

THE FATHER FACTOR



The South Carolina Center for Fathers and Families



UNITING FAMILIES

The South Carolina Center for Fathers and Families believes fathers make unique, irreplaceable contributions to their children. Enabling fathers to get past barriers that prevent their engagement with their children is crucial. Children learn to trust or mistrust, to feel safe or afraid, to feel loved or unloved based on the way people, especially parents, respond to them. Having an involved, caring dad around goes a long way. We've all seen the consequences of when a dad is uninvolved with his children and the research confirms it. As the umbrella organization for fatherhood programs in South Carolina, the South Carolina Center for Fathers and Families provides on-going leadership, helps with resource development, and advocates father-friendly policies and practices because dads do, in fact, make a difference.

THE DAD DIFFERENCE

Father absence ranks among our more pressing social problems. Children living in a home with a dad are statistically more likely to stay in school and far less likely to commit crimes. They're not as likely to have sex as teens and father children out of wedlock. They are much less prone to perpetuating a vicious cycle that traps ensuing generations.

Poverty, without a doubt, presents society a problem of immense proportions. That father-absent families provide a significant predictor of poverty for children is well documented. And yet strengthening relationships between fathers and their children has long received little attention. The South Carolina Center for Fathers and Families, a statewide nonprofit organization, is addressing this problem. The Center's goal is to help fathers overcome barriers that prevent them from being better providers for their children.

BREAKING BARRIERS, BREAKING THE CYCLE

Some fathers choose to be uninvolved in their children's lives; others hunger for involvement but various barriers get in their way. Many fathers lack confidence in their parenting ability. Some find it hard to support their families financially due to a lack of education. And there's the cycle itself. Many grew up in father-absent homes themselves and, thus, find it difficult to provide for their children emotionally and spiritually.

Lack of employment is one of the greatest barriers. Employment is critical to a father's ability to support his family and himself. With so much at stake, the Center works with community-based programs to build bridges that help fathers become better fathers, better co-parents, and community role models. These local programs are at the heart of the Center's Fatherhood Initiative.



FOR THE GOOD OF ALL

Society suffers as a whole when children drop out of school, exhibit delinquent behavior, experience teen pregnancies, and end up with diminished hope for the future. On the other hand, children with involved, loving fathers perform better in school, develop self-esteem, and better prepare themselves as tomorrow's leaders.

That's reason enough for fatherhood programs to offer fathers training, referrals, and support to improve their employment, parenting skills, and relationships. In addition to one-on-one interaction, education takes place in group settings where fathers relate and talk about what's best for their families. For complex issues—drugs, alcohol, abusive and violent behavior, and mental illness—programs provide a trusted bridge between fathers and specialized treatment organizations.

Men in fatherhood programs participate in a holistic program since most factors associated with responsible fatherhood—education, employment, sobriety, spirituality, and healthy relationships—interrelate. Fatherhood programs treat the men from the inside out, helping them meet their material, emotional, and spiritual needs.

IN AN IMPERFECT WORLD

Doubtless, fatherhood best occurs within the context of a traditional marriage. While the Center believes two-parent, married families provide the most effective environment for raising children, for many marriage may be an unattainable goal. The next best thing is having responsible single parents—mothers and fathers—meet their children's needs in a meaningful, co-parenting situation where the lives of all benefit.



FOCUSED SERVICES

- Job Readiness and Employment
- Legal Education and Assistance
- Parenting and Co-Parenting Instruction
- Counseling and Peer Support
- Healthy Relationships and Marriage Education
- Personal Development
- Spiritual Development
- Life Skills
- Additional Services on a Case-by-Case Basis

The Center guides and supports local programs in this service delivery as well as accounting, personnel matters, working with social services and legal entities, and promoting fathers' employability. The Center directs all programs to apply best practices in working with fathers committed to reconnecting with their families. This framework insures the Initiative works together.



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THE SOUTH CAROLINA CENTER FOR FATHERS AND FAMILIES: TODAY

The South Carolina Center for Fathers and Families, a faith-based, nonprofit organization, develops and supports a statewide infrastructure that strengthens relationships between fathers and families throughout South Carolina.

Achieving this mission requires a team effort. The Center's goal is to work with communities, organizations, and government to help men be mature, responsible fathers who meet their children's emotional, spiritual, and material needs.

To fulfill its goal, the Center performs four critical functions:

- 1 It provides leadership, infrastructure and oversight for the Fatherhood Initiative.
- 2 It promotes father-friendly policies while seeking to change adversarial policies that hinder men from re-engaging with their children.
- 3 It provides wide-ranging programming support and technical assistance for a well-coordinated Initiative.
- 4 It helps raise funds and provides financial resources to the local programs.

THE SOUTH CAROLINA CENTER FOR FATHERS AND FAMILIES: THE BEGINNING

The Sisters of Charity Foundation of South Carolina founded The South Carolina Center for Fathers and Families in 2002 as an outgrowth of its Fatherhood Initiative, Reducing Poverty through Father Engagement. The Foundation is committed to addressing the needs of South Carolina's poor and underserved. The Center is a ministry of the Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine.

For more information about the Center and the local fatherhood programs, visit www.scfathersandfamilies.com.

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