



ture This

Programs and Policies
Affecting Today's Families

Fathers play a unique and crucial role in the well-being and development of children. The presence of involved fathers in households is often linked with positive outcomes for children in intellectual, social and emotional functioning.

Changes in Family Structure

Generally in most U.S. households, mothers play a more active and lead role in caring for their children. Based on the 1998 U.S. Census, there are 11.9 million single parent households, of which 2.1 million are headed by fathers. Even in homes where there are two parents, mothers are generally more engaged in their children's activities.



Researchers have probed into these findings and discovered interesting data. The 1998 Census indicated that between 1995 and 1998 there was a significant increase (25%) in the number of single father households. In a 2001 Child Trends Report, fathers in two parent households are shown to be more engaged in various aspects of their children's lives compared to past years. For additional information, visit www.childtrends.org/pdf/June_2001.pdf.

Although trends indicate that fathers are getting more involved in their children's lives, there are still many homes where children don't experience the needed father-child interaction. In a 2000 Gallup poll, most respondents felt that mothers still have a more dominant influence than fathers on their children.

Father Presence and Child-Wellbeing

Studies have shown that children with engaged fathers at home tend to perform better academically and emotionally. When fathers are involved in their children's education, such as volunteering in the classroom or helping with homework, their children are more likely to do well in school, enjoy school, participate in after-school activities, and are less likely to have repeated a grade. Children with fathers living at home also exhibit increased levels of empathy and self-esteem, and maintain more secure relationships with peers and family. For more information and research, visit www.fatherhood.org/ffacts.

Fathers and Adolescents

Adolescents and young adults with close paternal relationships also report fewer incidents of depression and increased self-confidence. Father involvement is linked to lower rates of youth delinquency and positive emotional outcomes in adolescents. Taking time for father-youth activities can increase an adolescent's sense of self-worth and interest in positive social activities. For fathering tips, visit www.fathers.com/articles/cat.asp?cat=4.

Resources

As family structures evolve in the U.S. and result in more single-parent homes, networks and service organizations are growing to support fathers' involvement. These resources can help fathers who want to get more involved in their children's lives. The National Fatherhood Initiative (NFI) provides a web site containing news and research from local and national media on fathering. They also offer a research round-up in the quarterly newsletter *Fatherhood Today*, which is available at www.fatherhood.org/ftoday.htm. This year, the NFI sponsors the 5th Annual Summit on fatherhood June 10-12 in San Antonio, TX. For more information, visit www.fatherhood.org.

The Fathers Network offers support for fathers of children with special health care needs and developmental disabilities. Support and service programs are listed in each U.S. state, as well as in Canada and New Zealand. There is also a venue for fathers of children with special health care needs to share their experiences. Visit www.fathersnetwork.org. En español, vaya a www.fathersnetwork.org/web/espanol/index.html.

Newly-minted fathers can visit "Boot Camp for New Dads" to explore strategies and ideas for the family. Fathers can acquire knowledge on infant care including breastfeeding, crying, and bonding. Information about post-partum depression, advice for supporting new moms, and infant safety allows dads to find practical and useful information for the new family. Visit www.newdads.com.

The National Practitioners Network for Fathers and Families assists fatherhood initiatives through conferences and workshops. NPNFF also hosts "The Practitioner's Page," a forum for discussion among fatherhood program practitioners. Organizations can call 1-800-346-7633 or visit www.npnff.org.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of America is a one-on-one mentoring program between an adult volunteer and a youth. For parents in single parent household, this can be a chance to provide another influential adult in your child's health. For more information, visit www.bbbsi.org

Family Voices is a national grassroots network of families and friends speaking on behalf of children with special health needs. Our children are also part of the wider world of children. With a Partners in Information and Communication (PIC) Cooperative Agreement from the MCH Bureau - DHHS, Family Voices is working to encourage partnerships between families and professionals for children's good health.

PICture This is a digest of articles and news clips to share with families, family organizations, and our professional partners to offer a flavor of activities going on in the maternal and child health (mch) community. We hope to encourage flourishing partnerships! ■



Partners...

Association of State and Territorial Officials is a membership organization of public health departments in the United States and U.S. territories. ASTHO assists health departments in developing and implementing programs and policies to promote health.

ASTHO is engaged in several projects and has developed publications that could be interesting to families and organizations. Projects cover topics such as adolescent and school health, immunization, child passenger safety, managed care, racial disparities, etc. They also publish several newsletters, such as ASTHO Report which covers programs and issues state health departments and organizations are working on. Visit www.astho.org/about/publications/areport/areport_archive.html to view past editions or contact Brent Ewig (bewig@ASTHO.org) for more information or to subscribe

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Family Resource Corner

* Stress Management Tips for Women

The myriad of responsibilities in our modern life can often increase our feelings of stress at home, work and even when trying to relax.

According to a special report for the Mayo Clinic's Women's Healthsource (March 2002), frequent stress often has a detrimental effect on health. Stress can make existing health concerns worse and increase the risk of serious health issues such as immune system problems, cardiovascular disease, asthma, and stomach problems. Organizational improvements and relaxation techniques, such as maintaining more structured sleep, delegating responsibilities, practicing yoga, and organizing a weekly schedule for the family, can assist in reducing stress. For more information, visit the Mayo Clinic bookstore at www.health-store.com/My_nws.asp?id=.

* Patient Assistance Programs for Medicine

There are several online programs that allow persons with low incomes easier access to pharmaceutical companies and financial assistance. Patients with low incomes can visit www.themedicineprogram.com, which will access pharmaceutical companies on your behalf for a one-time fee. At www.needymeds.com, you can contact drug companies directly and search for their programs for low-income individuals.

What's new in research?



Children's Hyperactivity and Attention Problems linked to Sleep Disorders

A recent study of 866 boys and girls found that children who snore had higher rates of hyperactivity symptoms than nonsnorers. Thirty percent of boys age 8 and under who snored had parent reports of hyperactivity symptoms as well. See Chervin, R.D., Archbold, K.H., Dillon, J.E., Panahi, P., Pituch, K..J., Dahl, R.E. et.al. (2002). Inattention, hyperactivity and symptoms of sleep-disordered breathing. Pediatrics. (109), 449-456.

Tidbits for the Month



National Immunization Awareness Month

April is the time to refresh our knowledge on child and adult immunizations, and help increase the rate of immunization. Promotional

kits featuring fact sheets, stickers and posters are available to print at www.partnersforimmunization.org/niam.html.

National Infant Immunization Week April 14 – 20

The American Academy of Pediatrics offers a childhood immunization support program that provides current information on immunization schedules, research reports, and a parent's guide to child immunizations. Infants should receive about eight different kinds of immunization, continuing from birth to 18 months. See www.cispiimmunize.org/resar/rsh_main.html to learn more.

National Public Health Week April 1 – 7

Communities and agencies focus on positive public health practices during the first week in April. The American Public Health Association offers organizations press releases and tips on cross-agency collaboration to promote fruitful public health programs and strategies. Visit www.apha.org/news/press/nphw.htm for more information.



Highlights for the next PICTURE This...

- Nutrition

Share your news with others!

We're always looking for news and activities about family organization and programs to post. Share exciting events and activities about your organization that will be interesting to others. Email Kathy Cruz Fernandez at kcruz@fcsn.org or fax at (617) 572-2094 with your tidbits. To subscribe to the newsletter, email or call Kathy at (617) 236-7210 ■

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