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**PEW**  
CENTER ON THE STATES

# Fathers and Home Visiting: What Do We Know?

May 1, 2012

# Pew Home Visiting Campaign



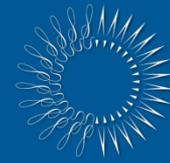
Advancing smart state and federal policies and investments in high-quality, home-based programs for new and expectant families.

Our primary focus areas include:

- Policy Advocacy
- Research
- Information Sharing

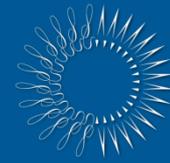


[www.pewstates.org/homevisiting](http://www.pewstates.org/homevisiting)



## Scott Hippert

President and CEO  
Parents as Teachers



**Sarah Avellar**  
Senior Researcher  
Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.

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# **Home Visiting for Fathers: What Does the Research Tell Us?**

**May 1, 2012**

**Presentation for the Pew Home-Visiting Campaign  
Sarah Avellar**

**MATHEMATICA  
Policy Research**

# Background and Context

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- **Descriptive research consistently shows a link between supportive fathering and positive child outcomes, but some fathers encounter barriers to positive involvement**
- **Programs and services to support fathers have increased in recent decades**
- **The Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation contracted with Mathematica to review the research on these programs**

# Home Visiting: Not Yet a Common Strategy

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- **Our review revealed a handful of studies describing programs that offered home visiting as one method of service delivery**
  - **The review was designed to identify research on programs for low-income fathers but did not focus on home visiting specifically**
  - **The limited research suggests the need for caution in interpreting the findings**
- **Most of these studies were recent, however, suggesting that this may be an emerging area of interest**

# Most Programs Grew Out of Early-Childhood Home Visiting

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- **These programs likely limited to custodial fathers**
- **Two common program strategies were to:**
  - **Maintain home visits as the primary service but to also include fathers**
  - **Add or adapt other services for fathers, such as father-child socialization activities or group sessions**
- **Programs that did not grow out of early-childhood home visiting sometimes offered case management during home visits**

# Services Were Offered for a Few Months

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- **The father-focused components often lasted no more than 12 weeks**
- **For programs that offered longer-term home visits to mothers and children, it was not always clear whether fathers would be encouraged to continue participating**
  - **However, one program clearly tried to change its approach to become more inclusive of fathers**

# May Be Necessary to Change Attitudes

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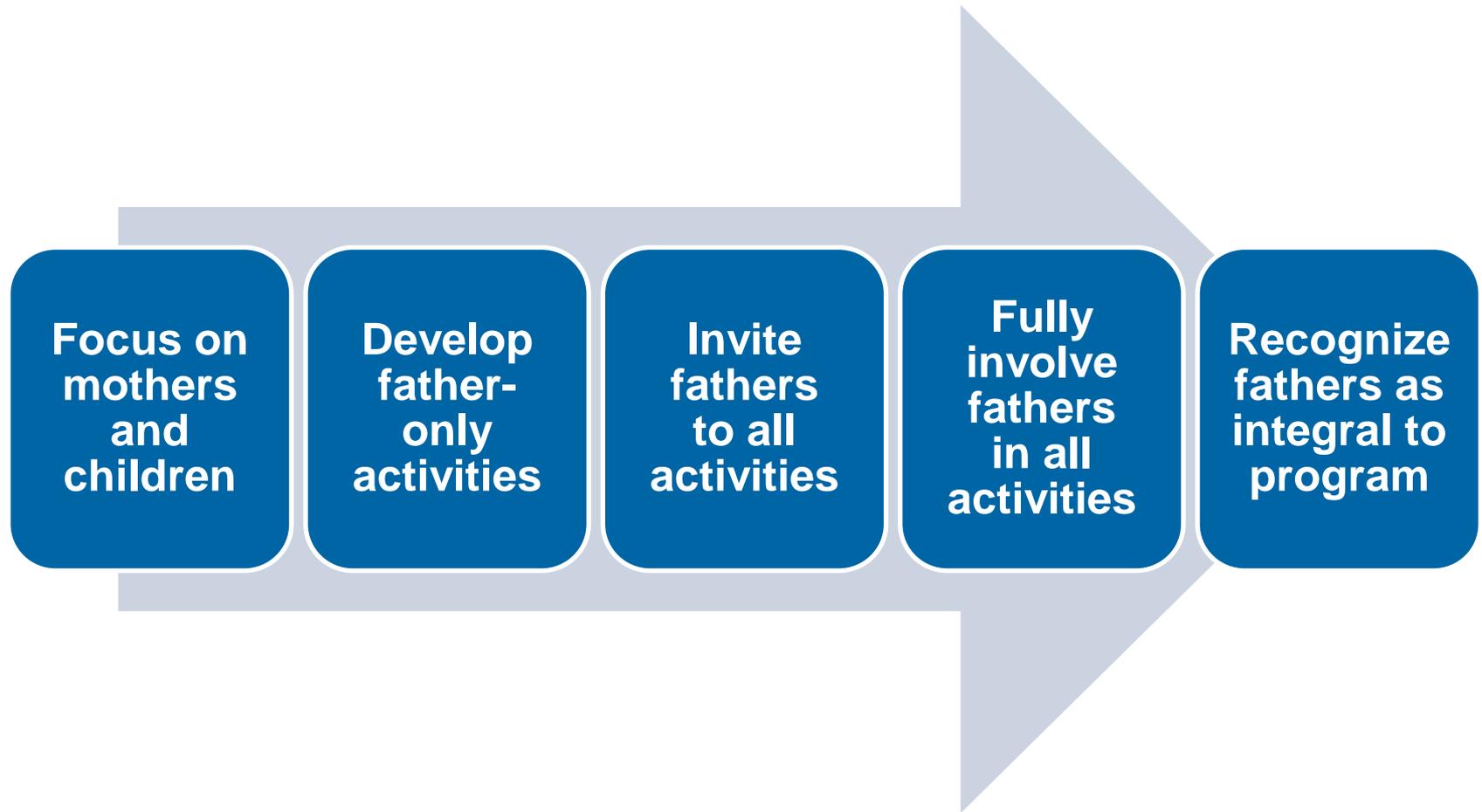
- **Fathers sometimes felt that the program was not for men**
- **Staff sometimes stereotyped fathers, for example, as being primarily interested in employment or sports**
- **Some women who felt the program benefited them were reluctant to share the services with the father**

# Other Challenges to Participation

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- **Mothers' reluctance to share information, fearing loss of public assistance or child-support enforcement**
- **Relationship issues between mothers and fathers**
- **High rates of incarceration, especially among young African American fathers**

# An Example of Program Transformation



# Engaging Fathers in Home Visiting

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- **Including fathers may take more than just inviting them to home visits**
  - **Plan home visits around the fathers' schedule**
  - **Consider engaging fathers in specific tasks, directing their attention to the child, and pointing out the child's positive reactions to the father**
  - **Get to know the fathers as individuals, understand their goals, and provide support for those goals**
  - **Recognize both the importance of fathers and potential biases**

# Do These Programs Work?

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- **To date, there is limited information on the effectiveness of these programs**
  - **Of the six identified studies, only one had a comparison group**
- **Some evidence suggests that home-visiting services may improve fathers' play skills, but this outcome could not be definitively attributed to the program**

# Summary

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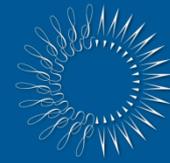
- **Home-visiting programs for fathers are uncommon but may be increasing**
- **Most programs are an expansion of services offered to mothers and children**
- **These programs may have difficulty convincing families and staff that the programs are for men**
- **Currently, there is insufficient research to evaluate the effectiveness of this strategy**

# For More Information

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**The complete results of the review are available at:**

**<http://familyreview.acf.hhs.gov>**



**William Scott**  
Program Coordinator  
Parents as Teachers

# The Parents as Teachers Fatherhood Journey



**William Scott, MA**



**Parents as Teachers**

# What we knew when we began

- Fathers contribute significantly to their children's development.
- Father involvement strategies needed to be strengthened



# Our next steps

- Learned from fatherhood experts.
- Collaborated with local, state and national partners to develop father resources

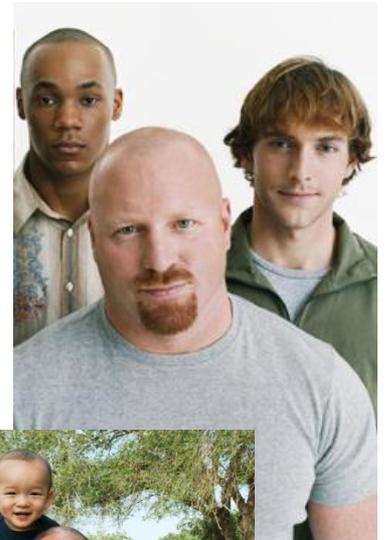


Parents as Teachers

# Resources to support fathers

## Fatherhood Grant – A partnership with sites

- Increase father participation in Parents as Teachers
- Increase fathers' knowledge of child development
- Enhance fathers' parenting skills
- Encourage fathers to become more engaged and influential in their children's everyday lives



Parents as Teachers

# Outcomes

- Increased participation
- Improved skills/knowledge
- Enhanced communication/relationships
- Improved patience/understanding

**Group meetings are an effective strategy!**



Parents as Teachers

# Challenges and lessons learned

- Organizational capacity
- Recruitment
- Retention



Parents as Teachers

# What fathers say changed...

*“More patient, explaining more. A better understanding of behaviors from kids. To see signs of anger and frustration and know when to step away or take a deep breath.”*

– Father participant



Parents as Teachers

# What facilitators say changed...

*“Their new understanding of age appropriate behavior regarding their children...We have also observed that many of the fathers have found their parenting styles to be too authoritarian and that it is not developmentally appropriate to view their children as ‘mini soldiers.’”*

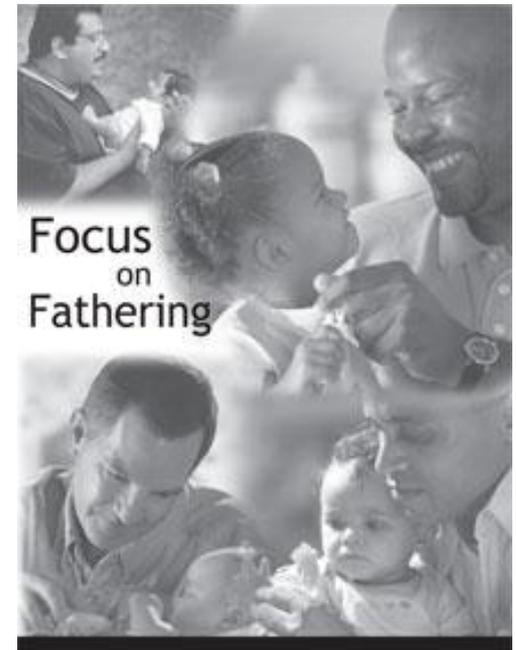
- J. Buehrle and T. Lewis (Dads on Duty), CA



Parents as Teachers

# Resources to support fathers

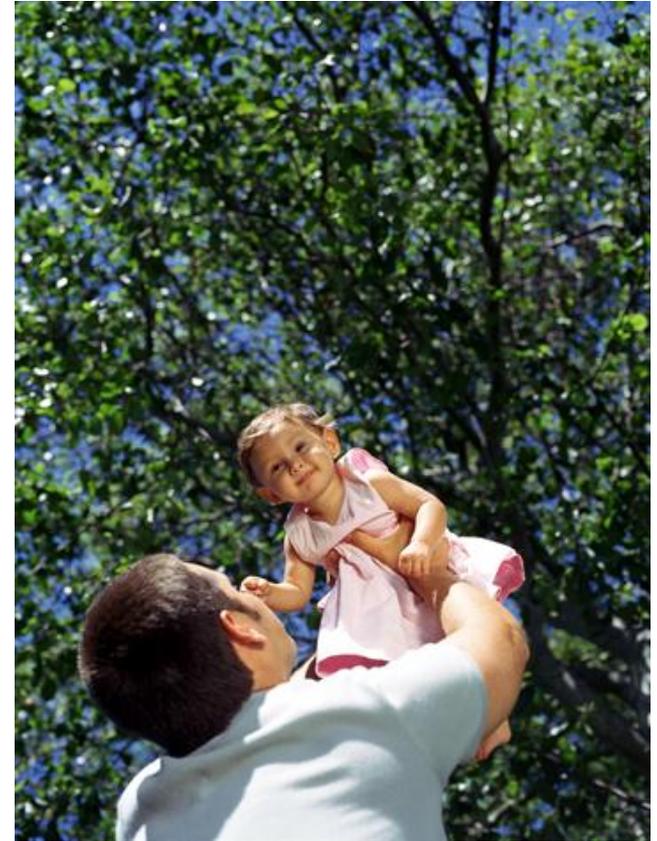
- Parents as Teachers Foundational Curriculum
- Focus on Fathering  
<http://www.parentsasteachers.org/resources>
- Young Dads, Young Moms:  
A Curriculum for Peer Facilitated  
Group Meetings
- Fatherhood Toolkit

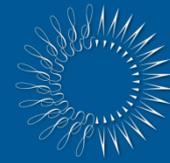


Parents as Teachers

# Final thoughts

- We are still learning
- We don't have all the answers





## Haji Shearer

Director of the Fatherhood Initiative  
Massachusetts Children's Trust Fund

# Engaging Fathers and Promoting Co-Parenting in Healthy Families Massachusetts

Haji Shearer

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Director of the Fatherhood and Co-Parenting Initiative



**Children's Trust Fund**

# Context: Healthy Families Massachusetts



- CTF funds HFM, a 15 year old, statewide, home visiting program for first time parents under 21
- Approximately 3000 families are served by 250 staff on a weekly, biweekly or monthly schedule
- CTF has a fatherhood/co-parenting advocate who provides training and TA for all 25 HF programs
- All HV are encouraged to work with fathers



# FITS 1.0

- All staff had an opportunity for training on Engaging Dad and Parenting as Partners
- There remained a wide disparity in rates of father involvement in various programs
- In 2009, CTF began an 3 to 6 month Intensive Support model (FITS) with selected programs to increase father participation
- Within a few months, the first three programs we worked with tripled their percentage of fathers on home visits from single digits to high 20s/low 30s



# FITS 2.0



- However, rates reached a plateau and started dropping after the intensive support ended
- In 2010, on the suggestion of HVs, CTF created a Resource Guide to facilitate work with fathers
- FITS model extended to 12 months for selected programs and protocol was developed for all programs to use the Resource Guide
- Father engagement was also embedded in Core Training



# Benchmarks

- In 2010, for the first time, CTF created a benchmark for father engagement
- 45% of participants are required to have a visit with father present
- From 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter FY11 to the same time FY12, the program average rate for fathers on one HV went from 25% to 45%
- We've also observed a positive correlation between father involvement and length of time mother stays in program



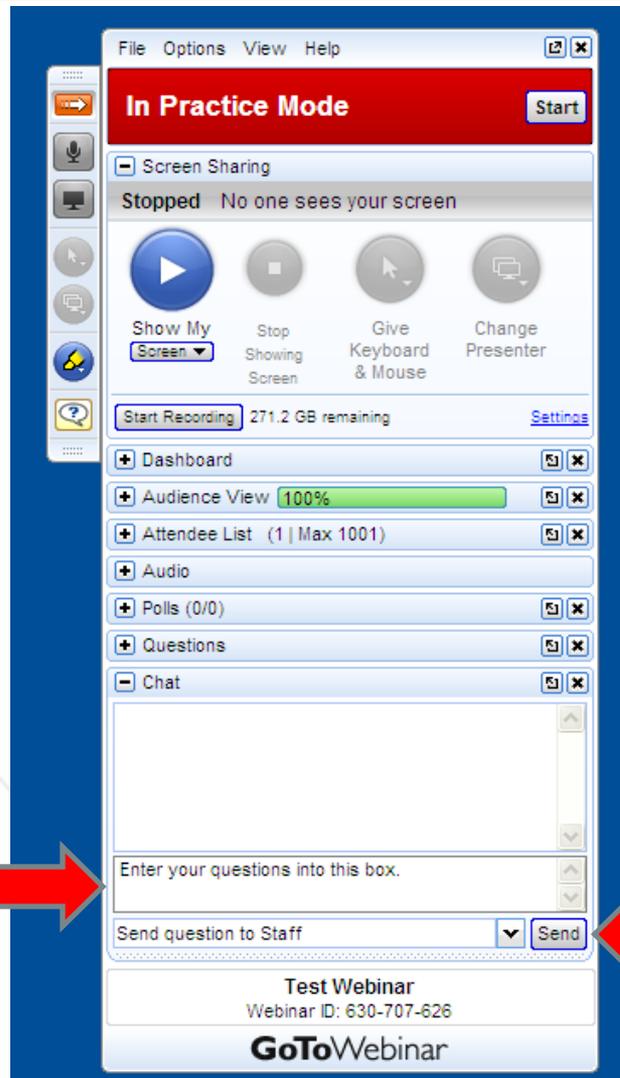
# Recommendations

- See father involvement as an issue of cultural competency and address resistance from staff and mothers
- Set SMART benchmarks for father engagement
- Work closely with community IPV and BIP providers and distinguish IPV from normal relational conflict
- As you do with mothers, use a father's desire to become a better parent as leverage for changing his behavior



# Q & A

**Enter question  
into this box.**

A screenshot of the GoToWebinar control panel. At the top, it says "In Practice Mode" with a "Start" button. Below that is a "Screen Sharing" section with a "Stopped" status and "No one sees your screen". There are four buttons: "Show My Screen" (with a dropdown menu), "Stop Showing Screen", "Give Keyboard & Mouse", and "Change Presenter". Below these are "Start Recording" (with "271.2 GB remaining") and a "Settings" link. A sidebar on the left contains icons for various features. The main area has several expandable sections: "Dashboard", "Audience View" (100%), "Attendee List" (1 | Max 1001), "Audio", "Polls (0/0)", "Questions", and "Chat". The "Chat" section is expanded, showing a text input box with the placeholder "Enter your questions into this box." and a "Send" button. Below the input box is a dropdown menu labeled "Send question to Staff" and another "Send" button. At the bottom, it says "Test Webinar" and "Webinar ID: 630-707-626" with the "GoToWebinar" logo.

**Click the Send  
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# Q & A



## For more information visit:

### **Pew Home Visiting Campaign**

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Email: [william.scott@parentsasteachers.org](mailto:william.scott@parentsasteachers.org)

# Upcoming Webinar



## **Child FIRST**

June 5, 2012

3-4pm ET

Registration details available within 2 weeks on  
[www.pewstates.org/homevisiting](http://www.pewstates.org/homevisiting)