



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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## NON-RESIDENT FATHERS AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT EARLY ADOLESCENCE (11-14)

### Definitions and Topics

- **Non-Resident fathers** are men who do not co-reside with their children.
- **Academic performance** refers to adolescents' grades, test scores, cognitive abilities, and overall school performance and functioning.
- **Externalizing behavior problems** include antisocial conduct such as fighting, non-compliance, poor performance in school, delinquent behavior, and substance use.
- **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.
- **Internalizing behavior problems** refer to lower psychological well-being and emotional distress such as depression, irritability, and somatic concerns.
- **Social development** refers to adolescents' self-efficacy, feelings of self-worth, and development of positive relationships with peers and other adults outside the family.

### Externalizing behavior problems

#### Father-Child Contact

- A study of 647 10–14 year olds found that more regular contact and conversations with nonresident fathers and nonresident fathers' greater responsibility for their children's daily care and basic needs are associated with children's lower engagement in delinquent and problem behavior.  
Source: Levine Coly, R. & Medeiros, B.L. (2007). Reciprocal longitudinal relations between nonresident father involvement and adolescent delinquency. *Child Development*, 78 (1), 132 – 147.
- For black children, more frequent nonresident father visitation is associated with more child problem behaviors as measured by the Behavior Problem Index. The study examined the problem behaviors of 1,501 children ages 4 – 18 in 1988.  
Source: King, V. (1994). Variation in the Consequences of Nonresident Father Involvement for Children's Well-being. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 56, 963-972.
- A study of 1,172 households of children ages 5-18 found that higher levels of nonresident father visitation are associated with fewer child behavior problems measured by items such as whether or not the child has been suspended or expelled, ran away from home, or is difficult to raise, but only if mothers are satisfied with the non-resident fathers' level of involvement.  
Source: King, V. and Heard, H. (1999). Nonresident father visitation, parental conflict, and mother's satisfaction: what's best for child well-being? *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 61(2), 385-396.

*Take Time to Be a Dad Today*

- Adolescents who stay overnight with their nonresident fathers more often are less likely to smoke regularly. The study consisted of 1,932 adolescents in grades 7-12.  
Source: Menning, C.L. (2006). Nonresident fathers' involvement and adolescents' smoking. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 47*, 32-46.
- Daughters of non-resident fathers with regular child contact are less likely to have behavior problems, as measured by children's in-school behavior and criminal behavior. The study included 1,285 children between the ages of 5 and 18.  
Source: Amato, P. and Rezac, S. (1994). Contact with nonresident parents, interparental conflict, and children's behavior. *Journal of Family Issues, 15*(2), 191-207.

## Father Engagement

- Nonresident fathers' greater participation in a wide range of daily activities with their children including reading, watching TV, attending entertainment events, doing homework, visiting, and shopping is associated with adolescents engaging in fewer externalizing problem behaviors including kicking or hitting, complaining, ignoring parents, and acting defiant. These results are based on a study of 115 children of divorce ages 5 to 13 living apart from their biological fathers in Southern California.  
Source: Clarke-Stewart, K. & Hayward, C. (1996). Advantages of father custody and contact for the psychological well-being of school-age children. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 17*, 239 – 270.
- A study of 189 adolescents ages 10 to 18 with a nonresident father and living with a stepfather found that higher levels of nonresident father-adolescent relationship quality are associated with reduced externalizing behaviors including acting impulsive, acting without thinking, and feeling restless.  
Source: White, E., & Gilbreth, J. G. (2001). When children have two fathers: Effects of relationships with stepfathers and noncustodial fathers on adolescent outcomes. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 63*, 155-167.
- Greater nonresident father-child relationship quality is associated with adolescents engaging in fewer externalizing behaviors including bullying others, disobeying at home, a strong temper, and acting impulsive. This study examined 453 adolescents ages 10 – 18 who were living apart from their biological fathers. Father-child relationship quality was measured by whether or not the child would talk to their father if they were unhappy or needed advice, how much they admired their father, whether or not they received praise or complements from their father, and the quality of the overall father-child relationship.  
Source: King, V. & Sobolewski, J.M. (2006). Nonresident fathers' contributions to adolescent well-being. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 68*, 537-557.
- More responsive parenting by nonresident fathers is associated with adolescents engaging in fewer externalizing behaviors including bullying others, disobeying at home, a strong temper, and acting impulsive. This study examined 453 adolescents ages 10 – 18 who were living apart from their biological fathers.  
Source: King, V. & Sobolewski, J.M. (2006). Nonresident fathers' contributions to adolescent well-being. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 68*, 537-557.
- Nonresident fathers that talk to their adolescent children about things going on at school have children with lower levels of delinquency. This study was based on 1,535 adolescents in grades 7 – 12 who were living apart from their biological fathers.  
Source: Stewart, S. D. (2003). Nonresident parenting and adolescent adjustment: The quality of nonresident father-child interaction. *Journal of Family Issues, 24*, 217-244.

- Adolescents who feel close to their nonresident fathers are less likely to smoke regularly. The study consisted of 1,932 adolescents in grades 7-12.  
Source: Menning, C.L. (2006). Nonresident fathers' involvement and adolescents' smoking. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 47, 32-46.
- Adolescents who engage in more shared activities such as going shopping, going to a movie, and working on a school project with their nonresident fathers are less likely to smoke regularly. The study consisted of 1,932 adolescents in grades 7-12.  
Source: Menning, C.L. (2006). Nonresident fathers' involvement and adolescents' smoking. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 47, 32-46.

### Financial Support

- For Hispanic children, the amount of financial support received from nonresident fathers is associated with fewer child problem behaviors as measured by the Behavior Problem Index. The study measure of social and emotional development of 1,501 children ages children ages 4 – 18 in 1988.  
Source: King, V. (1994). Variation in the Consequences of Nonresident Father Involvement for Children's Well-being. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 56, 963-972.

### Internalizing Behaviors

#### Father-Child Contact

- Among children living with a stepparent, sons and daughters that spent a greater number of days with their nonresident father in the prior year experienced fewer psychological problems such as restlessness, jumpiness, and trouble sleeping. This study consisted of 136 children ages 9 to 12.  
Source: Bronstein, P., Frankel Stoll, M.F., Clauson, J., Abrams, C.L., & Briones, M. (1994). Fathering after separation or divorce: Factors predicting children's adjustment. *Family Relations*, 43, 469-479.
- Daughters of non-resident fathers with more regular contact are less likely to have seen a doctor or therapist for emotional or behavioral problems. The study included 1,285 children between the ages of 5 and 18.  
Source: Amato, P. and Rezac, S. (1994). Contact with nonresident parents, interparental conflict, and children's behavior. *Journal of Family Issues*, 15(2), 191-207.

#### Father Engagement

- Nonresident fathers' greater participation in a wide range of daily activities with their children including reading, watching TV, attending entertainment events, doing homework, visiting, and shopping is associated with children's improved psychological well-being measured by their adjustment to divorce, positive mood, and lower levels of depression. These results are based on a study of 115 children of divorce ages 5 to 13 living apart from their biological fathers in Southern California.  
Source: Clarke-Stewart, K. & Hayward, C. (1996). Advantages of father custody and contact for the psychological well-being of school-age children. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 17, 239 – 270.

- Among children living with a stepparent, sons and daughters that participated in more activities with their nonresident father including celebrating holidays together, attending school or church events, and participating in leisure activities together experienced fewer psychological problems such as restlessness, jumpiness, and trouble sleeping. This study consisted of 136 children ages 9 to 12.  
Source: Bronstein, P., Frankel Stoll, M.F., Clauson, J., Abrams, C.L., & Briones, M. (1994). Fathering after separation or divorce: Factors predicting children's adjustment. *Family Relations*, 43, 469-479.
- A study of 189 adolescents ages 10 to 18 with a nonresident father and living with a stepfather found that higher levels of nonresident father-adolescent relationship quality are associated with fewer internalizing behaviors including feeling unhappy, sad, depressed, and worthless.  
Source: White, E., & Gilbreth, J. G. (2001). When children have two fathers: Effects of relationships with stepfathers and noncustodial fathers on adolescent outcomes. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 63, 155-167.
- Higher levels of nonresident father-child relationship quality are associated with fewer adolescent internalizing behaviors such as feeling worthless, inferior, unhappy, depressed or nervous. This study examined 453 adolescents ages 10 – 18 who were living apart from their biological fathers. Father-child relationship quality was measured by whether or not the child would talk to their father if they were unhappy or needed advice, how much they admired their father, whether or not they received praise or complements from their father, and the quality of the overall father-child relationship.  
Source: King, V. & Sobolewski, J.M. (2006). Nonresident fathers' contributions to adolescent well-being. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 68, 537-557.
- More responsive parenting by nonresident fathers is associated with fewer adolescent internalizing behaviors such as feeling worthless, inferior, unhappy, depressed or nervous. This study examined 453 adolescents ages 10 – 18 who were living apart from their biological fathers.  
Source: King, V. & Sobolewski, J.M. (2006). Nonresident fathers' contributions to adolescent well-being. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 68, 537-557.
- Adolescents who feel close to their nonresident fathers have lower levels of emotional distress. This study was based on 1,535 adolescents in grades 7 – 12 who were living apart from their biological fathers.  
Source: Stewart, S. D. (2003). Nonresident parenting and adolescent adjustment: The quality of nonresident father-child interaction. *Journal of Family Issues*, 24, 217-244.
- Nonresident fathers that talk to their adolescent children about things going on at school have children with lower emotional distress. This study was based on 1,535 adolescents in grades 7 – 12 who were living apart from their biological fathers.  
Source: Stewart, S. D. (2003). Nonresident parenting and adolescent adjustment: The quality of nonresident father-child interaction. *Journal of Family Issues*, 24, 217-244.

## Academic achievement/ performance

### Father-Child Contact

- Among children living with a single mother, sons and daughters that spent a greater number of days with their nonresident father in the prior year had higher academic performance measured by their GPA. This study consisted of 136 children ages 9 to 12.  
Source: Bronstein, P., Frankel Stoll, M.F., Clauson, J., Abrams, C.L., & Briones, M. (1994). Fathering after separation or divorce: Factors predicting children's adjustment. *Family Relations*, 43, 469-479.

- Among children living with a stepparent, sons and daughters that spent a greater number of days with their nonresident father in the past year had better classroom behavior measured by teachers' assessments of their social, emotional, and academic functioning in the classroom. This study consisted of 136 children ages 9 to 12.  
Source: Bronstein, P., Frankel Stoll, M.F., Clauson, J., Abrams, C.L., & Briones, M. (1994). Fathering after separation or divorce: Factors predicting children's adjustment. *Family Relations*, 43, 469-479.
- More frequent visitation among nonresident fathers is not associated with children's improved math and reading aptitude. The study examined the cognitive abilities of 1,501 children ages 4 – 18 in 1988.  
Source: King, V. (1994). Nonresident Father Involvement and Child Well-being: Can Dads Make a Difference? *Journal of Family Issues*, 15(1), 79-96.
- For black children, more frequent nonresident father visitation is associated with lower math aptitude for children. The study examined the cognitive development of 1,501 children ages 4 – 18 in 1988.  
Source: King, V. (1994). Variation in the Consequences of Nonresident Father Involvement for Children's Well-being. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 56, 963-972.
- More frequent contact with nonresident fathers is associated with higher grade point averages for sons. This study included 50 white middle class males ages 14 to 17.  
Source: Jones, K. (2004). Assessing psychological separation and academic performance in nonresident-father and resident-father adolescent boys. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 21, 333-354.

## Father Engagement

- Among children living with a single mother, sons and daughters that participated in more activities with their nonresident father including celebrating holidays together, attending school or church events, and participating in leisure activities together had higher academic performance measured by their GPA. This study consisted of 136 children ages 9 to 12.  
Source: Bronstein, P., Frankel Stoll, M.F., Clauson, J., Abrams, C.L., & Briones, M. (1994). Fathering after separation or divorce: Factors predicting children's adjustment. *Family Relations*, 43, 469-479.
- Among children living with a stepparent, sons and daughters that participated in more activities with their nonresident father including celebrating holidays together, attending school or church events, and participating in leisure activities together had better classroom behavior measured by teachers' assessments of their social, emotional, and academic functioning in the classroom. This study consisted of 136 children ages 9 to 12.  
Source: Bronstein, P., Frankel Stoll, M.F., Clauson, J., Abrams, C.L., & Briones, M. (1994). Fathering after separation or divorce: Factors predicting children's adjustment. *Family Relations*, 43, 469-479.
- Higher quality relationships with nonresident fathers are associated with higher grade point averages for sons. This study included 50 white middle class boys ages 14 to 17.  
Source: Jones, K. (2004). Assessing psychological separation and academic performance in nonresident-father and resident-father adolescent boys. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 21, 333-354.
- Children of non-resident fathers who are involved in their schooling are more likely to receive A's and less likely to repeat a grade or be suspended or expelled than their counterparts with non-resident fathers who are not involved in their child's schooling. The study included 5, 064 children in 1<sup>st</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade with a nonresident father.  
Source: Nord, C. and W., Jerry. (2001). *Fathers' and mothers' involvement in their schools by family type and resident status*, NCES 2001-032. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

- Higher levels of nonresident father-child relationship quality are associated with better grades for sons. This study examined 453 adolescents ages 10 – 18 who were living apart from their biological fathers. Father-child relationship quality was measured by whether or not the child would talk to their father if they were unhappy or needed advice, how much they admired their father, whether or not they received praise or complements from their father, and the quality of the overall father-child relationship.  
Source: King, V. & Sobolewski, J.M. (2006). Nonresident fathers' contributions to adolescent well-being. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 68, 537-557.
- Higher nonresident father-child relationship quality is associated with less acting out at school for sons. This study examined 453 adolescents ages 10 – 18 who were living apart from their biological fathers. Father-child relationship quality was measured by whether or not the child would talk to their father if they were unhappy or needed advice, how much they admired their father, whether or not they received praise or complements from their father, and the quality of the overall father-child relationship.  
Source: King, V. & Sobolewski, J.M. (2006). Nonresident fathers' contributions to adolescent well-being. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 68, 537-557.
- Nonresident fathers that talk to their adolescent children about their school work or grades have children with higher academic performance as measured by their GPA. This study was based on 1,535 adolescents in grades 7 – 12 who were living apart from their biological fathers.  
Source: Stewart, S. D. (2003). Nonresident parenting and adolescent adjustment: The quality of nonresident father-child interaction. *Journal of Family Issues*, 24, 217-244.
- Nonresident fathers' involvement in a variety of activities with their adolescent children including playing sports together, discussing school and grades, going shopping, and working on school projects, and increases in fathers' involvement in such activities over time, are associated with children's lower likelihood of dropping out of high school. This study included approximately 2,500 adolescents in grades 7-12 who were living apart from their biological fathers.  
Source: Menning, C.L., (2006). Nonresident fathering and school failure. *Journal of Family Issues*, 27, 1356-1382.
- A study of adolescents living with their biological mother and a stepfather found that closeness to nonresident fathers is associated with better grades. Adolescents are even less likely to have failing grades if they are close to both their nonresident father and their stepfather. The study examined of 1, 152 adolescents in grades 7 – 12.  
Source: King, V. (2006). The antecedents and consequences of adolescents' relationships with stepfathers and nonresident fathers. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 68, 910-928.

## Financial Support

- Increasing amounts of financial support received from nonresident fathers are associated with children's improved math and reading aptitude. The study examined the cognitive abilities of 1,501 children ages 4 – 18 in 1988.  
Source: King, V. (1994). Nonresident Father Involvement and Child Well-being: Can Dads Make a Difference? *Journal of Family Issues*, 15(1), 79-96.
- Nonresident fathers' payment of child support is associated with adolescents' lower likelihood of dropping out of high school. This study included approximately 2,500 adolescents in grades 7-12 who were living apart from their biological fathers.  
Source: Menning, C.L., (2006). Nonresident fathering and school failure. *Journal of Family Issues*, 27, 1356-1382.

- Children of non-resident fathers who paid child support in the prior year are more likely to receive A's and less likely to repeat a grade or be suspended or expelled than their counterparts with non-resident fathers who did not pay child support. The study included 5, 064 children in 1<sup>st</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade with a nonresident father.

Source: Nord, C. and W., Jerry. (2001). *Fathers' and mothers' involvement in their schools by family type and resident status*, NCES 2001-032. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

## Social Development

### Father-Child Contact

- Among children living with a single mother, daughters that spent a greater number of days with their nonresident father in the prior year exhibited more popularity with their peers. This study consisted of 136 children ages 9 to 12.  
Source: Bronstein, P., Frankel Stoll, M.F., Clauson, J., Abrams, C.L., & Briones, M. (1994). Fathering after separation or divorce: Factors predicting children's adjustment. *Family Relations*, 43, 469-479.
- Among children living with a stepparent, sons and daughters that spent a greater number of days with their nonresident father in the prior year had higher ratings of self-worth. This study consisted of 136 children ages 9 to 12.  
Source: Bronstein, P., Frankel Stoll, M.F., Clauson, J., Abrams, C.L., & Briones, M. (1994). Fathering after separation or divorce: Factors predicting children's adjustment. *Family Relations*, 43, 469-479.
- A study of 1,172 households of children ages 5-18 found that higher levels of nonresident father visitation are associated with children's improved adjustment measured by items such as their willingness to try new things, feelings of happiness, cheerfulness, sadness or depression, and whether or not they get along with other kids, but only if mothers are satisfied with the non-resident fathers' level of involvement.  
Source: King, V. and Heard, H. (1999). Nonresident father visitation, parental conflict, and mother's satisfaction: what's best for child well-being? *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 61(2), 385-396.
- A study of 1,172 households of children ages 5-18 found that higher levels of nonresident father visitation are associated with children's higher levels of well-being measured by how well their mother feels their life is going, but only if mothers are satisfied with the non-resident fathers' level of involvement.  
Source: King, V. and Heard, H. (1999). Nonresident father visitation, parental conflict, and mother's satisfaction: what's best for child well-being? *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 61(2), 385-396.
- Frequency of non-resident father visitation was not associated with children's more positive feelings of self-worth. The study examined the social and emotional development of 1,501 children ages 4 – 18 in 1988.  
Source: King, V. (1994). Nonresident Father Involvement and Child Well-being: Can Dads Make a Difference? *Journal of Family Issues*, 15(1), 79-96.

### Father Engagement

- Among children living with a single mother, daughters that participated in more activities with their nonresident father including celebrating holidays together, attending school or church events, and participating in leisure activities together exhibited more popularity with their peers. This study consisted of 136 children ages 9 to 12.  
Source: Bronstein, P., Frankel Stoll, M.F., Clauson, J., Abrams, C.L., & Briones, M. (1994). Fathering after separation or divorce: Factors predicting children's adjustment. *Family Relations*, 43, 469-479.

- Among children living with a stepparent, sons and daughters that participated in more activities with their nonresident father including celebrating holidays together, attending school or church events, and participating in leisure activities together had higher ratings of self-worth. This study consisted of 136 children ages 9 to 12.  
Source: Bronstein, P., Frankel Stoll, M.F., Clauson, J., Abrams, C.L., & Briones, M. (1994). Fathering after separation or divorce: Factors predicting children's adjustment. *Family Relations*, 43, 469-479.
- A study of 1,431 children between 3 and 12 years old found that greater warmth from nonresident fathers is associated with children's improved pro-social development as measured by children's health, friendships, prospects for the future, and feelings of self-worth.  
Source: Harper, S.E. and Fine, M.A. (2006). The Effects of Involved Nonresidential Fathers' Distress, Parenting Behaviors, Inter-Parental Conflict, and the Quality of Father-Child Relationships on Children's Well-Being. *Fathering*, 4(3), 286-311.

### Financial Support

- For Hispanic children, the amount of financial support received from nonresident fathers is associated with children's reduced problem behaviors as measured by the Behavior Problem Index. The study measure of social and emotional development of 1,501 children ages children ages 4 – 18 in 1988.  
Source: King, V. (1994). Variation in the Consequences of Nonresident Father Involvement for Children's Well-being. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 56, 963-972.