



Fatherhood Program

The teenage pregnancy problem in the United States is not a new one. Since births to teenagers were first labeled as a major social problem in the 1970s, many programs have been developed and implemented to address this issue. The emphasis, however, has been viewed primarily as a woman's issue, with the adolescent father regarded as a shadowy, unknown figure—more a culprit than a potential contributor to either the mother or his child. Teen fathers in American Society have generally been viewed as irresponsible and lacking interest in caring for their children. However, studies show that most teenage fathers are just as confused, afraid and anxious as the young women who give birth.

It is clear that the importance of the role of fathers has been severely under valued. Current studies show that children raised without fathers are more likely to perform poorly in school; develop emotional problems; engage in risky behavior such as early sexual activity and drug and alcohol abuse; and experience violence as children. Several studies show that the greatest predictor of juvenile delinquency and teen pregnancy is the absence of fathers in the home. In addition, fatherless boys are more likely to become violent men than are boys raised with fathers.

The Southwest Key Fatherhood Program seeks to engage teen and young adult fathers in relationship-building and long-term bonding with their children through supportive parental educational groups. We employ a nationally recognized fatherhood curricula to promote responsible fatherhood and address the issues that young fathers face. Strengthening relationships between young fathers and their children enhances the lives of families, provides needed support to young mothers and offers a compelling solution to breaking the cycle of incarceration, poverty, juvenile delinquency, and despair that young children experience.

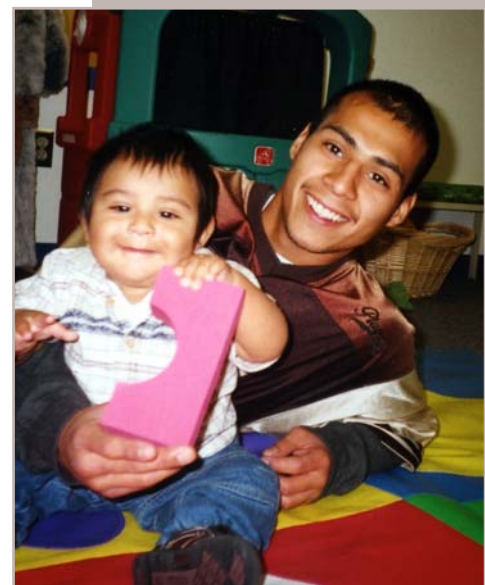
Program Description

The ultimate goal of the Fatherhood Program is to develop awareness of young men of the importance of their role as fathers to their children as well as their relationship with their own father. We strive to provide a father-friendly environment for young men to come together, address, and share parenting needs and information. Through interactive group activities and parental training, we teach participants how to build healthy, strong, productive relationships with their children, ultimately aspiring to break the pattern of children, particularly children of color, growing up in the absence of their fathers and the "cycle of incarceration".

In our current program, participants range in age from 14 to 26 years old, and many are currently detained in juvenile or adult criminal justice systems. When appropriate, and with permission from the spouse or guardian, Southwest Key staff makes efforts to connect the children with the imprisoned parent through increased communication or visitation. We also work directly with families of young fathers, including families of incarcerated individuals. Support is provided to families through the identification of youth and family services available in specified geographic regions. For families of incarcerated individuals, we provide support and guidance during the incarceration period and prepare the family for potential reintegration of the incarcerated individual.

"The kind of father I would like to be towards my son is a respectful father who my son can look to and say that my father was always there for me no matter what."

~ Southwest Key Youth





Group Activities & Curriculum

Young fathers participate in the program for a period of one year. Group meetings are held once a week for one and one-half to two hours per session. Activities and group sessions incorporate curriculum to teach participating young men how to become more responsible, productive role models and parents. Through group work and activities, we teach our participants how to build healthy and productive relationships with their children.

Our curriculum, "Raising Children with Pride", addresses the following topics:

Sharing 'Who I Am'

Ethnic/Cultural Roots ♦ Traditions and Customs
Raising Children with a sense of pride.

Creating 'Another Me'

Pregnancy and Birth ♦ Establishing Paternity
Circle of Relationships ♦ Communicating with value

Accepting 'My Reflection'

Handling Infants ♦ Working with Infants ♦ Nurturing
Routines ♦ Baby Equipment

Culturally Competent Curricula

- ♦ El Joven Noble Program/Hombre Jovenes Con Palabra
(The Noble Young Men Program/Young Men With Word)
 - ♦ Con Los Padres (With The Fathers)
 - ♦ Cara y Corazon (Face And Heart)

Exploring the World

Working with Toddlers ♦ Baby Proofing the Environment
Toilet training tips ♦ Colds and Infections
Coping with Illness ♦ Disease can Spread

Taking Care of Business

Anger ♦ Family and Community Violence
Violence and Children ♦ Spanking
Family Violence ♦ Stress and the Body
Characteristics of a Potential Abuser

Developmental Issues

Pregnancy and Birth ♦ Infancy (Birth - 1 year
Toddlers 1-3 years ♦ Preschool / Kindergarten
Elementary ♦ Adolescence ♦ Thinking Stages



Funded by: Department of Health and Human Services
Administration for Children and Families

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