



Gateway CAP Fatherhood Times

Your Paternal Information Resource

"Dads are most ordinary men turned by love into heroes, adventurers, storytellers, and singers of song."

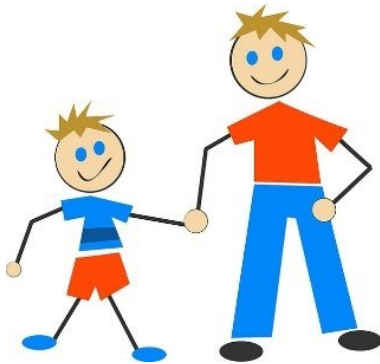
– Unknown

"Breaking the Cycle: Dads Supporting Dads in Raising the Next Generation"

Hey Dad,

If you're reading this, it's because you care. You care about being there for your little one in a way that maybe your own father wasn't there for you. And I get it. Being a dad when you never had one around as a role model can feel like stepping into uncharted waters. But here's the good news: *You don't have to do it alone. We're in this together.*

For many of us, growing up without a father figure leaves a gap—a hole that's tough to fill. You may not know what it looks like to be a present, loving father because it wasn't modeled for you. But here's the thing: Your past doesn't have to define your future. In fact, the very absence you experienced can drive you to be the kind of dad your child needs.



I can share from experience that the first and most important thing you can do is show up. You don't have to be perfect. Your kids won't remember if you always had the right answers or the most clever stories. What they will remember is that you were there—cheering them on at their first steps, reading them stories before bed, or just being present at dinner time. Showing up, even when it's hard or uncomfortable, makes all the difference.

Fatherhood is not about having it all figured out from the start. It's about being willing to learn, to grow, and to adapt. The truth is, we all have days where we don't know what we're doing. The key is to not beat yourself up. Every challenge, whether it's soothing a crying baby or dealing with the frustrations of toddler tantrums, is an opportunity to learn and grow together with your child.

There are resources out there—books, podcasts, and community groups such as we offer here at Gateway CAP Early Head Start and Head Start. But one of the best resources?

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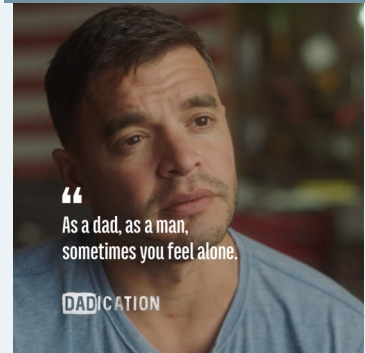
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Riddle Me This?

Riddle: Without me, a family tree is incomplete. I am the root of strength and love, so sweet. What am I?

Answer: A Father.

#DADication by making time for their kids, even when parenting isn't easy



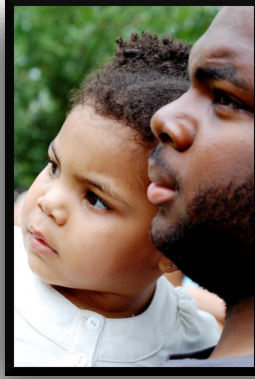
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Other dads. At our meetings, you will find guys who are also in the trenches with young kids and swap stories, frustrations, and tips. Sometimes, all it takes is hearing another dad say, "Man, I've been there," to remind you that you're not alone.

Here's something to think about: You're not just raising a child; you're redefining what fatherhood looks like for them. If your dad wasn't around, you have the chance to create a new legacy. When you show love, patience, and presence, your child will grow up knowing what a real dad looks like—and that will shape their future relationships.

You can be the one to break the cycle. It's not about being perfect; it's about being intentional. You have the power to rewrite the story for your family, to show your kids a different way, and to give them the kind of support and presence you may have missed. The best is that you do not have to do it by yourself. Our meetings create a community of men who are navigating just like you. Collectively we are building a network of men that is changing the outcomes of our communities by being together and sharing our experiences.



So, if you've ever doubted your ability to be a great dad because of your own experiences, remember this: The fact that you're worried about it means you already care deeply. That's a huge part of what makes a good father. Take it one day at a time, reach out for support when you need it, and keep showing up. Your presence, your love, and your effort will make a bigger impact than you can imagine.

From one dad to another—let's keep building the future, one hug, one story, and one moment at a time. Join our fatherhood network and together we will build a new legacy.

To find out more about our Male Initiative visit our website page at <https://www.gatewaycap.org/maleinitiative>

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"Empowering Fathers: The Dads Matter Act and Gateway Community Action Partnership's Path to Stronger Families"

There is no doubt that mothers need support throughout pregnancy, delivery, and postpartum. [The Dads Matter Act of 2024](#) recognizes this while also emphasizing the vital role of fathers. This legislative act challenges the *U.S. Department of Health and Human Services* to create and promote programs that highlight the importance of father involvement during the childbirth process. *By encouraging fathers* to be active participants, this act also aims to reduce maternal mortality rates. Increased father engagement throughout pregnancy and the early months of a child's life can greatly improve the overall well-being of both mother and child, positively influencing the child's development as well.

At Gateway CAP, the Expectant Families Program has teamed up with the Male Initiative Coordinator to promote greater *father involvement* within local communities. Together, they are working on launching programs designed specifically for first-time parents. One of the key initiatives in its final stages of development is "*Daddy Boot Camp*." This interactive training course will equip fathers with essential skills and knowledge to care for a newborn, especially those who may not have had previous experience with infants.

Daddy Boot Camp includes hands-on activities such as diapering, swaddling, and bathing, as well as important lessons on breastfeeding. Research shows that when fathers understand breastfeeding and maternal health, they are better equipped to support the mother through these crucial early stages. The program will also include guidance on nutrition and feeding, helping parents understand the proper stages of eating for their child. This five-week course, consisting of one-hour sessions, will be

piloted at Gateway's Head Start Early Education Center in midtown Atlantic City. At the end of the program, participants will receive a certificate of completion.

Gateway CAP's Expectant Families and Male/Fatherhood Initiative Programs are also building partnerships with community health networks to provide essential resources, such as model babies, diapers, and swaddling linens for the training sessions. These networks will serve as valuable resources for fathers, helping with items like diapers, wipes, cribs, and bassinets for their newborns.



Fatherhood is an incredible journey, and the support fathers provide during pregnancy and early childhood is vital to the health and well-being of both mother and child. *The Dads Matter Act of 2024* and initiatives like "*Daddy Boot Camp*" reflect the growing recognition of the important role fathers play. At Gateway CAP, we're here to help guide and support you in your fatherhood journey, ensuring that every step you take enriches your family's future.

The Evolving Role of Fathers in Early Childhood Education: A Look at Head Start & Early Head Start

Over the past few years, the role of fathers in society has been changing rapidly, and this transformation is being felt in early childhood education programs like Head Start and Early Head Start. More fathers today are stepping up to take an active role in their children's early development, and research from 2023 and 2024 shows that their involvement can have a powerful, lasting impact on their children's lives.



Fathers as Key Contributors in Early Learning

Traditionally, early childhood education has often been seen as the responsibility of mothers. However, groundbreaking studies in recent years have shown that when fathers engage early in their children's learning, the outcomes are significantly better. Children with active fathers in Head Start programs tend to show higher cognitive skills, better emotional regulation, and improved behavior. These fathers help create a positive learning environment, providing emotional support and stability that contribute to school readiness.

Key Data from 2023–2024: According to a 2023 report from the National Fatherhood Initiative, children whose fathers actively participate in early education programs like Head Start show a 20% increase in language skills and a 15% decrease in behavioral issues compared to children without paternal involvement. This new data underscores the need to encourage more fathers to participate in their children's early education.

Changing Family Dynamics

The modern family structure is no longer confined to traditional roles. Fathers are no longer seen solely as providers; they are caregivers, educators, and emotional anchors in their children's lives. More than ever, fathers are taking paternity leave, staying home, and becoming the primary caregivers while their partners work. Head Start and Early Head Start have begun adapting to these shifts by creating father-friendly environments that encourage men to be involved in their children's education from infancy.

In 2024, Head Start programs have implemented more inclusive policies that promote father engagement, including father-child bonding activities, parent-teacher conferences scheduled at more father-friendly times, and the use of social media to encourage dads to join the conversation.

The Power of Father Involvement in Head Start

A groundbreaking trend in 2024 is the focus on "Fatherhood Initiatives" within Early Head Start and Head Start programs. These initiatives are designed to break down the barriers that may prevent fathers from getting

involved—like time constraints, social expectations, or lack of confidence. Programs now offer tailored resources like workshops that teach fathers about child development, stress management, and ways to balance work and family life.

A 2024 survey conducted by the Fatherhood Research and Practice Network found that fathers who participated in these programs felt more empowered, reporting higher levels of self-confidence in parenting and improved relationships with their children. These initiatives have been especially beneficial in communities where fathers may face additional socioeconomic or cultural barriers to engagement.

Long-Term Benefits for Children and Families

Fathers who are involved in their children's early learning experience significant long-term benefits. Research shows that these children are more likely to succeed in school, avoid risky behaviors, and form healthier relationships later in life. This positive impact extends beyond the child to the entire family, as fathers who participate in these programs also report improved relationships with their partners.

The 2023–2024 updates to Head Start have focused not just on academic outcomes but on creating whole-family wellness and ensuring fathers are supported in every way—emotionally, mentally, and financially.

Final Thoughts

The role of fathers in Head Start and Early Head Start programs is evolving, reflecting broader changes in society. As men take on more active roles in their children's early education, the benefits are undeniable. With groundbreaking research supporting their involvement, and new initiatives designed to remove barriers, fathers are now more empowered than ever to make a lasting impact on their children's lives.

Programs like Head Start are paving the way for a future where father involvement in early childhood education is not just encouraged but essential. The message for dads today is clear: you matter, and your involvement is shaping the future.

Supporting Mental Wellness for Fathers: Join Us at Gateway Community Action Partnership

At Gateway Community Action Partnership's Early Head Start and Head Start programs, we recognize that fathers play a pivotal role in their children's early learning and development. With children ages newborn to 5 years old, balancing fatherhood and life's other responsibilities can sometimes feel overwhelming. That's why we're here to support you, not only in your role as a parent but in taking care of your mental wellness.

Our Male Initiative is designed to offer fathers the tools, resources, and community they need to be the best version of themselves, for both their children and their families.

The Importance of Mental Wellness for Fathers

Fathers are crucial to the emotional, social, and cognitive development of their young children. When a father is mentally healthy, his child benefits from more engaged interactions, stronger emotional bonds, and a supportive learning environment. However, we understand that many fathers face challenges—whether it's balancing work, family life, or finding their place in the role of parenting.

For fathers who may not have had positive role models, or those feeling the weight of stress or anxiety, mental health can sometimes take a backseat. Our goal is to ensure that every father feels supported, not only in their parenting journey but in their personal wellness as well.

Barriers to Mental Health for Fathers

Many dads may find it hard to ask for help or talk about the mental pressures they face. You're not alone if you've struggled with:

Balancing Work and Home: Finding time for yourself while providing for your family can feel impossible.

Feeling Isolated: It's common to feel like you have to shoulder all the responsibilities alone.

Lack of Support Networks: Many fathers, especially those without strong role models, feel they don't have someone to turn to when things get tough.

Societal Expectations: The pressure to be the "strong, silent" type can prevent fathers from seeking the help they need.

These barriers can contribute to stress, anxiety, and even depression—emotions that can

make it harder to fully engage with your child and family. But by addressing these challenges, fathers can open the door to a healthier, happier family dynamic.

How Gateway Community Action Partnership Supports Fathers

At Gateway Community Action Partnership, we're committed to providing resources that support not just your child's development but your well-being too. Through our **Male Initiative**, we offer fathers access to resources specifically designed to help them manage the challenges of fatherhood and mental health.



Fatherhood Support Meetings: Through our Male Initiative, we host regular fatherhood support meetings where dads can come together, share experiences, and learn from one another in a safe, non-judgmental environment. These meetings cover a range of topics, from parenting strategies to mental wellness tips, all tailored to the specific needs of fathers with young children.

Why Join Our Fatherhood Support Meetings?

1. Build a Stronger Connection with Your Child: Fathers who prioritize their mental health are more engaged, patient, and present with their children. Our meetings will give you the tools to deepen that bond.

2. Find a Community of Like-Minded Fathers: You don't have to go through this journey alone. Our support meetings are a great place to meet other dads who are experiencing the same challenges and joys of fatherhood.

3. Access Professional Mental Health Resources: We offer access to mental health professionals and parenting specialists who can help you navigate the pressures of fatherhood and improve your mental wellness.

4. Learn Self-Care Strategies: We understand that it's hard to take time for yourself, but in our meetings, we focus on practical, everyday self-care techniques that can make a big difference in managing stress.

5. Be Part of a Positive Change: By taking part in our Male Initiative, you're helping create a culture of support for fathers, one that encourages openness and well-being.

Available Resources at Gateway Community Action Partnership

In addition to our fatherhood support meetings, we offer a variety of resources designed to support your mental wellness:

Parenting Workshops: These sessions provide insights into child development, positive discipline techniques, and emotional connection—all important elements of parenting in the early years.

Counseling and Mental Health Support: Through Early Head Start and Head Start, we offer access to counseling services where fathers can talk one-on-one with a professional about any challenges they may be facing.

Community Events: Throughout the year, we host events that bring families together, helping fathers connect with their children in fun and meaningful ways.

Why Your Mental Wellness Matters

As fathers, you are role models, providers, and protectors—but that doesn't mean you need to carry the weight of the world alone. By prioritizing your mental health, you not only improve your own well-being but create a healthier, happier environment for your child.

The time and care you put into yourself today will make a lasting impact on your child's future, setting them up for success in school and life.

Join Us!

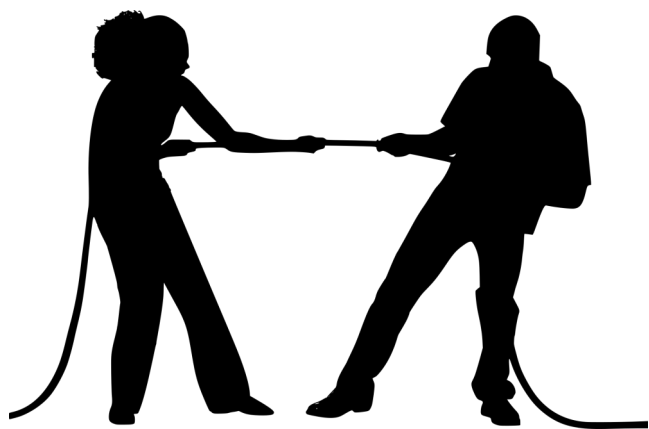
We invite all fathers in the Gateway Community Action Partnership Early Head Start and Head Start programs to take part in our **Fatherhood support meetings**. Whether you're looking for guidance, connection, or just a safe space to talk, we're here for you. Together, we can create a supportive community where fathers thrive.

To learn more or sign up for our next fatherhood meeting, make sure to contact us or visit our website.

Healthy Communication in the Family: Building Strong Co-Parenting for Your Child's Future

I get it—co-parenting is not easy and it can be tough. There are times when it can feel frustrating, it feels like nothing's working, and sometimes, you might wonder if it's even worth the effort or why it even matters. But I've been there, and I want to share something with you why it **does** matter: it is worth it, especially when you see the positive impact it has on your child's life.

As a dad myself, I understand how emotional co-parenting can get. But with a few simple steps and some support, you can build a solid co-parenting relationship that helps your child thrive.



1. Why Co-Parenting Matters

Your child's first five years are huge. This is when their brain develops the fastest and sets the stage for who they'll become. When you and the mother communicate and work together, your child picks up on that. It's more than just splitting responsibilities—it's about creating a healthy environment for them to grow.

Research from the **Journal of Family Psychology** (2023) shows that when dads are involved and co-parenting is positive, kids develop better emotional and social skills, which helps them succeed in school and life.

2. Keep It Simple: Communication is Key

You don't have to be on the same page with everything, but you **do** need to talk—and do it respectfully. Sometimes, it's about taking a step back and focusing on the bigger picture. Instead of blaming or arguing, try starting conversations with "I feel like..." or "Our child needs..." This helps keep things positive and focused on what's best for your kid.

Studies show that when parents communicate well, even when they're not together, kids feel more secure and experience less stress.

3. Routine is Your Best Friend

Kids need consistency, especially when they're young. Having similar routines—whether it's bedtime, meals, or playtime—helps them feel safe. Talk with the co-parent about setting up some basic guidelines that both of you can follow. It doesn't have to be exact, but having some shared structure makes a big difference.

The **American Academy of Pediatrics** (2023) says that routines help kids feel more secure and grow emotionally, mentally, and physically.

4. Focus on Your Child, Not Your Differences

Let's be real: there will be times when you and the mother don't agree. But when those moments happen, remember that it's about your child's well-being. If things get heated, take a step back and think about what's best for them. It's okay to ask for help too—that's what we're here for.

At *Gateway Community Action Partnership*, we have fatherhood support groups through *Head Start and Early Head Start* that give dads like us a place to talk, share ideas, and get advice. You're not alone in this.

5. You're Shaping Your Child's Future

When you and the mother work together, you're teaching your child what healthy relationships look like. You're showing them how to handle conflict, how to be patient, and how to solve problems. Those lessons will stick with them long after they're out of preschool.

We've Got Your Back

Co-parenting isn't always easy, but it's worth it. If you ever feel like you're stuck or unsure, don't hesitate to reach out. Through *Gateway Community Action Partnership's Male Initiative*, our fatherhood support groups and programs like *Head Start and Early Head Start* are designed to help dads like you. From Daddy Boot Camps to regular fatherhood meetings, we're here to give you the tools you need to succeed.

You don't have to do this alone. Keep showing up, keep the communication open, and keep focusing on your child. You've got this.

Gateway CAP EHS & HS 2024

Dads being Dads

