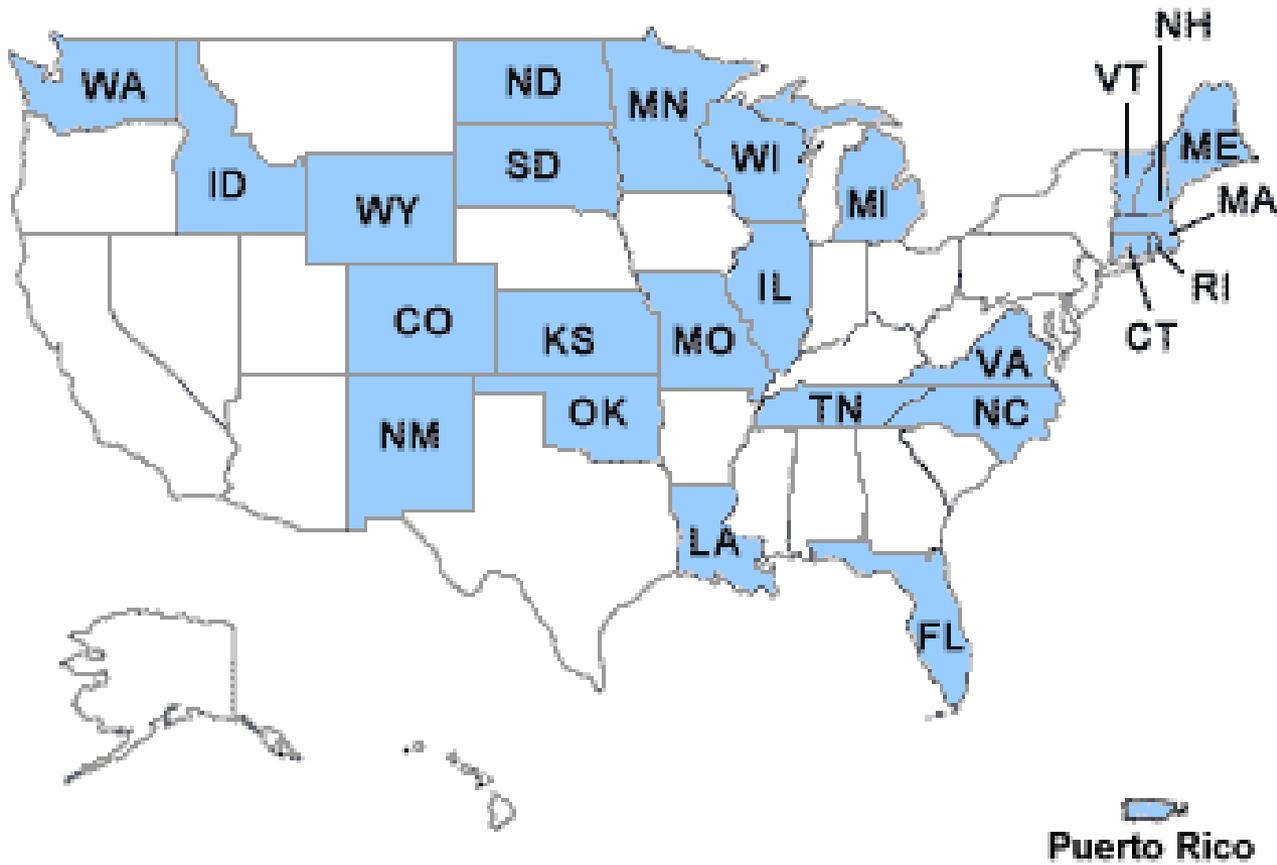
Encouraging Early Bonding and Addressing Health and Safety Issues

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Circle of Parents





Partners for Kids: United Hands Make the Best Families

- Grants have been awarded in 11 states: Colorado, Florida, Illinois, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Washington, Wisconsin.
- **Circle of Parents®** Network members receive \$20,000 to provide Training and TA to 2 local home visiting programs within their state. Each local home visiting program receives \$50,000 to provide education and support services for expecting dads and fathers of babies 12 months and under.
- Local home visiting programs receiving awards represent Healthy Families America, Parents as Teachers, Nurse/Family Partnership, Early Head Start and Healthy Start.
- Grants are used to increase the capacity of local community/faith-based home visitation programs to promote responsible parenting among expectant and new fathers. Along the way, organizations are helped to become more father and family-friendly. A variety of urban, rural and suburban communities are impacted.
- Education and support services are a combination of *Conscious Fathering Program™* classes (a program of **Parent Trust for Washington Children**) and **Circle of Parents** fathers' groups.
- Circle of Parents national office provides Training and TA in partnership with its Network members; parents; fatherhood, research and domestic violence consultants. A National Fatherhood Advisory Committee of parents and practitioners guides the project.



Population Served

- Married and unmarried fathers (biological, adoptive, or with legal custody) of unborn babies and babies up to 12 months, whose children's mothers are eligible for home visitation services offered by a number of programs (e.g. Healthy Families America, Parents as Teachers, Nurse-Family Partnership).
 - For the vast majority of fathers whose co-parent is receiving services through a home visitation program, there are significant barriers to being a good father. Most are:
 - young (under age 25), unmarried, poor, un- or under-employed;
 - do not have a high school diploma or advanced education;
 - lack positive male role models;
 - do not understand their role as a father;
 - have limited knowledge of child development.
- And** many have exacerbating factors such as a history of domestic violence, mental health problems, substance abuse, or criminal histories that make their involvement precarious or counterproductive in an in-home setting.



Data Summary through Dec 08

Classes/Groups Provided: 406

39% = Conscious Fathering classes
61% = Circle of Parents groups
(topic-based or open discussion)

Fathers in Target Population: 506
(expecting dads and fathers of babies
under 12 mo; unduplicated count)

Non-Target Population served

Fathers of children over 12 months: 355
Mothers: 283
Grandfathers/mothers, etc: 103

Target Population -- Demographics

Married – 49%
Married and/or living together – 79%
Biological fathers – 94%

Expecting fathers – 46%
Fathers of babies 12 months and under –
54%

Income under \$30,000 – 56%
Employed Full-time – 65%

Less than High School – 16%
Some HS or HS grad – 38%
College grad – 22%

19 years of age or younger – 10%
Ages 20-29 – 50% Ages 30-39 – 31%



Conscious Fathering Surveys

Change from Pre-test to Post-test

Survey Item	% Participants Improving	N	Average Score Change
1. I Feel confident in my skills as a father.	87%	100	2.83
2. I know what is necessary to keep my baby safe and healthy.	80%	102	2.89
3. I know how to be a caring and equal parenting partner with my baby's mother.	74%	101	2.92
4. I have a better understanding of what is normal development for a baby.	86%	93	2.99
5. I know how I can respond to my baby's needs.	87%	102	3.24
6. I know what steps I can take to calm a crying baby.	89%	102	3.97



Preparing expectant and new fathers to be involved in the healthy, development of their children

We provide help for fathers in the following areas:

- Knowledge of child development
- Parenting skills
- Relationship with the mother of the child
- Skills in self-management
- Knowledge of community resources

DADDY TIME



What are you doing to save time?



Important Impact of Dads

- Father's tend to spend more time than mothers in playful, physical activities with their children
-- researchers believe this helps children learn to regulate their emotions and resist the urge to act on aggressive impulses.
- Father's tend to encourage independence and achievement
-- in contrast to the more nurturing and protective nature of mothers.

Child games for different aspects of Child Development

- Hold, rock, and sing to young babies.
- Take them outside on nice days.
- Read aloud books that have colorful pictures.
- Talk to, hold and touch your baby.
- Put cushions on the floor and engage in play with your baby.
- Use a cardboard box for you and your baby to crawl inside and play.
- Stack blocks, pound toys, and sort shapes.

Goal: help develop eye hand coordination; motor skills; and recognition of objects, shapes, colors, numbers -- through seeing, hearing, touching, and trying.



Game Plan to Help Dads Get Involved

- Many expectant fathers mistakenly believe that their role in their child's life doesn't begin or matter until he or she is about two years old and is walking, talking and can play interactively.
- The father-child bond can begin the moment you learn your partner is pregnant and only increases in importance and impact when the baby is born.

How to get involved?

- Learn as much as possible before the baby arrives – attend prenatal appointments and childbirth classes, read books, and watch DVD's. Be proactive!
- Seek out mentors in other men who have children and would understand what you're going through. Ask your own father, uncle, brother, and friends about their experiences. Ask them if they were involved and a willing participant.
- Discuss concerns, fears, apprehensions about fatherhood with your partner.
- Be honest and have a willingness to communicate and share your feelings together.



Relationship Building

- Your parenting role takes on even greater importance starting at birth. Studies have shown that babies understand the difference between the father and mother as early as three months old. With the exception of breastfeeding, dads can do everything moms can do for the baby.
- Don't be afraid to get involved -- the more time you spend with your baby, the more comfortable you will become.
- Pitch in with the unpleasant tasks, such as diapering and soothing your baby when he or she is cranky. Resist the urge to pass off your baby to mom when play time is over. Not only will mom appreciate the help in the trenches, you will deepen your bond with your baby and feel a sense of accomplishment.
- Designate the evening bath or morning feeding as your special duty. This will not only give mom a break and a chance for some personal time, it will give you the opportunity to bond with your child.
- Offer to get up through the night to help mom with nighttime feedings and diaper changes. Volunteer your services.
- Play with your child in your own way. Moms and dads naturally interact with their babies in different ways, which is a good thing.



DADS guide to make Mommy happy.

- Take initiative with the kids.
- Take on a regular chore.
- Arrange date nights.
- Give her a night off each week.
- Reach out to her first.
- Stick up for her with your family and friends.
- Communicate a vulnerable feeling or wish.
- Be affectionate.



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If you have questions that were not addressed during this Webinar, please submit them to your Federal Project Officer.

Thank you and have a great afternoon!