

The High Costs of Fatherlessness

Presented by: Neal E. DeSha
MEd, LPC

Learning Objectives-participants will be able to identify:

- The costs fatherlessness has on society
- The extent, or epidemic of fatherlessness
- The two major contributors to fatherlessness
- The six major consequences of fatherlessness
- The positive effects of fatherfullness
- The five questions every father should ask himself
- The seven things a great dad knows

What do you think is the biggest problem facing America today?

- Abortion?
- Drugs?
- Teenage pregnancy?
- Gangs in the cities?
- Prostitution?
- Violence among youths?
- Alcoholism?
- Hopelessness?
- Sexual Promiscuity?
- Excessive spending on government programs?

“We can balance the budget from the White House to the outhouse, but if we don’t get the family and father together, we’re going to suffer in ways that we cannot imagine.”

- Carey Casey, Chief Executive Officer,
National Center for Fathering

Costs to Society

- In 2006, the Federal Government spent at least 99.8 billion dollars providing assistance to father absent families (TANF, Child Support Enforcement, food/nutrition programs (school and WIC), housing programs, Medicaid, etc.
- According to the USDA, 69.2% of the children who participated in the free school lunch program live in single mother households
- The most recent TANF report with data on female headed households is the Fifth Annual Report. It estimates 87.5% of TANF recipients are non-widowed single mothers

Costs continued

- The most recent data available show that 55.2% of WIC recipients live in father absent homes
- In 2006 an allotment of 9.3 billion dollars was spent on Food Stamps for single mother households
- Only a minority of SSI recipients are children, but they account for 6,832,000,000 dollars. A 2000-2002 survey of SSI recipients found that 56.3% of SSI children lived in female headed households
- Using 2003 data, a survey found that 53.6% of Head Start households have a father absent

The One Hundred Billion Dollar Man: The Annual Public Costs of Father Absence; NFI, 2008. Steven L. Nock, University of Virginia; Christopher J. Einolf, DePaul University School of Public Service

The extent, or epidemic of fatherlessness

- A 2005 Census Bureau report reveals 24.35 million children (33.5%) live absent their biological father, and that 63% of black children, 35% of Hispanic children, and 28% of white children are living in homes absent their biological father
- In June of 1994 the Bureau of Justice Statistics reported an estimated 778, 761 dads behind bars with children under 18
- A 2002 Dept. of Justice survey of 7000 inmates revealed 39% of jailed inmates lived in mother-only households. Of those 20% had experienced a father in prison or jail

The Two Major Contributors to Fatherlessness

Since the 1960s most research focuses on two major causes for the growth in fatherlessness, divorce and out of wedlock births.

Divorce

- From 1970 to 1995, the number of currently divorced adults quadrupled...4.3 million to 17.6 million (US Bureau of the Census)
- A 1991 survey by National Commission on Children found close to 50% of children in disrupted families hadn't seen dad at all in the last year. Almost 20% in female-headed families hadn't seen dad in five years

Out of Wedlock Births

- One survey revealed children living with never married mothers has grown from 221,000 in 1960 to 5,862,000 in 1995-an increase of 5,641,000
- One report revealed 1/3 of all newborns in 2003 were born to unmarried parents - a total of 14.2 million children
- Research published by the 2011 U.S. Census Bureau's “..American Community Survey found that 36% of the 4.1 million women who gave birth in the U.S. that year were unmarried, up from 31% in 2005.”
The states with the highest out-of-wedlock birthrate were New Mexico, at 47.6%, Mississippi at 48.1%, Louisiana at 48.7%, and The District of Columbia, at 50.8%

The Six Major Consequences of Fatherlessness

As identified by the National Center for Fathering, there are 6 main areas directly impacted by fatherlessness:

- Poverty
- Drug/Alcohol Abuse
- Physical/Emotional Health
- Educational Achievement
- Crime
- Sexual Activity/Teen Pregnancy

Poverty

- Children in fatherless homes are 5x more likely be poor. In 2002, 7.8% of children in married-couple families were living in poverty, compared to 38.4% of children in female households
- A 1993 study by National Commission on Children revealed almost 75% of American children living in single-parent families will experience poverty before they turn 11 years old. Only 20% of children in two parent families will do the same

Poverty continued

- From 1970-1996, there was a 5% increase in child poverty that was nearly all attributed to the rise in single parent families, especially never married mothers
- A study of nearly 5,000 children born to parents in seventy large US cities found that unmarried childbearing helped sustain high poverty rates due to multiple partner fertility and relationship instability

Drug and alcohol use

- A 2006 study in Pediatrics journal of 296 at-risk youths found that fathers who smoke cigarettes were less likely to enforce anti-smoking rules for their children, and had weaker bonds in terms of child admiration and emulation
- A 2006 study from Journal of Divorce and Remarriage found that “boys from father-absent homes were more likely than those from father-present homes to use drugs.”

Drug and alcohol use continued

- “Fatherless children are at a dramatically greater risk for drug abuse as teenagers.” U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services on Child Health, 1993
- National Fatherhood Initiative found in 2004 from a study of 6,500 children from the ADDHEALTH database that “father-closeness was...correlated with a child’s use of alcohol, cigarettes and hard drugs...”
- “Even after controlling from community context, there is significantly more drug use among children who do not live with their mother and father.” May 2002 Journal of Marriage and Family

Physical and emotional health

- The National Longitudinal Survey of youth found that obese children are more likely to live in father-absent homes than are non-obese children
- A 2007 published study of the Pediatrics journal found that “children of fathers with permissive and disengaged parenting styles had higher odds of being in a higher BMI category” (based upon the father’s inactivity).
- A 2003 study published in Evolution and Human Behavior found that “separation or frequent changes increase a woman’s risk of early menarche...”, or “the longer a woman lived with both parents, the lower her risk of early reproductive development.”
- A 2010 Maternal Child Health Journal article reveals “when fathers are involved during the pregnancy babies have fewer complications”, and “babies with a father’s name on the birth certificate are 4 times more likely to live past 1 year of age.”

Physical and Emotional Health continued

- The 2005 Journal of American Academic Child Adolescent Psychiatry found from a study of 3,400 middle schoolers that “not living with both biological parents quadruples the risk of having an affective disorder.”
- A 2007 article from the Journal of Marriage and Family revealed that “children born to single mothers show higher levels of aggressive behaviors than children born to married mothers.”
- A 1993 article printed by The Christian Century revealed “three of four teenage suicides occur in households where a parent has been absent.”
- A 1988 U.S. Dept. H and H Services study found “children in single-parent families are 2-3 times as likely as children in two-parent families to have emotional and behavioral problems.”

Educational Achievement

- A 1993 U.S. Dept. of H and H Services survey found that “fatherless children are twice as likely to drop out of school.”
- A 2001 Dept. of Education report revealed that “students living in father-absent homes are twice as likely to repeat a grade in school.” Also, “students in single-parents families..are significantly less likely than students living in intact families to have parents involved...”
- A 2007 American Sociological Review survey reported that “white children raised in a mother-only household for..75% of their first 4 years greatly increased externalizing behaviors and decreased cognitive achievement scores”, and “children who experienced multiple family transitions were more at risk for development problems than children who live in stable, two-parent families.”

Crime

- 1988 U.S. Dept. of H and H Services survey claims that “children in single parent families are more likely to be in trouble with the law than their peers who grew up with two parents.”
- Journal of Criminal Justice published a 2002 article that read “Adolescents, particularly boys, in single parent families were at a higher risk of status, property, and person delinquencies.”
- A 2004 Journal of Research on Adolescence article stated “youths who never had a father in the household experienced the highest odds of incarceration.”
- A 2004 study of INTERPOL crime stats from 39 countries claims that single parenthood ratios are strongly correlated with violent crime
- A 2007 Child Development report reveals “higher social encounters and frequent communication with non-resident fathers decreases adolescent delinquency.”

Sexual Activity/Teen Pregnancy

- A 2003 article from Child Development reveals “teens without fathers were twice as likely to be involved in early sexual activity and seven times more likely to get pregnant.”
- A 2009 Children and Youth Services Review study found “maternal education and father involvement were the only protective factors for early sexual activity”, in addition, “Among all of the family processes, father involvement was the only factor that decreased the odds of engaging in sexual activity, and none of the other family processes was found to be statistically significant.”
- A 2005 study published by the ABNF Journal, of 1,409 rural, Southern adolescents from father-absent homes, ages 11-18 years, were more likely to report being sexually active
- In a 2008 Issues in Mental Health Nursing report “..it was revealed that teen mother’s experiences of living without a strong father figure were an important factor for having become sexually active.”

The Effects of Fatherfulness

- Children benefit from positive relationships with their fathers

A study of children's cognitive development found in 1978 Child Development reveals "fathers promoted their child's intellectual development and social acceptance through physical play, *whereas* mother's promoted these skills through verbal expressions and teaching activities."

- Father's can positively influence their children's development by assuming a significant amount of the child care taking

A 1990 Journal of Personality and Social Psychology study found that "...single most important childhood factor in developing empathy is paternal involvement. Fathers who spent time with their kids performing routine childcare at least 2x a week raised *children who were the most compassionate adults.*"

Fatherfulness continued

- A father's parenting style has implications for child well-being

In one study of preschoolers boys whose fathers offered praise and compliments preformed better on cognitive achievement than boys whose fathers were cool and aloof (Social Work in Education, 1986)

“A father's use of harsh and inconsistent discipline had a negative impact on their son's emotional adjustment and classroom behaviors, which was related to lower school achievement.” (Journal of Early Adolescence, 1993)

Fatherfulness continued

- **A father's involvement can affect children's social development, cognitive development and academic achievement**

Higher levels of father involvement in activities with their children, such as eating meals together, going on outings, and helping with homework, are associated with fewer behavior problems, higher levels of sociability, and a high level of school performance among children and adolescents. (Fatherhood and Contemporary Theory, Research, and Social Policy, 1995)

For children in first through twelfth grades living in **single-father** families, higher father involvement is associated with getting higher grades and enjoying school, and a lower chance of suspension or expulsion from school. (US Dept. of Education, 1997)

7 Things a Great Dad Knows!

- A great dad knows the importance of improving his family
- A great dad knows the importance of communicating with his spouse/ex-spouse, or child's mother
- A great dad knows what his child likes and needs
- A great dad knows his child's favorite experiences
- A great dad knows his family's schedule
- A great dad makes time for his family
- A great dad knows his schedule

5 Questions Every Father Should Ask Himself

- Self Awareness: How well do I know myself?
- Caring for Self: How well do I care for myself?
- Fathering Skills: How well do I father?
- Parenting Skills: How well do I parent?
- Relationship Skills: How well do I relate?



Questions?

Comments?

Thank you!