



**Institute for
Research on
Poverty**

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON



CHILD ABUSE & NEGLECT

Prevention Board



The Role of Fathers in Children's Health

February 19, 2020

Webinar begins at 2pm EST/1pm CST/12pm MST/11am PST

Tova Walsh, PhD, MSW

Assistant Professor,
UW-Madison School of Social Work

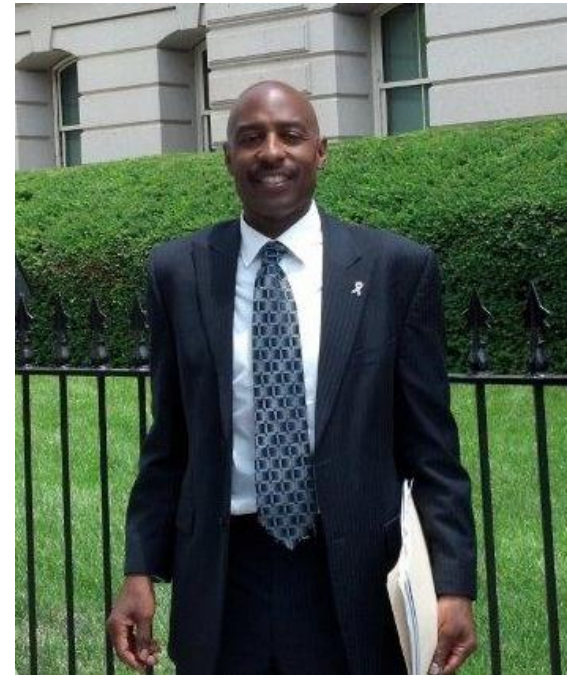
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Darryl Davidson

Milwaukee Fatherhood Initiative Director

City of Milwaukee



Milwaukee Fatherhood Initiative; Direct Assistance to Dads Project

The **Milwaukee Fatherhood Initiative** is a collaborative effort between City of Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett and numerous partner organizations assisting fathers in helping their children to thrive.

The central areas of focus include men's health, healthy child development, employment, legal navigation, child support services, driver's license recovery, continuing education and more. The core belief is that positive father involvement strengthens child, families and communities.

The **Direct Assistance For Dads (DAD) Project** is a unique home visiting strategy for expectant fathers and fathers of young children offered through the City of Milwaukee Health Department.

Craig Garfield, MD, MAPP

Professor of Pediatrics,
Northwestern University
Feinberg School of Medicine

Director,
Family and Child Health
Innovations Program (FCHIP),
Lurie Children's Hospital



Family and Child Health Innovations Program (FCHIP)

- New initiative to understand child health in the context of the family
- “Because children thrive when parents thrive.”
- Holistic approach to the family in all its diversity
 - What brings us together

 Ann & Robert H. Lurie
Children's Hospital of Chicago®



Outline of Presentation

- Fathers' influence on the health and development of their children
- Effects of paternal physical and mental health on child and family wellbeing
- Role of fathers in children's healthcare
- Strategies for healthcare and child and family services providers to more effectively engage fathers
- Questions and discussion



Who are fathers?

- Biological
- Stepfather
- Father figure

...in families ranging from married to cohabiting, single parent, and re-combined.



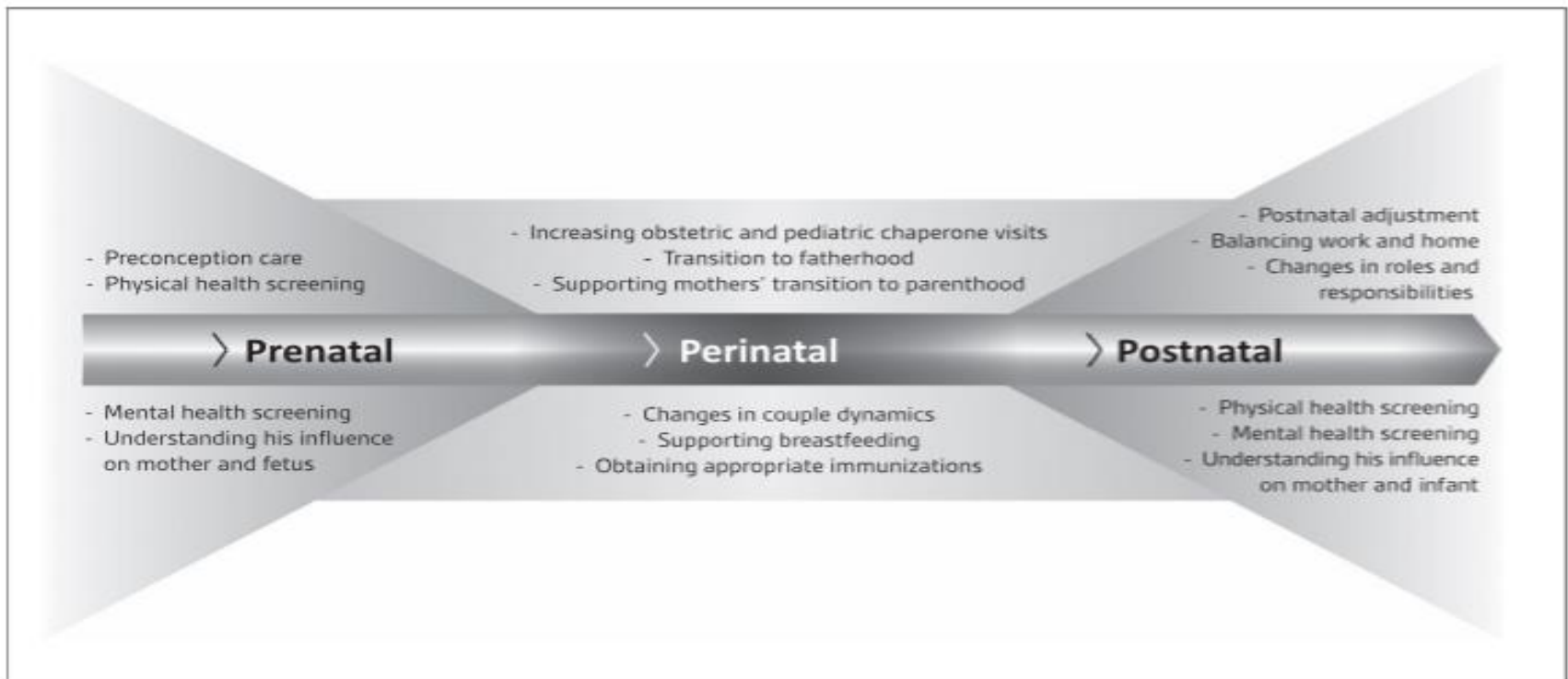
Notions of the role of a father are diverse, and may be influenced by cultural and demographic factors.

Fathers' influence on the health and development of their children



Conceptualizing fathers' preconception health

- Preconception health: “things men can do for their own health, as well as for the women and children in their lives” (CDC)



During pregnancy...

Partner support associated with positive maternal and child outcomes

- father involvement prenatally increases likelihood of mother receiving 1st trimester prenatal care
- women with supportive partners have fewer health problems in pregnancy
- the quality of the partner relationship predicts how both mother and father will nurture and respond to the needs of their child

ACOG, 2009; Guterman & Lee, 2005; Marsiglio, 2008;

Yogman, M., Garfield, C. F., & Committee on Psychosocial Aspects of Child and Family Health (2016)

Starting early

The New York Times

From a Pediatrician, Lessons for Dads-to-Be

The class is part of a broader effort to shed scientific light on fathers' roles in child and family well-being.



Fathers react to a vivid childbirth video in Dr. Craig Garfield's class for expectant fathers at Northwestern. Randy Belice



By Anahad O'Connor

June 14, 2018



CHICAGO — In a conference room at Northwestern Memorial Hospital on a recent evening, a group of men sat down for a class on pregnancy and childbirth led by Dr. Craig Garfield, a pediatrician who specializes in studying new fathers.


M Northwestern
Medicine®

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Support for Parents

Dads, Welcome to the NICU!

by NICU2HOME Team



Your First Visit to the NICU

Your baby has just been born, and your partner is still recovering from delivery. You, the new father, are often the first member of your family to visit the NICU and see your

Home Update Education Team Journey

Across childhood and adolescence...

Fathers influence child health and development via...

- Parenting behavior
 - Engagement in caregiving and play
 - Participation in decision-making, ensuring that children are cared for
- Children's diet / nutrition, sleep, exercise, play



Lamb, Pleck, Charnov, & Levine, 1987; Pleck, 2010;

Yogman, Garfield, & AAP Committee on Psychosocial Aspects of Child and Family Health, 2016

Benefits to children of positive father involvement

Positive father involvement is associated with positive social, emotional, and cognitive outcomes for children from infancy to adolescence, and into adulthood.



Amato, 1994; Deutsch, Servis, & Payne, 2001; Flouri & Buchanan, 2003; McBride, Schoppe-Sullivan, & Ho, 2005; Mosley & Thomson, 1995; Parke et al., 2002; Sarkadi, Kristiansson, Oberklaid, & Bremberg, 2007; Volling & Belsky, 1992; Yeung, Duncan, & Hill, 2000

Effects of paternal mental and physical health on child and family wellbeing



Influence of fathers' well-being on child and family health

Paternal depression

- Heightened in the period surrounding the birth of a child
- Highly correlated with maternal depression
- Negatively impacts co-parent relationships, parenting interactions & parent-child relationships
- Associated with poorer emotional and behavioral outcomes in childhood and adolescence
- Fathers with depression may present differently than mothers
- Limited awareness of paternal PPD

Influence of fathers' health on child and family health

- Fathers' health behaviors (e.g., immunization) have direct impact on infant and child risk
- Unhealthy habits in fathers may be more impactful for children
- Health conscious fathers may benefit families and children
 - Improving overall family functioning
 - Shaping the family environment and norms
 - Improving family financial situation



Role of fathers in children's healthcare



Defining father involvement in children's healthcare

- Increased role during pregnancy, labor, and delivery
- Attendance at well-child and acute care visits
- Healthcare decision making
- Treatment adherence
- Managing chronic conditions



Key findings of qualitative research on father engagement in prenatal and pediatric care

In qualitative studies with expectant and new parents:

- Mothers and fathers want and expect fathers to be involved in prenatal and pediatric care
- Participation is highly meaningful to fathers
- Dual role as parent and partner
- Some fathers feel marginalized or uncertain of how to engage
- Fathers identify specific knowledge needs related to engaging with infants / toddlers / very young children

Key findings of quantitative research on father engagement in prenatal and pediatric care

In a nationally representative sample of men aged 18-35 (N=1303):

- 88% of fathers attended at least one prenatal ultrasound
- 81% of fathers attend pediatric visits sometimes, often, or always
- Prenatal engagement positively associated with participation in pediatric care
- Gaps in knowledge of early development

Fathers' experiences in prenatal & pediatric settings



Significance of father involvement in children's healthcare

- Differences in measures obtained separately from mothers and fathers suggest importance of multiple perspectives
- Father participation in care associated with higher treatment adherence, better family adjustment
- Healthcare seeking behaviors are highly correlated among family members



Schor, Starfield, Stidley, & Hankin, 1987; Wysocki & Gavin, 2004;
Yogman, Garfield, & AAP Committee on Psychosocial Aspects of Child and Family Health, 2016

Strategies for healthcare and child and family services providers to more effectively engage fathers



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Learn more about fathers' experiences, circumstances, involvement and needs

- Research with fathers
- Ask individual fathers



Why survey fathers?

- Fathers play a key role in the health and development of their children; Father health status and behaviors influence decisions about pregnancy, women's health, and infant and early child development
- Postnatal father involvement
 - better pre/postpartum maternal health
 - better child developmental outcomes
- Very little research has examined:
 - roles, behaviors of expectant fathers
 - father's influence on maternal and child health
 - effect of transition to fatherhood on paternal health



Known challenges:

- **RR Men < Women**
- **Father may be unknown or contact information missing on birth certificate**
- **Contact info for non-residential fathers limited**

Sources: Commission on Paternal Involvement in Pregnancy Outcomes, Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies. Commission outlook: best and promising practices for improving research, policy and practice on paternal involvement in pregnancy outcomes; Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs. AMCHP fact sheet. Father involvement in MCH programs.

PRAMS for Dads

- Population-level survey to examine men's health, attitudes, and experiences prior to and after becoming a father
- Collects comprehensive information about fathers before and after the birth of their child
 - Non/resident fathers
- Links between paternal factors and pregnancy outcomes
- Builds on success of PRAMS methodology



PRAMS For DADS

THE BEST SOURCE OF DATA ON FATHERS AND BABIES

AJPH PREGNANCY RISK ASSESSMENT MONITORING SYSTEM

Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System for Dads: Public Health Surveillance of New Fathers in the Perinatal Period

As Father's Day approaches each June, the nation pauses to reflect on the importance of fathers. In the United States, approximately 60% of American men are fathers, 82% of whom live with at least one of their children.¹ Over the past few decades, we have learned that paternal involvement is strongly associated with better prenatal and postnatal maternal health and with improved developmental outcomes for children.² A number of key indicators demonstrate the influence fathers have on prenatal maternal and child health,³ including improvements in first trimester prenatal care initiation, infant morbidity and mortality, and breastfeeding initiation and continuation. Although fathers' involvement in families is increasing, there has been limited research on how fatherhood affects the health and well-being of fathers themselves, especially at and after the time of the transition into fatherhood. In particular, surveillance efforts examining new fathers' behavior and attitudes remains suboptimal. Expectant fathers' preconception health is a newly emerging area of research focused on measuring the health of men during their

reproductive years, a key tenet of men's health.⁴

MALE HEALTH AND NEW FATHERS

Beyond influences of paternal involvement on maternal and child health outcomes, enhanced paternal health surveillance presents an opportunity to benefit overall male health, as the transition to fatherhood affects male mental and physical health.⁵ A healthy father is more likely to produce a healthy offspring, participate fully in child-rearing, and provide financial support. Yet from the time of their high school physical until they reach middle age, many men do not access health care. The transition to fatherhood could be an opportune time to promote the integral involvement of fathers in their children's lives as well as serve as a lever for men's health change.⁶ Focused surveillance designed to better understand the health care needs of new fathers would provide insight into the gap in male health care services and use, ultimately supporting men and their families.

PERINATAL HEALTH SURVEILLANCE

Although a few existing systems, such as the National Survey of Family Growth and the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study, touch on aspects of fatherhood, there are no large-scale US-based public health surveillance efforts designed specifically for men during the perinatal period and the significant period of transition to fatherhood.

PRAMS

One of the longest-running and most successful public health surveillance programs is the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS), a 30-year-old state-based surveillance system

conducted annually of mothers' perinatal behavior, attitudes, and experiences (see Shulman et al. in this issue of *AJPH*, p. 1305).

PRAMS has been especially useful for tracking healthy initiation over time, evaluating public health programs, and addressing emerging health issues (e.g., e-cigarette use, influenza vaccine, Zika) during the perinatal period through the use of short questionnaire supplements.

Currently, the primary question asked about fathers in PRAMS relates to domestic interpersonal violence around pregnancy. Although information regarding fathers could be expanded by using a PRAMS supplement, the data remain that mothers would be responsible, hindering a firsthand examination of the father's perinatal experience. To expand knowledge of fatherhood risks, benefits, and opportunities—inclusive of positive aspects of parenthood as well as men's health—a wealth of topics related to fathers and their families could be directly asked of men, rather than indirectly through women, thereby

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

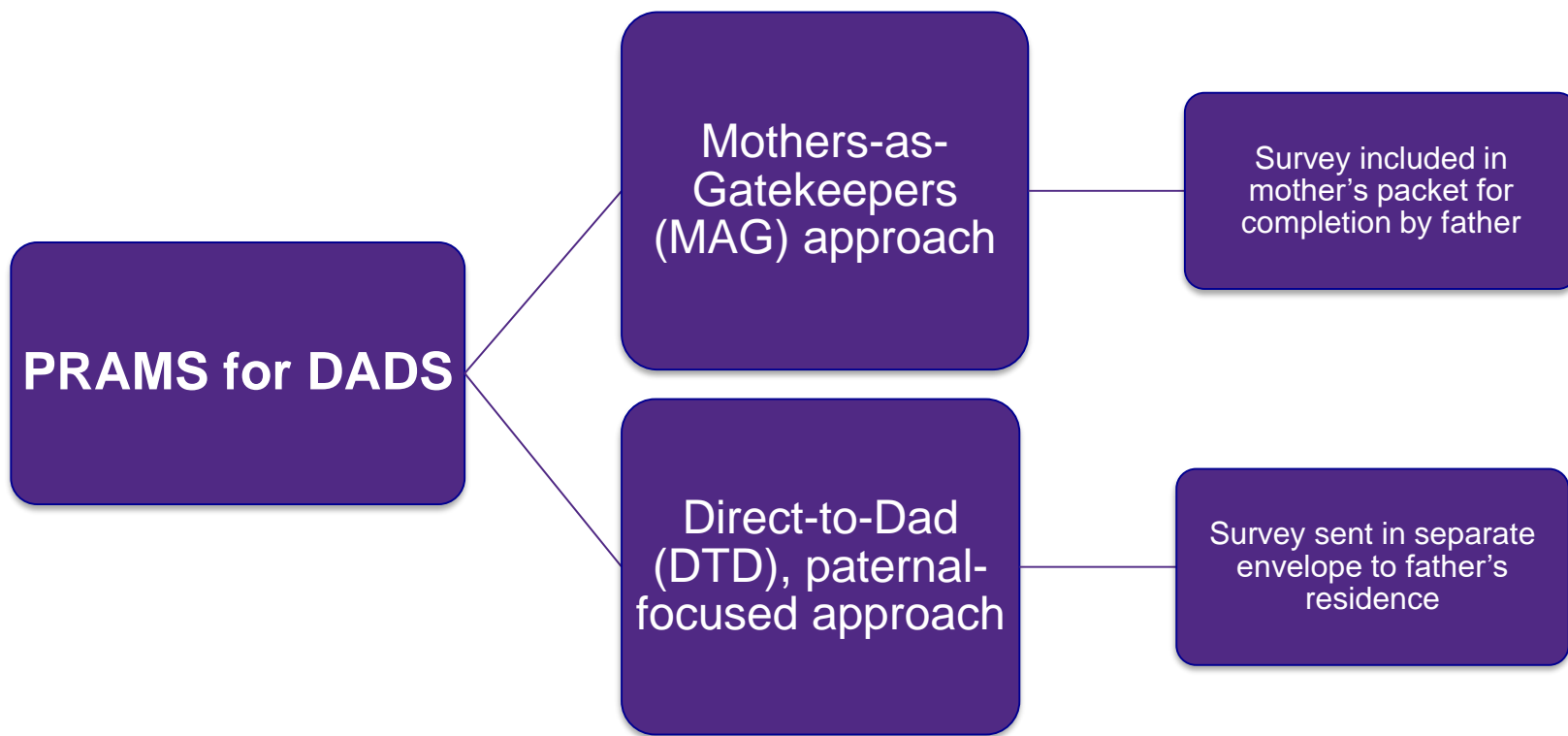
Craig P. Garfield is with the Department of Pediatrics and Christine D. Simeon is with the Department of Pediatrics, Northwestern Feinberg School of Medicine, Chicago, IL. Leslie Morrison, Christy Stone, Martha Kopyov, Kara Patel, Shava Brooks, Wanda Bayfield, and Lee Houser are with the Division of Reproductive Health and Translational Genomics in with the Division of Health Informatics and Surveillance, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta, GA.

Correspondence should be sent to Craig P. Garfield, Department of Pediatrics, Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine, Department of Pediatrics, 633521 Chicago, Ill. 60611 (e-mail: cgarfield@northwestern.edu). Reprints can be ordered at <http://www.ajph.org> by clicking the "Reprints" link.

The editorial was accepted July 12, 2018.

Note. The findings and conclusions in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. doi: 10.2195/AJPH.2018.304664

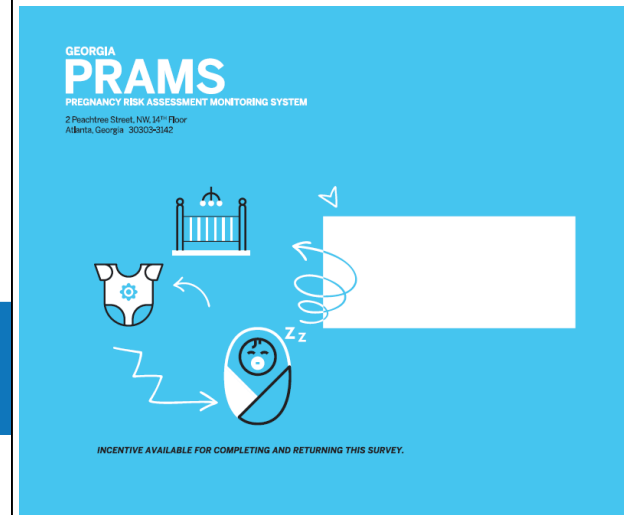
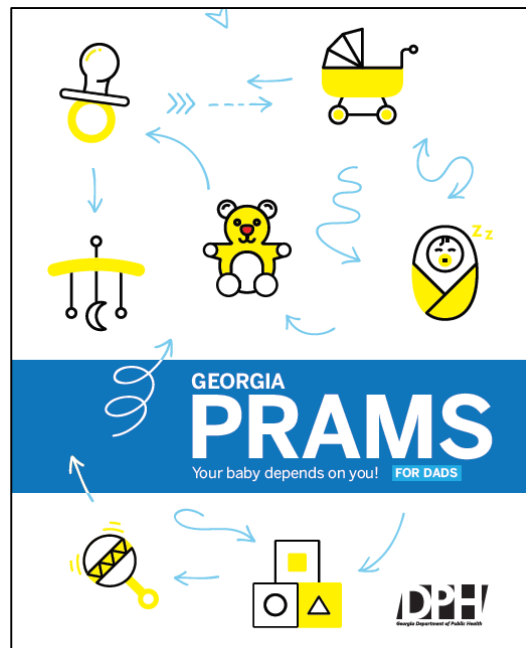
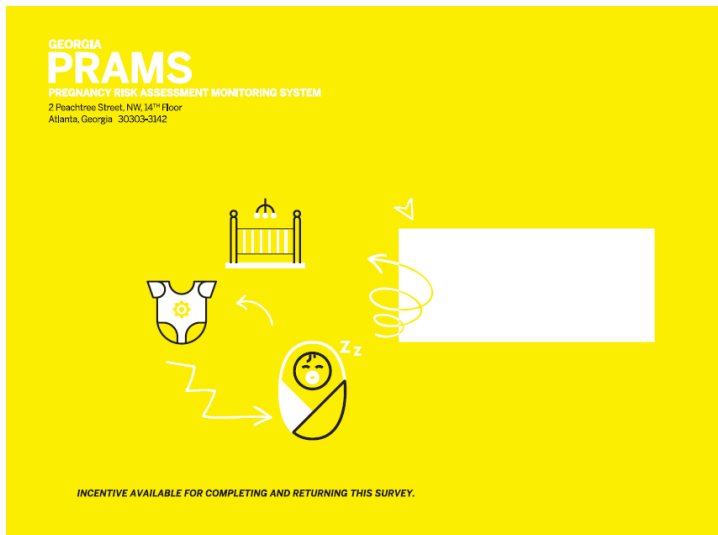
Randomized Pilot Study - 2 Study Arms



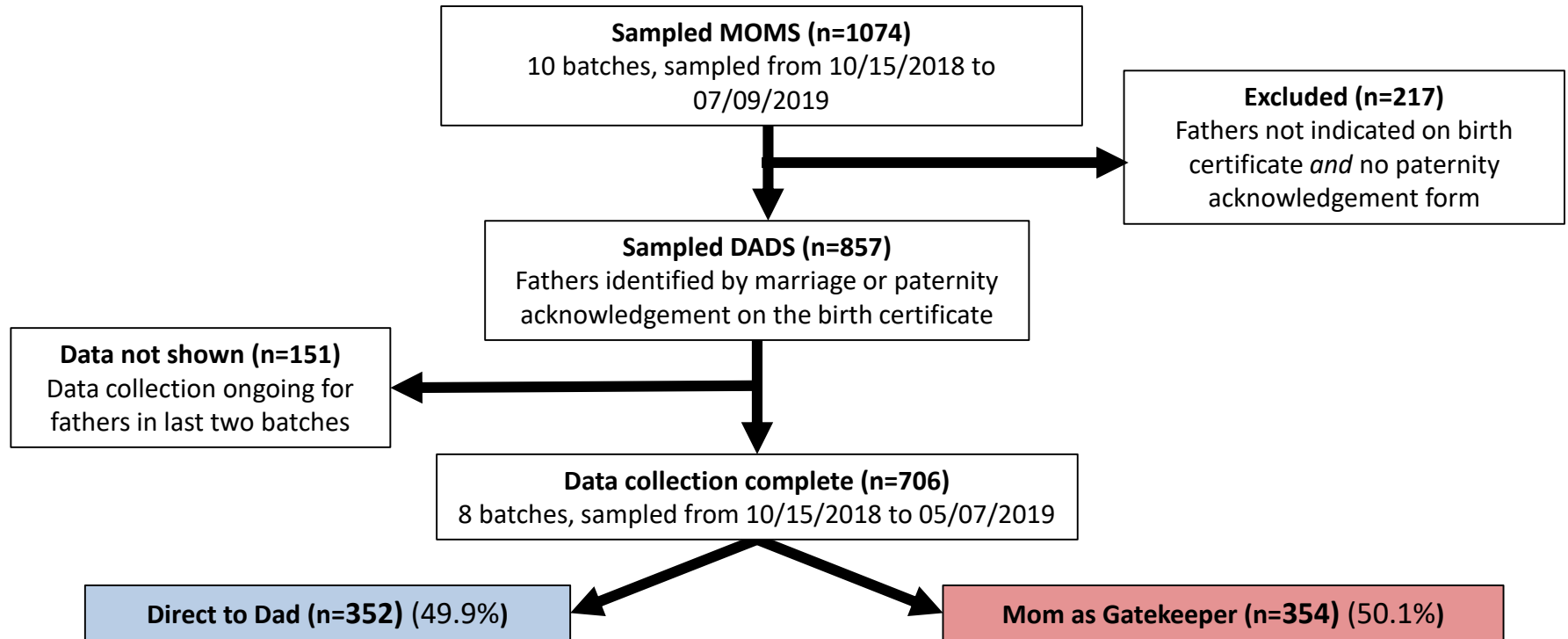
PRAMS For DADS

Materials

- Graphic design for Dad survey cover and Dad and Family mail envelopes consistent with Georgia PRAMS materials



PRAMS for Dads Sample



Barriers that need to be removed

Beliefs that act as barriers

- Father participation is not important, extra / optional
- Father-child relationship is secondary
- Fathers' capacity to be caregivers is limited
- Fathers as risk factors

Provider barriers

- No active invitation to fathers to participate
- Biases
- Discomfort or uncertainty engaging fathers

Additional barriers

- Competing responsibilities, particularly work related
- Tension with child's mother

Strategies for involving and engaging fathers

- Extend a personal invitation to fathers; encourage participation in prenatal, delivery, post-partum and continued child health visits
- Communicate with fathers, including nonresident
 - Anticipatory guidance to all parents
- Presume high interest
- Encourage participation in caretaking activities
- Address practical barriers to engagement
- Create a family-friendly environment
- Reinforce fathers' contributions and their role as model of health behavior



Strategies for involving and engaging fathers

- Programming where fathers are not outnumbered
- Allow families to define the father role
- Learn about and respond to fathers' individual circumstances
- Normalize screening and discussing father-centered health concerns (e.g., depression)
- Offer resources to achieve parenting & related goals
- Collaborate with other providers
- Advocate for family friendly policies
- Moments of opportunity



Moment of opportunity – expectant and early fatherhood

- Early and sustained father involvement benefits mothers, children and families
- Transition to parenthood may present unique opportunities to engage fathers in health reflection & change
- Support and encourage fathers' development of caregiving capacities
- Promote overall health awareness and behaviors that will lead to a healthier environment for children

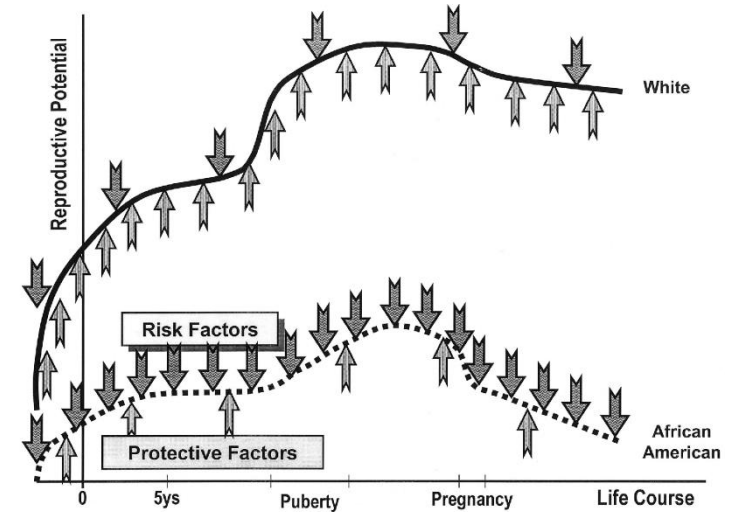


FIG. 4. How differential exposure to risk factors (downward arrows) and protective factors (upward arrows) over the life course affect

Interventions with Fathers

- Prenatal support
- Delivery involvement
- Smoking cessation
- Breastfeeding allies
- Parenting preparation
- Perinatal home visiting
- Parent education
- Parenting support
- Employment, literacy, economic stability
- Relationship enhancement / Co-parenting
- Depression screening

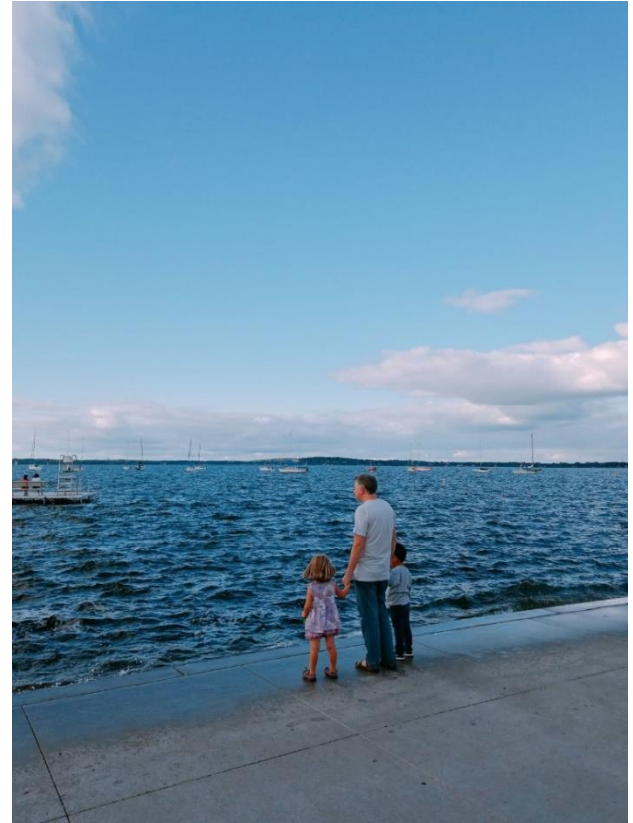


Questions and Discussion



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Thank You!



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Photo credit: Alameda County Father Corps' Fatherhood Photo Bank

<https://www.diversityoffatherhood.com/>

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