

HMHC Newsletter

Healthy Men, Healthy Communities

June 2010

Introduction from GCYF

This month's e-newsletter examines the importance of father's in children's lives. The lead story, from Dr. Jermane Bond, discusses the vital role expectant fathers play in improving pregnancy outcomes. Dr. Bond is a member of a newly formed commission by the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, Commission on Paternal Involvement in Pregnancy Outcomes (CPIPO). CPIPO's purpose is to improve paternal involvement in pregnancy and family health by reframing debates and informing research, policy and practice to support greater involvement of fathers in pregnancy.

Next, an article by Jolene Smith, Executive Director of FIRST 5 Santa Clara County, explores the role that FIRST 5 has had in supporting healthy fatherhood and male involvement and includes large scale ways that grantmakers can spark systemic change. Finally, a commentary from Roland Warren, President of the National Fatherhood Initiative, examines data on the economic, social and behavioral cost of absentee fathers on their children, highlighting findings from the National Fatherhood Initiatives report "One Hundred Billion Dollar Man: The Annual Public Costs of Father Absence".

We hope you enjoy this issue.

Best regards,

Dr. Stephanie McGencey, Ph.D., MPH
Executive Director
Grantmakers for Children, Youth & Families

First Call: Why Expectant Fathers Play a Vital Role in Improving Pregnancy Outcomes

By Dr. Jermane Bond, Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies



Is it perhaps coincidental that the historical developments (slavery, declining employment for Black men, increasing workforce participation for Black women, welfare policies favoring single mothers and discrimination) of our society have disintegrated the Black family and resulted in father-less homes?

If the answer is "yes", then what explains the racial and ethnic disparity in pregnancy outcomes among African Americans? And why does the United States currently rank 28th among developed nations in infant mortality^[i]?

If the answer is "no", can we explain away the associated risk factors for adverse pregnancy outcomes (PO)?

For the naysayers, why don't we have a national paid parental leave policy in this country? Why is it uncommon to mention men's health or family planning for men? All in all, our country has not paid much attention to the health and family planning needs of men.

Not only are men less likely than women to receive preventative health services, have a regular doctor, source of care, or health insurance^[ii], but men are also neglected in the reproductive health agenda.

We know that men are important to maternal and child health^[iii], but we know little regarding specific roles expectant fathers play in improving PO. The little that we know about paternal involvement (PI) and pregnancy outcomes suggests that PI can have a positive influence on maternal health behaviors during pregnancy.^[iv]

But what if the male does not know his role? Have we done a good job teaching our young boys how to be men and men how to be fathers? How can men be expected to play a direct, active and constructive role in the planning and participation of the pregnancy and birth if they lack knowledge regarding roles and expectations?

The Need to Improve Research, Practice and Policies on Paternal Involvement in Pregnancy

In a [recent report](#), the [Commission on Paternal Involvement in Pregnancy Outcomes](#) (CPIPO) called for more research, policy and practice changes to boost the involvement of expectant fathers during pregnancy. This report, released May 20th, 2010, outlines forty recommendations aimed at supporting and enhancing the role that expectant fathers can play in ensuring healthy pregnancies and infants. ([more](#))

Supporting Healthy Fatherhood and Male Involvement in Santa Clara County

By Jolene Smith, FIRST 5 Santa Clara County



The research is unequivocal. Fathers have an independent effect on the well-being of a child. Unfortunately, fewer men overall are actually involved with their children. Therefore, grantmakers and funded organizations must play a more active role to promote the importance of fatherhood and male involvement in a child's life.



In 1998, California voters established First 5 county Commissions as public grantmaking bodies to support the healthy development of children prenatal through age five. Over the past 12 years, FIRST 5 Santa Clara County (SCC) has invested over \$100 million in local

programs that range from high-quality childcare and preschool, to screening children for developmental delays. Throughout our history, we have funded programs that have predominantly focused on the mother-child relationship. However, current research has revealed that a father's early involvement in a child's life is a significant factor in the child's healthy development.

Three years ago, FIRST 5 SCC formed a countywide [Fatherhood/Male Involvement Collaborative](#) to formulate a [Strategic Plan](#) that developed a long-term vision for responsible fatherhood/male involvement in the County. The Collaborative embarked on an extensive needs assessment to identify the needs of fathers, assets in the community, and gaps in services. The findings helped FIRST 5 SCC to understand the issue, develop effective strategies, and galvanize the community around the issue of fatherhood/male involvement. ([more](#))

The One Hundred Billion Dollar Father

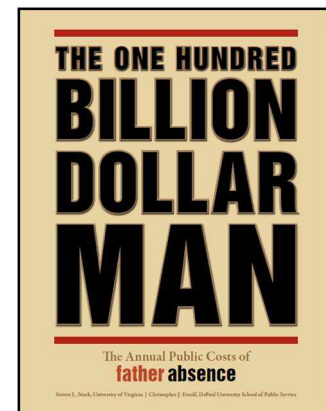
By Roland C. Warren, National Fatherhood Initiative

One of my favorite television shows growing up was "The Six Million Dollar Man." It was about secret agent Steve Austin (played by Lee Majors) who had been severely injured in a plane crash and then "rebuilt" for special missions with the Office of Scientific Intelligence of the CIA. The operation to give him bionic, and thus more powerful, body parts cost \$6 million.

The show's opening popularized the phrase, "We can rebuild him - we have the technology." Indeed, the government agency that rebuilt him vowed to make him "better than he was before - better, stronger, faster." Having this one man be better, stronger and faster was worth at least \$6 million to the government.

This Father's Day, I was reminded of the show's premise when I considered the state of our nation's fathers and fatherhood in general. Like Steve Austin, the institution of fatherhood, in too many communities, needs to be rebuilt.

Indeed, fatherhood is at a crossroads. On one hand, today's involved fathers are more engaged in the day-to-day care of their children than at any time in recent memory. On the other hand, far too many fathers are disconnected from their children - more than 24 million children, one out of every three, live absent their biological fathers. These children are at least two to three times more likely to be poor; to use drugs; to experience educational, health, emotional and behavioral problems; to be victims of child abuse; and to engage in criminal behavior than peers who live with both of their parents. ([more](#))



News in Brief

President Obama Launches Next Phase in Fatherhood Efforts with The President's Fatherhood and Mentoring Initiative

On June 21, President Obama spoke in Washington, D.C. to discuss the importance of responsible fatherhood and mentoring to build healthy families and communities. At the event, the President announced the next steps in his longstanding agenda on fatherhood and personal responsibility: [The President's Fatherhood and Mentoring Initiative](#). The Initiative will continue the President's effort to impact father absence in America through partnerships with fatherhood and family-serving groups and role models around the country.

[Read the President's speech](#) or [watch the video](#)

New Study on Building Strong Families Recommends Better Approach, Access

Earlier this month The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) released findings from the [Building Families Initiative](#), which provides relationship and marriage education, case management, and referrals to other services. The study measured the living arrangements, relationship status, relationship quality, extent of father involvement, existence of domestic violence, and economic well-being of approximately 5,000 couples. This report's findings indicated a need to strengthen approaches for families and provide better access to support services. Carmen R. Nazario, assistant secretary for children and families at HHS, commented that "these findings are very timely as Congress considers the more comprehensive Fatherhood, Marriage and Families Innovation Fund, proposed in the President's 2011 budget."

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