Involved Nonresident African American Fathers as Protections for Their Children

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Father involvement is important to child well-being.

Notable demographic shifts in U.S. family:
- 1/3 of all births are non-marital in past 30 years
- Increasing divorce rates over past two decades

63% of African American children under age 18 did not live with their biological father in 2012.
- “Almost 80% of African American youth can expect to spend a significant portion of their childhood living without or apart from their father.”

Increase in nonresident father involvement
(Amato et al, 2009; King & Sobolewski, 2006)
Research with nonresident African American fathers has found that compared to white fathers, African American fathers are:

- less likely to live with their children at birth
- more likely to remain involved with their children after romantic relationships end (Edin et al. 2009)
- likely to engage in religious activities at higher rates (King et al., 2004)
- likely to live closer to their children and visit more often (Bryant & Zimmerman)
- likely to assist their adolescent children with school projects (King et al., 2004)
- likely to increased their involvement when their adolescent children engage in non-violent delinquent behaviors (Coley & Medeiros, 2007).
To develop a *culturally relevant* youth risk behavior preventive intervention to enhance relationships between nonresident African American fathers and their 8-12 year old biological sons to:

- prevent substance use, violent behavior and early sexual initiation among African American boys, and

- encourage health promoting behaviors (i.e., physical activity and service use) among both ... by strengthening parenting behaviors and intentions among fathers and refusal skills and intentions among sons.
Fathers’ Outcomes

- ↑ Parental monitoring
- ↑ Race-related socialization
- ↑ Communication about sex with son
- ↑ Parenting skills satisfaction
- ↑ Intentions to communicate with son
- ↑ Requested help for drinking problem

1. Superscript note 1
Sons’ Outcomes

- ↑ Perceptions of monitoring from father
- ↑ Ability to talk about sex with father
- ↑ Intentions to avoid violence in the future
- ↑ Improving fathers’ parenting behaviors was associated with less aggression in sons.


Depression, Drinking and Fatherhood

- Depressive symptoms associated with ↓ eye contact, ↓ closeness, ↓ monitoring and ↑ conflict with sons.³

- ↑ Good relationship with sons was associated with ↓ depressive symptoms and drinking in fathers.⁴


Footage supplied by Fuse/Thinkstock
“Despite the public health significance of problems such as depression and substance abuse among men, few evidence-based interventions have been developed specifically for men, and even fewer have focused on their role as fathers as a health promotion strategy.”
(Caldwell et al. 2011)
Strengthening Nonresident Families

- Interested nonresident African American fathers can be effectively involved in their sons’ lives.

- Nonresident African American fathers can improve their parenting skills through family-centered programs that address their needs.

- Cultural sensitivity is critical for creating a safe environment for father-son participation in intergenerational programming.

- Involving fathers and sons in program development is vital to success.
Defining Nonresident Fathers

- **Father**: African American / Black, biological fathers of boys in intervention
- **Nonresident**: sons did not sleep-over at fathers’ home more than half-time
- **Nonresident fathers’ characteristics**:  
  - Nonresident to some children  
  - Resident to other children  
  - Marital status  
  - Living arrangements with sons
Fatherhood as a Component of Men’s Health

- A commentary in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* suggested that:

  “…illuminating the psychosocial fabric of men’s lives may reveal critical links between fatherhood and men’s health.”


- The benefits and burdens of fatherhood as a social context for health will provide researchers and clinicians with additional resources for addressing health disparities among men and boys.

  (Caldwell et al., 2011; 2012)
“I feel so great because I’m hanging out with my dad, thank you Lord.”

— African American son and former participant in the Fathers and Sons Program
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