



## Healthy Start TA & Support Center Fatherhood Newsletter

Strengthening Healthy Start to  
support family health and well-being



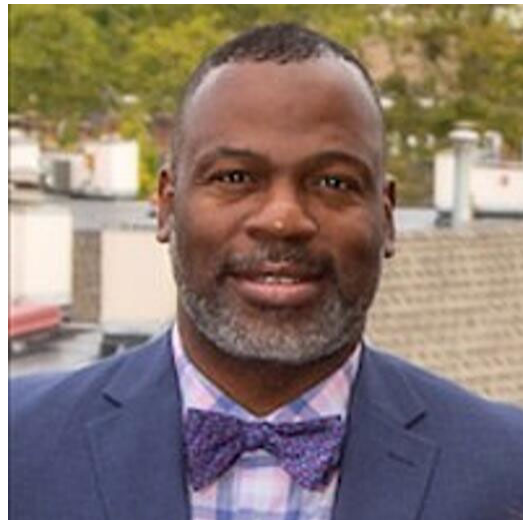
## Healthy Start Fatherhood Newsletter

### Greetings from the Director of the TA & Support Center at NICHQ

Greetings Healthy Start Grantees:

It's with great excitement that we introduce a newsletter that centers on Fatherhood!

We have had 85 years of maternal and child health (MCH), and 30 years of the federal Healthy Start program, first introduced in 1991. And although Healthy Start projects have always addressed fatherhood within their programs, this current funding cycle (2019-2024) marks the first time fatherhood is a required component in a MCH program.



***This accomplishment is certainly one that deserves celebrating! “Kudos” to the Maternal and Child Health Bureau, Division of Healthy Start and Perinatal Services for its commitment to the inclusion of fathers and moving from “counting dads” to “making dads count”!***

Healthy Start understands fathers in context to pregnancy and birth outcomes; infant and child outcomes; and his role within community. The fatherhood work has evolved within the Healthy Start program and no other MCH program is in a better position than Healthy Start to demonstrate the value of fathers in addressing infant mortality.

Healthy Start's fatherhood initiatives address fatherhood in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, as it has transitioned into more of an ecological model than it was in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It now centers on strengthening a father's capacity to understand his role and responsibility in the context of supporting pregnancy and parenting. As a community-based, community-driven model, Healthy Start is building from three decades of experience, demonstrating the value of father involvement along the MCH continuum. Historically, fathers have been rendered invisible along the continuum of preconception, pregnancy, postpartum and parenting. The big goal of fatherhood within a MCH framework is to make him visible: before, during, after and beyond.

I am happy to introduce this inaugural newsletter from the NICHQ Healthy Start TA & Support Center (TASC). We are thrilled to have an article from Dr. Jeffrey Johnson, President & CEO, National Partnership Community Leadership. NPCL is a partner of the TA & Support Center and Dr. Johnson serves as the Dean for our first Fatherhood Learning Academy!

We remain committed to supporting Healthy Start grantees in your fatherhood efforts. The TASC, in partnership with the National Healthy Start Association (NHSA), will grow the fatherhood programs with a cadre of talented fatherhood coordinators and sustain it for years to come. We hope to use this newsletter as a vehicle to showcase the work that you all are doing across the country, and we encourage you to think about the stories that you want to lift up through this vehicle. We look forward to hearing about the tremendous work that we are confident the Healthy Start grantees will contribute to the advancement of fatherhood work across the country. Here's to supporting you all in that work!

Best,  
Kenn L. Harris

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## **Fatherhood, Evidence-Based Training and Children's Health Outcomes**

By: Dr. Jeffery M. Johnson, President, National Partnership for Community Leadership

I am incredibly delighted to have the opportunity to share my thoughts on the importance of training Fatherhood Coordinators and Healthy Start staff on implementing effective and evidence-based fatherhood programs.



Over the years, maternal and child health professionals have become increasingly more aware of how fathers positively affect the health and development of children. Supporting father engagement and involvement is critical to improving children's health outcomes. In my more than 30 years of working in the field of responsible fatherhood, I have had the extraordinary opportunity to experience managing and playing a significant role in several of the nation's most notable fatherhood demonstration projects. I have gained valuable experience and developed curriculums (Fatherhood, Motherhood, Co-Parenting) and other relevant training materials to assist community-based agencies in helping fathers be the best they can be.

Research indicates that father involvement has a positive impact on the health outcomes of children. Specifically, involved fathers are linked to better results on nearly every measure of child well-being, from cognitive development and educational achievement to self-esteem and prosocial behavior. Providing services and programming to increase fathers' positive parenting skills, appropriate discipline, effective communication, emotional support, and stress management can have the double effect of reducing child abuse and increase protective factors. As a result, not only can children face a reduced risk of maltreatment, but they can also benefit from positive father involvement.

Training and professional development are critical to fatherhood coordinators and healthy start staff in integrating fatherhood as a sustainable component of services provided to families, expanding the traditional mother-child dyad. One of the most important things that I can share is that there is no need to "reinvent the wheel." There have been many vital lessons over four decades that can be learned through \*evidence-based training to help maternal and child health agencies expand their family approaches to include dads. It is essential that training content is focused on a shared vision and shared program goals for outcomes for father engagement. Further, evidence-based fatherhood training will enable the diverse network of healthy start agencies to create a viable \*\*\*"learning community," wherein there is an ongoing collaboration among mature and less mature programs and "peer to peer" learning occurs. Learning from each other will facilitate capacity building and lay a solid foundation for future research and evaluation.

Finally, we need a sense of urgency in engaging fathers. Mothers are 1.5 times more likely to receive prenatal care in the first trimester when a father is involved, which has positive implications for maternal and infant health. Including dads will inevitably make it

easier for moms during the prenatal period and beyond to keep the child healthy at birth and beyond.

I look forward to the continued capacity-building and professional development training of fatherhood coordinators and healthy start staff to expand services to include fathers. For information on upcoming NPCL curriculum training, please visit our website at [www.npclfathersandfamilies.org](http://www.npclfathersandfamilies.org).

\*Evidence-based training methods are practices grounded in and supported by research demonstrating their success. Using techniques and tools supported by research helps ensure effective training. (Training Industry Glossary)

\*\* Learning communities provide a space and a structure for people to align around a shared goal. Effective communities are both aspirational and practical. They connect people, organizations, and systems that are eager to learn and work across boundaries, all the while holding members accountable to a common agenda, metrics, and outcomes. These communities enable participants to share results and learn from each other, thereby improving their ability to achieve rapid yet significant progress. (Center On Developing Children, Harvard University)

#### REFERENCES

Berns, Scott D. "Fathers: Powerful Allies for Maternal and Child Health" National Institute for Children's Health Quality (NICHQ) 2021

"5 Things You Should Know about the Importance of Fathers", Child and Family Research Partnership, LBJ School of Public Affairs, University of Texas at Austin. (June 2017)

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## Upcoming Fatherhood Events & Activities

### Fatherhood Learning Academy

TASC is pleased to announce its first Learning Academy focused on Fatherhood! The goal of the Fatherhood Learning Academy is to examine the breadth and depth of the fatherhood movement in the 20th and 21st century, and to deeply examining the policies and practices that have influenced fatherhood programming that have either encouraged or impeded father engagement. This Fatherhood Learning Academy schedule is below. To view the recording and materials from Session 1, [please click here](#). **To register for the remaining Fatherhood Learning Academy sessions, [please click here](#).**

- Session 1: July 27, 2021 from 2:00-4:00 PM ET
- Session 2: August 24, 2021 from 2:00-4:00 PM
- Session 3: September 28, 2021 from 2:00-4:00 PM
- Session 4: October 26, 2021 from 2:00-4:00 PM
- Session 5: November 23, 2021 from 2:00-4:00 PM

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### Male Doula Webinar

Please join the TASC for the **Male Doula webinar on Wednesday, August 25 from 2-3:30 p.m. ET**. Meloney Baty, Project Director of South Phoenix Healthy Start, will share her project's doula journey and how they have worked to redefine the role of fathers in

maternal care by incorporating male doulas into the Healthy Start model **To register, [please click here.](#)**

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### **Partners4Fatherhood**

TASC is excited to launch Partners4Fatherhood (P4F), an informal group that will bring together new and experienced Fatherhood Coordinators to connect, share wins and barriers, and discuss their Healthy Start Projects' workaround fatherhood. All Healthy Start fatherhood coordinators and other related staff are invited to join as this group can serve as a fellowship opportunity with a mentoring structure. The participants will be able to share their insights and concerns with the entire group while also being paired with another member for a more concentrated dialogue. If you are interested in participating in this group, please email [healthystart@nichq.org](mailto:healthystart@nichq.org).

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### **#HealthyStartStrong**

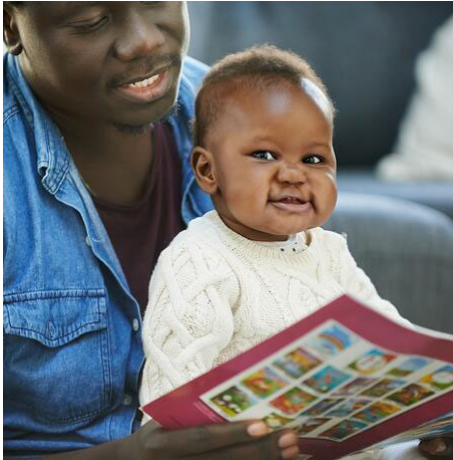
#### **We want to hear from you!**

Our team at the Healthy Start TA & Support Center would love to highlight the Healthy Start sites in upcoming newsletters, as part of our #HealthyStartStrong initiative. This spotlight can include new improvement methods, developments, resources, or initiatives taken that you'd like to share.

**If you'd like to share, please email us at [healthystart@nichq.org](mailto:healthystart@nichq.org)!**

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### **Fatherhood 1:1 TA**



Noticing some areas for improvement in your fatherhood work? Your project may benefit from further individualized support.

The Healthy Start TA & Support Center (TASC) offers 1:1 TA to all grantees on a wide array of topics, including fatherhood! **[Click here to submit a TA request.](#)** The TASC team will work with you to understand your goals and develop a TA workplan to most efficiently complete your request, while keeping your Project Director and Project Officer in the loop.

**Feel free to email us at [healthystart@nichq.org](mailto:healthystart@nichq.org) with questions on 1:1 TA support.**

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### Stay Connected

Please encourage your fellow Healthy Start staff members to subscribe to the Healthy Start email distribution list! Once subscribed, they will receive these weekly update emails and the monthly newsletter, which include information about upcoming webinars, training opportunities, and more. To subscribe, please email [healthystart@nichq.org](mailto:healthystart@nichq.org).



Have questions? Either respond to this email or contact the TA & Support Center at [healthystart@nichq.org](mailto:healthystart@nichq.org)

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