



U.S. Department of Health
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Administration for Children
and Families
Office of Family Assistance

NRFC Research Review

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www.fatherhood.gov

NON-RESIDENT FATHERS AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT INFANTS AND TODDLERS (0-2)

Definitions and Topics

- **Non-Resident fathers** are men who do not co-reside with their children.
- **Cognitive development** refers to an infant's ability to explore objects, babble, problem solve, and use words.
- **Emotional development** refers to children's ability to be expressive, regulate their emotions, and control their behavior.
- **Father-child contact** refers to non-resident fathers' direct contact with their children (including visits), and indirect social contact (such as phone calls or mail correspondence).
- **Father engagement** refers to fathers' demonstration of warmth, use of authoritative (demanding and responsive) parenting, sensitivity, and participation in activities with the child.
- **Financial support** refers to child support payments or the provision of other forms of informal support and child-related resources.
- **Infant health** refers to infants' prenatal care, birth weight, and mortality.
- **Motor development** refers to infants' hand-eye coordination and ability to sit, crawl, walk independently, and balance.
- **Social development** refers to the ability of infants and toddlers to meet the societal expectations within daily routines (i.e., independently dressing, eating, using the restroom, and communicating), maintain a spontaneous interest in learning (i.e., participating in self-initiated activities), and developing interpersonal relationships (i.e., interaction with caregivers).

Cognitive Development

Father-Child Contact

- When communicating with their infant children, non-resident fathers are less direct when giving orders, presenting a greater cognitive challenge for infants to understand and respond to their fathers. The study sampled 146 families, with 18 percent of the fathers being non-resident fathers.
Source: Rowe, Coker, & Pan. (2004). A comparison of fathers' and mothers' talk to toddlers in low-income families. *Social Development*, 13(2), 278-291.
- Infrequent, short, and/or irregularly scheduled child visits by non-resident fathers are associated with greater delays in infants' language development. The study examined 45 infants that were under the age of 3 and in post-divorce homes.
Source: Hodges, W., Landis, T., Day, E., & Oderberg, N. (1991). Infant and toddlers and post-divorce parental access: an initial exploration in Everett, C. (ed). *The Consequences of Divorce: Economic and Custodial Impact on Children and Adults*. Philadelphia, PA: Haworth Press, Inc.

Take Time to Be a Dad Today

Father Engagement

- A study of 679 infants between 8-12 months found no significant associations between non-resident fathers' attachment formation with their child and their infant's cognitive performance.
Source: Ko, B. (2006). Nonresident father involvement and child well-being. A thesis submitted to Faculty of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences of Georgetown University. Washington, D.C.: author.

Financial Support

- A study of 679 infants between 8-12 months found no significant associations between non-resident fathers' financial support and infants' cognitive performance.
Source: Ko, B. (2006). Nonresident father involvement and child well-being. A thesis submitted to Faculty of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences of Georgetown University. Washington, D.C.: author.

Social/ Emotional Development

Father-Child Contact

- Infrequent, short, and/or irregularly scheduled child visits by non-resident fathers are associated with greater delays in infants' personal and social development. The study examined 45 infants that were under the age of 3 in post-divorce homes.
Source: Hodges, W., Landis, T., Day, E., & Oderberg, N. (1991). Infant and toddlers and post-divorce parental access: an initial exploration in Everett, C. (ed). *The Consequences of Divorce: Economic and Custodial Impact on Children and Adults*. Philadelphia, PA: Haworth Press, Inc.

Infant Health

Financial Support

- Infants of mothers who receive financial support from non-resident fathers during their pregnancy are less likely to be born with a low birth weight. The study included 4,700 newborns and their families.
Source: Padilla, Y. and Reichman, N. (2001). Low birthweight: do unwed fathers help? *Children and Youth Services Review*, 23(4-5), 427-452.
- Non-resident fathers' financial contributions positively influence mothers' receipt of early prenatal care and the adoption of healthy pregnancy behaviors, such as refraining from alcohol, drug use, and smoking, which results in better health outcomes for infants as measured by their birth weight.
Source: Teitler, J. (2001). Father involvement, child health and maternal health behavior. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 23(4-5), 403-425.

Motor Development

Father-Child Contact

- A study of 679 infants between 8-12 months found no significant associations between non-resident fathers' physical caretaking and infants' motor performance.
Source: Ko, B. (2006). Nonresident father involvement and child well-being. A thesis submitted to Faculty of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences of Georgetown University. Washington, D.C.: author.

Father Engagement

- A study of 679 infants between 8-12 months found no significant associations between non-resident fathers' attachment formation with their infants and infants' motor performance.
Source: Ko, B. (2006). Nonresident father involvement and child well-being. A thesis submitted to Faculty of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences of Georgetown University. Washington, D.C.: author.

Financial Support

- A study of 679 infants between 8-12 months found no significant associations between non-resident fathers' financial support and infants' motor performance.
Source: Ko, B. (2006). Nonresident father involvement and child well-being. A thesis submitted to Faculty of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences of Georgetown University. Washington, D.C.: author.