

Successful Communities Need Involved Fathers

Father's Day offers us an opportunity to reflect on the important role fathers play in the future well-being of our community. We know children are the foundation of a prosperous and modern society. What isn't clear is how essential fathers are to ensuring children's healthy growth and development. When children have positive, loving relationships with their fathers they are more likely to have the skills and abilities to be nurturing parents themselves, productive employees, and contributing members of our community.

Just like a house, children's brain architecture must be built on a strong foundation. It affects all the growth and development that follow. Nurturing, interactive, and responsive experiences build that strong foundation, while lack of attention and/or indifference from key adults builds a fragile foundation.

So having engaged fathers who are present and available to their children is not just a nice thing, it's critical to children's successful growth and development. Research shows that fathers have several unique impacts on their children. By simply nurturing their children and performing everyday tasks like helping with homework, taking their children to the doctor, and even styling their daughter's hair fathers help their children feel more confident and secure. By being positive role models, they help their children learn right from wrong, feel good about themselves, and to safely take risks. By actively playing with their children, fathers help them become more confident and comfortable playing with other children and adults. Additionally, by developing a supportive partnership with their children's mother and other adults, such as teachers and coaches, they are an important part of their child's "family circle".

These simple and natural interactions of engaged fathers reduce the risk of their children living in poverty, abusing drugs and alcohol, doing poorly in school, and engaging in criminal behavior. They even provide protection against long-term health and behavioral problems, such as heart disease, obesity, and depression.

While there is no doubt among researchers about the major role fathers play in their children's lives, many fathers still see themselves as the "other" parent [an "optional parent"]. It is critical that all fathers understand the invaluable role they play in their children's development and in our community's present and future success, regardless of the relationship they have with their children's mother.

(Name of organization) is working to support fathers in their fatherhood efforts. (Briefly describe the work you are doing to engage fathers. [Be sure to include contact info, priority population(s) served, "impact statement" describing how your organization has impacted the community, and/or Father's Day events].

As we celebrate Fathers Day, let's celebrate the role we all have in ensuring our children's healthy growth and development. If you are a father, we challenge you to embrace your call to duty. There is no greater role a man can take than to be a father. It takes courage and strength to educate, encourage, and nurture our state's greatest asset – our children. We also invite everyone to join us in promoting fatherhood in North Carolina by encouraging the fathers, grandfathers, and other men in a fathering role we know. By working together we can make sure they have the knowledge, skills and support they need to be effective in their role of raising our future parents, workers, and leaders.