



# ENGAGING FATHERS AND PARTNERS IN PREGNANCY AND BEYOND

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# Language Matters

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While we are centering fathers in this session,

- Recognize and honor the diversity of family structures and gender identities.
- Goal is not to reinforce binary or traditional roles.
- Aim to explore how to intentionally include and support all parents, including those who identify as fathers or take on fathering roles.

# We know that dads Matter!

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## Children Raised Without their Father..

- **Mental health:** Youth in single-parent homes have 2–3 × higher rates of depressive symptoms and suicidal thoughts
- **Substance use:** Father absence is linked to ≈40 % higher instance of adolescent alcohol and drug use, even after adjusting for income.
- **School Outcomes:** Students without a resident father are 2 × more likely to repeat a grade and score about 10 % lower on standardized tests.
- **Juvenile justice:** Father-absent teens are 2.5 × more likely to be arrested or incarcerated.
- **Young pregnancy:** Girls growing up without fathers face up to 5 × higher risk of adolescent pregnancy.

# Having Dad Around Leads to...

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- Reduced contact with juvenile justice system
- Delay in commencing sexual activity
- Less divorce in adult life
- Less reliance on aggressive conflict resolution
- Higher grades
- Greater problem solving and stress tolerance

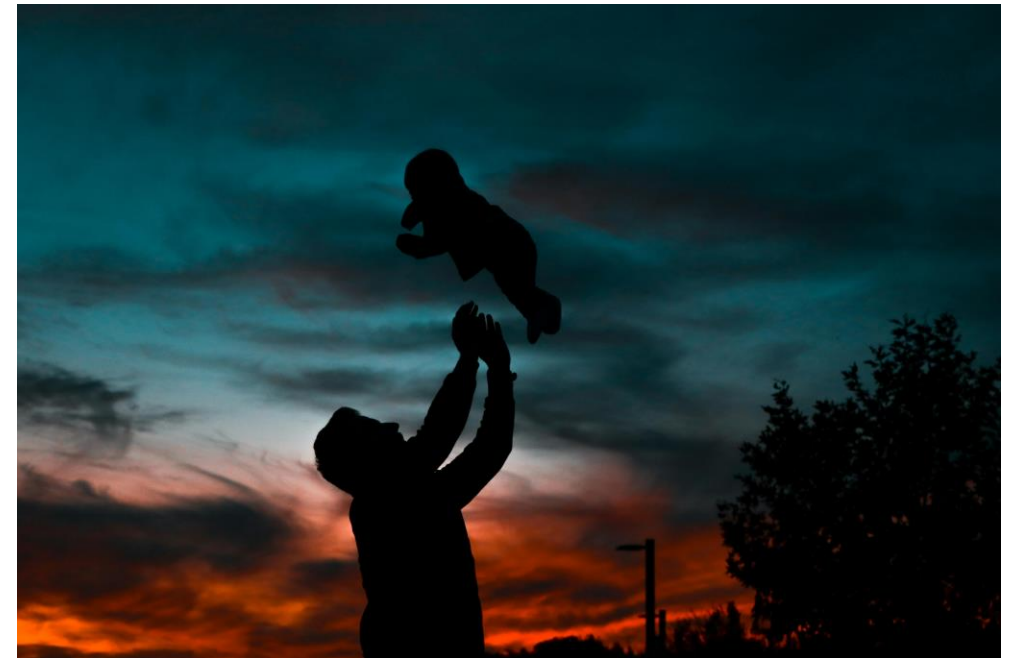


# And it's not just good for kids!

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## Fathers do better when involved with their child:

- Better relationships
- More job consistency
- Lower aggression and impulsivity
- Less accidental death
- Longer life



# Allow for the Differences in Parenting

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- Men have often been conditioned to limit emotional expression
- The emotion that is allowed to be shown is often anger
- The subtle or softer emotions are often not identified or named
- Men are action and solution oriented- fixing vs witnessing
- Men bring unique gifts to their children

# Recognize the fragility of fatherhood:

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## Non-residential fathers are at high risk of no involvement

- **Social systems often sideline fathers:** from healthcare settings to public assistance programs, dads are rarely centered or welcomed in perinatal spaces
- **Structural barriers** (like incarceration, unemployment, or immigration status) can prevent fathers from being consistently present, even when they want to be
- **Cultural messaging and masculinity norms** may discourage emotional expression, caregiving, or help-seeking behaviors among men
- **When fathers are unsupported or excluded**, the impact is felt across generation, increasing risks for poor maternal outcomes, child development challenges, and cycles of disconnection





# Encourage Engagement

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- Be welcoming of dads (images we use, language, male employee, etc.)
- Meet dads where they're at
- Be prepared to deal with conflict (co-parenting)
- Create a safe environment for men to talk openly
- Allow him to seek improvement (parenting classes, mediation, educational guidance, vocational/employment, dad's groups, therapy etc.)



# Encourage Engagement

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- Don't attack his intentions or his basic commitment—even if small
- Acknowledge him, any involvement is good
- Awareness of gatekeeping by coparents or other relatives
- Keep other good men involved, especially paternal grandfathers, uncles etc.

# Some Good News...

- **Research shows that Dads are already trying to be more involved in their children's lives**
- **Fathers are spending more time with their kids:**  
U.S. dads now average 7.8 hours/week in childcare, an increase from 6.8 hours just 20 years ago.
- **Millennial dads are leading the shift:**  
They spend 30% more time with their children compared to their own fathers and grandfathers.
- **More dads are showing up in healthcare:**  
Over 60% of fathers attend their child's well-visits despite work and systemic barriers.
- **Shared caregiving is rising, especially among college-educated dads:**  
Fathers with degrees spend nearly twice as much time in childcare than those without.
- **Children help shift cultural norms:** Some Males who are hesitant about asking for help are willing to do better when it comes to their kids.



# Father's Role in Maternal & Child Health

- Maternal mental health is many times tied to the level of support she receives (sleep, childcare, nutrition etc.)
- Are dads engaged in prenatal and postpartum services? Invite them, include them!
- How do dads respond to offered services, are they included? Are we asking how they are coping?
- Are dads registered with clinics/agencies/organizations as clients as well or just moms?
- The community plays a key role in engaging dads, through outreach, education, and inclusive family-based care- multigenerational homes.



# Father's Role in Maternal & Child Health

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## Theme

### Engagement in Care

## Core Message

Invite dads into prenatal and postpartum service, welcome them as active participants.

### Check-In & Wellbeing

Ask dads how they're coping, include them in conversations about family health.

### Client Inclusion

Ensure dads are registered as clients in clinics/agencies—not just moms.

### Community Connection

Use outreach, education, and inclusive family-based care (including multigenerational homes) to sustain engagement.

### Paternal Mental Health

Around **8–10% of new fathers** experience postpartum depression, yet it often goes undiagnosed.

# What are your thoughts?

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- What are you seeing that works well with dads partners in your community?
- What do you think you can do differently in your work/life to engage fathers/partners?

# Father & Partner Support in New Mexico

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## Fathers New Mexico

Weekly father support groups and case management for young dads

Santa Fe, Sandoval & Bernalillo Counties

☎ (505) 377-8950 • [info@fathersnewmexico.org](mailto:info@fathersnewmexico.org)

## Padres Unidos (Las Cumbres)

Parenting groups, mentoring, legal support, and workshops

Santa Fe & surrounding counties

☎ 575-626-2193

## Conscious Fathering- Aprendamos

Hands-on newborn care and bonding classes

Las Cruces

☎ (575) 526-6682

## Fathers Building Futures – Fatherhood Reentry

Support for dads transitioning from incarceration: training & reintegration

Albuquerque

☎ (505) 341-9034 • [joseph@fathersbuildingfutures.org](mailto:joseph@fathersbuildingfutures.org)

## The Birthing Tree – Partner Support Group

Peer-support and education space for fathers & partners

Santa Fe

☎ (505) 552-2454 • [info@thebirthingtree.com](mailto:info@thebirthingtree.com)

# Contact Fathers NM

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**FATHERS**  
New Mexico

