

Dads Make a Difference Too!



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

Terra Association's mission is: "Supporting pregnant and parenting teens and their children in developing their confidence and skills to succeed by providing child development opportunities, parenting support, and connections to the community". The Association was founded in 1972 and historically has worked with pregnant and parenting moms through a variety of programs and services. More recently, in 1999, services for young dads were developed and a small percentage of young men have accessed these services. Through a complex history of program development and in remaining consistent to the organizations philosophy of a holistic approach to the issues and challenges facing our clients, Terra Association has come to realize that it is imperative to better engage young fathers in the services that we make available.

The In-Home Visitation Programs at Terra Association of which the mother and child are the primary clients, utilize different measurement tools to evaluate the effectiveness of our support on child development outcomes. In the U.S., many child development and parent support program models such as Head Start, target fathers as well as mothers. Also in the U.S., there appears to be greater recognition of the relationship between the changes being experienced in traditional family structures and other social issues.

Part of our aim at Terra Association is to break the cycle of poverty, the cycle and recidivism of crime, low literacy, repeated unplanned teen pregnancies, and negative health outcomes for children and families. It is of interest therefore, to explore the research that studies the benefits of father involvement to child development outcomes for Canada, Edmonton, and the Terra Association and partner organizations.

As the funding for this project comes from the National Crime Prevention Strategy, we and our stakeholders are particularly interested in better understanding the experience of young fathers in our area as it relates to delinquency, and what the literature indicates are some of the related variables of teen pregnancy that we should address in an effort to break the cycle of crime for future generations.

This report summarizes two research approaches. Terra Association conducted a number of one-to-one interviews and focus groups with young fathers accessing its services as well as services at other agencies. This data was also compared to existing statistics we collect as part of our Young Dad's Outreach Services. Secondly, a literature review was conducted to research and highlight a number of research areas related to fathering, men's issues, and young fathers in particular. Together, the findings of these two pieces of research will serve to assist the planning of service strategies specifically related to engaging young dads and supporting their involvement with their children.

The findings of this two-fold research study are compared with an Environmental Scan of Services for young fathers in the Edmonton area, also conducted by this research project. These comparisons of research findings have resulted in final recommendations for new service initiatives by Terra Association.

The study explores the needs of fathers from an Ecosystemic Perspective and Population Health approach. These models are discussed in this study, particularly as it relates to the findings of our 1-to-1 and focus group surveys, providing for an examination of the private troubles and public issues relating to young fathers.

The research consisted of 5 focus groups of young fathers, with a total of 20 participants, and the completion of 26 one-to one surveys. Four agencies participated in the survey and focus group process.

The ecological model has 5 interrelated systems that should be considered simultaneously and help to view young fathers issues from the narrower private troubles perspective and the broader public issues perspective. These systems include the Ontosystem, Microsystem, Mesosystem, Exosystem and Chronosystem and will look at the individual characteristics of young fathers, characteristics of the various environments, relationships between the microsystems, administrative and political environments, influences on roles and the contexts of a young fathers age.

The Population Health approach is the second conceptual model used in this study. Essentially, this model looks at the relationship between a populations social-economic indicators or characteristics and health outcomes. This comparison assists in measuring the sub-grouping of young fathers in relation to how much at risk they are of poor health outcomes and therefore how they fare as a group deserving of program interventions and policy responses. Areas that are examined include income and social status, social support networks, education, employment and working conditions, social and physical environments, personal health practices and coping skills, culture and gender.

Review of the Literature –The Benefits of Healthy Father Involvement

Research clearly supports that healthy father involvement has benefits not only for the child, but also for the father and the mother of the child. If we are concerned about the repercussions of father absence on social problems/issues, such as crime, poverty and health, then it is important to explore findings that demonstrate the benefits of father involvement to those other than just the child. This is particularly true with teen fathers who, according to research findings, are less likely to be involved with their children.

The research evidence is overwhelmingly in support of the view that supports the positive relationship between father involvement and child development outcomes. Literature states that when fathers are satisfied with parenting, contribute financially to the family, and are nurturing during play, their children's social, cognitive and emotional development is enhanced. Involvement also supports language, self-esteem and sexual identity development for children. They are more likely to succeed in school, attend post secondary institutions, find stable employment, and are less likely to have a child before age 19 years or experience depression.

Positive father involvement is also a factor in the prevention of child neglect and abuse. There are also a number of protective factors in other negative child

development outcomes including behavioural problems, adolescent delinquency and future criminal involvement with the criminal justice system.

Research demonstrates that fathers who are involved in their children's lives also benefit. They are more satisfied with parenting roles, feel important to their child and are therefore encouraged to be even more involved. Involved fathers are less likely to experience accidental or premature death, have fewer encounters with the law, experience a lower incidence of substance abuse, and have better health and a greater sense of well being overall. Partners (young moms) are more likely to have healthier pregnancies, easier deliveries, fewer incidents of postpartum depression, and greater success with breastfeeding when fathers are involved and emotionally supportive in the relationship.

Summary of Research Results

The findings of this research study have been examined through the theoretical models as outlined above. The following is a summary of the raw data and the data analysis using highlights from both models.

Education & Employment

Young fathers experience a great deal of stress, frustration and poverty as a result of their low levels of education and literacy. They are more inclined to emphasize finding employment than going back to school as an option. The range of private troubles facing young fathers, such as low education, bad and/or unsuccessful educational experiences, and immediate crisis caused by poverty such as unstable housing/shelter, lack of income, food insecurity, meeting other basic needs, are likely the underlying reasons for these young fathers viewing barriers to finding employment being a higher need area than education. Although employment is expressed as a high need amongst young fathers, they have experienced little employment success.

Because of the strong emphasis still held within society as father involvement equating to financial support, we might then infer that the low levels of education and high barriers to employment compound the uncertainty around becoming a father. This, compiled with an unplanned pregnancy occurring at a life stage where they are unable to fulfill the traditional fathering role, and the lack of support they receive around this, likely contributes towards the low levels of father involvement amongst young fathers.

Shelter/Accommodations

Without employment and stable income it is difficult to afford accommodation. Without a fixed address, young dads are not readily accessible for employment, which perpetuates the cycle of homelessness. Lack of safe, stable, affordable housing for young dads is found to be a major "private trouble" and "public issue" in our findings.

Substance Abuse

Research results demonstrate that a number of young fathers have or had substance abuse issues. They also related that becoming a father and being involved with their child was a major impetus for change when it came to substance abuse life style issues. The focus group discussions and survey responses demonstrated that these young fathers saw their substance abuse issues not being congruent with the role of a father. While recognizing readiness for change issues, these dads demonstrate long-term commitments for change.

Mental Health

Mental health has not been well defined in our study, yet data sheds light on specific areas, and demonstrates that mental health has been a significant area of concern. Depression, family conflict, grief, emotional abuse, separation and loss are all identified as reasons for requesting service from Terra Association. At times, mental health status of single parenting dads impacts their situation as lack of support and the increased demands placed on single parents affects the management of their mental health. Terra Association has had reasonable success in supporting young fathers with mental health concerns; however, research results demonstrate how they feel isolated, misunderstood and unsupported by various friends, family and services.

At Risk Behaviors

The findings of this study are consistent with the literature that affirms that young fathers who are not involved with their child are more likely to have criminal records, experience increased delinquency, and that their children are also more likely to experience conflict with the law. This is further supported by our own data that shows that these young fathers who have high incidents of criminal involvement also report low levels of father involvement growing up. The study demonstrates that there is a high incidence of substance abuse, street involvement, exposure to unsafe situations, things or people and criminal activity that is primarily assault related amongst these young men.

Culture/Ethnicity

Culture and ethnicity is a need area worth noting in this research report as over half of the young fathers involved at Terra Association are of Aboriginal or Metis decent or have Treaty Status. Smaller percentages are from other ethnic groups and cultures, although all but one of the survey participants, part of the young fathers grouping, were born in Canada. Internal data shows that cultural identity issues have been identified as a need area by at least on third of program participants, and the study identifies the need for greater Aboriginal content and staffing.

Fathering Status

Findings suggest that there is a lot of opportunity to support father involvement through role and relationship clarification support, couple counseling, building capacity of support systems involved such as immediate and extended family. The fact that men are seeking help prior to the birth of their child and also obtaining help

regardless of being a resident or non-resident father, affirms tremendous opportunity to support young fathers to be involved with their children. The literature review and our statistics demonstrate that father involvement amongst young fathers decreases over time. This suggests that we must monopolize the opportunity provided to support early intervention with young families.

Gender

Men are at far greater risk of negative health outcomes than are women. Even though not all men are fathers, all fathers are men and considering other health indicators, young fathers appear to be significantly more at risk and more impacted by socio-economic inequalities impacting inequalities in health outcomes. In comparing the public health resources to young mothers to those initiatives targeted towards young fathers in Edmonton, there are apparent inequities in service response.

Family of Origin Issues

This study finds that there is a lack of positive father involvement or role modeling for many of the young fathers that Terra Association serves, partly due to many of the fathers themselves being in the care of Children's Services as young people. Although, a number of survey respondents did report that extended family members or significant others in the community were prominent father figures, these were not always positive. Without positive father figures, young fathers have no role model for their new role, and are under supported as they take on these fathering responsibilities.

Microsystem

The microsystem describes the characteristics of different environments, including family, work, school, friends, etc. Almost 100% of fathers surveyed stated that they felt counseling would have helped them to clarify their relationship with the mother of their child when they learned about the pregnancy. Fathers reported stresses and interference from family members in being able to be a supportive partner. These fathers appear to rarely garner support for their involvement with their child from anywhere else than their partner, suggesting a need for early intervention at the microsystem level to strengthen spousal and family support.

Although the young fathers do appear to want to provide financial support and when unable, do appear to provide non-traditional forms of support, there is little recognition of this within the research literature or from key informant responses. Research results indicate that young fathers would use parenting skill enhancement support services and attend prenatal classes. The findings support an early intervention response to assist young fathers in discovering how they can be supportive of their child's mother and in this way influence positive child development outcomes.

From examining the referral sources of young fathers to Terra Association services we know that family, friends and community resources are part of fathers lives. Statistics demonstrate that immediate and extended family, although involved, are not viewed by the young father as always being helpful or compatible to the fathers

reality. The high degree of street peer affiliation with these fathers also indicates that friends are seldom a great source of support, except as it relates to survival skills, and once their children were born, the young fathers report losing these friendships.

Human services organizations surveyed express feeling ill equipped to deal with young fathers needs. They appear to recognize the gap between how fathers versus mothers are being served but require further information as to how to intervene, what the benefits of involving fathers are to their children, and how to bridge these gaps in ways that reflect the specific needs of young fathers. There is a range of short-term crisis related services available to the public in Edmonton and it appears that the service environment that is in place to address basic needs for food and clothing in the non-profit sector are organized, coordinated and well equipped to address the needs of young fathers. Short-term or crisis services for income support and/or housing are not however readily available to meet the unique needs of this group.

The long-term service providers including pre employment programs, life-skills and employment training, educational supports or programs and other funding bodies have a limited capacity to respond to the long-term employment and educational needs of young fathers. Young fathers have unique needs in this area and there are no services that specifically target this group to assist them in addressing the barriers to gain employment or educational success. There appears to be recognition in the employment sectors and with their partner human service organizations that the system is not working for all youth. These services lack resources, experience and funding parameters to adequately address the needs of young fathers, which includes high-risk youth.

Of key importance when attempting to encourage father involvement to facilitate positive child development outcomes, is to mitigate issues that force families to separate. When these young people learn that they are to become parents, their lives are forced into major transition that is not congruent with normal life stage events. Not only do they need to work out the status of their relationship, but the various microsystem environments may not be supportive of them moving towards any relationship clarification that results in living together as a family. A lack of policy recognition that this is a need area relating to youth income security, makes role clarification difficult and does not assist in facilitating father involvement.

From an ecological perspective, the Microsystems that characterizes the education and employment sectors, lack resources to respond to the needs of young fathers, including a lack of public awareness of their issues as a population group, knowledge about how to engage them in services, and policies to respond to the need for strategies to develop program responses.

Mesosystem

The mesosystem represents the degree to which the relationships between these environments are compatible and complement each other. The focus group discussions demonstrate that these young fathers do experience stress in finding any balance in these areas, particularly as it relates to schooling, work, family and service providers, particularly those providing child welfare services or income support services.

The environmental scan document also clearly demonstrates that there is very little compatibility between these systems and they do not complement each other.

This study however does provide new insights into the realities facing young fathers in the Edmonton area. Considering that the research evidence strongly supports the benefits of father involvement contributing towards positive child development outcomes, and learning that the young fathers that participated in this study demonstrate great desire to be involved with their children in a healthy, positive and long-term manner, the findings of this research should help to dispel widely held beliefs that young fathers are irresponsible, unmotivated men preying on the vulnerabilities of young women. It dispels the notion that young fathers are “dead beat dads” and creates greater awareness of issues that discourage their involvement with their children, result in relationship and family breakdown, and feeds the cycle of poverty and crime amongst young men; problems that are then passed on to the next generation. This cycle is obvious when we realize that these young fathers come from broken homes, lack role models and grew up in poverty.

Recommendations

The results of this research study include four major areas of attention that include Terra Association program development or enhancement, community development, public policy and systemic responses and the creation of long term strategies to address identified need areas.

Program development or enhancement would include finding strategies to better respond to the demand for services for young dads and to mitigate the waiting list. Increasing resources would also potentially facilitate the provision of more seamless services between programs, improving access from different entry points, increasing referrals between programs and improving intake processes for fathers. Other areas identified as program development or enhancements include:

- the creation of a father friendly space
- development of strategies to respond earlier in teens pregnancy to assist in addressing role and relationship problems
- Development of strategies to address addictions, housing security, education or employment, cultural needs, isolation, need for family activities
- respond to need for crisis services that quickly engages young fathers and monopolizes on their strengths and readiness for change
- provide opportunities for volunteer and/or mentorship activities, mutual support amongst fathers, building of community and leadership opportunities.
- further develop and incorporate notions of best practice as it relates to young fathers in all Terra Association programming

Recommendations from this study also include the creation and implementation of community development strategies. Terra Association proposes to identify stakeholders and partners that have program experience and expertise in particular areas of identified need and seek partnerships in the development of new initiatives that will assist young fathers. Terra Association is also in a position to provide support and information that would assist partner agencies who also provide services to young fathers, including home-visitation programs, to increase their knowledge

base regarding the importance of engaging and working with young fathers. This information would assist programs to adapt program delivery models and incorporate best practices to reflect the research evidence supporting father involvement to enhance child development outcomes.

Public policy and systemic responses include a variety of recommendations based on this research. It is recommended that Terra Association support recommendations and the actualization of strategies outlined in the Edmonton Region Plan For Coordination of Youth Services, 2004-2007. As well, the need to advocate for more equality in terms of how mothers versus fathers are targeted in policy and program strategies is outlined so that there is a clear understanding of the private troubles and public issues of teen parenthood and that policies and practices enhance father involvement. There is also an identified need to work with government stakeholders in the areas of housing, education, employment, child protection, income security and crime prevention to collaboratively improve employability and role enactment amongst young fathers.

Recommended long-term strategies include supporting new or ongoing research that will support the work being done with young fathers and fathering in general. Collaboration with the research community and other stakeholders to further our understanding of fathering issues in Canada and further inform public policy is also a long-term strategy to improve the lives of young fathers and their children. As well, this research suggests that there is a need to work more closely with stakeholders in the immigrant/refugee settlement communities or other program areas where high need at-risk families and fathers are currently under supported.

Dads Make a Difference Too! Research Project 2004

INTRODUCTION

Terra Association was founded in 1972. Its mission is to be “Supporting pregnant and parenting teens and their children in developing their confidence and skills to succeed by providing child development opportunities, parenting support, and connections to the community”. Historically, the organization targeted pregnant and parenting moms (“unwed mothers”), and was the first agency to respond to this target group through a school based program that would assist unwed moms to continue their education.

Terra Association’s services have evolved over the past few decades and presently maintains the philosophy that a “holistic approach to the issues and challenges of teen pregnancy enhances the self-worth and dignity of each individual.” The evolution of Terra’s Services, in line with the number of family related programs in the Edmonton community, have been in response to the growth of the city and the complex interplay of new research and valuable experience that helps us to better understand service needs and required responses.

Through this complex history of program development and in remaining consistent to the organizations philosophy of a holistic approach to the issues and challenges facing our clients, Terra Association has come to realize that it is imperative to better engage young fathers in the services that we make available. This awareness also derives from a change in the status of fathers in society.

“Over the past 20 years, the role of fathers in caring for children has received increased attention in the research literature. The confluence of several factors—e.g., growth in the number of two-earner families, [the increase in unemployment amongst men] the women’s movement, and the availability and quality of childcare – have resulted in shifts in the expectations of fathers and questions about the nature of fatherhood and fathering, particularly the development of attachment and provision of nurturance (Benokraitis, 1985; Lamb, 1995. Found in: Davis, J., et. al, 1996, p.1)

“Dramatic increases in divorce and nonmarital childbearing have [also] caused major shift in the nature of parent-child interactions, in that many parents no longer live with their children. (Stewart, 2000, p.1)

As young fathers and/or teen fathers are not considered part of the grouping of traditional fathers, these changing trends make it all the more confusing and difficult for young fathers and service providers to understand the dynamics influencing unplanned pregnancies, the stresses surrounding the event, and assessing the existing strengths, barriers faced, and supports required to support young fathers to have healthy and involved relationships with their children.

About 5 years ago, Terra Association began piloting some responses to the needs of young dads. At that time, there were no known service models to replicate, and Terra Association moved ahead to attempt to provide services to this population. Terra Association drew from its experiences and information collected from working

with young mothers. Some programs that worked for young mothers were replicated. These initiatives had varying success. Eventually, the agency recognized that the timing was appropriate to conduct comprehensive research into the area of services for young fathers, their needs, how to best engage them, barriers to services and what type of programming now exists elsewhere in Canada that can better inform and help actualize the agencies vision.

Part of the motivation for this research is based upon the successful Outreach Services presently being provided to young fathers through Terra Association. This service has been offered consistently over this period of time and presently is under resourced with only one worker who maintains an ongoing waiting list of young fathers wanting services. This demand for service demonstrates a continuing need, but the agencies success in this area has also made it very evident that there is a lack of other community resources to address the specific needs of young fathers involved in our Outreach Services.

This report summarizes two research approaches. Terra Association conducted a number of one to one interviews and focus groups with young fathers accessing its services as well as services at other agencies. Secondly, a literature review was conducted to research and highlight a number of research areas related to fathering, men's issues, and young fathers in particular. Together, the findings of these two pieces of research will serve to assist the planning of service strategies specifically related to answering the following planning questions.

- Are there benefits associated with assisting young fathers to be involved with their children?
- Are there benefits to young fathers in being active parents?
- Are there benefits to society in supporting positive father involvement?
- As a subgroup of fathers, what are the specific needs and life issues faced by young fathers, that require study/attention to facilitate positive father involvement?
- Who are the young fathers utilizing particular service sites in Edmonton (demographics)?
- How do young fathers in the Edmonton area describe their own experiences, needs and desire to become responsible and involved fathers?
- What are these young fathers views of present services, what is needed, and what they would utilize?

The findings of this two-fold research study will be compared with an Environmental Scan of Services for Young Fathers in The Edmonton Area, also conducted by this research project. This final comparison of research findings will result in final recommendations being made for new service initiatives by Terra Association.

SOURCES OF LITERATURE

It is not the intent of this study to replicate existing literature reviews. It is important to acknowledge the emerging volume of research being conducted on fathering issues in Canada, and the growing interest on this important subject. Although Canada is behind countries like the United States, Great Britain and Australia, in researching fathering issues, there appears to be significant interest and efforts towards changing this.

It is also important to reference this emerging research as our countries demographics, social service systems, and cultural diversity are different than these other countries, highlighting the need for Canadian research that addresses these specific variables. For example, much of the research on fathers of visible minority groups in the U.S. focus on Afro-American and Hispanic populations. At Terra Association, approximately half of the young fathers accessing our services are of Aboriginal descent, a grouping that has received little research attention in these other countries.

This report will also reference two important, recent and comprehensive studies. The first study is the “Status Of The Research On Fatherhood In Canada” by Diane Dubeau from the University of Quebec in Outaouais, 2002. “The two main objectives of this report are to identify the Canadian researchers whose works pertain to the different facets of fathering and to draw a descriptive account of the existing research concerning fathers in order to propose an integrative model for further research aimed at advancing the understanding of father involvement in Canada.”(Dubeau, D., 2002, p.5)

The second study is called “On Father’s Ground”, A portrait of projects to support and promote fathering.” This project, in addition to highlighting other important literature and research on fathering, is a compilation of a number of intervention initiatives aimed at fathers in Canada. It reviews their diversity, issues of best practice and barriers to success and variables that promote successful and sustainable programs.

METHODOLOGY

Literature will be cited that answers some of the above, mentioned questions. The study “On Father’s Ground”, explores the needs of fathers from an Ecosystemic Perspective and Population Health approach. These models will be discussed in this study, particularly as it relates to the findings of our 1-to-1 and focus group surveys, providing for an examination of the private troubles and public issues relating not only to men’s health and fathering, but specifically to young fathers as well.

The literature review will highlight important areas of research and research findings that will help to better understand the subject of teen/young fathers and what gaps still exist. The data from our 1-to-1 surveys and focus group discussions with young fathers will further inform how we can be more effective in responding to their needs.

Both individual and focus group surveys were conducted. Originally, it was proposed that two focus groups of 15 individuals each would be held. It was later felt that this number of participants was too large to effectively facilitate participation from all participants and that it would be difficult to get this number of young fathers out at any given time.

We also believed that being the only know service in our municipal area that specifically targets young fathers for service, that it would be difficult to obtain a large enough sample to make empirical inferences from the data. This is further compounded by the difficulty of engaging young fathers, a shared experience within research circles.

“...it is important to stress the loss of statistical strength due to the limited size of most samples, often explained by the difficulty of reaching fathers” (Dubeau, 2002, pp. 12-13). “...Survey nonresponse is generally somewhat higher for men than women, and especially those who are not currently married, minority men and those of lower socioeconomic status” (Gupta, 2002, p.4).

RATIONALE

The specific area of young fathers is really a sub-group of a vast expanse of research conducted on a number of fathering issues. Various areas of research include, but are not limited to, types of fathers, characteristics of fathers, the benefits of father involvement on child development outcomes, the effects of father absence on child development outcomes, the role mother plays in supporting or discouraging father involvement, non-custodial/resident fathers, divorced fathers, gay fathers, immigrant fathers, the benefits of father involvement to mothers and themselves, characteristics of father care, sex roles and child care, and the list goes on.

Some literature reviews attempt to categorize these areas. For example, a National Center on Fathers and Families study, looking at Father’s Care as a subcategory of fathering, further divides studies into 3 more subgroups, 1) descriptive accounts of father involvement, 2) comparisons of fathers care giving in various family arrangements, and 3) research aimed at assessing variations in attitudes toward and levels of care and participation (James, et. al, 1996, p.2).

It is not the purpose of this review to summarize the literature on the broad area of fathering, yet as it relates to young fathers and the questions that this study seeks answers to, some of these areas are related and worthy of exploring. At Terra Association, our In-Home Visitation Programs, of which the mother and child are the primary clients, utilizes different measurement tools to evaluate the effectiveness of our support on child development outcomes.

In the U.S., many child development and parent support program models do target fathers as well as mothers, such as Head Start of which we also have in Canada. The Healthy Families America model is also very popular in Alberta. And so, it should be of interest to explore the research that studies the benefits of father involvement to child development outcomes, to substantiate a view that Canada, Edmonton, and the Terra Association and partner organizations should be reviewing their service structures and models, which appear to exclude or at least ignore fathers as a significant client/stakeholder in the realm of family intervention services.

Until this present time, it appears that our own notions of best practices have been regimented by organizational culture [for instance, of approximately 60 staff, Terra Association has only 2 male staff and 1 permanent position occupied by a male], the lack of information and service models, and the values of the broader community. Our inability to think outside the box, by considering that fathers involvement should make up part of the problem-solving puzzle, or capacity building model, needs now to change.

Although there is an emerging interest, and volume of research in Canada, and ensuing programming, the area of fathering is largely under supported and demonstrates regional disparities. The “On Father’s Ground” study reviewed programs across Canada, and of “the 230 projects throughout Canada of which we had knowledge, we counted 61 whose primary objective was to promote and support paternal involvement”(Bolte, et. al., 2001, p.24). “The 61 projects were concentrated primarily in three provinces and, in linguistic terms, are spread equally among both official languages”(Bolte, et., al., 2001, p.24). Only 2% of projects were located in the prairies, namely one organization in Calgary, AB. that provides teen father workshops.

The longevity and funding of programs is also indicative of the lack of support for such programs. The study found that the “average lifespan of the projects was about three years (37.5 months), not a great length of time to begin activities and become known, [and effect long term impacts]. ...The average annual budget for all projects was \$13,000”(Bolte, C., et. al., 2001, p.24).

Part of our aim at Terra Association is to break the cycle of poverty, the cycle and recidivism of crime, low literacy, repeated unplanned teen pregnancies, and negative health outcomes. In the U.S. there appears to be greater recognition of the relationship between the changes being experienced in traditional family structures and other social issues.

“Nicholas Davidson has called the absence of biological fathers in their children’s lives ‘America’s greatest social catastrophe,’ and sees it as the root of crime, drug use and poverty (Davidson 1990; also see Blankenhorn 1996; Whitehead 1996). Even less alarmist commentators suggest that the institution of marriage must be strengthened if we are to avoid harmful consequences for children of nonresidential fatherhood (Furstenberg and Harris 1992)(Found In: Gupta, S., et. al., 2002, p.2).

Studies that explore the affects of father absence on child development outcomes appear to shed some light on these areas.

As the funding for this project comes from the National Crime Prevention Initiative, we and our stakeholders are particularly interested in better understanding the experience of young fathers in our area as it relates to delinquency, and what the literature indicates are some of the related variables of teen pregnancy that we should address in an effort to break the cycle of crime for future generations.

Another area that is worthy of exploration in the broader context of fathering is sex roles and expectations that are impacted by teen pregnancy. In working with young families it is useful for us to understand how father involvement is different than mother involvement, and what environmental issues barrier young fathers specifically from fulfilling these roles. Again research does explore this area as it relates to fathers in the broader context, and by comparing our own data on young fathers, perhaps we can gain a better understanding of those issues that barrier young fathers from having healthy involvement with their child(ren).

THE LITERATURE

The Benefits of Healthy Father Involvement

To The Child

The United States in comparison to Canada is considerably more advanced in its research and programming related to father involvement. One example of this is with their Head Start programs, of which we also have in Canada. While the number of such programs in the U.S. has been growing over the past few decades (Knitzer & Bernard, 1997; Palm, 1998), the evidence is clear that, at present, the vast majority of existing programs for parents tend to focus on mothers and their children (Carter, 1996)(Found In: Fagin, J., & Inglesias, A., 2002, p.244).

It is our observation that there is little acknowledgement in the Edmonton area to the benefits of father involvement as it relates to positive child development outcomes. Although there is a growing interest in the subject, (e.g. a research team from the University of Alberta are presently studying whether or not there are child development benefits to early intervention that supports fathers involvement) there are few in-home visitation programs in the area that actively facilitate father involvement as a part of their program design, goals and strategies. A limit to the above mentioned U. of A. studies applicability to many home visitation programs is that the fathers that are participants in the study, tend to already have a significant degree of child involvement, come from more socially and economically stable backgrounds than the at-risk families served by these intervention programs, and does not focus on young fathers in particular.

There are different research views with regards to what relationship exists between father's involvement with their child, and child development outcomes. In broad terms, there are

“...two opposing views researchers hold regarding fathers' effects on children. One view is that fathers are rather insignificant to children and make little difference in child outcomes beyond their economic contributions to the family (Crockett, Eggebeen, and Hawkins 1993; Hawkins and Eggebeen 1991). The opposing view argues that fathers have a substantial influence on several child outcomes. These researchers argue that although fathers spend significantly less time with their children than mothers (e.g. Aldous, Mulligan, and Bjarnason 1998; Hochschild 1989; Lennon and Rosenfield 1994; Paulson and Sputa 1996; Ruddick 1992), active fathering and a close father-child relationship are related to several positive child outcomes...”(Rude, Stacey P.,2000, pp. 2-3).

The research evidence is however, overwhelmingly in support of the latter view, and the strength of this research that supports the positive relationship between father involvement and child development outcomes continues to grow, as the following illustrates.

“Studies among low-income, urban, African-American families illustrate links between fathers' roles and their children's behavior and development. When fathers

are satisfied with parenting, contribute financially to the family, and are nurturant during play, their 3-year-old children have better cognitive and language competence and fewer behavior problems [5]. In one of the few longitudinal studies that followed the children of adolescent mothers into their own adolescence, youth who had a close relationship with their father were more likely to enter college or find stable employment after graduating from high school, less likely to have a child before age 19 years, and less likely to experience depressive symptoms[6].”(Gavin E., Loretta, et al., 2002, p.3).

Other research has discovered that fathers “are more likely than mothers to engage in physical play with their children (Pleck, 1997), and, in general, they do more to encourage exploratory behaviours, which help children adapt to the outside world (Lewis, 1997). (In: Bolte, C. et. al, 2001).

A father’s involvement promotes his children’s social, cognitive and emotional development (Turcotte, 1994). A warm father/child relationship helps a child develop his or her sexual identity with greater confidence (Levine, 1993). (In: Bolte, C. et. al, 2001).

Children of dedicated fathers have a better chance of being successful in school and of having a positive self-image (Amato, 1999) (In: Bolte, C. et. al, 2001). For example, children have shown higher mathematics readiness change scores and less behavior problems, in research on father involvement in Early Head Start programs in the U.S. (Fagin, J. & Iglesias, A., 2002). “Infants of highly involved fathers are more cognitively competent at 6 months and score higher on the Bayley Scales of Infant Development (Petersen, Rubinstein, & Yarrow, 1997; Pedersen, Anderson, & Kain, 1980). By one year, they continue to have higher cognitive functioning (Nugent, 1991), are better problem solvers as toddlers (Easterbrooks & Goldberg, 1984), and have higher IQ’s by age three” (Yogman, Kindlan, & Earls, 1995)(Found in: Allen & Daly, 2004, p. 194).

Children who have the social, emotional and material support of a father or father figure display fewer behavioural problems and symptoms of depression than those who do not (Turcotte, 1994). (In: Bolte, C. et. al, 2001) Father involvement also has a positive effect on children’s social confidence and abilities. For example, infants “whose fathers are involved in their care are more likely to be securely attached to them, (Cox, Owen, Henderson, and Margand, 1992), be better able to handle strange situations, be more resilient in the face of stressful situations (Kotelchuk, 1976; Parke and Swain, 1975), be more curious and eager to explore the environment, relate more maturely to strangers, react more competently to complex and novel stimuli, and be more trusting in branching out in their explorations” (Biller, 1993; Parke & Swain, 1975; Pruett, 1997) (Found in: Allen & Daly, 2004, p.195).

These benefits also positively impact emotional development, self confidence and self actualization, throughout the child’s development into adulthood, Here they are found to:

“demonstrate a greater tolerance for stress and frustration (Mischel, Shoda, & Peake, 1988), have superior problem solving and adaptive skills (Biller, 1993), be more playful, resourceful, skilful, and attentive when presented with a problem (Mischel et al., 1988), and are better able to manage their

emotions and impulses in an adaptive manner (Easterbrooks & Goldberg, 1990).... Young adults who had nurturing and available fathers while growing up are more likely to score high on measures of self acceptance and personal and social adjustment (Fish & Biller, 1973), see themselves as dependable, trusting, practical, and friendly (Biller, 1993), be more likely to succeed in their work, and be mentally healthy (Health & Health, 1991).” (Found in Allen & Daly, 2004, p.195).

Paternal commitment is a factor in prevention of child neglect and abuse (Dubowitz, 2000), and the nature and quality of a father’s interaction with his children counts for more than his mere physical availability (Palkowitz, 1997) (In: Bolte, C. et. al, 2001, p.13).

Healthy father involvement has also been found to have a number of protective factors in decreasing negative child development outcomes. These findings are of particular significance as they relate to behavioral problems in children, adolescent delinquency and future criminal involvement with the criminal justice system.

“Father involvement protects children from engaging in delinquent behavior (Harris et al, 1998), and is associated with less substance abuse among adolescents (Coombs & Landsverk, 1988), less delinquency (Zimmerman et al., 1995), less drug use, truancy, and stealing (Barnes, 1984), less drinking (Harris et al., 1998), and a lower frequency of externalizing and internalizing symptoms such as acting out, disruptive behaviour, depression, sadness and lying (Mosley & Thompson, 1995). Adolescents who strongly identified with their fathers were 80% less likely to have been in jail and 75% less likely to have become unwed parents (Furstenberg & Harris, 1993)” (Found in: Allen & Daly, 2004 p.196).

In contrast, children who have healthy relationships with their fathers develop a better understanding of appropriate social behaviors, and more self confidence in social relationships, skills transferable and required in the development of relationships with peers and friends (Coleman, 2002).

Of particular research interest in Canada should be how these protective factors are negatively impacted by father absence because of Child Welfare interventions and foster care breakdowns, adoption breakdowns, and environmental factors related to culture, demographics and social policy, that may barrier unwed fathers from fully actualizing and/or enacting their fathering role.

Most studies come from the U.S. and demonstrate there that father absence tends to have a number of negative implications for children’s cognitive, emotional and social development. For instance:

“Children who live without their fathers are, on average, more likely to choose deviant peers, have trouble getting along with other children, be at higher risk for peer problems (Mott et al., 1997), and be more aggressive (Horn & Sylvester, 2002)....

...Children who live without their fathers are, on average, at greater risk of being physically abused, or harmed by physical or emotional neglect (Selak & Broadhurst, 1996).

...Adolescents who live without their father are more likely to engage in greater and earlier sexual activity and are more likely to become pregnant (Miller & Moore, 1990; Metzler, Noell, Biglan, & Ary, 1994; US Department of Health and Human Services, 1988) (Found in: Allen & Daly, 2004, pp.197-198).

These factors are discussed further in this study in following sections and review of study statistics.

Benefits To The Father

Research clearly supports that healthy father involvement has benefits not only for the child, but also for the father himself, and the mother of the child. If we are concerned about the repercussions of father absence on other or indirectly related social problems/issues, such as crime, poverty and health, then it is important to explore findings that demonstrate the benefits of father involvement to those other than just the child. This is particularly true with teen or unwed fathers who are less likely to be involved with their children, as the frequency with which young, unwed fathers see their children and provide financial support declines rapidly over the years of a child's life. (Gavin, L., et. al, 2002).

Kerry Daly points out the well know fact that fathers still spend less time caring for their children than do mothers. Canadian statistics reflect that they spend 2/3 as much time and still work more hours in paid employment than mothers. They also do not yet take full benefit of available parental leave, at a rate of only 10%. Yet the men that do actively participate in family life report lower levels of distress and higher life satisfaction.¹

Dubeau points to the research that demonstrates the relationship between fathers involvement and their feelings of parental competence (Beitel & Parke, 1998; McBride, 1989). This is also mentioned in Daly's summary of the literature, where he expands on the benefits to fathers themselves, such that, fathers that are involved find parenting more satisfying (Owen, Chase-Lansdale & Lamb, 1982), feel more intrinsically important to their child (Lamb, 1987), and feel encouraged to be even more involved (DeLuccie, 1996).

Considering the decline in father involvement amongst young unwed fathers over time, and the relationship between father involvement and paternal satisfaction, policy makers should focus some attention on interventions that assist young fathers to address the many barriers and stresses that prevent involvement early in the pregnancy or infancy of their child. Interventions should support involvement that is positive and builds confidence and satisfaction amongst these men. One could

¹ University of Guelph, Campus News Press Release: "U of G at center of \$1.6-million father involvement project. December 03, 2003.

extrapolate that these out of life stage stresses negatively impact paternal satisfaction and compounds the lack of and declining involvement of these fathers over time. Daly points out that,

Fathers “who are involved in their children’s lives are more likely to exhibit greater psychosocial maturity (Pleck, 1997; Snarey, 1993), be more satisfied with their lives (Eggebean & Knoester, 2001), feel less psychological distress (Barrett, Marshall, & Pleck, 1992b; Gove & Mongione, 1983; Ozer, Barnett, Brennan, & Sperling, 1998), and be more able to understand themselves, empathically understand others, and integrate their feelings in an ongoing way (Heath, 1994). ...

Involved fathers report fewer accidental and premature deaths, less than average contact with the law, less substance abuse, fewer hospital admissions, and a greater sense of well being overall (Pleck, 1997). ...

Some evidence suggests that involved fathering is correlated with marital stability (Cowan & Cowan, 1992) and is associated with marital satisfaction in midlife (Heath & Heath, 1991; Snarey, 1993). (Found in: Daly E. & Allen, S., 2004, p.198).

The range of social, emotional, health, and community benefits the research supports should be of significant interest to a range of policy makers. The data of this study will help to focus on those public policy areas such as housing, child welfare, employment, crime prevention and addictions, that require more deliberate targeting of young fathers by policy makers, in order to actualize for children, fathers, families and communities, the obvious benefits associated with supporting father involvement.

Importance of a Healthy Mother-Father Relationship

Perhaps key to program interventions is the role of mother as gate-keeper, and the health of the father-mother relationship. “Psychological characteristics of the child’s caregivers and the nature of their relationships may influence a father’s involvement with his child. For example, mothers [can either support or inhibit] a father’s involvement with his child [20, 21, 22, 23]. One of the few studies that looked at adolescent parents... reported that fathers interact more positively with their infants when there is a high level of mother-father engagement [24](Gaven, L., et al, p.4, 2002). There are many variables that impact this interplay in mother-father relationship, such as support of the parents and broader family of the young couple, financial well-being, role expectations and role enactment, and how satisfied each partner is within the relationship. Although a healthy and mutually supportive relationship is positively correlated to father involvement, some researchers have concluded that marriage is the principal support system for parents (Daly, 2004).

“Some research indicates that there is a positive correlation between marital quality and the following: levels of father involvement in child care responsibilities (Bouchard & Lee, 2000; Harris & Morgan, 1991; McBride & Mills, 1993), the quality of the father-child relationship (Belsky & Volling, 1987; Cox, Owen, Lewis, & Henderson, 1989; Doherty et al., 1998; Feldman, Nash, & Aschenbrenner, 1983; Levy-Schiff & Israelaschivili,

1988), the father's satisfaction in his own paternal role, and his competence as a parent (Bouchard & Lee, 2000)" (Found in: Daly E. & Allen, S., 2004, p.199).

It makes sense that in a mutually supportive relationship that facilitates the role enactment of father involvement, that the child's mother would also reap benefits and that these benefits would positively support child development outcomes.

Benefits To The Mother

An obvious problem for teen parents is their low income earning potential. This is further compounded by a young father limited ability to contribute financially. Child custody patterns and the decreasing involvement of young fathers over time is a reality that policy makers should be cognoscente about. The focus of policy, increasingly so in Alberta over the past decade, with maintenance programs holding fathers more responsible for child support, places young fathers in a lose-lose position when it comes to supporting their involvement.

As this studies data demonstrates, young fathers have low levels of education, high unemployment, and a range of other life stage struggles that inhibits their ability to adequately provide financial support. The expectation of society and its laws, without counter balancing interventions that support young men to meet these expectations further antagonizes difficult relationship issues, only working against fathers confidence in role enactment. Although historically, research has focused on father involvement defined by narrow roles such as that of the provider, we now better understand that there are many other roles that fathers play in supporting both the mother and child that has positive child development outcomes.

With trends such as more women in the work force, higher unemployment amongst men, etc., there is also a shift at the societal level as father's roles become more egalitarian, and thus broaden in the areas of childcare, nurturing of children, assisting children with homework, and a number of other ways that supports the family. Therefore, policy directions need to shift to reflect that supporting young fathers in a variety of ways, also means supporting the mothers of these children.

Father's support of mothers has many benefits. When

"fathers are supportive and encouraging, mothers are more competent parents. They are more patient, flexible, emotionally responsive, sensitive, and available to their infants and young children (Belsky, 1981; Cowan & Cowan, 1987; Feiring & Lewis, 1978; Parke & Anderson, 1987; Snarey, 1993). This tends to enhance the quality of the mother-child relationship and thus facilitates positive developmental outcomes for their children (Lamb, 1997). ...

...When fathers are emotionally supportive of their spouses, wives are more likely to enjoy a greater sense of well being, good post partum mental health (Gjerdingen, Froberg, & Fontaine, 1991), and have a relatively problem free pregnancy, delivery process, and nursing experience, (Billler, 1993) (Found in: Daly E. & Allen, S., 2004, p.200-201).

The reality however is that becoming a father during ones teens is almost always unplanned and an unwanted event, not normally expected as part of ones process of growing up. This situation is not always conducive to young couples getting along in a manner that supports each others roles in parenting. Tension may exist between the couple. One parent may blame the other for the pregnancy, or the mother may not recognize his legal status as the father. In-laws may not support the father's involvement, feeling this is in the best interest of their daughter, and the father may be limited in asserting his involvement because of an insecure economic situation.(Dubeau, D. , in Transition Magazine, Vol 32, No.2, on The Vanier Institute of the Family's Website at www.vifamily.ca, p.13).

We are becoming more aware and concerned about the many structural changes that are occurring in families. The traditional family structure is increasingly being replaced by non traditional concepts of families, due to divorce, remarriage, teen pregnancy, different notions of adoption, emancipation of gay rights, etc. Central to the ongoing health of children's development however is better recognition of how these changes affect the fathering role.

“A father is more likely to make the choice to enact the father role in more efficacious ways when he perceives that his role is central and important relative to other role commitments, if the significant others in his world [mother of child, in-laws, friends, schools, community services, etc.] encourage the continuance of that role, if his father role is enmeshed with other identities (e.g. religion), and if he perceives that the rewards of continued enactment outweigh the costs”. (Day, R., p.3)

Clearly therefore the notion of fathering and particularly how to support father involvement amongst young unwed fathers, can not be explored in isolation of its impact on children, the nature and quality of the partner relationship, fathers support of the mother, and mothers support of father. Nor can we ignore the importance of extended family support, public policy impacting father involvement, and the strategies that community services develop to support young unwed parents.

Not only can we not ignore the notion of father involvement in isolation from the fathers relationship with others, but we must also explore the issue from many different contexts. The area of fathering research is extremely diverse, being explored from many different angles and from many different professional and scientific disciplines and sub-disciplines. Although the area of teen or young fathers is only one area of fathering studies, it is important not to ignore its commonalities within other contexts such as the broader study of the benefits of father involvement. There is also diversity amongst young fathers that could skew quantitative analysis of studies if not taken into consideration, such as the high percent of Aboriginal young fathers that participated in this study.

“There are a variety of contexts within which men enact the role of social fatherhood. These contexts are a mixture of structural, ethnic, gender, community, and life-course issues that direct his motivations and how he enacts the fathering role. One of the key questions that fatherhood scholars wish to know more about is why a man chooses (or does not choose) to participate in the biological creation of a child and, once the child is born, why he decides to continue his contact with the mother and child.

Further, why would he choose to continue (or not continue) that contact and invest in those relationships when the turbulence and trouble of family life arise.” (Day, R., p.1)

The following section will assist us to further explore the many variables impacting the young fathers who participated in this study, who they are (tomb stone demographics and social issues they face), the importance and state of inter-relationships between these fathers and others, and the various levels of systems related to their well-being.

CONTEXTUAL MODELS FOR DATA ANALYSIS

The purpose of this study is to answer particular questions about the circumstances under which young fathers in Edmonton are living, what problems they face, what strengths they possess that can be build upon to improve their situations, what needs they express having, and what types of service interventions would be most helpful and accepted by fathers. Ultimately we are concerned with supporting healthy family development and circumstances that are optimal for healthy child development.

Most qualitative studies take a much narrower approach to answer a specific hypothesis such as the relationship between how a father interacts with his child and cognitive benefits to the child. As discussed before, this population presents unique research challenges as they are difficult to engage in services, sample sizes are typically small, and non-response rates tend to be higher than with women. These sample size and response rate challenges are real for an agency like Terra Association, and we have highlighted the challenges experienced in accessing young fathers through other service organizations. This is particularly true in any community that has not yet made many gains in policy development and program initiatives that recognize the need to better engage fathers into existing programs.

For this reason the qualitative approach that has been taken with this study is believed to be far more informative. First, we are able to explore a range of issues and variables related to young fathers life circumstances and influencing their involvement with their children. A survey of young fathers in and of itself would however only present a snap shot of this picture. This is apparent if we compare the responses to the 1-to-1 survey with existing statistics collected from Terra Association clients, which shows some degree of variation. With a larger sample size, it is likely that there would be less variation between these comparisons.

For this reason, it is important to employ information from more than one source that helps to describe a clearer picture. In this study, we have included focus groups, 1-to-1 surveys, a literature review and an environmental scan that includes a key informant survey of service providers. Together, the compilation of this data is believed to be more informative and accurate in describing the needs of young fathers.

“Most studies on fathers’ care focus on activities traditionally associated with caregiving; feeding, dressing, changing diapers, bathing, reading,

laying and helping with school work (Starrels, 1994; Demo, 1992; Marsiglio, 1991). The care of children is described as a gendered activity in which caregiving expectations of mothers and fathers vary substantially. Most of the research includes a substantial discussion about father's financial participation and contributions to the material well-being of their children, thus placing other traditional forms of caring (e.g. feeding and bathing) in subordinate roles (Meyers and Garasky, 1993)(In: Davis, J., et al., 1996).

Needs assessment research however, does not typically take a narrow approach to looking at issues. Rather, it tends to take an approach that explores and helps, in this case, to understand the private troubles as well as the public issues of young fathers. How to analyse data from such studies then presents a particular challenge. For this reason we require a conceptual model that looks at the interrelationship between particular demographic information (who these fathers are and what characteristics they share), the social and economic context with which they live (relationship with immediate and extended family, relationship with mother of their child, involvement with employment, school, social services, etc.) and the broader social environment and its various complexities. In this case we look at young fathers living in Edmonton, what resources are available that support their needs, what policies influence family individual services, and the value context that exists in this community that supports or undermines these policies.

This study confers with the view of Diane Dubeau, the author of "Status Of The Research On Fatherhood In Canada" and several other authors, (Bolte, C., et. al., 2001; Marsiglio, et. al., 2000) that the 'ecological systemic model' is useful in understanding and conceptualizing both from a private troubles and public issue perspective, the needs of young fathers.

"The ecological model developed by Bronfenbrenner et al. (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner & Crouter, 1983; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998) has the ability to not only take into account a group of factors linked to a studied phenomenon, but also the interrelation that exists between those factors. According to this approach, it is conceptually possible to take individual components into account as well as social, cultural, economic and temporal characteristics. ...

...The model stipulates that the relationships experienced within one of these systems have an impact and are influenced by the relationships developed in other systems. Put in a context of prevention or promotion of the child's and his family's well being, the ecological model suggests taking into account the father's various life environments, as well as their levels of mutual influence. This would allow for the eventual development of measures aimed at insuring the child's optimal development, the parent's well-being, and a more harmonious family"(Dubeau, D., 2001, p. 14).

A second conceptual model we will utilize, is a 'Population Health' approach. Essentially, this model looks at the relationship between a populations social-economic indicators/characteristics and health outcomes. This comparison will assist us to measure the sub-grouping of young fathers in relation to how much at risk they are of poor health outcomes and therefore how they fare as a group deserving of program interventions and policy responses.

Both of these conceptual models hold credibility within the human services sector in the Edmonton region. Many family visitation, and early intervention programs are modeled from a population health perspective, i.e. 'Health for Two' and there is recognition that a broad perspective to issues like employment, have to look at a number of variables related to youth unemployment, as evidenced in the 'Edmonton Region Plan For Coordination of Youth Services, (E.R.P.C.Y.S.) 2004-2007, commissioned by the Edmonton Youth Community Engagement Steering Committee.

'Throughout the research undertaken for the Edmonton Region Plan for Coordination of Youth Services, 2004-2007, the fact that the issues impacting youth employment in Edmonton were interconnected became increasingly evident (R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd., 2004, p.i). ...

...there is the desire among stakeholders to see the continuation of a coordinating body, in some form, working to improve coordination and information sharing. As evidenced in the research findings, the issues impacting youth employment in Edmonton are inter-connected, and involve a continuum of need" (R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd., 2004, p.50).

For the purpose of categorizing questions into similar groupings within the 1-to-1 questionnaires, in order to present an organized flow, the questions were ordered under the following headings: Demographics, Relationships, Level and Perceptions of Family Involvement, Strengths and Natural Supports, Types of Services They Would Use, Service User History and Experience.

Bolte et.al., refers to the use of the conceptual model in this context as 'The Ecology Of Fathering'. The report, 'On Father's Ground' explains that,

The "ecological approach states that human development is the result of peoples' interactions with their environments. In the context of fathering, this means that paternal involvement is influenced by a man's individual characteristics (such as temperament or education) and by the environment in which he lives (for instance, a father living in poverty will not have the same opportunities with respect to aterial resources and information as a father who is better off). However, the ecological model also states that taken individually, these factors cannot in and of themselves determine how people will develop and assume various roles.

The ecological model can be made use of from two points of view: analysis and intervention. The multi-faceted view provided by ecological analysis facilitates an overall understanding of fathers' situations." (Bolte,et.al., 2001, p.15)

The ecological model has 6 interrelated systems that should be considered simultaneously and help to view young fathers issues from the narrower private troubles perspective and the broader public issues perspective. These systems are as follows:

The Ontosystem: this system describes a young fathers individual characteristics including his past and present experiences related to family, upbringing, and areas such as educational attainment.

The Microsystem includes the characteristics of the various environments of a young father, such as family characteristics, work situation, child welfare involvement, or schooling system involved with.

The Mesosystem compares the relationships between the Microsystems and how compatible and complementary they are to each other.

The Exosystem: this system represents the administrative and political environments that are related and influencing the father's development.

The Chronosystem deals with the influences on roles, such as life stages, and the contexts of a young fathers age that impact his role enactment or lack there of.

This study is primarily concerned with the Ontosystem, microsystem and mesosystems, but will also touch on how some of the broader systems may or may not be coherent or compatible with these other systems in the Edmonton area and what changes are required.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

From An Ecological Perspective

Within the ecological and socio-economic indicators of health models, this study will take data from four different collection sources, analyzing the findings within the above mentioned categories. To reference the raw data, refer to appendix 1 to review results from the 1-to-1 Surveys; appendix 2 to reference 2003 Program Statistics for Terra Association; appendix 3 for Focus Group responses; and appendix 4 to reference the Key Informant responses.

The Ontosystem

The Ontosystem is concerned primarily with the young father's individual characteristics, his past and present experiences as well as his present assets and strengths.

- The mean age of 2003 clients using Young Dads' Outreach Services, and those who participated in this survey, was between 22 and 23 years of age, and thus, a few and sometimes several years older than the pregnant and parenting teen mothers that utilize Terra's Services.

Education & Employment

- Young fathers have a very low level of education.

- Only 25% of young fathers served by Terra Association in 2003 had any high school education, compared to 1/3 in this study who did not have any high school education.
- Young fathers experience a great deal of stress, frustration and poverty as a result of their low levels of education and literacy.
- They are more inclined to emphasize finding employment than going back to school as an option. Key informant and focus group responses suggest that school systems are not flexible enough to address the needs of young fathers (they are not father friendly).

As one service provider commented, “we are more employment focused – however family and parenting issues often affect the ability to maintain employment”. Another reflected that “there is no education/training of staff in the field re: the realities these men face. Services need to become more user friendly to men/fathers (housing, training/employment programs that provide child care, food bank outlets).

When asked what struggles they were presently experiencing, one father shared that the “school wanted him to attend but Student Finance Board rejected me because I have a diagnosis of FASD [Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder]. Another commented on the lack of financial support to attend school and when it is available it is difficult to get by on. Others, when asked about their perception of Terra Associations support, although overall it was considered positive, also noted that they do not have a school option like young mothers have through Braemar School, and that they are forbidden to go to Braemar/be on the schools premises.

- The range of private troubles facing young fathers, such as low education, bad and/or unsuccessful educational experiences, and immediate crisis caused by poverty such as unstable housing/shelter, lack of income, food insecurity, meeting other basic needs, are likely the underlying reasons for these young fathers viewing barriers to finding employment being a higher priority need area than education.
- Although education is listed as a need area, it appears less accessible as a strategy or option for dealing with immediate income needs.
- Because of the strong perception still held within society that father involvement equates mainly to financial support, we may then infer that the low levels of education and high barriers to employment compound the uncertainty around becoming a father when it was unplanned, and occurring at a life stage where they are unable to fulfill the traditional fathering role.

The provider role in relation to the life stage issues of being unprepared for this role, likely related highly to creating greater uncertainty for young fathers around the issues of role enactment. This incongruity between societal norms and role enactment that young fathers struggle with, and the lack of support they receive around this, likely contribute towards the low levels of father involvement amongst young fathers.

Young fathers expressed this during the focus groups when asked what their reactions were to finding out they were going to become a father. Although most were overwhelmingly excited about becoming a father, they expressed tremendous stress of the prospect or new experience they now find themselves in.

“Life changes-more responsibilities”... “life got more hectic as the time of baby drew near”... “nervous everyday thinking about more things and how life was going to change”... “financially, I didn’t know if I could provide for my son”... “stress as a father and as a provider”... “Security over money”

- Although employment is expressed as a high need amongst young fathers, they experienced little employment success as demonstrated by their sources of income. Only 1/3 of those surveyed were employed and of the 16 clients served during the first 6 months of 2004, 8 reported needing employment preparation and 7 reported requiring job search skills. Twelve out of 17 clients that responded to this data collection area in 2003, reported having annual incomes less than \$15,000.

Shelter/Accommodations

- Without employment and stable income it is difficult to afford accommodation, just as by not having a fixed address and not being readily accessible barriers finding employment.
- Twelve out of 37 clients (@33%), in 2003 reported having no fixed address at the time of intake. Although this number was less amongst those surveyed for this study, housing as a major “private trouble” and “public issue” was reinforced by other related findings. Transiency or lack of housing stability remained high between both sources of data, with only 1 not reporting a change of residency in the past 3 years. 3 moved once, 4 moved twice, 2 moved three times, 1 moved 6 times, and 2 reported moving more than a dozen times in the past year.
- From both data sources, it was noted that a significant number of individuals (just under 50%) lived in Central Edmonton, while the rest were scattered through different city areas, but all in low income housing pockets of these areas.

Substance Abuse

- In 2003, 7 individuals at the time of intake reported that Alcohol Abuse was an issue they were dealing with. Of the 13 respondents to the survey, 7 reported that Addictions had been an issue in the past 5 years but only 1 reported this as a continued issue. Denial and readiness for change issues need to be factored into this substantial decrease in substance abuse after becoming a father, but both the focus group discussions and survey responses demonstrated that these young fathers saw their substance abuse behaviors not being congruent with the role of a father.

“Our fathers were not in the picture so I wanted to be a role model as a dad for my child”... “keep them away from the negative. Try to let them see the positive as much as possible”... “[my] family is not always sober so I don’t want to have my child around them”... “Friends want you to be the “Old You” temptations or drugs and/or alcohol”... “you can be the best role model you can be but you’re not perfect. You may smoke or do other things that may influence your child and that is not always good”

- Research results also demonstrated that becoming a father was a major impetus for change when it came to substance abuse life style issues. Although 1/3 of fathers served in 2003 were not living with the mother of their child, being involved with their child was a major motivator for change. Two fathers who were in focus group discussions described that their substance abuse was severe enough at the time of pregnancy and birth that they were not fit to father. But becoming a father, wanting to be involved with their child and realizing that the mother of their child was also struggling with addictions issues, was a major impetus for change.

These young men described how they were putting their lives back together in order to be able to have a meaningful relationship with their child. This appears to be supported by the responses in the questionnaires that demonstrate substance abuse moving from a major to a less significant barrier to father involvement over time. Focus group discussion also made clear that readiness for change is a key factor in recovery, but that this life changing event was significant enough to create readiness for change. This change process however was described as needing to occur in relation to educational and employment changes, which require 2-3 years duration of support.

Mental Health

Mental health has not been well defined in our study, yet data sheds light on specific areas, and demonstrates that at the time of intake during the 2003 year period, mental health was a significant area of concern. 9 clients reported depression at the time of intake, 10 clients reported family conflict, grief, separation, and loss being reasons for requesting service and 6 reported emotional abuse being a factor requiring a service response. Certainly if we look at the life circumstances under which these youth live, and at a very stressful time in their lives, it is not surprising that they report being in crisis and feeling distress.

Two fathers talked about how their own mental health status impacted their situation as a single parent, and how the lack of support and increased demand of being a single parent affects the management of their mental health.

“Being a single dad is stressful, more responsibilities, there’s no help”... Single dads need a break sometimes”... “As a dad with Mental Health issues, I needed a doctor’s note for SFI which cost money I didn’t have, but without it I would not be accepted”.... “Health is a concern because there are no supports for that”... “if you have a disability, there is nothing out there”.

- Specific mental health conditions experienced to date include depression, personality disorders, Alcohol Related Birth Defects and depression. Terra Association has had reasonable success in supporting young fathers (including single parent fathers) with mental health concerns. Research results however, demonstrates how they feel of isolated, misunderstood and unsupported, by various systems, including friends, family and services.

At Risk Behaviors

- There is a high incidence of substance abuse amongst these young men.
- In the first 6 months of 2004, 6 of 16 clients reported at the time of intake having Street Involved Peer Groups. 5 of 16 of these same individuals reported exposure to unsafe situations, things or people.
- Of the 26 fathers who participated in the survey, 12 reported having criminal records. Of those 12, 9 were under the age of 24. Therefore about 70 % of young fathers have criminal records, the vast majority being assault related charges. It is unclear how many of these may be family violence related.

These findings are consistent with the literature that affirms that young fathers are more likely to have criminal records, experience increased delinquency after becoming a father, and that their children are also more likely to experience conflict with the law. This is further supported by our own data that shows that these young fathers with high incidents of having criminal records also report low levels of father involvement growing up.

Health

- Health services were listed as amongst the most helpful services received by these young fathers. There was a moderate level of health needs reported in the agency statistics and survey findings, and the environmental scan demonstrated that there is sufficient health related services available to this population. A gap however appears between available services and young fathers knowledge of those services.

Culture/Ethnicity

- Of the 37 clients served in 2003, 40% reported being caucasian, 50.6% reported being of Aboriginal or Metis decent or Treaty Status. 8.1% reported being East Indian, Ecuadorian, or other. All of the participants of the survey were born in Canada. Similarly, over 50% of survey respondents were of Aboriginal descent.
- Of the 16 fathers who were served by Terra Association in the first 6 months of 2004, 6 reported at the time of intake that they were experiencing "Cultural Identity Issues".
- Cultural programming needs were also expressed in the survey results.
- The literature review showed that even though there is substantial research in the U.S. on young Latino and Afro-American fathers, there is little research to be found on American or Canadian Aboriginal young fathers.

Fathering Status

- Out of the 13 survey respondents, 4 had not yet had their expectant children. This demonstrates a strong will amongst expectant fathers to seek help before the birth of their child. This also suggests a great opportunity for early intervention to support father involvement amongst young men.
- One half of fathers also reported not living with the mother of their children, suggesting a strong need for role clarification, goal setting and role enactment strategies to be developed to facilitate father involvement.

- Findings suggest that there is a lot of opportunity to support father involvement through role and relationship clarification support, couple counseling, building capacity of support systems involved such as immediate and extended family. The fact that men are seeking help prior to the birth of their child and also obtaining help regardless of being a resident or non resident father, affirms tremendous opportunity to support young fathers to be involved with their children.
- The literature review and our statistics demonstrates that father involvement amongst young fathers decreases over time. This suggests that we must monopolize the opportunity provided to support early intervention with young families.
- Family conflict was most often reported as the reason for service, in the first 6 months of 2004. The survey suggests that early intervention to assist fathers and mothers to negotiate their relationships, clarify roles and assess issues, would be well received by these young fathers. Ten of 13 fathers said that counseling would have helped them deal with relationship issues with the child's mother when they learned of the pregnancy. Twelve out of 13 fathers responded that they would be willing to attend support groups with other young fathers.

Family of Origin Issues

- Only 1/3 of survey respondents reported that their own natural fathers were the most prominent father figures while growing up. 25% report having had no father figure. The remaining number of respondents had extended family members or significant others in the community listed as prominent father figures. The issue of role models arose several times during the focus group discussions.

“Our fathers were not in the picture so I wanted to be a role model as a dad for my child”... “I didn't have a dad, I wanted to do better than my dad”... “Children learn what they live”... “[we] need more cultural support – Aboriginal workers or Elders”... “We need elders to give youth direction”... [we need] mentorship from experienced fathers to new fathers”... Children have no role models in their lives”... “t.v.'s take the role of parents”...

- Of 13 respondents to the survey, 8 reported having been in the care of child welfare services when growing up.
- Although the majority of young fathers grew up being at some time in the care of child welfare authorities, few would report overall whether this was a positive or negative experience. Of the five who did, 3 said the experience was positive and 2 said it was negative, and 3 said it was both positive and negative. However, when asked to describe the experience, all 5 descriptions were negative in nature and no one described positive experiences.

One respondent summed up his experience with child welfare by saying “Child welfare – huge struggle having a record with Child Welfare is worse than having a criminal record”...

Although the sample size is small, we can infer a strong relationship exists between having been in the care of child welfare authorities growing up and becoming a young father. There however appears to be ambivalence around ones feelings of this experience, and one has to question what bench marks of comparisons these young people have when they also report growing up in unstable families, lacking father involvement and positive role models.

Self Image

- Although the young fathers were forthright in describing their struggles as parents or expectant parents, they still reported a high level of confidence in their ability to be a good father (an average of 4 on a scale of 5).
- When asked what their greatest strength was as a person, 3 replied traditional characteristics, like money management, having a job, etc. 5 listed intrinsic types of qualities like kindness, loving someone, being sober or being spiritual. Interestingly though, 10 reported extrinsic types of qualities, like being resourceful, living life to the fullest, being outgoing, being goal focused, being persistent or speaking my mind.
- When asked what their greatest strength as a father was, 4 said they didn't know, 9 described intrinsic and nurturing and relationship based strengths, and 6 described extrinsic and role based strengths.
- The role versus relationship view of self is more equal than in the general father population. This says two things: 1) young fathers do want to be involved with their children than perceptions of the dead beat dad and statistics relating to involvement may suggest. Secondly, when they are unable to play a more traditional fathering role such as providing financially for their child, they see value in playing a more nurturing role as a parent.
- Although some ambivalence pertaining to self image as a person and father may be attributed to a high incidence of non resident fatherhood, there appears to be a strong desire and confidence level in being able to be a healthy and involved father.
- This same degree of optimism is discovered amongst young fathers when they were asked what the most positive assets in their lives were. Overwhelmingly, these young fathers look at the quality of their relationships, what's important to them (such as significant others, like their children, partners, friends and family) and their overall social well being (employment, music, sobriety, intelligence, security/safety, safe housing, etc.) They placed a heavy emphasis on overall social, mental, cultural and physical well being versus material measures of success and well being.

Microsystem

The microsystem is the most commonly studied ecosystem level within the Canadian research community, as Dubeau discovered. She states that "given that the father is identified as the ecological model's central element, his microsystem is essentially represented by the life environment that is the family. And so we explore those findings that help us to better understand the life environment of the family as it relates to young fathers" (Dubeau, 1999, p.15).

The microsystem describes separately the characteristics of these different environments, including family, work, school, friends, etc.

Family System

Spousal Support

- The literature review demonstrated that the evidence supporting spousal support as an important variable in encouraging father involvement. Spousal support increases paternal self confidence and acts as a protective barrier to the father-child relationship, when the father has had negative childhood experiences of his own.
- 5 of the fathers in the survey reported that they were living with the mother of their child where 6 reported their relationship status as being single. Whether living with the mother of their child or not, on average, young fathers reported having been involved with these moms for 2 years.
- Almost 100% of fathers surveyed stated that they felt counseling would have helped them to clarify their relationship with the mother of their child when they learned about the pregnancy.
- When these fathers were asked to state their strengths as fathers, more intrinsic qualities than extrinsic qualities were expressed suggesting greater spousal emotional support and help with child care activities.

One father stated that “Understanding, I had to be more attentive to my baby, my partner and self needs”...

- Fathers reported stresses and interference from family members in being able to be a supportive partner.

“my family was not supportive they even denied the baby was mine”... “I had to abandon my family to stay with my wife and child-a tough decision”... My girlfriends mom hated me for a year – I wasn’t able to call my girlfriend or have contact until she had our baby”... “The mother-in-law always tried to get into our business and that caused problems”... “my mother-in-law wanted our child raised in a traditional way”... my girlfriends mom made it hard for me to be part of the pregnancy”... “my family started saying bad things to my partner”... “family does not want to take care of the child”... “my family is not always sober so I don’t want to have my child around them and the alcohol and they don’t give me the breaks when I need the breaks”.

- These fathers appear to rarely garner support for their involvement with their child from anywhere else other than their partner, suggesting a need for early intervention at the microsystem level to strengthen spousal and family support. The need for such intervention to support family involvement comes from the high number of individuals reporting having immediate and extended family contact, 11 of 13 and 10 of 13 respectively. But only ½ see these contact as being supportive.

Father Support Of Their Child's Mother

- Along traditional definitions of support, fathers have little success in being able to enact the role of financial provider.
- Although the young fathers do appear to want to provide financial support and when they are unable, do appear to provide non tradition forms of support, there is little recognition of this within the research literature or from key informant responses.
- Young fathers participating in the survey and focus group discussions reported that parenting skill enhancement would be a support service they would use. They also expressed a desire to be involved in prenatal classes with their partners.
- The children of these fathers averaged 2.3 years of age and ranged from being 2 months old to 4 years of age. Four fathers reported that their children were not yet born, and by asking for support, these men appeared concerned about their role as fathers and partners. These findings support an early intervention response to assist young fathers in discovering how they can be supportive of their child's mother and in this way influence positive child development outcomes by removing the wedge that separates fathers from the child and mother.
- And although 10 of 16 clients served by Terra Association in the first 6 months of 2004, reported relationship problems being a cause for needing services, still 6 out of 13 respondents to the survey reported that the main asset in their life was their partner.

Family, Friends, Referral Sources

Of the 19 clients data was collected on during 2003, 7 reported that they were referred to Terra Association by other service providers and 12 individuals were referred from natural support systems, such as family, friends, partners, etc. And thus we know that these Microsystems are part of fathers lives. The question is are they equipped to support these fathers.

- Previous statistics already demonstrate that immediate and extended family, although involved, are not viewed by the young father as always being helpful or compatible to the fathers reality.
- We also know that there is a high degree of street peer affiliation with these fathers, (6 reported this at the time of intake during first 6 months of 2004, n=16) indicating that friends are seldom a great source of support, except as it relates to survival skills, i.e. couch surfing, illegal forms of earning money, etc.
- During focus group discussions, young fathers also reported losing contact with many of their peers once their children were born. They needed to change but realized that those around them were less flexible to his new reality.

“friends changed because I wasn't doing the stuff they were doing still”... “we as dads became boring to our friends as we had responsibilities”... “my house doesn't look like a rec. center any more as I chose a different lifestyle”... “because of

change no on [friends] do not come anymore"... "we do not talk to our old friends"... "friends want you to be the same person"...

- Although youth are reaching out for help and other services are making referrals to our Young Dad's Outreach Program, referral sources themselves express feeling ill equipped to deal with young fathers needs as key informant responses illustrate.

When key informants were asked what reasons and barriers exist for their agency to better serve the specific needs of young fathers, and whether there are adequate services for young fathers, and if not, what kinds of initiatives are required... they responded as follows:

"don't work enough with this specific population to offer insight"... "Staffing capacity and possibly training. Lack of resources (shelters, housing for fathers). Child care with low parent portion fees. Respite care/mentor families to allow fathers a break"... "Lack of resources for young dads. Male workers for dads. Space with agency. Funding. A place where they can go to be recognized as a young dad and feel good about being a young dad"... "No education/training of staff in the field: re the realities these men face. Services need to become more user friendly to men/fathers (housing, training/employment programs that provide child care, food bank outlets)"... "We work with the moms- we need to focus more on the dads. Tools to help us engage fathers. A male home visitor that accompanies the female family visitors when a father is involved. It is a women dominated field- the field itself carries the stereotype, i.e. 'women are the ones caring'. Be more aware of what the dads need."

- Human services organizations appear to recognize the gap between how fathers versus mothers are being served and that this situation poses public policy issues, but are not yet well informed of how to intervene, what the benefits of involving fathers are to their children, and how to bridge these gaps in ways that reflect the specific needs of young fathers.

Basic Service Environments

- There is a range of short-term crisis related services available to the public in Edmonton for a narrow range of needs. It appears that the service environment that is in place to address basic needs for food and clothing in the non-profit sector are organized, coordinated and well equipped to address these needs for young fathers. Some provisions also exist for furniture and household goods.

Long Term Service Environments

- The same can't be said about long-term service providers. The long-term service providers most relevant and involved with young fathers include the pre employment, life-skills and employment training and educational sectors, including student finance, SFI/Alberta Works, and Terra Association, etc. Although there are services available, both young fathers and these service providers recognize the limited capacity of responding to the long-term employment and educational needs of young fathers. In fact, there are no

such services that specifically target young fathers and their unique needs. Young fathers describe this relationship with frustration.

“Nobody cuts too much slack for fathers, however mothers are always being helped”... “as a father you would need to have three part time jobs to support a family – fathers are always dead on their feet”... “you have to be a survivor as a father because no one is looking out for them out there”... “offer first aid courses, child care is an issue, to help young dads get employment”... “transportation is a major concern as well”... “day care – they want a piece of your cheque”... “Single fathers versus single mothers – opportunities are there for moms; however, to dads they tell us to find it”... “We need skills, certificate of skills, access to a computer or fax”... “Change the systems in how it works – think more socially”... “cheaper daycare”

Although Terra Association provides meaningful, effective services, for the long-term, young fathers do not report a change in need status in these areas.

Employment Sector/Environment

There appears to be recognition in the employment sectors and their partner human service organizations, that the system is not working for all youth. Although there are more than 25 employment related organization providing services to youth and young adults in the Edmonton area, these services lack resources, experience and funding parameters to adequately address the needs of young fathers, which includes high-risk youth.

This view is widely accepted and supported as reflected in the Edmonton Region Plan For Coordination of Youth Services, 2004-2007. In the review they highlight the need to recognize the range of socio-economic variables impacting youth employment and to develop coordinated and systemic strategies for better addressing the specific needs of particular youth populations.

We believe that this study on young fathers by Terra Association can provide significant information that can better inform that process and provide the impetus to begin initiatives that are comprehensive, and employ the ingredients required to sustain successful changes. Please refer to the **“Dads Make A Difference Too! – Environmental Scan Of Services For Young Fathers In The Edmonton Area”, 2004 Report.**

Alberta Works

Unlike some of the other government systems, Alberta Works does not appear to be a part of any systemic strategies to address the underlying problems that at risk pregnant or parenting youth face. Of particular concern are those youth who are in transition. Of key importance when attempting to encourage father involvement to facilitate positive child development outcomes, is to mitigate issues that force families to separate.

When these young people learn that they are to become parents, their lives are forced into major transition that is not congruent with normal life stage events. Those

around them may not support them being together, as was reflected in the family, friends, referral sources section above, creating crisis in their relationship. On the one hand they need to work out the status of their relationship, but on the other hand as previous data illustrates, the various microsystem environments may not be supportive of them moving towards any relationship clarification that results in living together. A lack of policy recognition relating to youth income security, makes role clarification difficult and does not assist in facilitating father involvement.

As previously mentioned, there appears to be tremendous opportunity with these youth to intervene early in this transition period. The research has also shown us that those fathers who are not living with their children, have increasingly less involvement over time.

- There are no obvious crisis programs through Alberta Works to assist these youth in transition.
- Support workers report a lack of program resources to assist them in addressing the financial crisis of these youth, and facilitating relationship clarification, and mitigating those situations that increasingly force apart fathers from having involvement with the mother of their child and the child.
- A gate-keeping policy in being eligible for income support appears to be the mans' employability status. If he is viewed to be employable, he is often referred to a single mens shelter and the female is forced to apply as a single parent. If the child is not yet born, they are not viewed as a family, but as individuals required to apply separately for services.
- As the research illustrates, there are tremendous barriers to employment and schooling for these young men. Not supporting this transitional reality and not supporting a situation where relationship clarification can take place, can only serve to increase the recidivism of crime.
- Terra Association lacks a strong working relationship with Alberta Works to help facilitate them working together with other government programs and systems to address the underlying socio-economic issues related to single parenting, crime prevention, poor health outcomes, poor child development outcomes, and health of families.
- The lack of a crisis provision for these couples, forces them to seek other income support programs such as Student Finance or Employment Training Allowances. Although these are longer-term options for these fathers, the programs have yet to be structured in a manner that addresses the immediate and specifically unique issues related to young fathers, resulting in increasing employability, achieving higher educational outcomes, and decreasing poverty and its related consequences. Our research shows that in general these outcomes are not being achieved.
- Terra Association collects longitudinal data relating to the degree and frequency of needs that clients are experiencing. Our statistics show that we have success in lowering, from the youths perception, the need severity in areas like addictions, income security, food security, shelter, etc. in the short term, but not so much in the long-term.

Essentially, over time our involvement with these fathers helps them to feel supported, access emergency services (to a limited extent) and increase an overall sense of well-being.

We however are not successful in intervening early to prevent relationship breakdown, and achieving longer term positive outcomes in decreasing the level of poverty (level of personal income) over time, preventing decreasing father involvement, and decreasing the severity of need in the areas of employment and education.

- Because of a lack of recognition of the need and opportunity to provide income support during this initial period of transition for young families, there is a programming gap that forces these couples apart, increasing relationship stress, and compounding the difficulty for community support services with linking resources for their clients, that mitigates decreasing father involvement.
- There is a jurisdictional gap that forces young families apart and a lack of system coordination to address this gap. Alberta Works does not appear at this time to be a major player in addressing the systemic causes that have long-term negative implications for men, women and their children.
- For those men served by Terra Association during 2003, four were receiving Supports For Independence at the time of intake.
- Not having a stable place of residence of course makes most of these youth ineligible for income support. Not being eligible for service in turn makes it difficult for them to secure residency. Of the 37 men served during 2003, 12 had no fixed address at the time of intake. A lack of emergency housing resources for young couples and income security programs targeting this issue to support this transitional period, results in men seeking services from single men's shelters or 'couch surfing' amongst street involved peers. This gap in services forces families apart and perpetuates crime.
- The frustration of youth attempting to negotiate their needs in this environment was articulated by one youth in the focus group discussions when the group was asked what situations made it difficult for them to be a part of the pregnancy and what problems they now face as fathers.

"my partner was kicked off SFI because I didn't have I.D."... "to much red tape and trying to get through the process"... "Family support is an issue in that they are very limited to dads... they provide maintenance to moms but not for dads"...

Many youth stated that the lack of financial support, transportation costs, difficulty in negotiating systems, and the overall absence of support were major barriers to being a support to their partner during the pregnancy and later coping as a father.

Schooling

"Braemar School – as a dad I feel out of place, as I did not belong. It should be more father friendly. They need to have some fathers there. As a father you feel very intrusive."

The average grade level of education that young fathers report is astoundingly low. As previously mentioned only 25% of fathers served by Terra Association in 2003 had any high school education. There was a lot of discussion about the school systems amongst stakeholders at a focus group that the researcher attended as part of the **Edmonton Region Plan For Coordination Of Youth Services, 2004-2007**, sponsored by the Edmonton Youth Community Engagement Steering Committee.

Various agency representatives discussed the issue of school drop out rates and problems youth experience in mainstream systems. There was a general consensus that schools were ill equipped to address various learning and social related barriers of students, and generally did not see it as their mandate to do so. Participants of the focus group felt that the view of main-stream school systems is that it is the responsibility of alternative school programs and community services to address the struggles that youth experience that results in their failure to succeed in mainstream programs.

Because the majority of participants at this focus group shared this view and acknowledged that the broader community services, life skills and employment services and alternative school programs are not successful in addressing all of the needs, that there exists significant gaps in options available to groups of at-risk youth.

From an ecological perspective, the Microsystems that characterizes the education and employment sectors, lack resources to respond to the needs of young fathers, including a lack of public awareness of their issues as a population group, knowledge about how to engage them in services, and policies to respond to the need for strategies to develop program responses. Regardless of the reasons, as one study cited in the plan concludes, the bottom line is “the earlier that youth leave the educational system, the less likely they are to succeed in the labour market” (Edmonton Youth Community Steering Committee, Final Report, 2004, p.21).

Mesosystem

The mesosystem represents the degree to which the relationships between these environments are compatible and complement each other. There is very little data or research on this subject, particularly for young fathers. The focus group discussion however does demonstrate that these young fathers do experience stress in finding any balance in these areas, particularly as it relates to schooling, work, family (as already illustrated above) and service providers, particularly those providing child welfare services or income support services.

The environmental scan document also clearly demonstrates that there is very little compatibility between these systems and they do not complement each other. If the Microsystems mentioned above are characterized by elements that do not support young fathers, then it is clear that it will be frustrating for young fathers to attempt to interact with these Microsystems to meet their needs.

So far we have looked at the research compiled for this study and studied them from two subsystems, the Ontosystem and the Microsystem. This has provided missing information about the private troubles that young father face and has allowed us to characterize those problems into a number of demographic and trend related descriptions. Doing this helps us to gain a clearer understanding of the life situations that young fathers find themselves in and how this impacts upon their ability to be successful and engaged parents. Clearly the research shows us then that the incidence of young father hood and the private troubles they face are significant enough to constitute a public problem.

This data collection and conceptualization of the data had also provided a clearer picture of those other systems or environments that young fathers are most involved with and specific characteristics of those environments. The Mesosystem is the next step in a conceptual model of understanding the relationship between these different environments/systems and how their compatibility either complement or frustrate the well-being of the microsystem that encompasses the fathers immediate situation, being himself, partner and child.

The broader we explore the layers that make up the ecological environment as it relates to fathers, the less we are able to infer about the complexity and content of specific system areas and layers. Considering the state of research in Canada as it relates to fathering and young fathers in particular, it will take a great deal more research to understand this complexity than what we can be inferred from this study.

This study however does provide new insights into the realities facing young fathers in the Edmonton area. Considering that the research evidence strongly supports the benefits of father involvement contributing towards positive child development outcomes, and learning that the young fathers that participated in this study demonstrate great desire to be involved with their children in a healthy, positive and long-term manner, the findings of this research should help to dispel widely held beliefs that young fathers are irresponsible, unmotivated men preying on the vulnerabilities of young women. It should help to dispel the notion that young fathers are “dead beat dads” and serve to create greater awareness of their private troubles that discourages their involvement with their children, resulting in relationship and family breakdowns, and feeding the cycle of poverty and crime amongst young men, problems that are then passed on to the next generation. This cycle is obvious when we realize that these young fathers come from broken homes, lack role models and grew up themselves in poverty.

With this new gained knowledge we can then see how young fathers Microsystems (school, employment, extended family, peers, etc.) are ill equipped to respond to their needs. Therefore from an ecological perspective we can conclude that the mesosystem of this public issue is also unhealthy. This is reflected by how differently services view and serve families and develop strategies to improve child development outcomes in Canada as compared to other western countries like the United Kingdom and United States.

For example, the numerous home visitation programs operating in Alberta that seek to positively influence child development outcomes for at-risk families, view the mother as their primary client. There is little in these program models that acknowledge the important role that fathers play in contributing towards child development outcomes.

A recent improvement in this is the inclusion of a module on fathers that is to make up a new updated training package, for which Terra Association provided input, for workers involved in the Health for Two network.

Other examples of an ineffective mesosystem are found in the E.R.P.C.Y.S. 2004-2007. On page 21 of the report it states:

“Youth felt that employers offering positions related to basic labour or services were increasingly expecting youth to have a high school diploma. Many youth who have traditionally accessed these positions do not have their diploma.

Some service providers also stated that they felt that the priorities of the Province were increasingly turning from upgrading and education to specific job training. This was felt to ignore the increasing demands of employers for higher minimum levels of education from new employees. ...Literature reviewed for this project indicates that, in Canada, the unemployment rate for young people who drop out of secondary school before getting their certificate is twice the average rate.”

This is an obvious example where the Microsystems of employers, educators and employment training stakeholders are not coordinating in ways that complement each others strategies and compatible with the aim of improving the employment needs of unemployed youth.

Four years ago Terra Association experienced another example of such incongruency. Terra Association received funding to deliver a pre employment, lifeskills/lifemanagement program, modeled on the very successful Future Directions Program Terra Association provides to pregnant and parenting teen females.

Although based on the same model with a few program alterations, a significant difference between the funding structure of the program was that females were eligible to receive SFI or other funding to participate in the program, where the young men were not. Consequently the enrollment steadily dropped resulting in the ending of the program.

Exosystem, Macrosystem and Chronosystem

The remaining 3 outer layers of the ecological perspective are the Exosystem, Macrosystem, and Chronosystem.

The exosystem deals the administrative and political decisions that influence, in this case, young fathers healthy development, the nature and coherence of these decisions. This report will make recommendations for strategies at various levels of intervention that fit within this definition of the exosystem.

The macrosystem system looks at cultural standards and societal values, of which have been explored in the literature review and data from this study. The data demonstrates that there are not only societal shifts in the norms of what constitutes families, but that our community has been slow to respond to the new needs that result from the shift away from traditional families to the range of family structures that are increasingly more common.

It is hoped that this study will provide meaningful insights into the inequities that exist in how we view and serve families, and serve mothers versus fathers towards the same goals of strengthening families and improving child development outcomes.

Recommendations will include strategies at the macrosystem level to address these inequities in our community.

The chronosystem represents the influences on the role of the father, in the context of this study, and how this role is assumed and enacted during a particular stage in one's life. Clearly the role of becoming a father at the age of one's late teens or early 20's is not consistent with the average norms in our society, where people are getting married later and starting their families, having children at an older age.

This is fundamentally one of the major issues for the fathers who participated in this study, that sets them apart from other at-risk groups/families. These pregnancies were typically unplanned. The role of becoming a father precludes having many of the life stage events completed, such as finishing school, developing an employment history, accumulating financial savings and security, becoming an accepted member of an extended family, having a chosen career path, and starting a family at an age where this is the norm amongst one's peers, etc.

Where the ontosystem explores specific characteristics of young fathers past experiences, present circumstances and acquired or lacking skills, the chronosystem places this in the context of the compatibility with one's life stage.

Clearly, it is not only that these young men have problems as well as strengths, but that they are simply not life stage ready, (socially, physically, developmentally, in terms of maturity, experientially, etc.). Historically, teen pregnancy was described in different terms than it is today, such as illegitimacy, unwed mothers, bastard children, etc. Services were also characterized in these terms that focused on schools for unwed moms, or orphanages for illegitimate children, or hospices/homes for moms to go to during pregnancy and to deliver their child.

Typically young men were not involved during or after the pregnancy, where today, more pregnant teens remain in their families and/or communities during pregnancy, keep and raise their children, and keep dating or living with their partners. These changes are occurring during a time when society is also experiencing higher unemployment amongst men, more academic and labour force competition, and increasingly more egalitarian role sharing in child-care, and divorce and blended families are more the norm.

Clearly it is not surprising that we are now becoming more knowledgeable about the benefits to children in having healthy involved relationships with their fathers. And with all these changing trends in society that challenge our traditional views and responses to what constitutes family, we should not be surprised that young fathers are a part of this change and increasingly desiring to remain involved.

To effectively respond to their struggles, as communities we need to better understand the challenges that being a teen or youth poses on the successful enactment of the fathering role, and how not meeting these challenges result in perpetuating the cycles of crime and poverty amongst the next generations.

From A Population Health Perspective

When a social problem is identified, all stakeholders will be concerned about evaluating the importance or relevance of this social problem. Service providers may be the first to realize that the growing incidence of private troubles exhibited amongst a client group is large enough to constitute a public issue.

Service providers like non-profit agencies will then be challenged with the question of how to respond to this emerging issue. They'll explore how large an issue it is, how does it relate to the mandate and vision of the organization, does responding to the issue fit within long-term strategic plans, does the degree and severity justify the use of public sponsored resources to respond to the issue and if so how much resources should be expended?

Funders will then be challenged with similar questions. Of particular interest will be the importance of the issue from a public priority perspective. Is the issue severe enough to constitute a policy response? What is the degree of negative impact the social problem poses on social well-being? How will demographic trends increase or decrease the severity of impact over time, and does public awareness, knowledge and values support a response? How much resources should be allotted to a response and what public/stakeholder engagement strategies should be employed?

The Population Health conceptual model, although not answering all of the above questions, or providing the scope of knowledge required to inform policies and allocation of resources, does provide a bench mark tool to evaluate how a problem weighs in comparison to other issues.

Therefore, how does the public issue of teen pregnancy and early fatherhood compare in terms of its consequences leading to poor public health outcomes? In other words, what is the scope and depth of socio-economic risk factors related to poor health outcomes, in comparison to other public issues?

Failing to explore these questions without a conceptual bench-mark of comparison only serves to drive social policy by public perception, absent of facts and any valuable exploration from legitimate and accepted theoretical frameworks. A focus group of mothers and fathers conducted in the Muskoka area of Ontario captured the essence of how this happens as they explored the effects of societal attitudes towards fathers.

From the discussion with mothers:

“Everywhere, both in business and in the non-profit sector, organizations were doing more with less, and expecting more productivity from each worker. There was less leisure time. Although, globally, Canada is seen as a leader in supporting the family, politically, there has been a shift to the right, meaning less emphasis on family values. A polarization of ‘right’ and ‘left’ has meant that Canadian society is giving a very mixed message.”

From Fathers:

“These men felt that, in Canadian society, there is a general view that the father was not as good a parent as the mother. In addition, there was a tendency to view fathers’ involvement with some suspicion, because men were the chief perpetrators of spousal and child abuse. Generally speaking, the attitude of society towards father involvement was not altogether positive, which added to the difficulties of being a good father.”

The researchers observed that:

“It is worth noting that the women took a more global approach to this question, the men a more personal one. For the women, the consumer society, the inflexibility of the workplace and the polarization of political views were the areas of difficulty. For the men it was the negative attitudes of people generally that made it difficult for them to enjoy an ideal experience of fatherhood.”(Summerhayes, S., 2003, p.8)

The point here is that amongst this confusion, and diversity of views and values, decision makers both at the program and community level, and at the public policy and political level, need tools with which to filter information and make meaningful decisions.

The Population Health Perspective uses a number of measures taken from the health field, that when applied towards a group of people, provides an evaluation of the degree of health of a group in relation to broader public health. These measures are referred to as “determinants of health”. “Similar to the ecologic model, this approach takes into account the complex interactions between several social and economic factors acting interdependently with the physical environment and the individual. ... The objective of the health perspective is the improvement of the health of the population, and it’s measures are focused on whole populations rather than on individuals”(Dubeau, 2002, p.18).

It is believed that by reducing the socio-economic inequalities between individuals and groups, will result in the reduction of health inequalities. As mentioned above, this provides a bench-mark of comparison to evaluate therefore the degree of socio-economic inequality between young fathers and the general population and how the resulting health inequalities will impact broader public health. For example, we now better understand that by measuring the level of father involvement, we will be able to better predict risk levels amongst children, better informing us about socio-economic inequalities amongst children and their health outcomes, how this will impact them as adults and impact the well-being of communities.

Some of these determinants of health include the following:

1. Income/Social Status

Young fathers that participated in our study reported on average, having little income security and 12 of 17 during the 2003 period reported earning less than \$15,000 in the past year. This places them at the bottom of income earners and impacting of course their partner and child.

Social status amongst young fathers is greatly diminished in all ways. As fathers previously reported in focus group responses cited earlier, they lose status within their peer group, are often ostracized by extended family and the immediate family of their partner, find it difficult to maintain relations/involvement with other systems like school or work or programs, and often experience conflict with the mother of their child.

2. Social Support Networks

Young fathers reported in this study a lack of supports or support system. Often their partner or a connection with an agency like Terra Association is the only support available. This often results in distancing from this situation and gravitating to a lifestyle prior to the pregnancy.

3. Education

One third of survey respondents had no high school education and only 25% of young fathers served by Terra Association in 2003 had any high school education. The remaining may have some high school but generally few have completed high school.

4. Employment/Working Conditions

One third of those surveyed were employed and of the 16 clients served during the first 6 months of 2004, 8 reported needing employment preparation and 7 reported requiring job search skills. This places the unemployment rate amongst these young fathers as being approximately 66%. This rate is considerably higher than overall youth (15-24 years of age) unemployment in Edmonton which is at 11.4% as well as unemployment rates of overall Aboriginal youth in Edmonton which is 17.3%. This demonstrates that young fathers, even in comparison to other youth, are at very high risk of being unemployed.

5. Social Environments

Young fathers participating in services at Terra Association and in this research project, reported having high levels of association with street involved peers. This finding coupled with a high incidence of substance abuse and criminal involvement suggests that their social environments are not very positive. The lack of involvement in community services, poor relationships with extended family and their family of origin history suggests that these youth have rarely experienced supportive social environments.

Surprisingly, participants in the focus group discussions demonstrated great awareness of this and how these environments are not conducive to being a good father. Furthermore, the prospect of having a child they expressed, appears to be a major motivator for change and there is research evidence in the study to confirm this to be the case.

6. Physical Environments

Fathers reported a high level of homelessness and transiency and interaction with people, places and things that are unsafe.

7. Personal Health Practices and Coping Skills

This study found that poor health was a concern to these young men, and realistically so considering the degree of substance abuse, insecure housing, assault charges, lack of food security etc. Diane Dubeau found in her report on the Status of Research in Canada, that some studies found that “there is often a relationship between one’s lifestyle and socio-economic conditions. Of the lifestyle habits identified in the Population Health Promotion Model (PHPM) multiple-risk behaviors (mixing alcohol, drugs and driving or drugs and unprotected sex) was found to be very high among young men”.p.23.

8. Culture

Dubeau’s study found that there are very few studies examining different cultures within Canada, where there are more studies comparing fathering in Canada against fathering in other countries.

She comments that data related to the involvement of fathers from First Nations ethnic groups are sparse at best, despite that these fathers are well represented in the Canadian population. This is really an understatement when looking at the representation of young Aboriginal fathers utilizing Terra Services as well as other services in Edmonton. Approximately half of our clients tend to identify with Aboriginal cultures.

9. Gender

It is well known that men are at far greater risk of negative health outcomes than are women. Even though not all men are fathers, all fathers are men and considering other health indicators, young fathers appear to be significantly more at risk and more impacted by socio-economic inequalities impacting inequalities in health outcomes. When we compare the public health response to young mothers in Edmonton compared to those initiatives targeted towards young fathers, these inequities become quite staggering.

Other trends that are related to health outcomes for young fathers includes the following:

Youth comprise one-quarter (23.6%) of the city’s overall population. This is higher than the national average by about 3.3%. The Aboriginal community in Edmonton is younger than the overall population of Edmonton and is growing more quickly. Males between the ages of 15-24 years of age make up 30% of the total youth population.(E.Y.C.E.S.C., pp.6-8)

“The population of the Capital Health region has increased by 17,000 in the past year. This reflects both rural and urban migration and newcomers to the province, as job seekers or as immigrants or refugees. Newcomers are

frequently young families and often lack support or resources to establish themselves. A further increase in population over 100,000 is expected by 2008. Births in the Capital Region have increased by 4.8% and 4.3% in the last two years. There is a projected increase of 4.5% in the current year. Edmonton's population has more families with low income, more Aboriginal families and a lower health status than that of Calgary." (CPNP Reflective Practices, Edmonton Health for Two Network Report, p.1, 2004).

The Population Health perspective demonstrates that young fathers are at great risk of poor health outcomes as compared to many other groups. When looking at the number of women served by the Health for Two initiative in Edmonton each year (2400 women), and the complete absence of similar services for young fathers, we can safely assume that not only is there tremendous inequity in how we view young fathers, but also tremendous inequity in how we respond to their apparent greater risk levels of poor health outcomes. When looking from a best practices perspective and when evaluating development outcomes for children, it is quite obvious and disappointing that we are missing a whole service area and aspects of theoretical models of service delivery in optimizing health outcomes for children.

This startling fact coupled with population trends in our community, should shock us into action in taking the public issue of young/teen fathers as a serious public policy concern.

Adult Immigrant/Refugee Participants

Although this is a different subgroup of fathers with very different characteristics from an environmental perspective, there were some strikingly similar areas of concerns that were shared with young fathers in terms of conditions that undermine their successful enactment as fathers.

- The immigrant fathers and refugee fathers reflected different degrees of need and strengths.
- Refugee fathers have very low educational levels often due to having lived much of their lives in poorly served refugee camps. Although immigrant fathers have a higher level of educational attainment than refugee fathers, they report that their credentials are not recognized in Canada.
- The refugees and immigrant fathers's Ontosystems varied. The immigrant participants were younger in age. They had more success in attaining employment, despite having been in Canada for shorter periods of time. Their family sizes were smaller, as immigrant fathers were younger and were just starting their families.
- Immigrant fathers tended to have a partner who sponsored them to Canada and was already employed, had savings and at a higher income position. Refugees often come as a family group and start with no material assets.
- Refugee fathers had lower literacy skills and higher language barriers.
- Microsystems were also different. Refugee families tended to have little or no extended family where immigrant fathers were of more established communities with more extensive family grouping and community networks.
- Immigrant fathers had more extensive microsystems including employment, schooling, child care, large Philipino and Latino communities, extended

- family, etc. Refugee fathers were more isolated, as their community numbers were smaller, less established and able to be supportive to settlement issues.
- Because of limited Microsystems of the refugee fathers, they tended to experience more frustration in dealing with Microsystems, (mesosystems were therefore characterized by less coherence and compatibility).
 - The father enactment process of refugee fathers poses many challenges to refugee fathers. There is mistrust and confusion pertaining to child protection laws. As these fathers tend to play strong authoritative roles as part of their cultural definition of fathering, they are unclear of the limits of this role that Canadian law impinges upon. They comment that children are taught what their rights are in the school systems and exert this at home, polarizing and further confusing the role of fathers in these situations.
 - Because of a lack of clarity in role expectations and enactment fathers experience more family conflict, children are more at risk of settling successfully to living in two cultures, and family violence is often a result of these frustrations. They report that they have very few community supports to turn to with these problems and that their new communities are not well supported by government to build community capacity to address these issues.
 - Settlement services like English As A Second Language programs fathers report, have been reduced from 3 years duration of services to 1 year. They express that this is terribly insufficient and does not contribute to employment and educational outcomes.
 - The educational and employment barriers make these fathers more dependent upon Alberta Works services, also perpetuating poverty and stress for fathers. They receive inadequate income support and few remedial services to improve their long term prospects.
 - Fathers report that caring and providing for their family is central to their role as fathers and conditions in Canada undermine this role, creating a wedge between fathers and the involvement with their children.
 - These conditions are similar to young fathers, yet immigrant and refugee fathers report a significantly lower incidence of criminal history, homelessness, drug/alcohol abuse. They have healthier experiences growing up with immediate and extended family involvement and report having had strong role models in their lives, especially with their own fathers. This suggests that causes differ and solutions require different service and policy responses.
 - These fathers report surprise and disappointment that social policy and support services do not appear to support their settlement needs, contrary to the global perception that Canada is one of the best places for immigrants and refugees to settle. Both immigrant and refugee fathers expressed the view that the Canadian system appears intent on ensuring that they are available only to meet the part-time, seasonal and low paying jobs that others Canadians do not want to fill.

FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Program Development/Enhancement

- Enhance Outreach Services for Dads to better respond to demand and mitigate waiting list.
- Enhance Outreach staffing complement and service structure to ensure early and expedient intervention. The majority of those on waiting lists quickly are lost, and are difficult to later engage because of their crisis oriented situations.
- Enhance resources to respond to an increased degree of organizational readiness to provide more seamless services between programs, improving access from different entry points into services, facilitating increased referrals between programs and improving intake processes for fathers and data collection quality for programs. From a best practice perspective, significant work has taken place at Terra Association to address organizational readiness, and postponing new developments will result in a lack of momentum and an unraveling of the agencies readiness to shift its services to better reflect more up-to-date notions of families.
- Continue to address organizational readiness issues to ensure a more father friendly environment.
- Create specific program space for fathers to build a father friendly environment and a greater sense of consumer ownership and sense of normalcy.
- Develop program strategies to respond earlier in teens lives/teen pregnancy event, to assist in addressing role and relationship problems that encourage more father involvement, better supported mothers, healthier children and strengthened natural support systems such as extended family.
- Develop program strategies that address severe problems such as addictions, housing security, schooling and employment that results in the significant reduction and severity of needs over time.
- Enhance emergency services that quickly engages young fathers, monopolizes on their strengths and readiness for change. These would include emergency housing and treatment responses.
- Further explore how to effectively respond to cultural needs that may be present, especially for Aboriginal fathers which constitute about half of our existing clients.
- Provide opportunities for mentorship activities, mutual support amongst fathers, building of community and leadership opportunities that fosters continued involvement, mentoring to younger fathers and public education activities.
- Create volunteer opportunities that will support mentoring and community building strategies.
- Provide recreational and social opportunities for fathers, with other fathers, with and without their children, and for families with other families, that decreases isolation and teaches a provides healthy social and recreational outlets.
- Continue to provide co-ed pre-natal and parenting classes to encourage early and ongoing father involvement that also better supports mothers.
- As part of program development, monitoring and evaluation, further develop and incorporate notions of best practice as it relates to young fathers,

specifically those identified and outlined in the “On Father’s Ground” research study.

- Develop program evaluation strategies to monitor and improve effectiveness and gauge changing trends and their impacts.

Community Development

- Identify stakeholders/partners that have program experience and expertise in particular areas and seek partnerships in the development of new initiatives.
- Assist these partners in addressing organizational readiness issues and notions of best practice to ensure success in the development of new initiatives and partnerships.
- Work with partner agencies and authorities who also provide home-visitation programs to increase knowledge base and of the importance of engaging and working with young fathers.
- Formalize mechanisms to support other family programs; home-visitation programs to adapt program delivery models and incorporate best practices in their program delivery to reflect the research evidence supporting father involvement to enhance child development outcomes.
- Continue to seek training opportunities for human service professionals, agencies and policy makers as they relate to father involvement.
- Establish formal mechanisms and partnerships with other stakeholders/systems, to explore their own response to fathers needs (microsystem and exosystem issues) in order to explore their own response to fathers needs and improve the coherence and compatibility between programs/services to improve an effective continuum of services.

Public Policy and Systemic Responses

- Support recommendations and the actualization of strategies outlined in the Edmonton Region Plan For Coordination of Youth Services, 2004-2007.
- Advocate for more equality in terms of how mothers versus fathers are targeted in policy and program strategies.
- Advocate for policies that encompass a clear understanding of the private troubles and public issues of teen parenthood, that enhances rather than discourages father involvement and is in line with the depth and scope of need and its relevance in terms of impacting overall family and community health.
- Address the tremendous inequalities in public health programs that emphasize targeting moms but less with fathers.
- Work with government stakeholders in the areas of housing, education, employment, child protection, income security and crime prevention that better identifies gaps in services, jurisdictional grey areas, and resource sharing. Create a task force that develops strategies for funding emergency income and housing services for fathers and young families that support the value, benefits and improved outcomes of supporting the family unit in the short term and linking to longer term support that is more meaningfully intended to improve employability and role enactment amongst young fathers.

Long Term Strategies

- Liaise and support the research initiatives of the Father Involvement Research Alliance (FIRA), to mutually benefit our work in the area of fathering.
- Collaborate with the research community and other stakeholders, i.e. Health Canada Fathering Initiative, to further our understanding of fathering issues in Canada and further inform public policy. This could include the formation of a community alliance/forum on fathering in Alberta, creating more equity in the work being done i.e. in Eastern Provinces versus Alberta and other prairie provinces.
- Support research and program development in other areas where high need at-risk families and fathers are unsupported. An obvious starting point would be working more closely with stakeholders in the immigrant/refugee settlement communities, especially considering demographic trends and the cutting of support services for settlement needs/services.

APPENDIX 1

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

SURVEY RESULTS

There were 26 surveys completed. Of those 26, this report will focus on those participants who were 24 years old or younger, n=13. As the surveys and focus groups were conducted in partnership with other community services, participants did not always fall within the category of young or teen fathers. This in itself is an interesting finding, in that it appears that each agencies ability to engage young fathers specifically, was somewhat dependent upon how their programs directly targeted young fathers versus fathers in general.

Although all the agencies involved were extremely interested and helpful in organizing focus groups, Terra Association appeared to be the only one of the four agencies that had success at engaging young fathers specifically. As we know that young fathers are difficult to engage in services, this demonstrates how important relationship building and creating father friendly service are, when specifically targeting young fathers for services.

There are however some interesting shared areas of concern between the 13 fathers of which we are most interested in for this study, and the other fathers who participated. Their differences also highlight the significance of young unwed fathers as a subgroup of fathers worthy of study.

Demographics

- Of those 24 and under:

4 were 23 years of age
2 were 22 years of age
2 were 21 years of age
3 were 19 years of age
2 were 18 years of age

All of the partners of these men are 18 years of age or younger.

- All 13 were born in Canada

9 were born in Edmonton
1 was born in rural Alberta
2 were born in Saskatchewan
2 were born in Ontario
1 was born in Manitoba

- In comparison to existing Terra Association statistics of those served in 2003, of whom only 25% had any high school education, the group surveyed as an average, had a higher level of education, although still low.

4 have no high school
2 finished high school
7 have some high school

- Income source versus age were as follows
 - Grade 12> 2 employed
 - Grade 11> 2 employed
 - 1 receiving SFI
 - Grade 10> 2 receiving student finance
 - 2 receiving SFI
 - Grade 9> 2 employed
 - 1 receiving SFI
 - 1 with No Income
- There was a noticeable difference between the number of fathers under 24 versus those over 23 having criminal records.

Of the 26 fathers surveyed, 12 had criminal records. Of those 12, 8 are under the age of 24. Six reported that their criminal records were due to Assault charges, of which 2 had other additional charges, 1 reported numerous charges and there was 1 non response.

- Area of residency was varied throughout the city, but collectively tended to be in lower income areas.
 - 5 live in Central Edmonton
 - 1 lived in the city core
 - 1 in Northeast Edmonton
 - 1 in South Central
 - 2 in the South East
 - 1 in the West
 - 2 in West Central
- The study group also demonstrated a higher degree of having residency at the time of the survey in comparison to agency statistics for 2003, but still reported a significant degree of transiency over the previous year.

9 reported living in their own apartment
 2 shared accommodation and shared rent
 1 was living with friends and not paying rent
 1 was living with parents and not paying rent
 1 reported living in a basement suite

Of those 24 and younger, only 1 did not report a move in residency in the past year. However when asked how long they had been at their present place of residence, 3 reported over 1 year.

3 moved once
 4 moved twice
 2 moved three times
 1 moved six times

2 moved more than 12 times

4 have resided less than 1 month

1 had resided for a month

1 for two months

1 for three months

1 for six months

2 for eight months

3 for over 1 year.

Relationships

N=13

4 Children not born yet of expectant fathers

5 Fathers were living and caring for their child

1 Father reported having non-custodial involvement

3 Fathers reported having no contact with their child, but wishing to renew contact with their children

5 are boys

4 are girls

Children's ages range from 2 months to 4 years. Average age is 2.3 years

Fathers marital status:

6 reported they are single

5 are living with child's mother

2 are married

Level & Perceptions of Family Involvement

N=13

When asked who the most prominent father figure was for them when growing up, they reported:

2 Stepfather

4 Own father

3 No one

1 Uncle

1 Brother

1 Church Bishop

1 Grandmother

Half of the young fathers reported having a positive father figure in their life when growing up, but only $\frac{1}{4}$ reported this being their own father.

11 of 13 have contact with immediate family

10 of 13 have contact with extended family

Only $\frac{1}{2}$ see these contacts as being supportive

Past & Present Needs

N=13

- 10 of 13 said counselling would have helped them deal with the relationship with their child's mother when they learned of the pregnancy.
- 9 of 13 reported existing major problems in their lives.
- When asked to list and rank problem areas at the present time versus over the past 5 years, to following was observed:

Need Description	# Ranked This Item For The Previous 5 Years	# Ranked This As A Present Need Area	Change of Ranking Over Time >Equals increase < Equals decrease =No Significant change
Finances	10	9	=
Addictions	7	1	<
Education	9	5	<
Food Security	8	5	<
Parenting	1	5	>
Lacking a Support System	2	4	>
Relationship Problems	3	3	=
Employment	4	3	=
Health	2	3	=
Child Care	2	3	=
Housing/Shelter	7	1	<
Family Violence	3	1	<
Safety	1	1	=
Literacy	1	1	=
Custody	0	1	=

Types Of Services They Would Use

- A series of questions to better gauge what services young fathers felt they needed, would like, would enjoy and would utilize, were asked.
- When asked what supports they required to help them raise their children, the responses were varied, but included the following:

Money management, Mediation, Advocacy, Housing, Immigrant Settlement Services, all received one response each.

Role Models, Continued Terra Support, Parenting, Legal Services, In-home family support, and Child Oriented Activities, all received 2 responses each.

- When asked what programs they would enjoy, young fathers responded as follows:
Support Groups, Education, Literacy/Career Support, and Anything, received on response each.

Recreation, received 2 responses.

Cultural Family Interactions and Parenting received 3 responses each.

- 3 fathers indicated they would require child care to attend programs.
- 6 fathers responded that they would like to do programs with their children.
- 10 fathers responded that they would like to do a mix of programs with and without their children.
- 12 of 13 fathers replied that they would attend support groups with other fathers to discuss issues related to their situations.
- In terms of the best time periods for young fathers to attend programs, they responded as follows:

1 Mornings

2 Mornings and Afternoons

3 Evenings

2 Evenings and Weekends

2 Weekends

2 Anytime

1 Thursdays

Strengths and Natural Supports

- When asked- Who is a positive role model for them, 7 respondents stated either an immediate or extended family member, 3 stated someone in the community of which Terra Association was mentioned twice, and 2 stated their own fathers.
- When asked what their greatest strength was as a person, 3 replied traditional characteristics, like money management, having a job, etc. 5 intrinsic types of qualities like kindness, loving someone, being sober or being spiritual, were also listed. And 10 extrinsic types of qualities like being resourceful, living life to the fullest, being outgoing, goal focused, persistent, etc., were also listed.
- When asked what their greatest strength as a father was, 4 said they didn't know, 9 described intrinsic, nurturing and relationship based strengths and 6 described extrinsic and role based strengths.
- On a scale of 1-to-5, when asked to report on their level of confidence in their ability to be a good father, the average was 4.
- When asked what the most positive assets in their lives were, overwhelmingly these young fathers look at the quality of their relationships, what's important to them (such as significant others, like their children, partners, friends and family) and their overall social well-being (employment, music, sobriety, security, safe housing, etc.). They placed a heavy emphasis on overall social, mental, cultural and physical well-being versus material measures of success and well-being.

Service User History & Experience

- When asked about services presently using, respondents reported as follows:

Terra Association and Alberta Works was listed 5 times.

Schooling and Counselling were mentioned 3 times.

Two people replied they were using no services.

Addictions, Metis Child & Family Services, Multi-cultural Health Brokers, Capital Health, were listed once.

There was 1 non response.

- When asked which services were most helpful, the following was reported:

Terra Association was listed 6 times.

Housing Services were listed 3 times.

Alberta Works was listed 1 time.

Cultural support, Multi Cultural Health Brokers, Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society, Counselling, Health for two, were all mentioned once.

One person said no services have been helpful.

- 8 people reported having been in the care of Children's Services while growing up.
- 1 person reported not being sure if they had been in Children's Services care while growing up.
- 3 reported this involvement with Children's Services being positive.
- 2 reported this involvement being negative.
- 4 reported this involvement being both positive and negative.
- Of 5 responses to being asked to describe this experience, all 5 gave negative descriptors, such as Alcoholism in the home, Having negative foster siblings, or Not receiving proper care.

APPENDIX 2

EXISTING TERRA ASSOCIATION STATISTICS

TERRA ASSOCIATION STATISTICS

For the year 2003, Terra Association served 37 young fathers, separately from mothers, through our Outreach Services. On reporting statistics for this year, it is important to note that some statistical areas had non-response rates (certain fields on the dbase not completed) that will have skewed results.

- The mean age of young fathers served at admission, was 19.3 years old. N=37 However, the data shows 3 incorrect entries, 1 reporting a client as one years old, and two reported as pre-natal. These entries would have brought down the mean age and therefore we could more accurately conclude that the mean age of clients served during the year of 2003 was 22-23 years of age.
- Referral sources to Terra Associations Outreach Services for young fathers include 7 referrals from "Service Contacts" and 12 referrals from natural support systems, including family, friends, partners or self referrals. N=19.
- 5 clients reported having criminal records. N=17.
- 6 out of 7 reported being with the mother of their child. The lack of data entry on this statistic deems it unreliable.
- Only 4 out of 16, 25% reported having any high school education.
- 12 out of 17 reported having incomes less than \$15,000.
- 12 out of 37 reported having no fixed address at the time of intake.
- For the remaining 25, their place of residence were as follows
 - 9 Central
 - 5 West Central
 - 4 North East
 - 2 North West
 - 1 North
 - 1 South East
 - 1 South West
 - 2 On reserve
- The ethnicity of the 37 clients served during 2003, 40% reported being Caucasian, 50.6% reported being of Aboriginal, Treaty Status, or of Metis decent. And 8.1% reported being East Indian, Ecuadorian, or Other.

Reason For Service For Open Files (Pre Measure) 2004 January 1 – June 11

Terra Association collects information on the needs/issues that service users report dealing with at the time of intake. Here we have recorded those issues that were reported by 5 or more clients, during the first 6 months of 2004, providing us with a ranking of needs that are most commonly reported by clients. N=16.

- 10 clients Family conflict
- 10 clients Grief, Separation, loss
- 10 clients Lack of parenting skills
- 9 clients Depression
- 8 clients Requires employment preparation

- 7 clients Alcohol Abuse
- 7 clients Requires job search skills
- 6 clients Cultural identity issues
- 6 clients Emotional abuse
- 6 clients Street Peer Group
- 5 clients Exposure to unsafe situations, things, or people

These figures are very similar to those reported for 2003. An issue/need that was reported more often the previous year was “Requires Positive Role Model”. Although not reported more than once at intake during this 2004 period, during focus groups and 1 to 1 surveying, this was an issues/need often self identified by participants. Requiring knowledge of community resources was another issue reported more often in 2003 than the 2004 period. There also appears to be a difference between “Accommodation” being reported as a need in 2003 (by only 8.3%) and the number reporting having no fixed address at the time of intake, being 12 out of 37.

Pre To Post Issue Severity Scores, Jan. 1, 2003 – Dec. 31, 2003

By comparing the “Sum of Issue Severity” pre service to the “Sum of Issue Severity” post service, utilizing a T-Score measure, Terra Association seeks to determine the effectiveness of services provided.

For 2003, the Sum of Issue Severity was a mean score of 9.41 pre measure, versus 4.32 mean score post measure, with T-score pre test being 50.68 versus 45.23 post test. In general, these scores demonstrate positive outcomes in the decreasing of need severity for young fathers accessing Terra Services.

With the exception of 1 client, the higher the number of needs reported by a client, the larger the downward “Raw Score” difference experienced at the post test measure. This is helpful information when developing services and identifying immediate versus longer-term needs, and the resources that should be allocated to respond to these different need areas and severities.

APPENDIX 3

FOCUS GROUP RESPONSES

**DADS MAKE A DIFFERENCE TOO!
RESEARCH PROJECT
FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONNAIRE**

FOCUS GROUP SITE LOCATION: Terra Association

Date: May 3, 2004

NO. OF PARTICIPANTS: 4 participants

INTERVIEWERS: Roberta Wells (Family Resource Worker) and Mauricio Rodas (Dads Outreach)

- 1. Describe what the experience was like for you when you found out you were going to become a father?**

Terrified

Kind of excited

Between excited and scared

How it would be like [to be a father]

Could not believe it was me

Nervous everyday [about knowing partner was pregnant]

Last month is very excited and nervous

Relationships were a concern – were we going to break up or make up and if a break up happened would I still be in my child life.

Those were the best words I ever heard (you are going to be a father)

Life changes

Break-up

Sense of break-up because of child

A child being part of you

Responsibilities

Inspiration to live life

Gave me something to look forward to – more than just myself.

Focus on self

Our fathers were not in the picture so I wanted to be a role model as a dad for my child.

Awesome. I am good to my son I give him everything [regarding meeting his basic needs] not just material things.

- 2. What struggles are presently facing as a father, in meeting your needs? Therefore, what needs do you have and how are you meeting these needs? Also, what problems are you having in getting the help you need?**

How do you see yourself in the role as a father?

I think I am an awesome Dad as I am connected with my son

I am good to my son and I get him what he needs.

I had to learn patience

Understanding, I had to be more attentive to my baby, my partner, and self needs.

Being grouchy some days is real as I have to do everything, groceries, cleaning house I have to do it all (single dad).

My kid didn't ask to be brought into this world so I have to meet their needs as this was our choice.

Reaction of pregnancy of Family/ Friends

Shock; however, they were behind us [regarding support]
My family was not supportive they even denied the baby was mine
I had to abandon my family to stay with wife and child (a tough decision)
Upset with his partner.
Family started to say [bad] things to partner.
Excited from Mom's side
My Girlfriends Mom hated me for a year – wasn't able to call my girlfriend or have contact until she had our baby.
Scared of the In-laws regarding pregnancy.
Foster mom was upset.
Mom was too involved with their relationship [he felt that it was too frustrating]

FRIENDS

Turn away. Apartment before was a rec. center to friends; however, because of the change no one [friends] do not come anymore.
"Fun" things were gone from their friends
We do not talk to our old [friends]

CULTURE

Mother-in-law wanted the natural way not the city way [Aboriginal]

ISSUES DURING PREGNANCY

Relationship with partner such as jealousy, stress, etc [was a problem].
Financial – I didn't know if I could provide for my son – basic needs
Easy [regarding relationship] because we were alone (2yrs by themselves)
My partners other 2 children were an issue when she felt that I was treating them differently than the child we shared that was mine. I didn't feel I did anything different but it became a huge issue. She felt that the children weren't treated equally.

STRUGGLES – YOUR NEEDS AS A MAN & DAD (presently)

One parent to another [sometimes] does not see eye to eye
Meeting the child's need to be part of the other's person life
Financial – really had to live on a very tight budget and food was always an issue; trying to budget for other things like extras- clothing
Taking time for yourself
Babysitting- family not always sober so I don't want to have child around them and alcohol and didn't get the breaks when I needed a break.
Keep them away from the negative. Try to let them see the positive as much as possible. This is really hard to do.
Friends want you to be the same person
Life in general is a struggle
Parenting is a struggle because of the child's developmental needs
Speaking better [agencies/helping professional/resources] is a struggle
Role model – addictions, children learn what they live
Legal implications are also stressful – Child welfare – record with them is harsher than a criminal record.

Maintenance child support – having to pay comes with responsibility

BARRIERS: FRIENDS/FAMILY/RESOURCES

Analogy: Dads feel like the Atlas holding down all the responsibility of the world.

Can't get them when you need them [resources]

Meeting criteria is difficult and every agency makes it difficult

Time consuming looking [for resources]

Paperwork/intake/assessment–needed help with this and didn't always get it. [difficult because of wording and understanding]

[A Dad] has to be well spoken, concern and organized to be liked

BARRIERS: FOR YOURSELF (what needs do you have/meeting needs)

Transportation - bus, money, no vehicle or drivers licences

Employment-sent out 100's of resumes and have not heard from one employer this is really hard and very frustrating.

School; wanted to go to school but SFB rejected me because I have diagnosis of FASD.

SFI – As a dad with Mental Health, I needed a doctor's note, which cost money which if I did not show to SFI I would not be accepted. – Stressful.

Partner was kicked off SFI because I didn't have ID.

SUPPORT

Norwood, Metis Child Social Services, Elders, Brothers, immediate family, Creator, Terra Association.

3. **What has your experience with Terra Association been like? For example, when you first came to Terra for assistance was the intake interview helpful or could it be done differently? If we need to make improvements to better help you, what changes and improvements should we make?**

Intake:

Very helpful

Workers know what our situation was and supported us great. I appreciated it because no one ever did that before

I had no place to stay. He helped me with the emergency apt. – it ease my mind (3 dads lived in our apartment).

I got help writing the intake. When I said things the worker wrote down my words before I forgot. They did it orally and it was great.

Follow through was good – taking baby steps

Fast to get support and stuff I needed.

I felt the intake was done differently as I had to take my time to think and I wasn't rushed.

Everything I said I needed Mauricio helped me to get.

Terra works with your strengths not with your weaknesses

Terra is different from other places; it doesn't make you feel bad about getting support

Improvements:

More workers; waitlist is too long, Outreach worker too busy to do outreach (in home)
Emergency phone/person if [Mauricio] is away, such as the one in CHIMO
Family outings
Support nights; childcare is an issue or do stuff with the children.
More culture support
More aboriginal staff
Organize skills – supplies, info about finances, budgeting skills, etc
Elders or aboriginal youth
Bigger location or more locations throughout Edmonton; Southside, Northside.
Sometimes young dads feel that they are a burden for asking for stuff, it feels like pan handling at times.
Offer First Aid courses etc. to help young dads get employment.
Take us on a camping trip (free) like the girls did. We could learn from each other.

4. If you think there are services that need to be developed to better help young fathers deal with life issues and parenting, what are these services, who should provide them, and how should they be developed so that you would use them?

More culture support
More aboriginal staff
Organize skills – supplies, info about finances, budgeting skills, etc
Elders or aboriginal youth
Parenting information
Childcare + handouts
Certificate of skills
Access to a computer or fax

Dads group in the future:

Weekends/evenings
Too many groups dates not good – probably twice a month

Moms in the program with the dads:

Anytime, should not ever be an issue
Terra workers must balance the groups
Optional, more co-ed programs needed
Programs for relationship enhancements as relationships can bother the child. We are parents and should learn to be the parents for the best interest of the child.
Terra should help us learn to work together

**DADS MAKE A DIFFERENCE TOO!
RESEARCH PROJECT
FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONNAIRE**

FOCUS GROUP SITE LOCATION: Terra Association

Date: May 3, 2004

NO. OF PARTICIPANTS: 5 participants

INTERVIEWERS: Scott Smillie and Stephanie Poitras (Cultural Support)

Note: an asterisk after the comment indicates an additional member of the focus group agreed with the comment.

#1. Describe what the experience was like for you when you found out you were going to become a father.

- Shocked, scared, joyful
- Committed to staying in an unhealthy relationship *
- Trapped, confused **
- Realization of own childhood and upbringing
- Not ready *
- Greater need for responsibility; need to enter into educational programs
- Lost, addicted to drugs
- Wish to have another child only when ready (\$, home, "perfect partner")
- Stay in unhealthy relationship for/to offer stability and cared for the mother
- Felt like I had to do a good job and "set an example"
- Motivation changed: from chaos to stability
- Didn't understand the effects my addiction had on my child (1 year old) or myself

Help with addictions?

- Didn't get any; additionally, and aside from the addictions issue: also didn't get any help with getting my daughter back
- Got lucky: knew someone in the field
- Didn't know what I needed to learn to become a good parent
- Realized that I needed to take care of myself first before I can take care of anyone else

What could you have used to help you with your addictions?

- Time away
- Been able to move away
- Good role models to set an example and for support

#2. Present Struggles

- Access and custody of my daughter
- Dealing with an unreasonable, abusive person (mother of child)
- Developing a support network

Present Needs

- Developing a support network
- Staying away from "users"

- Budgeting
- Good friends
- Mentors and guidance
- Wanting to feel normal: wanting to be around “normal people”; having a hard time approaching people
- Life skills
- Life plan: “If you don’t know where you are going, where are you going to end up?”
- Credit/Financial counseling
- Getting and keeping a job:
- Information on prenuptial agreements
- Nutrition: for self and child (what to eat, what to feed my child)
- Transition planning

How are you meeting these needs?

- AA/NA/CA
- Psychologist
- Student grant through Student Finance
- Role models (“Uncle” – not a biological uncle but a friend of the family: “he teaches me about being a father by just inviting me over to his house”)
- Someone to split rent with as well as groceries, cell phone plans, entertainment
- Working out
- Agency help: iHuman; “Someone I can tell things to and be there (past normal working hours) - issue of on-call/after hours worker at Terra brought up

Any problems with getting the help you need?

- Fear, insecurity, judgment:* (past life)
- Discrimination: dress, manner of talk, how I look
- Getting people’s trust again: family, friends: *
- Hard to trust others, like Child Welfare (negative experience with Child Welfare creates a lack of trust for getting service): *
- Communication with the other parent (mother of child)

#3. Experience with Terra

- “Good, really good”
- “Friendly”
- “Too many white people”

Experience with Intake (Terra)

- No intake (young dad on wait list)
- Very helpful: connected directly with Young Dads Worker

If we (Terra) needed to make improvements to better help you, what changes and improvements should we make?

- Home intakes
- Phone intakes
- More male workers

- Unbiased information: straightforward
- Career help: trades, apprenticeship
- Connections to businesses for work

#4. Services for Fathers

- Respite services
- Information on ADD/ADHD/FASD
- Designing life plans
- Setting healthy boundaries
- Drop in centers
- Services not told to attend (mandated by Child Welfare; on service plan)
- Referrals (staff to help)
- Blood tests (free or low cost)
- Moral education (ethics): *
- Role models (dads)
- Role models (child)
- Home study program on/for child aged 2-6 or to age 12
- Affordable housing

**DADS MAKE A DIFFERENCE TOO!
RESEARCH PROJECT
FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONNAIRE**

FOCUS GROUP SITE LOCATION: Terra Association

Date: August 30/04

NO. OF PARTICIPANTS: 2 participants

INTERVIEWER: Scott Smillie (Dads Research) and Mauricio Rodas (Dads Outreach)

1. Describe what the experience was like for you when you found out you were going to become a father?

Between scare and excited

Sad, unexpected, so soon, so fast

New experiences

I had to back to school

Positive

I want to be a good father

Best time of your life (attachment/bonding with father)

Have to plan for the unexpected

Being part of my baby's life because my father was not there for me

Personal stress

Uncertainty

Walk away (scared of dealing with it)

Worried, isolated.

Big Step

You have to be motivated – mature – role models are great help

THEIR PARENTS

Told my mom: She did not want to do nothing with the baby

Excited, scared (mix feelings)

EXTENDED FAMILY

Happy and shaking up (wanted my partner to abort)

Excepting about keeping baby

They told me that I should not come for help all the time

My uncle was happy

FRIENDS

They told me that my partner should abort it.

Cool with it. Happy.

2. What challenges are presently facing as a father, in meeting your needs? Therefore, what needs do you have and how are you meeting these needs? Also, what problems are you having in getting the help you need?

Change in family circumstances (death, moving, etc)

Job, school, trade

Experiences in the legal system is also an obstacle to see my child

Developmental awareness – educate
Stress of health issues the baby may have
Discipline vs. punishment
Terra Association address some of these needs (PATHS and Young Dads Outreach)
Financial stability
Parenting skills needed

ANGER

Anger is an issue for me. Scared of anger feelings.
Pay attention to your body

RELATIONSHIP

Conflict/ realize that I must stop addictions
Negative people affect relationship
My partner has a previous child, I like to be involved and be her dad.
Fathers are trying to be involved with partner's developmental needs
Negotiation in relationship
Stressful for the relationship to stay together if there is no support
Children grow up seeing and having a negative parenting
When partner is pregnant, body issues are a concern.

ADDICTIONS

Alcohol – I get real stupid when I drink
Affects judgment
My partner suggested that I should quit with drugs

3. **What has your experience with general services been like? For example, when you first came to these services for assistance was the intake interview helpful or could it be done differently?**

THESE PARTICIPANTS WERE NOT PART OF THE PROGRAM HOWEVER, AFTER THIS INTERVIEW THEY CONNECTED TO THE PROGRAM.

4. **If you think there are services that need to be developed to better help fathers deal with life issues and parenting, what are these services, which should provide them, and how should they be developed so that you would use them?**

Systems needs to know about Programs such as Terra Association
A drop in at Terra Association
Braemar School - as a dad I feel out of place, as I did not belong. Should be more father - friendly. They need to have some fathers there. As a father you feel very intrusive.
Social Services need to change – more involvement with the whole family
Child Welfare mostly needs to change
Awareness of Program – instead of word of mouth

TIME TO...

Parenting

Find a job/seek a career
Skills/learn skills
Role models
Parenting courses
Anger management courses
Counselor
Need extra time for yourself
Mentors with other dads so that we can find solutions or educated among ourselves

Thoughts and ideas

Time [amount] is not important – is the quality of time in their lives
Coming to Terra Association gave me hope and that there still is out there.
You are not alone

**DADS MAKE A DIFFERENCE TOO!
RESEARCH PROJECT
FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONNAIRE**

FOCUS GROUP SITE LOCATION: Norwood Child and Family Resource Centre

Date: July 6, 2004

NO. OF PARTICIPANTS: 4 participants

INTERVIEWER: Scott Smillie (Dads Research) and Mauricio Rodas (Dads Outreach)

1. Describe what the experience was like for you when you found out you were going to become a father?

Stress as a father and as a provider

Putting your stuff together (responsibilities)

Time off (stress)

Security over money

Big change as a single father

Parenting roles: responsibilities as an employed men and being at home

Transition from single to family - relationships also changes

Everything changes when you have kids - your lifestyle changes

Having kids at times is a motivation for fathers

Fathers and men are misunderstood

SINGLE DAD

Big mistake/ I had to give full support (financially)

Legal issues regarding children

Stressful

Responsibilities

Depressed

No help/no childcare

(Positive) Norwood was helpful in my childcare needs

Single dads need a break once in a while

2. What challenges are presently facing as a father, in meeting your needs? Therefore, what needs do you have and how are you meeting these needs? Also, what problems are you having in getting the help you need?

Nobody cuts too much slag for fathers; however, mothers are always being helped

Family support is an issue in that they are very limited to dads

They are maintenance for moms but not for dads

Money and time

Hanging out with your kids is challenging because as a father there is a lot more responsibilities that you have to take care of and that leaves no time or very little time to spend with your kids

With no time, there is nothing left for parenting or being with them

To be an involved father, He must take away time for work or work opportunities so that he can spend time with the family which at times is a sacrifice that also affects the family and how society sees you.

As a father, you would need to have three part time jobs to support a family.
Fathers are always dead on their feet.
Appreciation – father need this to feel that they are contributing to the family
Relationship with partner – A challenge due to employment not enough time alone
Balancing relationship - moving forward such as career or employment due to the demand in time from relationship
Health/tired
School/tight budget
Cable television becomes as a “parent” to their children

3. What has your experience with general services been like? For example, when you first came to these services for assistance was the intake interview helpful or could it be done differently?

No idea what dads’ supports are out there?
Disability – nothing out there.
Transportation is a major concern as well
Daycare - they want a piece of your cheque
Health is a concern because there are no supports for that
Single fathers vs. single mothers – opportunities are there for moms; however, to dads they tell us to find it.
Fathers and mothers should raise their children rather than other services or people

4. If you think there are services that need to be developed to better help fathers deal with life issues and parenting, what are these services, who should provide them, and how should they be developed so that you would use them?

Change the systems in how it works – think more socially
Cheaper daycare
One parent or the parents can stay home for their children
If parents are involve this would help minimize children’s negative pressures
Day out to spend with their children; however, the energy to spend with them is challenging.
Recreation
Mentorship from experience fathers to new fathers
Trusted nanny

Thoughts and ideas

People are working more and less time for parenting
Knowing yourself – so to understand what is the role of being a father
Children have no role models in their lives
Hard being sensitive as a dad
Re-assurance as a dad must be shown so that they feel they are doing well as a dad.
Spirituality is an important part for fathers

**DADS MAKE A DIFFERENCE TOO!
RESEARCH PROJECT
FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONNAIRE**

FOCUS GROUP SITE LOCATION: Multicultural Health Brokers (Kurdish and Philippines)

DATE: October 1, 2004

NO. OF PARTICIPANTS: 6 participants (4 Kurdish and 2 Philippino)

INTERVIEWER/NOTE TAKER: Scott Smillie (Dads Research) and Mauricio Rodas (Dads Outreach)

TRANSLATORS/BROKERS: two Kurdish brokers and one Philippine broker.

*** Age group varied**

- 1. Describe what the experience was like for you when you found out you were going to become a father?**

Proud to be a father - my child is only a month old

Happy to be a father; however, my role as a father has changed in Canada

Happy – his child is very important.

- 2. What challenges are presently facing as a father, in meeting your needs? Therefore, what needs do you have and how are you meeting these needs? Also, what problems are you having in getting the help you need?**

Husband [in this community] is the way; however, here it is the opposite.

Changes in female rights in Canada are different from our country.

Cannot play role as a father

Mother is listen more than fathers

Discipline is an issue.

Refugee fathers find it hard to live here and it is more stressful

In this country, you are isolated

Government is involved in their lives too much

Fear of government due to its authority over others especially with other ethnic cultures is challenging.

Immigrant and refugee families constantly live in crisis.

There is no life in here because of the lack of support and basic needs.

Refugees are constantly trying to survive.

Canadian laws - what is allowed and what isn't.

Not understanding the laws

Integrating to the Canadian society is not easy. [Cultural shock].

Systems need to recognize immigrant and refugee's educational background so that they could have opportunities in this country.

SCHOOL [EDUCATION SYSTEM]

Student funding has change for ESL. Immigrant and Refugees have to go through the Income support program, which is very financially limited.

Studying English here was different years ago, now learning ESL is shorter and they want you to work sooner. There is only year of education.

As a ESL student, have a family, and having attendance is challenging because teachers expect you to be on time, don't miss any classes and have homework done is very difficult. This feels like being in the army or worse.

EMPLOYMENT

Cleaning jobs which are the bottom jobs are difficult to access or apply because you are not able to speak the language.

CHILDREN

Teaching children how to call 911 about discipline at home.

There are restrictions in laws and discipline with kids.

Child Welfare with kids calling and threatening parents; system takes it very serious.

Law – protect children; however, if parents are responsible then laws should help rather than make it harder for parents.

Good relationship with children is not good because fathers are working every day.

Television [media] replaces parents

FINANCIAL

Financial needs is always tight

Requiring a good house, employment etc. is hard

CULTURE

Our values and beliefs are stronger than the Canadian society.

What is to be a Canadian and behave like one and at the same time have your own culture?

FAMILY

Canadian laws change immigrant and refugee families than they lose their roles and so child changes as well.

There is no more head of the household.

Time – working and seeing child is difficult because you do not spend a lot of time with them.

EXTENDED FAMILY

Extended family is crucial to the well being of the nucleus family

REFUGEE CAMPS

As a refugee, they provide you with no training or skills and there is not enough resources to help refugees find employment.

Language

- 3. What has your experience with general services been like? For example, when you first came to these services for assistance was the intake interview helpful or could it be done differently?**

Although, immigrant and refugee services help you, at then end you are the one that has to deal with it own your own.

4. **If you think there are services that need to be developed to better help fathers deal with life issues and parenting, what are these services, which should provide them, and how should they be developed so that you would use them?**

The Canadian system should change to meet the needs of immigrant and refugees.

Schools should encourage more information about other cultures.

More communities support other than the Multicultural Health Brokers

More support from the government [long-term]

Career and Employment services to meet the needs of immigrant and refugee families.

APPENDIX 4

KEY INFORMANT SURVEY RESPONSES

**DADS MAKE A DIFFERENCE TOO!
RESEARCH PROJECT**

KEY INFORMANT QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

1. What is the name and address of the organization you represent?

- **The Family Centre** #20, 9912-106 Street, Edmonton
- **Bissell Centre** 19527-96 Street, Edmonton
- **Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society** 10117-150 Street, Edmonton
- **DECSA** (Distinctive Employment Counselling Services of Alberta) 11515-71 Street, Edmonton
- **Norwood Child And Family Resource Centre** 9516-114 Avenue, Edmonton
- **Chimo Youth Retreat Centre** 10568 – 104 Street, Edmonton
- **Alberta Parenting for the Future Association** , P.O. Box 2695, 5413-51 Street, Stony Plain
- **Youth Emergency Shelter Society** 9310-82 Avenue, Edmonton
- **Capital Region Housing Corporation** 6th. Floor, 10242-105 Street, Edmonton
- **Alberta Justice, Court Services, Family Mediation Program** Rm. 8077 John E. Brownlee Building, 10365 – 97 Street, Edmonton

2. What services do you provide to young parents?

- **Family Centre** Most specifically to young mothers – homemaking supports, child welfare is involved – parenting support/teaching, connection to resources, homemaking, childcare, etc.
- **Bissell Centre** Early childhood program – drop-in childcare services
Family Support Program – Includes Health for 2, Baby Program, Parents Group.
Early Childhood Resource Worker – assists parents with parenting strategies, accessing resources such as assessments, Head Start Programs, Day Care subsidy, Speech Therapy.
Family Shelter Network – Housing program for families who are homeless or at risk of losing their housing. Provides up to one year of follow up.
Intake Program – Provides families with basic emergency services (food hampers, household goods, clothing).
Well Community – Well Families - Parent-child advocates work with pregnant women who are using drugs/alcohol or who are at risk of abusing substances again because of their past addiction history.
Inner City Connections – Partnership with Child & Family Services and Boyle Street Co-op. Offering Child Welfare services and referrals.

- **Bent Arrow** Intensive Home Visitation
- **DECSA** We have offered parenting classes in the past but with poor attendance – offered during the day Friday a.m. – Poor attendance was often related to clients dealing with other life crisis.
- **Norwood Child & Family** Program for children 0-13 years old, parents groups, voluntary home visitation program, support of outreach workers, monthly family lunches, field trips.
- **Chimo Youth Retreat Centre** We provide services to pregnant and parenting teens who have status through children’s services. We primarily provide residential and counseling services but also have pre employment or back to school programs. Non of these programs offer services exclusively to young parents. We provide through contract, an apartment to clients of Terra.
- **Alberta Parenting for the Future Association** Gardening Program, Tick Tack Time, Surviving Sibling Rivalry, Raising your strong willed child, What now, what next, what happened, Dad’s Playgroup, Home Visitation.
- **Y.E.S.S.** Y.E.S.S. provides 3 residential programs and a community enhancement program. All programs of resources, referrals, skill training to both residential and non-residential youth.
- **Capital Region Housing Corporation** Subsidized housing.
- **Alberta Justice** 1) Assistance in provincial family court, specifically dealing with issues of custody, access, private guardianship, grandparent access. 2) Mediation services to assist parents in reaching agreements, developing parenting plans.

3. What services do you provide to young men (15-24 years old)?

- **Family Centre** None that are just specific to that population
- **Bissell Centre** Employment services, Family Support, Intake Program, Early Childhood Program, Inner City Connections – Child welfare collaboration.
- **Bent Arrow** Wind Dancers- Youth employment program; Circle of Hope- weekly youth group.
- **DECSA** Employment related supports are provided for adults 18+. The programs at DECSA generally have more referrals of women through social services than of men.
- **Norwood Child & Family** None.
- **Chimo Youth Retreat Centre** As above we provide a variety of residential and addictions programs to young men with children’s services status (although these programs are not exclusive to males). We also provide some pre employment programming to youth regardless of status.
- **Alberta Parenting for the Future Association** Home Visitation (Fathers are invited to be a part of this program) Dad’s Playgroup, Successful fathering.
- **Y.E.S.S.** Shelter. Life and employability skills program.
- **Capital Region Housing Corporation** Subsidized housing.
- **Alberta Justice** As above.

4. What services do you provide to young fathers specifically?

- **Family Centre** Therapy and Education program at the Family Centre offer courses for men. “Dealing with anger” – adolescent males (13-17 years). “Managing anger for positive results”- (18+). “Dealing with anger”- Boys (9-12 years). Not just specifically for fathers though.
- **Bissell Centre** None dedicated just to fathers.
- **Bent Arrow** In Home Visitation, when a young father is involved, we include him in the home visits as much as possible. There is really no specific services for young fathers. At times we find it difficult to include dads as they are at work, the moms tell the dads that the visitor is for the mom, the dads are not involved in their baby's life or just that the dads are not interested. Some Family Visitors have dads that are very involved with home visitation and use it to their benefit.
- **DECSA** None.
- **Norwood Child & Family** No service is provided to fathers.
- **Chimo Youth Retreat Centre** Other than my involvement on the steering committee, none!
- **Alberta Parenting for the Future Association** Our father-focused programming is for all age groups as long as their children are 0-6 years of age.
- **Y.E.S.S.** Life and employability skills project that is 22 weeks and provides a weekly allowance for attendance.
- **Capital Region Housing Corporation** Subsidized housing.
- **Alberta Justice** Young parents, and particularly fathers are unaware of Provincial legislation regarding guardianship of children. We provide information in this regard. None of our services are specifically for fathers, but all services are available to both parents. Workers serve as neutral parties, providing information and assistance to parents.

5. What reasons and barriers exist for your agency to better serve the specific needs of young fathers?

- **Family Centre** Don't work enough with this specific population to be able to offer insight.
- **Bissell Centre** Staffing capacity and possibly training. Lack of resources (shelters, housing for fathers). Child care with low parent portion fees. Respite care/mentor families to allow fathers a break.
- **Bent Arrow** Lack of resources for young dads. Male workers for dads. Space with agency. Funding. A place where they can go to be recognized as a young dad and feel good about being a young dad. Build their confidence. Support them as young dads. Their availability (shift work).
- **DECSA** We are more employment focused- however family and parenting issues often affect the ability to maintain employment.

- **Norwood Child & Family** Lack of space. Lack of staff who could be designated to serve the needs of fathers. Occupied fathers.
- **Chimo Youth Retreat Centre** This does not necessarily fall within our mandate and as we consider Terra to be a partner of sorts, we prefer to leave this type of programming to them. Funding bodies (to my understanding) have not identified this particular client group as being in need.
- **Alberta Parenting for the Future Association** Awareness of specific needs; Programming related to those needs; funding for those programs.
- **Y.E.S.S.** Funding to have staff specifically addressing the needs of young fathers.
- **Capital Region Housing Corporation** “Not applicable”
- **Alberta Justice** Father’s lack of familiarity with legislation can be a barrier to them.

6. In your opinion, are there adequate services for young fathers, and if not, what kinds of initiatives are further required and to meet which specific needs?

- **Family Centre** Don’t work enough with this specific population to be able to offer insight.
- **Bissell Centre** No. Education/training of staff in the field re: the realities these men face. Services need to become more user friendly to men/fathers (housing, training/employment programs that provide child care, food bank outlets).
- **Bent Arrow** No. We work with the moms- we need to focus more on the dads. Tools to help us engage fathers. Having more male outreach workers available to fathers. One with each agency. A male home visitor that accompanies the female family visitors when a father is involved. It is a women dominated field- the field itself carries the stereotype, i.e. “women are the ones caring”. Be more aware of what the dads need. Support the step-parent.
- **DECSA** Young fathers need support in family issues often including more parenting skills and more relationship building skills.
- **Norwood Child & Family** I don’t know any of them.
- **Chimo Youth Retreat Centre** I don’t believe current available services are either adequate or fair. I believe a big piece of work needs to be directed to advocacy. I think that we all first must believe there is a need so some level of public awareness should be considered.
- **Alberta Parenting for the Future Association** No. The needs of young fathers vary with the personal circumstances of the individual but my perception is that it must be approached as a “whole life” issue – i.e. housing, employment, substance abuse, lifestyle choices, etc., all have to be approached as inter-related in order to facilitate continued growth and change.
- **Y.E.S.S.** It would be nice to have support groups for young fathers throughout the city that could provide community resources and skills training.

- **Capital Region Housing Corporation** We have experienced no specific problems.
- **Alberta Justice** In terms of this office, I feel there are adequate services or appropriate referral sources for issues we are unable to deal with in-house.

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