



NATIONAL HEALTHY START ASSOCIATION

FATHERHOOD FACT SHEET

MAY 2021



Who We Are

National Healthy Start Association is the membership organization for federal Healthy Start programs.

What is the Healthy Start Initiative

Healthy Start is the Health Resources and Services Administration Maternal and Child Health Bureau's signature community-based and community-driven program focused on reducing infant and maternal mortality.

Who Does Healthy Start Serve

Healthy start participants experience persistent health disparities, which stem from issues directly related to health equity and social justice. Healthy Start program sites are in communities where the infant mortality rate is at least 1.5 times that of the U.S. national average.

Why Include Men in Healthy Start Services

The absence of fathers during pregnancy increases the risk of fetal and infant morbidities such as low birthweight, preterm birth, and small-for-gestational age. Women whose partners are more involved in the pregnancy experience:

- better birth outcomes (e.g., more likely to receive prenatal care in the first trimester).
- increased overall involvement (e.g., time spent with infant).
- increased ongoing involvement (e.g., caregiving, financial contribution).

Including men also start a conversation about their own health, including the importance of having a primary care doctor and engaging in preventive services.

4X

Infant death in the first 28 days of life is four times higher when a father is not involved

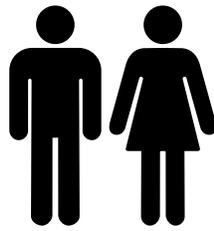
29%

Approximately 29% of men have no primary care doctor

47%

Children living in fatherless homes are 47% more likely to live in poverty

In 2017, men's life expectancy was nearly 5 years shorter than women



Involved dads improve their children's overall emotional and social well-being

Research confirms the significant impact that dads have on a child's life. However, the father's role and the significance of paternal impact on maternal and child health (MCH) are often overlooked.

There is a need for policy and systems change in the MCH field that ensure men and fathers are included as part of the family from the start. Therefore, when addressing health across the life course in MCH, men should be included. Men need information about their own health, available health services, contraception and the impact of their overall health on reproductive outcomes.

Healthy Start programs do this by taking a holistic approach in addressing the social determinants of health, so that the total family can achieve health equity.

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Men died at higher rates than women from heart disease, cancer, unintentional injuries, chronic lower respiratory disease, stroke and diabetes in 2017



The absence of a biological father contributes to increased risk of child maltreatment



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