Father Involvement and the Child Welfare System

Increasing father involvement in child welfare.
University of Denver. Institute for Families.
2005
*Perspectives on practice.*
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The majority of children in the child welfare system do not live with their fathers, increasing their risk for poverty, criminal activity, school withdrawal, substance abuse, and teen pregnancy. Despite the benefits of father involvement, many child welfare workers do not address father-child relationships in their assessments and services to families. This article identifies several strategies to engage fathers in child welfare work, including assessing the reasons for limited contact, using materials designed specifically for fathers, and helping mothers and children to appreciate the role of fathers. Employment support and peer networks also can equip fathers to be more involved in the lives of their children. [http://www.perspectivesonpractice.org/article2.htm](http://www.perspectivesonpractice.org/article2.htm)

Promoting father involvement in early childhood.
FRIENDS National Resource Center For Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention Programs.
2005
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FRIENDS Director Family Support America 205 West Randolph Street, Suite 2222
Chicago, IL 60606
Tel: 312-338-0900
Available from: [http://www.friendsnrc.org](http://www.friendsnrc.org)
Over the last decade, there has been a growing awareness of the role that fathers can play to support children in their early years of development. Those administering early childhood education programs have begun to reach out to parents for the specific purpose of promoting father involvement and leadership. Head Start programs have been a national model for parent involvement in early education and development and are now a national leader in linking father involvement to early childhood development and education. The recommendations and ideas in this fact sheet have emerged from the
Head Start experience. (Author abstract)
http://www.friendsnrc.org/downloads/Male_participation_in_Early_Childhood.pdf

Hello, we're changing the labels on absent fathers: reducing poverty through father engagement initiative findings
Sisters of Charity Foundation of South Carolina.
2005
Available from: Sisters of Charity Foundation of South Carolina.
2711 Middleburg Drive Suite 115
Columbia, SC 29204
Tel: 803-254-0230
scfsc@sistersofcharitysc.com
Available from: http://www.sistersofcharitysc.com/
This report describes the activities and outcomes of the Fatherhood Initiative in South Carolina. The initiative funded ten fatherhood programs in twelve sites across the State. The report discusses the characteristics of the participants, barriers that are faced by fathers, components of the fatherhood programs, and the success of the programs. Findings from the initiative indicate 60% of the 2,437 men who entered the program were unemployed, and 55% did not have a high school degree. As a result of being in the program, 408 obtained employment, 214 improved their earnings, 597 received job training, and 609 continue to look for work. The initiative found 79% of the fathers had children under age 18 not living with them, 64% had child support orders upon entering the program, and only 20% had visitation orders. Of men with child support orders, 72% were unemployed upon entering the program. As a result of being in the program, 123 fathers established child support and 109 men had their child support modified. Strengthening and developing healthy family relationships also occurred for the fathers in the program, with 626 having initial or first reconnecting contacts with their children, 196 improved relationships with their children's mother, and 261 men initially unable to visit their children now visit them without legal intervention. A case study of a father who participated in a fatherhood program is presented.

Fathers in child welfare: caseworkers' perspectives.
O'Donnell, John M. Johnson, Waldo E., Jr.
2005
Child welfare: journal of policy, practice, and program.
84 (3-4) p. 387-414
440 First Street, NW, Third Floor
Washington, DC 20001-2085
Tel: 202-638-2952
Available from: http://www.cwla.org
Five focus groups substantially agreed about the lack of paternal participation in child welfare services and the reasons for low paternal involvement. The groups had considerable disagreement about whether child welfare professionals should address this issue. Some caseworkers believed that all fathers and mothers should be treated identically with respect to services to be offered and time frames for services; other caseworkers thought that the special circumstances of some fathers, such as lack of child care experience, called for service approaches that differ from those for mothers. Another disagreement was whether more fathers would be more involved if services were gender sensitive, that is, if agencies provided male caseworkers for fathers and had father-only services. Much of the debate focused on pragmatic considerations (would gender-sensitive services improve paternal participation and outcomes?), although some participants were concerned about equity (would such services give fathers an advantage in disputed custody cases?).

Engaging families.
University of Denver. Institute for Families.
2005
Perspectives on practice.
1 (2) p. 1-6
This issue of a newsletter for child welfare workers in Colorado describes strategies for developing a rapport with families from other cultures, fathers, and teens. The articles review the importance of client-worker collaboration to the success of assessments and services. Professionals who are working with culturally diverse families are advised to learn about values and experiences from a variety of resources, including parents themselves. Cultural differences should be respected and integrated into treatment when appropriate. Techniques for including fathers in casework include identifying reasons for lack of participation, using materials that specifically address the role of fathers, and helping mothers and children to recognize the contributions of fathers. Workers also should focus on improving their relationships with teens by understanding current slang terminology.


Fatherhood in the child welfare system: fourth research progress report.
Publication Information: Olympia, WA : Office of Children's Administration Research, Practice Improvement Division, Children's Administration, Department of Social and Health Services.
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330 C Street SW
Washington, DC 20447
Tel: 800-394-3366 703-385-7565
nccanch@caliber.com
Available from: http://nccanch.acf.hhs.gov/
This demonstration program tested a model for addressing the systemic factors that influence father involvement in case planning in the state of Washington, such as staff training and agency policies. Pilot programs were implemented in four offices in one region of Washington, as well as in San Mateo County, California. This fourth report of the project highlights findings from three waves of data collection activities with fathers of children who entered the child welfare system between September 2002 and February 2003, and from families that were identified as eligible between March 2003 and August 2003. Outcomes for children and changes in agency policies and practices during the first two years of the project are highlighted. The study compared the involvement of primary caregivers and non-primary caregivers in terms of agreement with case plan, compliance with case plan, location of the non-primary caregivers, identification as a resource, and involvement of extended family members. In general, the Washington sites significantly increased the number of fathers considered to be a resource for the child. Barriers to identification as a resource included the unknown location of some of the fathers, lack of motivation of fathers, incarceration, mental illness, and federal goals for permanency. California child welfare programs reported a major increase in the number of cases that engaged extended family members. Numerous tables.

A multimethod study of father participation in family-based programming (Chapter 8 of Conceptualizing and measuring father involvement.)
Schock, Angie M. Gavazzi, Stephen M.
California State University, Northridge.
2004
Publication Information: Chapter 8 of: Conceptualizing and measuring father involvement. Mahwah, NJ : Lawrence Erlbaum Associates
Distributed by: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
10 Industrial Avenue
Mahwah, NJ 07430
This chapter shows how conceptualization of father involvement can affect the design of intervention programs for adjudicated youth. A study involving 78 fathers of at-risk adolescents found fathers who reported using a greater number of past services for their adolescents were more likely to participate in family-based programs, as were fathers who reported poorer family problem-solving abilities, and fathers of adolescents with more severe behavior problems. A follow-up quantitative study of 20 fathers of at-risk adolescents found views on traditional family roles and feelings of inadequacy impacted paternal participation. Methodological issues that arise in the course of multimethod research on paternal participation are discussed. 47 references.

**Low-Income Fathers and "Responsible Fatherhood" Programs: A Qualitative Investigation of Participants' Experiences.**
Anderson, Elaine A. Kohler, Julie K. Letiecq, Bethany L.
University of Maryland, College Park. Dept. of Family Studies.
2002
*Family Relations*
51 148-155
Publication Information: National Council on Family Relations, Minneapolis, MN.
Reprints available from: National Council on Family Relations
3989 Central Ave. Northeast Suite 550
Minneapolis, MN 55421
Tel: 888-781-9331 763-781-9331
ncfr3989@ncfr.org
Available from: [http://www.ncfr.org](http://www.ncfr.org)
Sponsoring Organization: Administration for Children and Families (DHHS).
This study documents the opinions of twenty low-income fathers about their participation in a Responsible Fatherhood program in a large urban area. The program offered life skills training, job readiness and placement assistance, mental health counseling and other services to help fathers become involved in their children's lives and to comply with child support orders. Formal services were provided for six months, with opportunities for follow-up maintenance groups. The fathers who participated in the study were at various levels in the program, from entry to ongoing support. Four focus groups were held to obtain information about participants' memories of becoming fathers, their perceptions of the benefits and the barriers to remaining involved with the program, and their suggestions for program improvement. A hermeneutic phenomenological methodology was used to analyze the discussions. Fathers reported individual, relational, and contextual benefits to the responsible fatherhood program, including an increase in self-confidence and optimism, emotional support, and assistance with substance abuse and legal problems. Improvements also were noted in the fathers' relationships with their children and the mothers of their children. Barriers to involvement were noted as personal fear or reluctance, limited time, lack of education, and job schedules. The participants suggested incentives for encouraging men to participate in the program, such as involving program graduates in initial assessments and providing greater choice in meeting times. Several programmatic changes also were recommended, including stipends for participants and assistance in resolving immediate problems. The results provide a preliminary evaluation of the program's services. 44 references.

**Fragile Families, Father Involvement, and Public Policy.**
Carlson, M. J. McLanahan, S. S.
Columbia Univ., New York, NY.
2002
Publication Information: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., Mahwah, NJ.
Distributed by: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
10 Industrial Ave.
Mahwah, NJ 07430-2262
Tel: 800-926-6579 201-236-9500
orders@erlbaum.com
Available from: [http://www.erlbaum.com](http://www.erlbaum.com)
This chapter reviews trends in nonmarital childbearing and explores the role of public policies in promoting the involvement of fathers in the lives of children born outside of marriage. Emphasis is placed on fragile families, defined as unmarried couples, cohabiting or living separately, who are raising a child together. These families are considered fragile because of the unstable nature of the parents' relationship and risk for poverty. Baseline data collected for the Fragile Families and Child Well-being Study revealed that the majority of unmarried parents were romantically involved when their child was born. Fifty-one percent of the parents were cohabiting and 32 percent were in a visiting relationship. Most of the parents expected to marry their child's mother or father in the future. Fathers were more likely to expect marriage than mothers, even when they were not romantically involved when the child was born. Most couples also agreed that child well-being is better when parents are married, despite their misgivings about marriage and high levels of distrust of the opposite sex. Unmarried parents had lower educational achievement and employment rates than married parents, increasing their risk for poverty and welfare participation. Research about the importance of fathers as economic providers and emotional supporters indicate that public policies should promote men's involvement in their child's lives. The chapter provides recommendations for welfare programs, child support enforcement, and fatherhood programs. Numerous references, 1 figure, and 3 tables.

**Study of Fathers’ Involvement in Permanency Planning and Child Welfare Casework.**
Sonenstein, F. Malm, K. Billing, A.
The Urban Institute, Washington, DC.
2002
Publication Information: Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (DHHS), Washington, DC
Sponsoring Organization: Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (DHHS), funding from the Administration for Children and Families.
Research findings from a comprehensive search of Internet sites, bibliographies, government sources, and experts were reviewed in preparation for a three-year study about child welfare practices with noncustodial fathers. This report summarizes the literature about trends in family living arrangements, the effects of trends in non-custodial fatherhood on families within the child welfare system, the barriers to father participation in case planning, and innovative practices used to locate and engage fathers in the child welfare case process. Overall, the review found that child welfare agencies are making greater efforts to identify fathers as they comply with TANF requirements and attempt to collect child support for foster care expenses. However, few studies have considered the role of non-custodial fathers in the lives of their children receiving child welfare services. The three-year study will investigate these issues in five states.
http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/CW-dads02/

**Best practice/next practice : family-centered child welfare, Summer 2002 : father involvement.**
National Child Welfare Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice
2002
Best Practice/Next Practice
Distributed by: National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information
330 C St., SW Washington, DC 20447
Tel: (703) 385-7565 (800) 394-3366
nccanch@caliber.com
Available from: http://nccanch.acf.hhs.gov
Despite research that substantiates the importance of father involvement in children's lives, family-centered child welfare services continue to be oriented toward the child's mother. This newsletter from the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice explains how child welfare services can engage fathers in the lives of their children. The articles suggest strategies such as family conferencing, support services, and outreach to fathers in prison or on parole. The findings from research
about the positive and negative aspects of father involvement are discussed. Perspectives are offered from a case manager and a father. The newsletter includes an outline of tips for involving parents in child welfare services, including early identification and engagement, comprehensive assessment, safety planning, out-of-home placement, implementation of a service plan, permanency planning, and re-evaluation of the service plan. Numerous references.

**The Effects of Welfare, Child Support, and Labor Markets on Father Involvement.**
Sigle-Rushton, W. Garfinkel, I.  
London School of Economics and Political Science, (United Kingdom).  
2002  
Publication Information: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., Mahwah, NJ.  
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10 Industrial Ave.  
Mahwah, NJ 07430-2262  
Tel: 800-926-6579 201-236-9500  
orders@erlbaum.com  
Available from: http://www.erlbaum.com  
This chapter summarizes economic theory and evidence regarding the impact of welfare, child support enforcement, and labor markets on the lack of father involvement in circumstances such as divorce, legal separation, or nonmarital births. The discussion reviews trends in family structure and explains how public policy can enhance child well-being by promoting family structures that facilitate father involvement in children's lives. All economic theories about family structure are based on the assumption that individuals make the decision to marry or divorce by weighing the benefits of each option. When applied to welfare policy, economic theory suggests that the income criteria of current welfare policies discourage women from marrying because they fear that their husband's income would disqualify them from receiving welfare payments. Greater restrictions would be expected to decrease the benefits of single parenthood and increase the likelihood of marriage and family involvement. Although studies have found some evidence that welfare restrictions are linked to decreases in nonmarital births, support for the theory is weak because of sampling problems and unknown confounding variables. An economic model of the impact of child support enforcement predicts that increased enforcement will decrease the divorce rate among families who utilize welfare assistance, and either increase or decrease divorce for other couples, depending on individual perceptions of the balance between loss of income from the payment of child support and gains from the receipt of support. Findings from two studies indicate that higher child support obligations are related to decreases in nonmarital births. Empirical research supports the labor market theory that increases in job opportunities for men increases marriage, while increases in job opportunities for women could increase or decrease marriage rates, depending on the supply of marriageable men, education, and race. 53 references.

**Welfare reform, fertility, and father involvement**
Mclanahan, Sara S. Carlson, Marcia J.  
Princeton University  
2002  
The Future of Children  
12 (1) p. 147-165  
Available from: The Future of Children  
FOC@princeton.edu  
Available from: http://www.futureofchildren.org  
Recognizing that most poor families are single-parent families, the federal welfare reform law of 1996 emphasized the responsibility of both parents to support their children. In addition to strengthening the child support enforcement system, the law included several provisions designed to decrease childbearing outside of marriage and to promote two-parent families. This article focuses on the important role that fathers play in children's lives and how public policies have affected childbearing and father involvement. Key observations are: Compared with children living with both biological parents, children in father-absent families often have fewer economic and socioemotional resources from their parents, and do not fare as well on many outcome measures.-- Efforts to reduce the rising number of father-absent families by focusing on preventing unwanted pregnancy among unmarried women, especially teen girls, have met...
with some success; those programs seeking to alter adolescents' life opportunities in addition to providing education or family planning services appear to hold the most promise.-- Efforts to encourage greater father involvement by focusing almost exclusively on increasing absent parents' child support payments reap only minimal benefits for poor children because their absent parents often have few resources and little incentive to make support payments.-- To date, efforts to increase the emotional involvement of unmarried fathers with their children have produced disappointing results, but new research suggests that such programs can make a difference when targeting fathers at the time of a child's birth. Many children spend some time living away from their fathers, deprived of the financial and emotional resources they can provide. Because of the importance of fathers to child well-being, the authors conclude that new directions in research and public policies are needed to encourage greater father involvement across the wide diversity of family arrangements in society today. (Author abstract)

http://www.futureofchildren.org/information2826/information_show.htm?doc_id=102678
http://www.futureofchildren.org/usr_doc/6-mclanahan.pdf

Scalera, Maureen Braun.
2001
Available from: National Family Preservation Network
3971 North 1400 East
Buhl, ID 83316
Tel: 888-498-9047
director@nfpn.org
Available from: http://www.nfpn.org
One hundred child welfare professionals, family service workers, court officials, and fatherhood program employees participated in group discussions held throughout the United States about the engagement of fathers in services. The National Family Preservation Network sponsored the events to determine the extent of agency attention to the needs of fathers and to identify ways to support father involvement in family life. The questions focused on the skills necessary to engage fathers in programs, types of services provided to fathers, barriers to father-child relationships, the impact of worker education and personal biases on services to fathers, and accessibility to fatherhood programs. Participants also were asked about changes needed to agency policies and structures to promote the inclusion of fathers in services. Their recommendations addressed social work education, technical assistance to agency administrators, regular paternity establishment, gender-neutral agency policies, staff recruitment, and collaboration with employment programs. The National Family Preservation Network plans to develop a training curriculum for child welfare workers to improve practice with fathers. 4 references.
http://www.nfpn.org/tools/articles/fathers.php

The Effect of Fathers or Father Figures on Child Behavioral Problems in Families Referred to Child Protective Services.
Washington State Office of Children's Administration Research, Olympia. Children's Administration Data Unit.
2001
Child Maltreatment
6 (4) 290-299
Reprints available from: Sage Publications, Inc.
2455 Teller Rd.
Thousand Oaks, CA 91320
Tel. 805-499-9774
order@sagepub.com
Available from: http://www.sagepub.com
This study examined the effect of father-child interactions on the behavior and health of young children in a sample of 182 families reported to child protective services. Data were collected from interviews with the child and his or her caregiver and from reviews of child protective service records and teacher
reports. Variables included child and family characteristics; parental and family functioning; extrafamilial relationships; community environment; religious affiliation; child outcomes; and service utilization. Whereas the presence or absence of a father or father figure seemed to make little difference in child behavioral problems at age 4, lower levels of aggression and depression were observed for children by age 6 if an adult male in some form of father-like relationship was present in the child's life. Analyses found no significant interactions between the mother's ethnicity, child's gender, number of referrals to child protective services, and the presence of domestic violence. However, presence and involvement of the father/father figure was indirectly related to child outcomes through its mediating effect on caregiver depression. The effects of father involvement were difficult to determine in the study because of the different types of men who assumed the father role in the sample and because the length of the father-child relationship was not known. 33 references, 2 notes, 2 tables.

**Fragile Families, Father Involvement and Public Policy.**
Carlson, M. J. McLanahan, S. S.
Princeton Univ., NJ.
2001
Distributed by: Princeton University, Center for Research on Child Wellbeing
Wallace Hall
Princeton, NJ 08544
Tel: 609-258-5894
crcw@opr.princeton.edu
Available from: [http://crcw.princeton.edu](http://crcw.princeton.edu)
Sponsoring Organization: National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (DHHS), Bethesda, MD.
The increase in the number of children being born to unmarried parents present a number of social policy issues for strengthening the involvement of unwed fathers with their children. This working paper examines trends in out-of-wedlock childbearing, the influence of fathers in child development, and how social policies such as welfare, child support, and fathering programs affect unwed fathers and their family involvement. The authors discuss a number of studies that have found paternal involvement to be associated with better emotional, behavioral, and developmental outcomes in children, as well as better economic conditions for families, regardless of marital status. The impact of legislation affecting fathers and families with unmarried parents are detailed, notably family reliance on economic welfare programs and the negative and positive effects of child support enforcement policy. Both public and private support is needed to ensure that unmarried parents raise their children together. Because most unmarried parents express the desire to be married, and evidence that children benefit most if both biological parents are involved in their upbringing, social policies that would strengthen such families can be expected to have broad bipartisan support, the paper concludes. However for new fatherhood initiatives to succeed, programs will have to work together with welfare and child support provisions of existing family laws, especially those in the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families act (TANF). Numerous references, 1 figure, 3 tables.


**Position paper on fatherhood in the child welfare system.**
2001
Available from: National Family Preservation Network
3971 North 1400 East
Buhl, ID 83316
Tel: 888-498-9047
director@nfpn.org
Available from: [http://www.nfpn.org](http://www.nfpn.org)
NFPN's Position Paper on Fatherhood in the Child Welfare System was commissioned by the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice. The paper explores the research on
fatherhood in the child welfare system, the impact of ASFA on fatherhood, best practices, and recommendations as to how the child welfare system can join the fatherhood movement. The paper concludes that there are currently no models, training curricula, training protocols, or technical assistance for engaging and involving fathers in their children's lives in the child welfare system. (Author abstract)

http://www.nfpn.org/tools/articles/fatherhood1.php