

## A VISION for Fatherhood

Most people would agree that children need Fathers.

The growing absence of fathers in children's lives has emerged as one of the nation's greatest social problems, resulting in lost opportunities for children and a financial burden to society. The annual economic cost to the American public is estimated to be more than \$55,000 for each fatherless family. Of greater concern is the emotional cost experienced by children who miss out on opportunities to become engaged with their father.

Fatherless children in Pennsylvania and Schuylkill County pay a high price for a father's absence. Fatherless children are two times more likely to drop out of school as their classmates who live with two parents. Fatherless children are more likely to experience mental health, substance abuse, and violence.

Perhaps the most impactful outcome of being a fatherless child is the likelihood that the child will be raised in poverty. In Schuylkill County, according to 2006-2008 federal census data, nearly 1 in 4 families are headed by a female-only (father-absent) parent. Of these families, 31.3% are in poverty, compared to only 16.2% of all families and 3.1% of families in which a married couple is the head of the family.

While almost all men are biologically able to be fathers, not all fathers are currently capable of being a parent, and more importantly a good parent.

There are common solutions toward improving father's active involvement to effectively embrace and support their children.

Importantly fathers can seek out advice, ideas, and mentorship from their friends, family, place or worship, or through many social service organizations. Additionally, fathers can make a commitment to improve their own skills to actively love and parent their child. The lack of fatherhood involvement can be improved if each Dad would make a personal commitment to be responsible for the financial, emotional, spiritual, educational, and supportive well being of their child. Resources are readily available at [www.fatherhood.gov](http://www.fatherhood.gov).

Organizationally, a Fathering Workshop for health, corrections, education, faith-based and social service agencies to engage fathers in service delivery will be held from 2 to 4 p.m. on April 14 at Penn State Schuylkill Campus Conference Center. During this session, participants will learn how to lower community costs by engaging fathers to take responsibility for children and families and learn effective strategies that to increase father participation. The guest speaker will be Jay Fagan, a professor of social work at Temple University and author of several books on Fathering.

The program is sponsored by Clinical Outcomes Group in partnership with Schuylkill County's VISION and Temple University. There is no charge for the program but registration is requested. The program is CEU approved. For more information or to register, visit [www.COGInc.org](http://www.COGInc.org) or call 570-628-6990.

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