



5 things you should know about the importance of fathers

Father involvement has increased dramatically over the past several decades, and simultaneously, the role of fathers in their families has evolved from conceptions of fathers as distant breadwinners to a more holistic recognition that they are equal coparents. Accompanying these changes is a growing interest among researchers in studying the role that fathers play in the lives of their children. Below are some highlights of the current landscape of what the research says about today's dads.

1. Involved dads have a direct impact on their children's future.

Involved fatherhood is linked to better outcomes on nearly every measure of child wellbeing, from cognitive development and educational achievement to self-esteem and pro-social behavior.¹ Children who grow up with involved fathers are: 39% more likely to earn mostly A's in school, 45% less likely to repeat a grade, 60% less likely to be suspended or expelled from school, twice as likely to go to college or find stable employment after high school, 75% less likely to have a teen birth, and 80% less likely to spend time in jail.²

2. Families are strengthened by supporting fathers.

Providing services and programming that aim to increase fathers' positive parenting skills, appropriate discipline practices, effective communication, emotional support, and stress management can have a double effect by reducing risk factors for child abuse and increasing protective factors. As a result, not only can children face a reduced risk of maltreatment, but they can also benefit from positive father involvement.

3. Policies and programs specifically for dads are on the rise.

Federal and state investments in promoting the positive impact fathers have on their children and families continue to increase significantly. Several cities and counties have also developed innovative fatherhood programming. A majority of states now have some sort of state or local efforts targeting dads in the form of government initiatives, professional and practitioner networks, and nonprofit and community collaborations.

4. Dads find immense value from their participation in programs.

Fathers who attend fatherhood programs find great value in them. The support they find among other fathers, the guidance they receive from the program facilitators, and the community resources and supports that fathers access keep them coming back. Additionally, fathers report knowing how to communicate better with their children and the mother(s) of their children, and having an increased sense of confidence and efficacy as a father because of their program participation.

5. The evidence base on the impact of dads and the effectiveness of specialized programs is growing.

Several small-scale studies found fatherhood initiatives showing promise, while other programs have registered impacts under more rigorous evaluation designs, including CFRP's evaluation of the state-wide [Texas Fatherhood EFFECT Programs](#). Several large evaluations of fatherhood programs are currently underway.³ Federal funds also support projects that promote rigorous evaluation of fatherhood programs throughout the country, like the national [Fatherhood Research and Practice Network](#), of which CFRP director Dr. Cynthia Osborne served as Chair of the Responsible Fatherhood working group. For more research on father involvement, go to the [Office of Planning, Research & Evaluation](#).

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Sources: (1) Rosenberg, J., & Wilcox, W. (2006). United States Department of Health and Human Services. Administration for Children and Families. Child Welfare Information Gateway. The Importance of Fathers in the Healthy Development of Children. Office on Child Abuse and Neglect, U.S. Children's Bureau. Retrieved from <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/usermanuals/fatherhood/chaptertwo.cfm>. (2) Nord, C. & West, J. (2001) Fathers' and Mothers' Involvement in Their Children's Schools by Family Type and Resident Status. (NCES 2001-032). Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Furstenberg, F.F. & Harris, K.M. (1993). When and why fathers matter: Impacts of father involvement on the children of adolescent mothers. Pp. 117-38 in Young Unwed Fathers: Changing Roles and Emerging Policies. Edited by R.I. Lerman and T.J. Ooms. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press. (3) United States Department of Health and Human Services. Administration for Children and Families. Strengthening Families, Healthy Marriage & Responsible Fatherhood. (n.d.) Retrieved from <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/research/topic/overview/strengthening-families-healthy-marriage-responsible-fatherhood>