



ADMINISTRATION FOR
CHILDREN & FAMILIES
Office of Family Assistance



SPOTLIGHT ON BUILDING SOCIAL CAPITAL:

TIPS FOR FATHERHOOD PRACTITIONERS

This National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse spotlight presents key points and tips from ***Connected to Others is a Good Place to Be: Helping Fathers Build Their Social Capital***, an information brief written by Armon Perry, Nigel Vann, and Stacey Bouchet.



READ FULL ARTICLE: The full article can be accessed at:
www.fatherhood.gov/research-and-resources/connected-others-good-place-be-helping-fathers-build-their-social-capital

WHAT IS SOCIAL CAPITAL?

- ➔ Social capital is the human and financial resources or benefits that individuals have at their disposal.
- ➔ An individual can build social capital by strengthening and expanding their relationships and networks with others (e.g., family, friends, peers, work colleagues, and new people who they get to know).

WHY IS SOCIAL CAPITAL IMPORTANT?

- ➔ Without the “right” connections, people can find it difficult to learn about job openings and other important opportunities.
- ➔ Surveys have estimated that 70 to 85 percent of people found out about their current job through networking. In fact, up to 80 percent of new jobs are never advertised.
 - **Who you know** and **who your friends know** often are the greatest determinants in whether you hear about a job opening, whether you get an interview, and whether you get hired for a job.

Without sufficient social capital, fathers may find it more difficult to secure gainful employment and stay involved in their children's lives.

Social capital has direct implications on:



HOW FATHERS RAISE THEIR CHILDREN



HOW WELL FATHERS ARE ABLE TO PROVIDE FOR THEIR CHILDREN



HOW OFTEN FATHERS SEE THEIR CHILDREN



WHAT ADVANTAGES FATHERS ARE ABLE TO GIVE THEIR CHILDREN

WHO DO FATHERHOOD PROGRAMS WORK WITH?

Fatherhood programs often work with:

- Unmarried, nonresident fathers who have less extensive social networks than their married counterparts.
- Low-income men and men of color who face deeply entrenched socioeconomic barriers and live in marginalized communities where their social connections are with similarly disadvantaged men.

HOW DO FATHERHOOD PROGRAMS HELP FATHERS BUILD SOCIAL CAPITAL?

Although fatherhood programs do not typically identify building social capital as a program goal, many programs do provide services that can increase the social capital of fathers in critical ways.

For example:

- Providing a safe, nurturing space that affirms participants as men and fathers can:
 - ✓ Build their fathering knowledge.
 - ✓ Encourage them to establish stability in their personal and occupational lives.
 - ✓ Encourage peer bonding, support, and ongoing connections.
 - ✓ Facilitate their engagement in the lives of their children.
- Connecting fathers to community resources and guiding them toward educational and employment opportunities can:
 - ✓ Expand their networks of relationships.
 - ✓ Provide opportunities for them to demonstrate their talents and abilities.
- Developing alumni leadership groups can:
 - ✓ Encourage fathers to engage long-term with their peers and program staff.
 - ✓ Help them build and maintain relationship networks.
 - ✓ Engage them in community problem-solving.





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Fatherhood programs [are] rare spaces where low-income men [can] access resources and shape positive paternal identities in the context of unpredictable local communities and long-standing social stigmas due to race and class. (Randles, 2020)

HOW CAN FATHERHOOD PROGRAMS DO MORE TO HELP FATHERS BUILD SOCIAL CAPITAL?

1. Make “building social capital” an explicit program goal.
2. Include measures of social capital in program evaluations to document any changes in the social capital of fathers while they are in the program.
3. Help fathers understand that improving their social capital may require ending negative relationships that interfere with their productivity and wellbeing.
4. Explain that they can use their social capital to create opportunities for their children.
5. Help fathers build bridges and linkages to the wider community.
 - Invite employers and prominent people in the local community to serve as board members of the fatherhood program/organization or as guest speakers for workshops and special events.
 - Encourage board members and community partners to draw on their own connections to connect fathers with employment and other opportunities.
 - Highlight accomplishments of fathers to raise their profile and that of the organization in the community. One way to do this is to nominate fathers for awards and other recognitions.
 - Encourage fathers to engage in civic opportunities in their communities.
6. Put more emphasis on establishing and maintaining alumni groups for program graduates.
 - Start an alumni Facebook group.
 - Organize occasional father-child or family events.
 - Produce a monthly newsletter that highlights achievements of past and current participants.
 - Provide leadership training and opportunities for fathers to represent the program in the community as outreach workers or public speakers.