

STATE & LOCAL AGENCIES

CREATING EFFECTIVE & SCALABLE

STATE & LOCAL FATHERHOOD
PROGRAMS & INITIATIVES



About National Fatherhood Initiative®

Because every child deserves a 24:7 Dad.SM

National Fatherhood Initiative® (NFI) is the nation's leading non-profit organization working to end father absence. Underlying many of society's most pressing challenges is a lack of father involvement in their children's lives.

Our Mission

National Fatherhood Initiative® (NFI) works to increase father involvement by equipping communities and human service organizations with the father-engagement training, programs, and resources they need to be father-inclusive.

Our Vision

NFI's vision is that all communities and human service organizations are proactively father-inclusive so that every child has an involved, responsible, and committed father in their lives.

To see more about our mission, our partners, our impact, and how we can help you engage fathers, please visit www.fatherhood.org

For fatherhood and family resources, including programs, resources, and other helpful materials, please visit www.fathersource.org.

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THE PROOF IS IN

Many people believe that family structure doesn't really matter, as long as children are cared for and loved by someone, anyone. However, new research on father absence shows that old adage, "correlation does not imply causation," does not apply to the effects of father absence on children. **In other words, for many of our most intractable social ills affecting children, father absence is to blame*.**

Despite reams of data that National Fatherhood Initiative® (NFI) compiled in our years of publishing *Father Facts*™ (the most comprehensive collection of data available on the consequences of father absence and the benefits of father involvement for children), the recognition among people across the political spectrum of the need to combat father absence, and the commitment of many private and public funders to addressing this problem, there are still some scholars and members of the public who are not convinced that dads are important to children. Many people believe that family structure doesn't really matter, as long as children are cared for and loved by someone, anyone. One valid reason for the skepticism among scholars, at least, is the lack of rigorous analytical methods employed in much of the research.

In 2013, researchers Sara McLanahan, Laura Tach, and Daniel Schneider stepped into the fray with their review of nearly 50 studies that employed innovative, rigorous designs to examine the causal effects of father absence. Published in the *Annual Review of Sociology*, "The Causal Effects of Father Absence" examined studies that focused on the relationship between father absence and four outcomes for children: educational attainment, mental health, relationship formation and stability, and labor force success. Although these studies varied in the use of analytical approaches and found different effect sizes, they prove beyond reproach that father absence causes poor outcomes for children in each of these areas.

Furthermore, what's impressive about the review is not only its inclusion of studies that employed a variety of analytical methods; it also included studies from nine countries, mostly developed countries (including the U.S.) but also developing countries. Consequently, this cross-cultural analysis of research lends strength and credibility to the conclusion about the devastating effects of father absence. Father absence isn't just a U.S. problem. It's a human problem.

*Source: McLanahan, S., Tach, L., & Schneider, D. (2013). The causal effects of father absence. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 39, 399-427.v

THE PROOF IS IN, CONTINUED

One particular conclusion of these scholars is very sobering and should haunt us as a nation given that the U.S. has reached an all-time high in the number of children born to single parents: the earlier in their lives that children experience father absence the more pronounced are its effects.

Ongoing research shows that father absence places children, on average, at greater risk for alcohol and substance abuse, child abuse, crime, lower educational success, emotional and behavioral problems, poorer physical health, poverty, risky sexual activity, suicide, and teen pregnancy. While these are not the only negative affects of father absence, they are the most concerning and well-researched.

It is for these reasons and more that state and local agencies should be on the forefront of father involvement programs and staff training to improve communities by engaging fathers for the well-being of children. By engaging more fathers in agency programs and services, we can partner together to create a world in which every child has a 24:7 Dad.



**JUST THE
FACTS**

According to the
U.S. Census
Bureau,
**19.5 million
children,**
more than 1 in 4,
**live without
a father in
the home.**

**National
Fatherhood
Initiative®**
www.fatherhood.org

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau.
(2018). Living arrangements of
children under 18 years old: 1960 to
present. Washington, D.C.: U.S.
Census Bureau.

*Source: McLanahan, S., Tach, L., & Schneider, D. (2013). The causal effects of father absence. Annual Review of Sociology, 39, 399-427.v

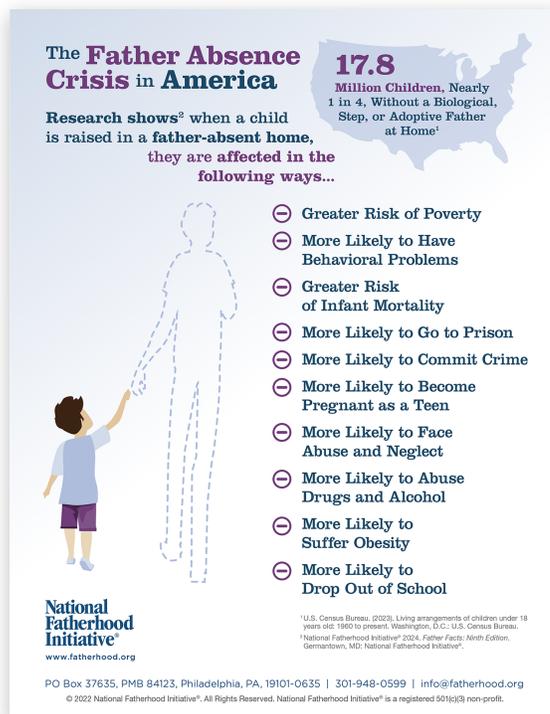
WHAT FATHERS NEED

Many people remain surprised at the research which shows a connection between father absence and an increase in social problems in America including: poverty, teen pregnancy, juvenile delinquency, physical abuse, suicide, substance and alcohol abuse and a host of other troubling social problems. The sad fact is that not only does father absence hurt children, fathers suffer as well. **Fathers need to be involved in their children's lives.**

Developing positive relationships with their children encourages and motivates fathers to lead more constructive lives, even in the most difficult circumstances. For instance, the simple act of regularly writing to their children from prison improves outcomes for incarcerated fathers, including increasing their odds of training for, finding, and keeping a job once they reenter society. Evidence shows that fathers who write to their children once a week have a lower risk of violence in prison and recidivism when released. These positive outcomes are multiplied when we study the impact on the children of inmates, and how father contact can change the trend of their children's lives—even while the father is still incarcerated. **Fathers need fatherhood-specific skill-building resources to help them be the best dads they can be.**

In addition, research and experience tell us that there is a strong correlation between lack of father involvement and many larger social challenges. Consider the data in the infographic below (click the image to download the infographic) that highlights the many social ills related to father absence.

Fathers need training and encouragement to be involved with their children, and an understanding that they are more than a paycheck (even if they do not live with their children.) State and local agencies can work with NFI to help fathers become involved, responsible, and committed.



*National Fatherhood Initiative® 2024.

Father Facts: Ninth Edition. Germantown, MD: National Fatherhood Initiative®

PARTNERING WITH NATIONAL FATHERHOOD INITIATIVE®

NFI was founded in 1994 to reverse our nation's destructive trend towards father absence. Today, over 18 million American children live in homes without a biological, step, or adoptive father. On average, these children face a host of risks to their physical, economic, social, and emotional well-being as a result of living without the presence of an involved, responsible, and committed father. Therefore, **NFI's mission is to increase father involvement by equipping communities and human service organizations with the father-engagement training, programs, and resources they need to be father-inclusive.** Accordingly, we accomplish our mission by:

- Educating all Americans, especially fathers, through social media, earned media, research, and free resources.
- Equipping organizations and communities with fatherhood programs and resources, and through training, planning, and technical assistance services.
- Engaging and assisting organizations and communities to mobilize at the micro and macro-level to increase father involvement in children's lives.

Since its founding and through the middle of 2022, NFI has distributed more than 10.3 million resources to fathers, organizations, and communities.

NFI has extensive experience in executing state and local government contracts, subcontracts, and projects related to building and implementing sustainable fatherhood programs and services in a high-quality manner. NFI works with state and local agencies and programs to build their capacity in father engagement and the capacity of their grantees and partners.

NFI also partners with agencies to reach their father engagement goals by helping them assess their own and their partners' (e.g. grantees' and community-based organizations") readiness to engage fathers, build capacity to serve fathers with customized strategies, and mobilize states, counties, and cities around father involvement. Many of our partners have focused their work with us within a specific funding stream, such as child welfare, home visitation, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and child support (Title IV-D).

State and local agencies are constantly faced with the need to justify programming and show that it leads to meaningful outcomes. That's why NFI's high-quality programs have built-in evaluation tools to help agencies serve fathers and provide the evidence they need to prove impact.

PARTNERING WITH NFI

NFI also helps agencies reach their goals faster and more efficiently by helping to activate father-focused initiatives and programs by:

- Launching affordable, standard, scalable statewide, countywide, and citywide initiatives that make father-engagement efforts easier to manage and evaluate.
- Integrating fatherhood initiatives into family-focused programs (e.g., child welfare, home visiting, and maternal and child health).
- Integrating high-quality, evidence-based fatherhood programs containing built-in evaluation tools to provide the evidence needed to prove impact.
- Creating strategic plans for father-focused efforts at the national, state, and local levels.

Also, NFI's online, on-demand [Father Engagement Certificate™](#), [Effective Facilitation Certificate™](#), and Recruitment and Retention Certificate™ trainings are ideal for state agencies desiring to train their own staff, grantees, and partners. Learn more about these and our other on-demand trainings at www.fatherhoodpractitioners.org.

By implementing fatherhood programs that are enmeshed within state, county, or city initiatives, you can have maximum impact and reach more fathers at a macro level. Since the mid-1990s, NFI has assisted many state, county, and local agencies in their efforts to build a fatherhood program or initiative to meet their needs. With our evidence-based and research-based programs, high-quality resources, and field-tested training programs, we can help you build an initiative that will engage fathers and strengthen families.

The rest of the sections in this guide provide a sample of the ways in which your agency can partner with NFI. Contact us at info@fatherhood.org to inquire about these and other ways your agency can partner with us.



ASSESS AGENCY PARTNERS

NFI can help your agency partners increase their ability to serve fathers by assessing their father-friendliness, followed by creating and implementing a comprehensive, targeted plan to increase their readiness to engage fathers.

NFI can conduct a [Father-Readiness Network Assessment](#)™. The workshop uses our Father Friendly Check-Up™ tool as a stepping stone to help partners assess the degree to which their organization's operations, activities, and programs encourage father involvement.

Our solution allows your agency and partners to process, track, and analyze assessment results quickly and easily. Partners will:

- Learn to create a father-friendly organization from a holistic perspective by identifying the four areas of focus, and creating an organizational culture that can support exceptional fatherhood programs and services.
- Walk away with the foundation for a strategic plan to increase father-friendliness.
- Generate no-cost and low-cost tactics to engage fathers.



FATHER INVOLVEMENT STRATEGY & PLANNING

NFI can also deliver an invigorating, interactive, in-person strategic planning retreat for your agency called [The Father Engagement Experience™](#) (FEE). **The FEE is excellent for any agency looking to launch a statewide, countywide, or citywide fatherhood program or initiative, or program or initiative within a specific program or service area of an agency (e.g. home visitation, child support enforcement, public health, etc.).** It is ideal for a strategic planning session, staff retreat, or collaborative meeting with your agency's partners. NFI uses the FEE to help you customize your fatherhood program or initiative. Specifically:

- Your agency uses NFI's design process to determine the main focus of the retreat and what you will accomplish.
- NFI staff use storyboards, Pure Form Thinking (e.g. not mixing the use of the left and right sides of the brain), and multi-voting tactics to accomplish goals and help you design strategies.
- The FEE results in your customized Father Engagement Game Plan™ that your agency will use as the blueprint to guide your program or initiative.

A Planning Retreat Like None Other



The bottom line is the FEE is the planning tool that will help your agency achieve its fatherhood-related goals. It cuts through clutter and distractions that can bog down decision making, planning, and strategic action, allowing you to walk away with a visual plan and **actionable** items with which to move forward. The feedback we've received tell us that people **love** it! It's a very different type of planning experience where everyone feels they have been able to contribute in a meaningful way.

Make a difference for the fathers, families, and children affected by your agency with this unique, inspiring, and effective planning retreat like none other.
Learn more at www.fatherhood.org/experience.

STANDARDIZE FATHERHOOD PROGRAMS

Jumpstart your partners' (e.g., grantees') capacity to serve fathers with NFI's evidence-based and research-based programs for fathers and mothers. NFI has extensive experience bringing staff together from organizations to train them on implementing a standardized fatherhood program (e.g., implemented across an entire state or community).

We can train staff in locations across a city, county, or state, allowing you to implement one or more fatherhood programs that can be analyzed for impact at a city, county, or state level.

For two days, your partners come together for an in-person or virtual fatherhood program training to get your statewide or local effort off on the right foot. We can train your partners on any one of the following programs:

- 24/7 Dad®
- InsideOut Dad®
- Understanding Dad™: An Awareness and Communication Program for Moms
- 24/7 Dad® Key Behaviors Workshop

To learn more about our programs, visit <https://www.fatherhood.org/programs-and-resources>.



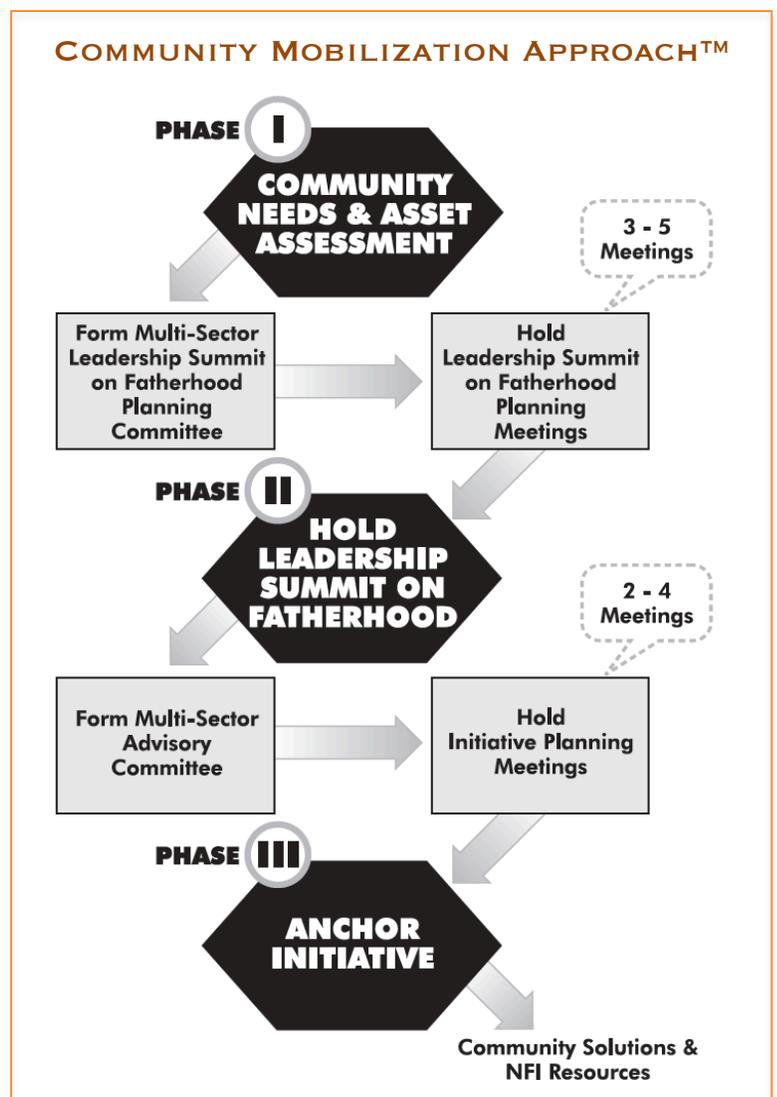
MOBILIZE COMMUNITIES AROUND RESPONSIBLE FATHERHOOD

In every state and community there are leaders, citizens, and professionals who, on a daily basis, see and despair about the consequences of father absence. Unfortunately, they don't always know what they can do to make a difference. **Help them turn their feelings of helplessness into focused and constructive action by rallying them around a broad-based fatherhood initiative.**

NFI brings one or more community-wide fatherhood initiatives to life through our Community Mobilization Approach™. More specifically, this unique, structured approach can help a city, county, or state mobilize around responsible fatherhood.

Through NFI's Community Mobilization Approach™ (CMA), we can help you create a multi-sector initiative in one or more communities that will get leaders involved and invested. We have worked with agencies at the city, county, and state levels to help them launch successful, sustained initiatives that have increased the number of programs, services, and other resources that help dads to be the best dads they can be.

Implementing our CMA consists of three phases: conducting a needs and assets assessment, holding a Leadership Summit on Fatherhood, and anchoring an initiative. NFI can train leaders in your agency and partners on how to conduct the CMA.



CASE STUDY: NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES



NFI Partner: New Jersey Department of Children and Families, Division of Family and Community Partnerships (DFCP)

Objective: Establish 24/7 Dad® programs in and increase the father-friendliness of 175 direct-service providers funded by DFCP.

Situation

Our partner was a division within a state agency in New Jersey that is:

- Dedicated to ensuring the safety, well-being and success of children, youth, families, and communities.
- Charged with promoting the health, well-being, and personal safety of New Jersey's children and families by working together with parents, caregivers, organizations and communities to ensure an effective network of proven support services, public education, and community advocacy to prevent maltreatment.
- Comprised of the Office of Early Childhood Services, the Office of School-Linked Services, the Office of Family Support Services, and the Office of Domestic Violence Services. Each office was at a different level of father-readiness.

Challenges

The challenges facing us were:

- Addressing DFCP's issue of not serving fathers in a comprehensive, cross-divisional manner.
- Providing a systematic way for DFCP to more effectively measure the impact of fatherhood programming on pro-fathering skills, attitudes, and knowledge across the state.
- Increasing the father-readiness of each office under DFCP and of the 175 providers funded by DFCP.

CASE STUDY: FATHERHOOD PROGRAM CAMP



Actions

The actions we took to address these challenges were to:

- Train each office and all 175 providers on NFI's 24/7 Dad® program. We provided each office and provider with a curriculum kit, 25 Fathering Handbooks, and evaluation tools that would help each office and provider standardize a way for DFCP to effectively measure the impact of the fatherhood programming using the same fatherhood program and evaluation tools.
- Conduct a Father-Readiness Network Assessment™ of each provider's father friendliness.
- Provide follow-up technical assistance to providers on how to convert their assessment results into action plans that facilitate accountability and follow through on specific tasks.

Results

Our actions resulted in:

- The creation of a tracking system that allows DFCP to measure the impact of a single fatherhood program across the state.
- The development of father-friendly action plans that are helping nearly 200 organizations to more effectively reach and serve fathers.
- The creation of a community of providers that are using the same fatherhood program to facilitate learning and sharing about best practices.
- An increased interest from other divisions within the Department of Children and Families to engage their own staffs and constituents around responsible fatherhood.