



The South Carolina Center for Fathers and Families

Fostercare and Fatherhood

“What role can fatherhood programs play?”

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US Child Welfare Statistics

Child Population in US - 72,023,983

Children Living in Poverty - 13,360,273

Child Poverty Rate - 18.5%

Child Neglect and Medical Neglect - 64.5%

Number of Children in Foster Care - 520,000



Children in single parent homes

The Third National Incidence Study of Child Abuse and Neglect in a nationally representative sample of 42 counties found that children from single-parent families are more likely to be victims of physical and sexual abuse than children who live with both biological parents. Compared to their peers living with both parents, children in single parent homes had:

A 77% greater risk of being physically abused

An 87% risk of being harmed by physical neglect

A 165% greater risk of experiencing notable physical neglect

A 74% greater risk of suffering from emotional neglect

An 80% greater risk of suffering serious injury as a result of abuse



Poverty's impact on abuse/neglect

Poverty is the single best predictor of child abuse and neglect.

Children who live in families with an annual income less than \$15,000 are 22 times more likely to be abused or neglected than children living in families with an annual income of \$30,000 or more.



Noncustodial fathers and fostercare

Of more than half a million in foster care in the US:

80% of children in foster care have a noncustodial father

81% paternity was known

54% had contact with the noncustodial father in past year



Non-resident fathers

About half of all noncustodial fathers have ties to another set of kin

A quarter has three or more children in their lives. These children include:

- Non-resident biological children of all other past/present mates
- Biological children and stepchildren who may reside with the father
- Step children who live elsewhere

Eight percent of all non-resident fathers are living with biological children they fathered prior to their current residency



Non-resident fathers (cont.)

Another 26 percent live with stepchildren

About 14 percent of non-resident fathers are living with women who are also nonresident parents

42 percent have biological children with their current spouse or partner.



Issues for Fatherhood Program Clientele

- Children in child welfare system not immune to increased father absence trends
- Caseworkers in child welfare agencies not trained to include noncustodial father in early investigative stages of hearings
- Goal of caseworker was to ensure that if child had to be removed from the home of the custodial parent that the child was placed in a safe and secure environment – period
- Little to no effort made to identify or locate absent father to notify of removal of child from home or to consider father as possible placement option for child



Progression of federal laws on issue

PRWORA (1996) – Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act

- In order for states to be eligible for TANF block grants,
“**state shall consider giving preference** to a relative over a non-relative caregiver provided that caregiver relative meets state protection standards”
- Required states to hit 50% mark for paternity established in all non-married births



ASFA (1997) Adoption and Safe Families Act

- Was result of growing foster care population (\$\$\$)
- **Explicitly required** states to consider giving preference to an adult relative over a non-relative caregiver
- Recommended **concurrent case planning** when child removed from home
- Recommended **family decision making** in case planning
- **Encouraged** Child Protective Services to use child support enforcement locate services to identify and locate adult relatives
- Several states (not SC) specifically changed their statutes to give preference to noncustodial parent after Act passed



2000 Adoption and Permanency Guidelines

National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges stated:

“At the very first hearing on a petition alleging abuse and neglect, efforts should begin to include all parents in the life of the child and to locate absent parents.”



Fostering Connections and Increasing Adoptions Act (H.R. 6893)

- Passed Congress October 7, 2008
- **Requires state agencies to exercise “due diligence”** to identify and provide notice to all adult relatives of a child within 30 days after the child is removed
- Authorized child welfare agencies to directly access FPLS of child support enforcement
- Provides grant funds for family group decision making meetings, kinship navigator programs, residential substance abuse treatment for family members
- Kinship guardian payments for children living in fostercare with relatives but relative must be able to be licensed fostercare provider



Partnering with CPS to improve policies toward absent fathers

- Advocate for a **WRITTEN AGENCY PROTOCOL** to identify, locate, and notify absent parents
 - States with excellent written protocols include:
New York, Wisconsin and Michigan
ex. <http://courts.michigan.gov/scao/services/CWS/CWS.htm>



Why develop a written protocol?

Generally, the failure to identify and involve absent parents is a barrier to timely, permanent placement for children

Because a young person's identity is strongly influenced by his or her family as well as providing basic health and family history information.

Because the more relatives identified increases the options for child placement in a safe and nurturing environment and allows for concurrent case planning

Because failure to identify the absent parent early in the process can delay the child being successfully adopted out of foster care later in the process when the absent parent's rights must be terminated



Common barriers within CPS system in identifying and locating fathers

➤ **Caseworker Bias**

Fatherhood program can offer to provide father friendly training at regional and state offices using fathers and staff from programs

➤ **Educate caseworkers that Mother may be gatekeeping, ways around**

- **If age appropriate, ask child**
- **Check online internet directories**
- **Review child's birth certificate and other vital records**
- **Voter registry**
- **Department of corrections**
- **Request info from CSE and Federal Parent Locate Services**
- **Speak to other family members**



Common barriers (cont.)

➤ **Profile of Absent Parent**

Caseworker may need to establish paternity before can proceed with case planning

Final word on putative father registries (pros and cons)

Legal father – paternity established, not required to list name in registry

Putative father – no paternity established, whereabouts unknown



CPS and Fatherhood programs can partner to use programs as service providers

Fatherhood programs can be helpful in the following ways:

Fathers can be referred to fatherhood programs after being investigated for neglect specifically around basic needs issues

The programs can be one element of a case plan

Fatherhood programs can help provide parenting knowledge, skills, and support to the fathers

Fatherhood programs may be helpful in locating father



Developing appropriate criteria for fathers who can be served by fatherhood programs

Noncustodial fathers who:

want to care for their child

have some basic resources i.e. adequate place to live, income, some supports that may assist in caring for the child

can take responsibility



Develop appropriate criteria for fathers who can not be served by fatherhood programs

Noncustodial fathers who:

Have domestic violence charges or convictions

High anger management issues

Assault or felony charges

Substance abuse



Challenges fatherhood programs may anticipate when working with CPS

Communication flow may not be smooth between and within the agencies

Crisis management e.g. challenges of being a resident parent for the child

Short time frame needed to help father prepare to receive the child

Dealing with protocols and steps that are required by CPS

Father may not immediately have adequate housing

Increase work demands for fatherhood program staff



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Questions and Answers