

Minnesota Fatherhood Leadership Initiative

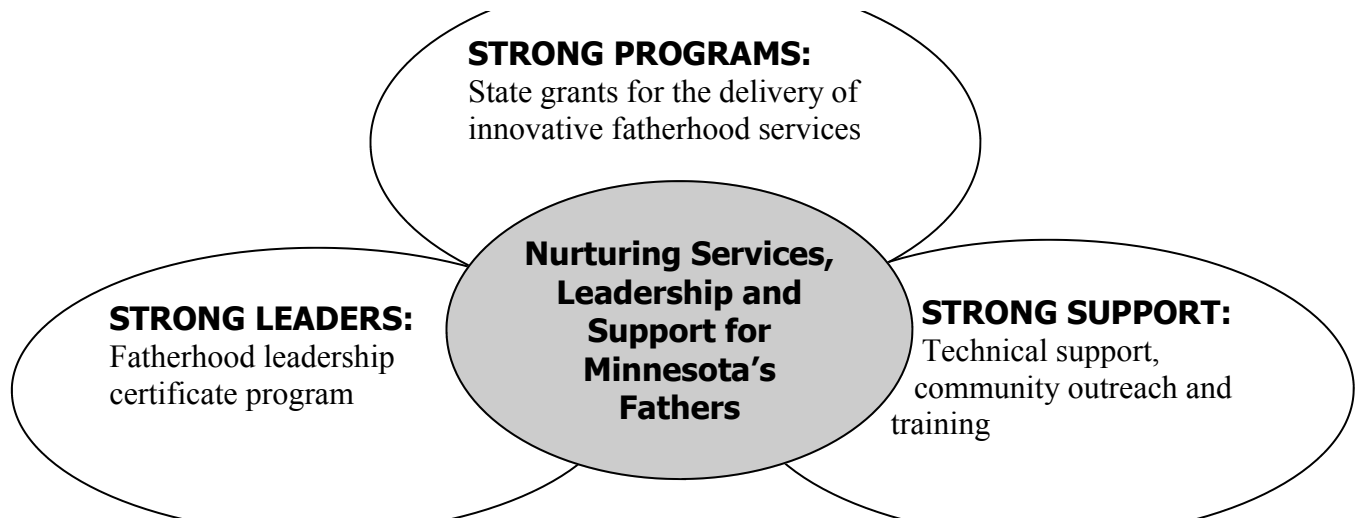
“Supporting the fathers and families of Minnesota’s young children”

The purpose of this initiative is to strengthen the relationship of fathers to their children and enhance responsible parenting across the state by improving and expanding fatherhood services in local communities. It has three components:

- 1) Annual state grants to faith and community organizations for the delivery of innovative fatherhood services. Services may include:
 - Parenting and co-parenting classes;
 - Marriage promotion as a resource for strengthening families and early childhood development;
 - Family law, child access, and parenting time services; or
 - Multi-service programming to address barriers of employment, education, health and mental health.
- 2) An intensive college-level Fatherhood Leadership Certificate Program to extensively train staff of the organizations receiving grants.
- 3) Additional technical assistance and training for the grant-receiving organizations and partner organizations.

The initiative supports early education development and the likelihood of educational success by strengthening the relationship of fathers to their children. The project would require assessment of outcomes and independent evaluations of grantees.

This initiative has been included in Gov. Tim Pawlenty’s 2008-2009 budget proposal at \$500,000 per year. The funding is to be appropriated from the TANF account to the Department of Education.



Initial Supporters:

- Central Minnesota Legal Services
- Concordia University, St. Paul
- Crisis Connection
- Crossroads College
- Dads Make a Difference
- FathersFIRST!
- Governor’s Council on Faith and Community Service Initiatives
- Minnesota Department of Education
- Minnesota Association for the Education of Young Children
- Minnesota Council on Family Relations
- Minnesota Fathers & Families Network
- Minnesota Humanities Commission
- Minnesota Organization on Adolescent Pregnancy, Prevention and Parenting
- Southside Community Health Services
- St. Cloud State University
- St. John’s University
- Volunteer Attorney Program, Northland Mediation Service
- Working Family Resource Center

ADD YOUR ORGANIZATION TO THE LIST!

Contact Paul Masiarchin at (651)222-7432 or info@mnfathers.org for further details.

Minnesota Fatherhood Leadership Initiative

“Supporting the fathers and families of Minnesota’s young children”

Why are fathers and fatherhood relevant?

[Excerpt from the introduction of “Do we count fathers in Minnesota?”, January 2007, Minnesota Fathers & Families Network.]

Since the early 1990s, there has been a growing body of evidence which points to the important benefits of a strong father-child relationship. Among these benefits are higher levels of school performance and increases in healthy behaviors. Fathers who are able to develop into responsible parents are able to incur a number of significant benefits to themselves, their communities, and most importantly, their children. For example, children raised with significant positive father involvement display greater empathy, higher self-esteem, increased curiosity, higher verbal skills, and higher scores of cognitive competence. In 2000, the U.S. Department of Education published “A Call to Commitment: Fathers’ Involvement in Children’s Learning”, which reveals that when fathers are involved in their children’s schools, their children learn more, perform better in school, and exhibit healthier behavior.

The benefits of healthy fatherhood are not relegated to one social class or one family structure. According to the same Department of Education report, “Research has shown that fathers, no matter what their income or cultural background, can play a critical role in their children’s education... Even when fathers do not share a home with their children, their active involvement can have a lasting and positive impact.”

On the other hand, children who lack a positive relationship with a father or father-figure demonstrate increased juvenile delinquency and lower academic achievement. “Father involvement protects children from engaging in delinquent behavior and is associated with less substance abuse among adolescents, less delinquency, less drug use, truancy, and stealing and a lower frequency of externalizing and internalizing symptoms such as acting out, disruptive behavior, depression, sadness and lying”.

Many families do not realize that the positive benefits of father-child involvement affect fathers as well as children. As explained by Frank S. Pittman, M.D., “The guys who fear becoming fathers don’t understand that fathering is not something perfect men do, but something that perfects men”. Men, in their roles as fathers, can learn from children in the form of heightened expression of emotion, expanded sense of self, new understanding of empathy, and expanded ability for caring and nurturance.

In addition to the benefits for men and children, healthy fathers recognize and honor the important role of motherhood. Indeed, fatherhood is not the opposite of motherhood and fathers are not a substitute for mothers. As stated by Rob Okun at the Men’s Resource Center for Change, “I believe it is critical that men's work locate itself within the larger framework of the movement for social justice”. Within the context of social justice, men are encouraged to embrace fatherhood as a responsibility, as an opportunity, as a blessing.

Healthy father-child involvement is clearly linked to the well-being of children, fathers, and families. The very presence of this link amplifies the importance of supporting men to be more present, more active, and more committed to the health and well-being of their children.