

Strong Dads Programming at Teen Parent Connection

Per our last WSJC meeting, here is some information on Teen Parent Connection's father involvement initiatives. Below you will find an outline of our "Strong Dads" program initiatives, as well as our year-end outcomes.

Strong Dads Programming at Teen Parent Connection:

- Father Focus Group
 - Facilitated by partner Parents Care + Share
 - Responses and feedback guide program development
 - Conducted annually

- Dads Support Group
 - Facilitated by former male Teen Parent Connection participant
 - Father Focused Curriculum
 - Held biweekly

- Dads Night Out
 - Sports, socializing, relaxed atmosphere
 - Self Care: Father's Day Event
 - Held quarterly

- Parent Cafes
 - Focusing on family Planning & Co-Parenting
 - Held quarterly

- Newsletter

-Informational: Resources, Tips, and Activities

-Available quarterly

- Counseling

-Ongoing, 1 on 1 sessions held by doctorate of Psychology Students

-Need based

- Parent's Pantry

-“Dad's Bucks” and Closet

-As needed (incentive program)

- Success Stories

-Highlights the accomplishments of a young dad participant

-Developed by staff monthly

Strong Dads Outcomes:

Less than 2% of program participants will be identified as the perpetrator of an act(s) of child abuse and/or neglect.

Year End Outcomes:

- 0% of male program participants have been identified as the perpetrator of an act of child abuse and/or neglect.

Fathers will develop parenting skills that will reduce the likelihood that they will become abusive or neglectful towards their children.

Male Parent Group Facilitators educated families about child development, healthy discipline techniques, and stress management. A presentation on healthy discipline techniques was presented to all groups. Increased knowledge of healthy discipline techniques was measured through the use of a survey following the presentation.

Year End Outcomes:

- 100% of male parents that attended the presentation on healthy discipline techniques reported an increase in knowledge around age-appropriate discipline and reported that they will use some of the suggested techniques provided in group.

80% of fathers who are 18 years and under shall move towards self-sufficiency defined as working, high school completion, enrolled in a GED program and completion of job readiness and workforce development education.

Year End Outcomes:

- 94% (31/33) have moved towards self- sufficiency as defined above.
- 15% (5/33) of male participants are currently still attending high school.
- 76% (25/33) of male participants have demonstrated high school completion by graduating with high school diplomas.

80% of participants attending father’s groups will improve knowledge of – and attitudes toward their fatherhood role and responsibilities.

Year End Outcomes:

Since attending the Strong Dads Program, male participants report having contact with their child a minimum of 12 times per month. They also report below:

Childcare: 86% of male participants report actively participating in the following activities between 1-5 times per week.

- Put child to bed at night
- Respond to child’s needs during the night
- Take care of child while other parent is busy
- Taken child for one full day or more

Activities in the home: 100% of male participants report actively participating in the following activities between 1-5 times per week.

- Play and interact with child

- Work together with child on age appropriate milestones
- Intentionally create activities that will be of special interest to the child

Personal interaction: 100% of male participants report actively participating in the following activities between 1-5 times per week.

- Read books to child
- Buy gifts for child on special occasions
- Show affection to child
- Take an active role in the guidance and discipline of child
- Called child's mother to see how child was doing

75% of participant fathers will report they have a better understanding of how to more effectively co-parent with the mother of their child.

Year End Outcomes:

- 86% of participant fathers report being able to communicate with the child's mother when it pertains to the needs of the child, including an understanding of how to more effectively co-parent.
- 100% of male participants participated in healthy relationship education during the course of the quarter.

Program Enhancements:

In an effort to expand both our outreach efforts to male participants, while serving the most at risk young fathers, we knew a partnership with Woodridge Interventions was critical. As a 90 day treatment center for young men, most of which fathers, this facility aims to prepare their participants for the working world and overall self sufficiency upon completion of their program. The Strong Dads program of Teen Parent Connection educates these young fathers on the strength based approaches to parenting, and ultimately encourages a positive relationship with their child(ren).

One of the most commonly discussed topics at our dad's groups is healthy relationships. We know that adolescent relationships go through many challenges, not to mention balancing that with the role of parenting. Group program staff was able to identify a resource in the community that was just what was needed to address this need. *Within My Reach* offers a skills-based program with critical, concrete tools that help participants control their own relationship in a way that will lead to more enriching, more satisfying interactions with the people that matter in their lives, with themes that include: knowing yourself first, smart love, and making your own decisions. Within My Reach staff brings with them a wealth of knowledge when working with teen parents around co-parenting relationships, and master's degrees in social work education.

Our young dads often time feel like they want/need to do more to financially support their child. Since many of them struggle with finding a balance between work, school and personal life, we have amped up our education around these areas. The Economic Awareness Council visits our dad's groups on a quarterly basis to provide detailed support around resume writing, college courses/credits and budgeting basics. The Council also acts as mentors or consultants when one of our young fathers has more specific questions that need to be discussed outside of the group setting.

A recent partnership with the Health and Family Services Program based out of Aurora has opened the door to many opportunities for our Strong Dad's Program. HFS is prepared to visit each of our young dad's groups to provide paternity testing free of charge, as well as educate young men about the Voluntary Acknowledgement of Paternity Form. Program staff is equipped to answer questions about the legal rights and responsibilities of a father, once a positive paternity test has been established.

We are excited to welcome our first male intern to Teen Parent Connection. Dan Pedraza joins our team pursuing a bachelor's degree in human services from Quincy University. He is joined by two former male participants of TPC, as well as the male health teacher from Nequa Valley High School in Naperville. This team of reputable men and fathers is able to provide the highest quality of services and support to our most vulnerable and at risk fathers. All volunteers are required to complete a background check and mandatory group facilitator training from Parent's Care and Share.

TPC's Parent and Community Engagement Manager was introduced to the creator of the Midwest Region Fatherhood ListServ conference calls. As a result of being thoroughly impressed by the content and research behind our Strong Dads Program, we were asked to lead a call based solely on the work of engaging young fathers. This call took place in June of 2013 and offered a connection to many other programs working to implement fatherhood programs.