

Washington Fatherhood Council

Washington State Department of Social and Health Services

Economic Services Administration

The Role of Fathers in Achieving ESA's Goal to Reduce Poverty by 2025

The well-established benefits of reducing poverty and inequality inspired ESA to establish a 2025 goal to reduce poverty by half in a way that eliminates disparities. Since 2018, ESA is a proud founding and sustaining partner of the Washington Fatherhood Council, a collaborative, transformational group of more than 30 state and local service providers, academics and — most importantly — fathers, who help further the goals of reducing poverty and promoting inclusion, access and belonging.

How the Washington Fatherhood Council Supports Fathers

Annual Fatherhood Summit: Every year, we create space for dads and our partners to come together to accelerate fatherhood inclusion and more holistic co-parenting supports.

Our 2024 keynote speaker, Dr. David Willis, Senior Fellow at the Center for the Study for Social Policy, stated, "Fathers support child development through improved maternal child health outcomes, encouraging healthy risk-taking, school and career supports and managing their emotions."

State of Fatherhood Study: Released in June 2024, this partnership across seven state agencies (Department of Social and Health Services; Department of Children, Youth, and Families; Health Care Authority; Department of Health; Department of Corrections; Employment Security Department; Department of Commerce) attempted to create a baseline of data and a narrative around how fathers show up in our systems of care across a broad ecosystem of supports. We found that data is scarce. However, each agency is on a path toward greater awareness, action and integration of father-focused programs, practices and policies that will create greater equity and inclusion for fathers. The study will

- **Mission:** Amplify the voices of fathers and father figures in Washington state to promote fatherhood inclusion, equity, diversity and research activity that strengthens families and maximizes children's potential.
- **Vision:** Fathers and father figures in Washington become the parents they aspire to be for their children, families and communities.
- **Role:** Bringing together a broad spectrum of fathers, public and private agencies, academics and advocates to raise awareness around the unique role of fathers; cultivate a father-inclusive culture in our communities, agencies and policies; develop leaders at all levels to carry messages; and welcome diverse cultures and experiences of fathers to create systems change.

serve as a unifying basis for systems change across agency partners. We seek to strengthen these commitments and to come together to create a sustainable strategies that will increase visibility and traction over time.

Community Cafés: Bring together professionals and dads in conversation to help lay the community groundwork for positive change by raising awareness of the unique needs of fathers and sparking hope for innovation.

Dads Connect: Working to incubate local councils of men in conversation to reduce social isolation, create mentoring opportunities and develop leadership as they discuss important issues that affect them and their families.

Provider Learning Series: Knowledge and skill-building learning sessions with state and national presenters that strengthen our provider network to effectively engage and support fathers and father figures.

More information:

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www.wafatherhoodcouncil.org



Transforming lives

9/2024

Father-Friendly Principles: We promote [these North Star Principles](#) to guide Washington state to strengthen our father-friendly services and systems.

Building on these successful strategies, the council executed a Memorandum of Understanding across all the state partners in June 2024 that strengthens the collective support and intentionality to improve inclusion and access for fathers and father figures.

Washington Fatherhood Council: Maximizing Children’s Potential

ESA connects children, adults and families to the resources and opportunities that help them reach their full potential in life. Washington state recognizes that investing in children, especially young children, lays the pathway for lifelong success. The people of Washington cannot expect a healthier, more resilient, more prosperous future if we don’t invest in our children now — and that includes an intentional focus on fathers and families.

We know from research* and the work of the Washington Fatherhood Council that:

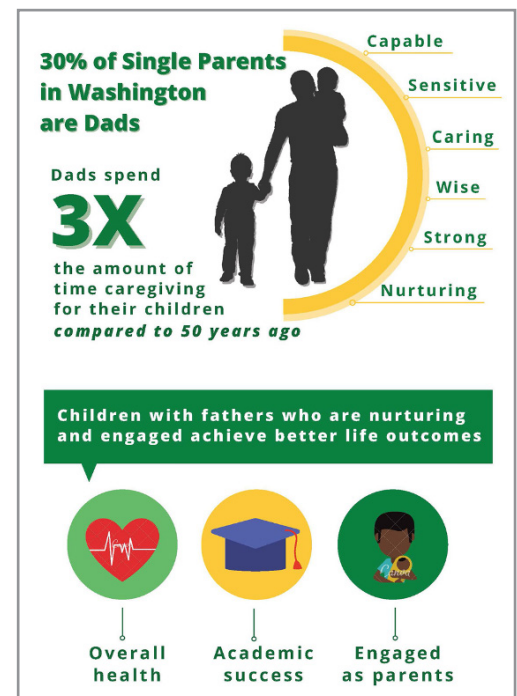
- Child and family well-being improve when fathers are engaged positively in their children’s lives.
- Fathers and father figures play a unique and important role in children’s development.
- Dads should have the support and resources to become the fathers they aspire to be.

The positive and protective impacts of fatherhood and the father-child bond on early childhood development are undeniable. Supporting nurturing, consistent fathering, starting prenatally, has proven to contribute to language development, reading and math skills, social-emotional development and reduced early behavioral issues, all of which have long-term impacts on children’s emotional and economic well-being.

Top Five Barriers to Receiving Services

- (1)** Don’t qualify for/ can’t afford needed services
- (2)** Can’t locate needed services
- (3)** Mother-oriented service environments
- (4)** Gender-based discrimination
- (5)** Non-inclusive invitations (unclear if fathers are welcome)

University of Washington State of Fathers in Washington Study – Father Survey June 2024



* *Father Facts 8, eighth edition, 2019, National Fatherhood Initiative®*
Father Facts, 8th Edition. | Fatherhood.gov

When fathers are involved and peacefully co-parenting, they can reduce stress for mothers, enhance the mother-child relationship and facilitate positive adjustment in children. Conversely, fatherhood absence is strongly tied to poor adolescent and young adult outcomes, such as high rates of juvenile and adult justice involvement, suicide and depression, homelessness and lower graduation rates. Quality of time is important. While resident fathers are more likely to interact consistently with their children, resident and shared-parenting fathers also have a positive influence through loving, consistent parenting.

Join us in our work by connecting at www.wafatherhoodcouncil.org.

