

Washington Fatherhood Council: Maximizing Children's Potential

Washington State Department of Social and Health Services
Economic Services Administration

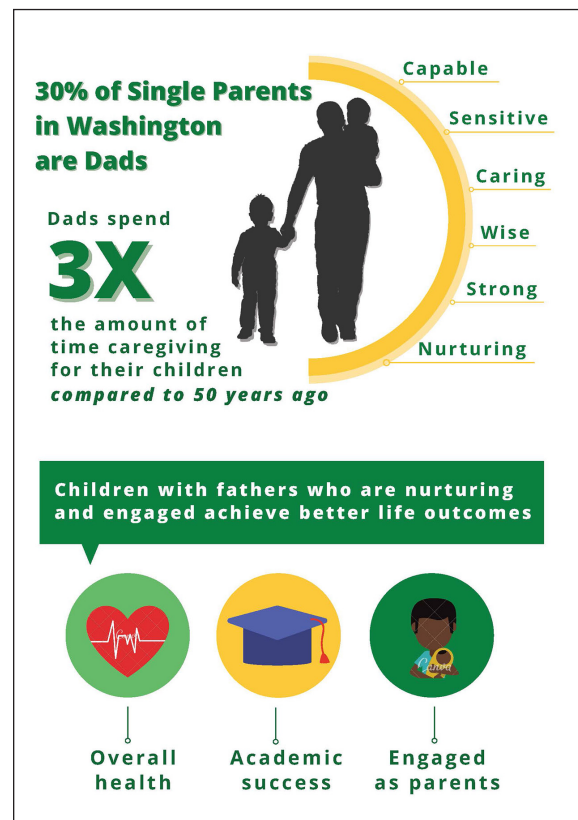
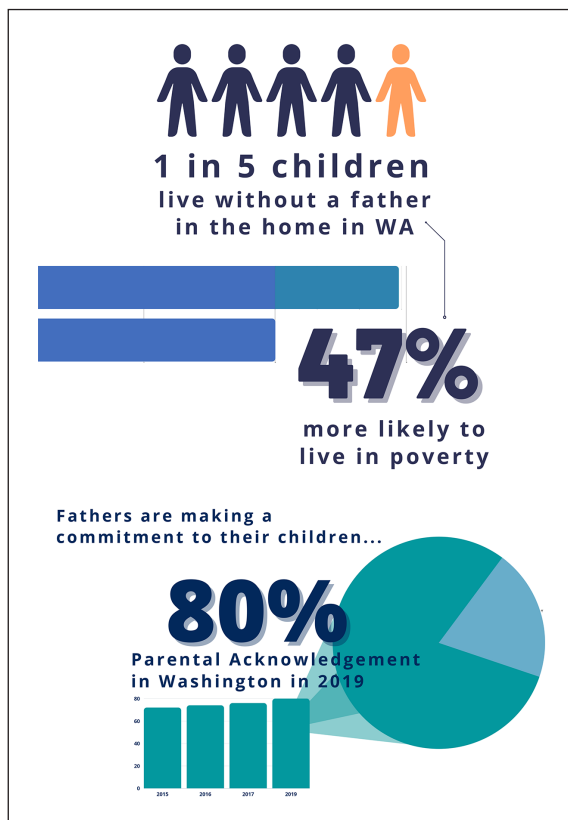
Washington Fatherhood Council: Maximizing Children's Potential

ESA transforms lives by connecting children, adults and families to the resources and opportunities that help them reach their full potential in life. Washington state recognizes that investing in children, especially young children, lays the pathway for lifelong success. The people of Washington cannot expect a healthier, more resilient, more prosperous future if we don't invest in our children now — and that includes investing in fathers and families.

We know from research* and the work of the Washington Fatherhood Council that:

- Child and family well-being improve when fathers are engaged positively in their children's lives.
- Fathers play a unique and important role in children's development.
- Dads should have the support and resources to become the fathers they aspire to be.

The positive and protective impacts of fatherhood and the father-child bond on early childhood development are undeniable. Supporting nurturing, consistent fathering, starting at birth, has proven to contribute to language development, reduced early behavioral issues, reading and math skills, and social-emotional development that have long-term impacts on children's emotional and economic well-being.



* Father Facts 8, eighth edition, 2019, National Fatherhood Initiative®
Father Facts, 8th Edition, | Fatherhood.gov

Fathers can reduce stress for mothers, enhancing the mother-child relationship and facilitating positive adjustment in children. Conversely, fatherhood absence is strongly tied to poor adolescent and young adult outcomes, such as high rates of juvenile and adult justice involvement, suicide and depression, homelessness and lower graduation rates. Quality of time is important. While resident fathers are more likely to interact consistently with their children, resident and non-resident fathers alike have a positive influence through loving, consistent parenting.

The Role of Fathers in Achieving ESA's Goal to Reduce Poverty by 2025

The well-established benefits of reducing poverty and inequality inspired ESA to establish a 2025 goal to reduce poverty by half in a way that eliminates disparities. Since 2018, ESA is a proud founding and sustaining partner of the **Washington Fatherhood Council**, a collaborative, transformational group of more than 25 state and local service providers, academics and — most importantly — fathers, who help further the goals of reducing poverty and promoting inclusion, access and belonging.

- **Mission:** Amplify the voices of fathers and father figures in Washington state to promote fatherhood inclusion, equity, diversity and research activity that strengthens families and maximizes children's potential.
- **Vision:** Fathers and father figures in Washington become the parents their children and families need them to be.
- **Role:** Bringing together a broad spectrum of fathers, public and private agencies, academics and advocates to: raise awareness around the unique role of fathers; cultivate a father-inclusive culture in our communities, agencies and policies; develop leaders at all levels to carry messages; and welcome diverse cultures and experiences of fathers to create transformational change.

How the Washington Fatherhood Council Supports Fathers

Father-Friendly Principles: We promote these [North Star Principles](#) to guide Washington state to strengthen our father-friendly services and systems.

Annual Fatherhood Summit: Every year, we make space for dads and the people who serve them to come together to accelerate fatherhood inclusion and more holistic co-parenting supports.

Community Cafés: Brings together professionals and dads in conversation to help lay the community groundwork for positive change by raising awareness of the unique needs of fathers and sparking hope for innovation.

Dads Connect: A conversation series with fathers and father figures to come together to talk about important issues that affect them and their families.

Provider Learning Series: Knowledge and skill-building learning sessions with state and national presenters that strengthen our provider network to effectively engage and support fathers and father figures.

As our keynote speaker said at a recent Fatherhood Summit, *"We are going to be intentional and unapologetic about our focus on fathers even though we all agree this work is about families and children."* Join us in our work by connecting at www.wafatherhoodcouncil.org.

Building on past successes in education, outreach and connection, the Fatherhood Council will expand its reach in 2024, by conducting and releasing a study/research review. Entitled Washington Fatherhood: A State of the State, the study will outline the landscape of current policies, funding, programs, and experiences of fathers and father figures in Washington state, with a focus on identifying gaps and needs to inform strategic and policy recommendations.

The study will serve as a unifying basis for fatherhood advocacy and support with our cross agency partnership which includes the Department of Social and Health Services, the Department of Children, Youth, and Families, the Health Care Authority, the Department of Health, the Department of Corrections, and potentially others. We anticipate that this partnership will be codified in a Memorandum of Understanding confirming each agency's commitment to supporting father engagement as an investment in the well-being of children and families.

Join us in our work by connecting at www.wafatherhoodcouncil.org.



Anne Stone, Director
Phone: 360.481.9185
Email: anne.stone@dshs.wa.gov
www.wafatherhoodcouncil.org



(10/2023)