



## Addressing the Critical Need for More Fatherhood Programs in Florida

### OVERVIEW

There is a father absence crisis in America. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 18.3 million children, 1 in 4, live without a biological, step, or adoptive father in the home.<sup>i</sup> This same research shows that when a child is raised in a father-absent home, he or she is at a 4x greater risk of poverty; 7x more likely to become pregnant as a teen; more likely to have behavioral problems; more likely to face abuse and neglect; more likely to abuse drugs and alcohol; more likely to go to prison; 2x more likely to suffer obesity; more likely to commit crime and 2x more likely to drop out of high school. Additionally, infant death within the first 28 days of life is 4x higher for those with absent fathers than those with involved fathers. However, children with involved dads have better overall emotional and social well-being; are less likely to be mistreated; do better in school; and are less likely to carry guns. Boys have fewer behavior problems and girls have fewer psychological problems.

A review of the literature conducted by university public health interns for REACHUP, Inc. indicates that most positively engaged males know exactly what role they should play in their child's life. In some cases, they come from a family where their dad was a positive role model. Clear roles were defined when they were younger, and they understand what their role needs to be. Other men may not have had that healthy male role model, thereby needing a little more encouragement and support along with actual skills. When they have the expectation, opportunities, encouragement, and skills, it is much more likely that fathers or father-figure figures become wholly engaged with their children.

“Men want to do their best as fathers, are most receptive to support as they become fathers, and learn best from other men already on the job. Princeton's Center for Research on Child-Wellbeing found that even among unwed new fathers, the vast majority are committed to their child, but many need support early on to handle their new responsibilities (2001). It also found that the months surrounding the child's birth are a window of opportunity during which fathers are most receptive to support and behavior change.”<sup>ii</sup>

Fatherhood programs address the comprehensive needs of fathers and improve their relationship with their young children by increasing financial self-efficacy, fatherhood responsibility, job-driven workforce development, and reducing domestic violence and recidivism rates.

The Florida Association of Healthy Start Coalitions (FAHSC) is recommending a model for expanding fatherhood programs in Florida based on two successful programs: Fatherhood P.R.I.D.E.<sup>iii</sup> at the Healthy Start Coalition of Northeast Florida and the Male Involvement Network at REACHUP, Inc.<sup>iv</sup> in Tampa. Evidence-based and research-based curricula are utilized to provide education and support in group settings, and case managers provide education and referrals to community partners to support fathers with individualized skill-building and job placement.

**Due to limited resources, it is recommended to prioritize services for fathers of young children 0-3 years of age** because investments in the earliest years have the highest returns on investments.<sup>v</sup>



## SERVICES

Fathers may be referred to the program by local community partners, family courts, child support enforcement agencies, home visiting providers, the child welfare system and self-referrals. FAHSC recommends that both group session education and case management services be offered to best meet the needs of fathers. FAHSC recommends that case management services be provided for fathers with children ages 0-3. However, fathers or father figures with children of any age may participate in the group sessions and social events. Below is a list of interventions that have been proven to have a positive impact on dad and the family.

At a minimum, Fatherhood programs would offer case management plus 24/7 Dad, Money Smart, and Safe Sleep for dad to “complete” the fatherhood program. Fatherhood programs would also offer a minimum of two additional group session topics (see below) and 2-4 social events to help fathers build a social support network of friends and mentors.

### 1. GROUP SESSIONS FOR FATHERS

- **24/7 Dad®** -- a 12-session, 24-hour responsible fatherhood workshop series utilizing the evidence-based National Fatherhood Initiative 24/7 Dad Fatherhood curriculum. Developed by parenting and fatherhood experts, 24/7 Dad® A.M. and P.M. teaches men the characteristics they need to be good fathers 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Used by a wide variety of organizations across the country, research shows that 24/7 Dad® successfully changes fathers’ attitudes, knowledge, and skills.<sup>vi</sup>

#### 24/7 Dad® AM Focuses on Key Fathering Topics:

- Family History
- What it Means to Be a Man
- Showing and Handling Feelings
- Men’s Health
- Communication
- The Father’s Role
- Discipline
- Children’s Growth
- Getting Involved with your Child(ren)
- Working with Mom & Co-Parenting

#### 24/7 Dad® PM Covers More Advanced Fathering Topics:

- Fathering and the 24/7 Dad
- Boyhood to Manhood
- Dealing with Anger
- Knowing Myself (Self-Worth)
- Family Ties
- Sex, Love, Relationships
- Power and Control
- Competition and Fathering
- Improving My Communication Skills
- Fun with the Kids

- **Money Smart**-- A six-hour financial literacy workshop series utilizing the FDIC Money Smart curriculum.<sup>vii</sup> The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) Money Smart curriculum provides financial education for adults and young adults. The award-winning training is available in traditional and computer-based formats and covers topics such as the basics of borrowing money wisely, using a spending plan to achieve financial goals and how to use banking products effectively. The curriculum consists of interactive modules that offer instruction to help people make informed financial decisions and take charge of their finances. The curriculum was selected for its ease of use and because it is customizable.



- **Daddy Boot Camp®**-- Boot Camp for New Dads® is a unique father-to-father, community-based workshop that inspires and equips men of different economic levels, ages and cultures to become confidently engaged with their infants, support their mates and personally navigate their transformation into dads. Boot Camp is validated by research and has been named a best practice by many organizations that consider it an exceptional means of supporting dads-to-be and fostering behaviors that greatly benefit children and help prevent a wide range of social ills. Founded in 1990, the non-profit Boot Camp for New Dads has graduated more than 325,000 men, making it by far the nation's largest program for new fathers, and is now offered in 44 states, on U.S. military bases, Canada and the U.K.<sup>viii</sup>
- **Skin to Skin**-- While most research focuses on skin-to-skin done between babies and their mothers, there's evidence that babies reap similar benefits from skin to skin with dad. One study of infants born via a cesarean found that those who did skin to skin with their dads shortly after birth had more stable heart rates and body temperatures, cried less, and ate sooner. Plus, the dads scored lower for anxiety and depression and bonded with their babies more quickly.<sup>ix</sup>
- **Safe Sleep**—Education on preventing sudden infant death syndrome and accidental asphyxiation due to co-sleeping or an unsafe sleep environment.<sup>x</sup>
- **Coping with Crying**—Education on parenting a fussy baby and preventing shaken baby syndrome.<sup>xi</sup>
- **Intergenerational Mentoring Group**--Brings three generations of men together to support each other's growth.
- **Stress Group**—Education on stresses that impact everyday life, including sources of stress, the physical and emotional symptoms of stress and strategies for coping with and managing stress.
- **Early Childhood Development Education**--enhances the active participation of father/father-figures in the development, education and/or schooling of their children, ages birth to five, by increasing knowledge of age-appropriate child development and expectations.

## 2. GROUP SESSIONS FOR MOTHERS

**Understanding Dad™: For Moms**--Nearly 90 organizations in 31 states offer Understanding Dad™ in their communities! It is a unique program that helps mothers improve the relationships they have with fathers, for the benefit of their children. There is a five-site qualitative and quantitative evaluation conducted by Temple University that includes how it improves the co-parenting relationship.<sup>xii</sup>



### 3. CASE MANAGEMENT

All fathers with children 0-3 enrolled in the Fatherhood Program would be assigned a case manager. Fathers would receive individualized case management services, education, and referrals to needed resources such as food, housing, transportation, education, employment services, health insurance needs, childcare and child support navigation for up to one year after their enrollment date.

Case managers are trained to utilize specific approaches to case management in order to assist participants to promote or sustain healthy marriages, promote responsible fatherhood programing, parenting/co-parenting, and economic stability.

Fathers would also have the opportunity to participate in additional services as needed including one-on-one support and referrals for job-driven employment services such as resume writing, interview skills, one-on-one employment counseling, job training, job search and post-employment supports; domestic violence/intimate partner violence/dating violence (DV/IPV) screening, training, and referrals when needed.

### 4. SOCIAL EVENTS/ACTIVITIES

2-3 social events per year would be offered to help fathers build a social support network of friends and mentors such as Barbers for babies/back to school for dads, fishing event, etc.

## BUDGET

The average cost per project program is estimated to be \$381,000 per year per program (budget example available) to serve approximately 100 fathers. A state agency could administer the contracts, or if FAHSC was asked to administer contracts with local sites, we would need 10% administrative fee plus one-time expense to update the data system to allow for statewide case management and reporting.

Possible options for criteria to select sites could include communities/counties/regions with higher infant mortality rates, infant mortality racial disparity rates, and/or single parent households rates.

<sup>i</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. (2020). Living arrangements of children under 18 years old: 1960 to present. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Census Bureau.)

<sup>ii</sup> Bootcamp for Dads Validating Research, <https://www.bootcampfornewdads.org/validating-research>. Accessed 11-6-21.

<sup>iii</sup> Fatherhood P.R.I.D.E, Northeast Florida Healthy Start Coalition, <https://nefhealthystart.org/fatherhoodpride/>. Accessed 11-6-21.

<sup>iv</sup> Male Involvement Network at REACH UP, Inc. <https://www.reachupincorporated.org/portfolio/male-involvement-network/>. Accessed 11-6-21.

<sup>v</sup> Heckman Equation, <https://heckmanequation.org/resource/research-presentation-for-birth-to-three-advocates/>. Accessed 11-6-21.

<sup>vi</sup> Evaluation of Tampa-Based REACHUP's 24/7 Dad® Program Supports Its Effectiveness Especially with Young Dads, <https://learning-center.fatherhood.org/all-program-evaluations/evaluation-of-tampa-based-reachup-s-24-7-dad-program-supports-its-effectiveness-especially-with-young-dads>. Accessed 11-6-21.

<sup>vii</sup> FDIC Money Smart program, <https://www.fdic.gov/resources/consumers/money-smart/index.html>. Accessed 11-6-21.

<sup>viii</sup> Daddy Bootcamp, <https://www.bootcampfornewdads.org/>. Accessed 11-6-21.



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- <sup>ix</sup> Benefits of Skin to Skin and How To Do It, <https://www.fatherly.com/parenting/the-benefits-of-skin-to-skin/>. Accessed 11-6-21.
- <sup>x</sup> NIH Safe Sleep education, <https://safetosleep.nichd.nih.gov/>. Accessed 11-6-21.
- <sup>xi</sup> Coping with Crying <https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/2171-how-to-stay-calm-when-baby-won-t-stop-crying>. Accessed 11-6-21.
- <sup>xii</sup> Father Source by the National Fatherhood Initiative, <https://store.fatherhood.org/understanding-dad-an-awareness-program-for-moms/>. Accessed 11-6-21.