



Key Messages for Promoting Healthy Discourse About Fatherhood

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InfoSheet 12:

Key Messages for Healthy Fatherhood Discourse

As the field of fatherhood continues to mature and the promotion of healthy masculinity continues to expand, there is a growing need for an accepted language for talking about fatherhood.

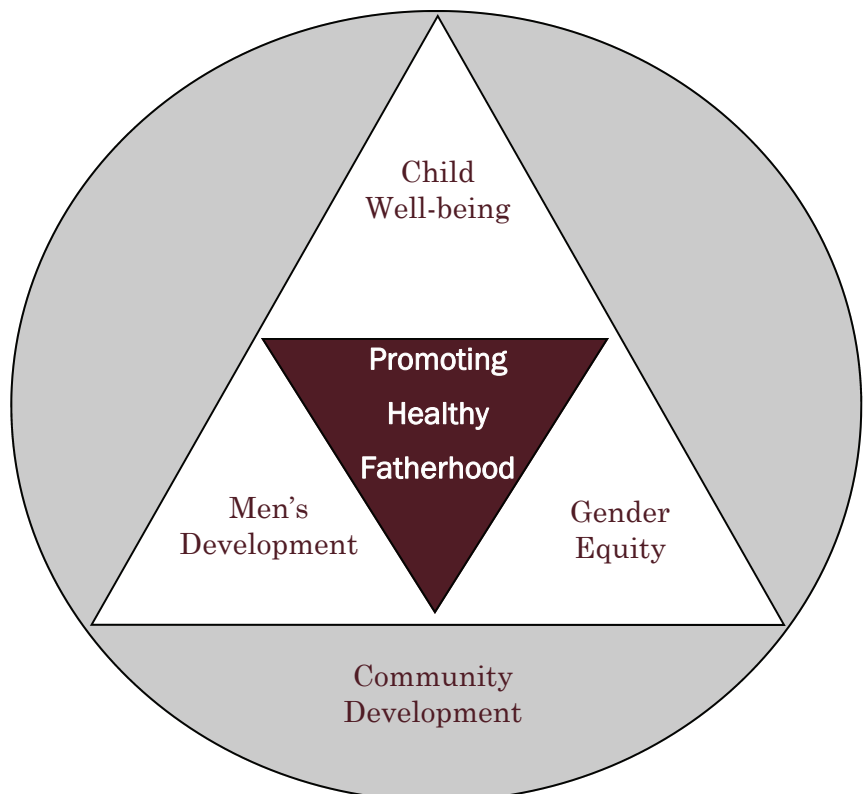
For many organizations, advocates, fathers, family members, and policy makers, there is a growing understanding that healthy fatherhood is not an end unto itself. Rather, healthy fathers are one component of a bigger picture — the promotion of healthy children, families, and communities.

This InfoSheet describes key messages for a level of discourse that promotes healthy fatherhood by focusing on the broad picture of 1) child well-being, 2) gender equity, 3) men's development, and 4) community development.



Adapted from a presentation by Adrienne Burgess at the Minnesota Fatherhood Summit in January 2007, the following key messages provide a positive, holistic lens for advancing the field of fatherhood.

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1. **Child well-being:** Children benefit from healthy father-child relationships.

- In all families, a positive, substantial father-child relationship is of enormous value to children and is a significant protective factor in the face of other disadvantage.
- Fathers produce a significant protective factor, particularly in vulnerable families – e.g., when the mother is young or the father is unemployed.
- When fathers who are noncustodial parents can pay regular and consistent child support, and remain an active and healthy presence in their children’s lives, the child and the entire family benefit.
- Whether or not the parents live together, children benefit from positive father-child relationships.

2. **Gender equity:** Women benefit from healthy father-child relationships.

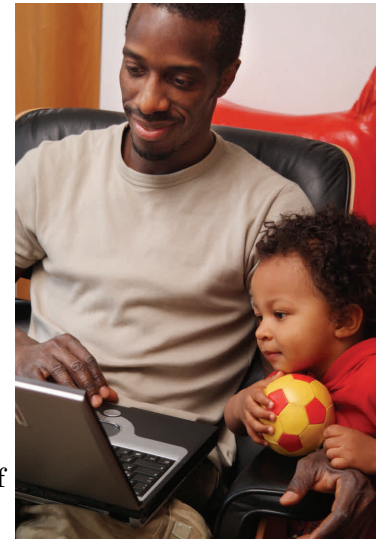
- Virtually all mothers want their child to have a positive and close relationship with their father.
- Families benefit when individual and institutional barriers that inadvertently limit either parent are eliminated.
- Child-mother attachment is more secure when child-father attachment is secure.
- Positive mother-child relationships are linked with positive father-child relationships.
- Whether or not the parents live together, positive mother-child relationships are linked with positive father-child relationships.

3. **Men’s development:** Men benefit from healthy father-child relationships.

- Virtually all fathers seek an active role in the healthy upbringing of their child.
- Men benefit through increased expression of nurturance, empathy, self-confidence and self-scrutiny.
- Fathers benefit from a positive relationship with their children.
- Whether or not the parents live together, fathers benefit from a positive relationship with their children.

4. **Community development:** Communities are healthier and safer when healthy father-child relationships are promoted.

- Neighborhoods are safer when fathers are role models and available to provide a presence and guidance to children of all ages.
- Communities, schools, places of worship, and civic activities positively benefit when fathers are more actively engaged.
- Social service agencies’ caseloads are reduced when fathers are part of the solution, not just part of the problem.



This InfoSheet is adapted from Adrienne Burgess, Fathers Direct, London, England, and based on a presentation presented by Ms. Burgess at the 4th annual Minnesota Fatherhood Summit, January 2007, St. Cloud, Minnesota. Learn more about Fathers Direct at www.fathersdirect.com.

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