



Fatherhood Orientation & Resources



Centering Fatherhood

Fatherhood is more than a title—it's a powerful and transformative presence in a child's life. Research consistently shows that when fathers are actively involved in positive and encouraging ways, children **benefit in nearly every area of development. From higher academic achievement to stronger self-esteem and healthier emotional regulation, a father's nurturing engagement makes a lasting impact.**

Fathers support their children in vital ways:

- Physically, through care and protection;
- Emotionally, by providing love, encouragement, and stability; and
- Economically, by contributing to their household's financial foundation.

Children thrive when fathers lead with empathy, guidance, and respect, creating an environment where they feel safe, seen, and valued.

Challenging the Historical Narratives: Reclaiming Fatherhood in Birth and Parenting

Fathers have historically played vital roles in birth, caregiving, and community life. Reclaiming the role of fathers in parenting means challenging negative assumptions and making space for fathers to show up with tenderness, wisdom, and care from the very beginning—even during pregnancy and in the birthing room. When we shift the narrative, we affirm that fatherhood is not just support — it's sacred and deeply connected to the health and wellness of our families.

Fathers are Critical in Early Developmental Years

The first three years of a child's life are a critical window for brain development, emotional security, and social connection. Science shows that consistent, loving interactions during this period shape how children learn, trust, and relate to the world around them. **When fathers are present and responsive during these early years—holding, talking to, playing with, and soothing their babies—they support healthy brain growth, build secure attachments, and lay the foundation for lifelong resilience.** Studies have found that children with engaged fathers in their earliest years show stronger language skills, better emotional regulation, and more confidence as they grow. Bonding isn't just something that “naturally happens”—it's built moment by moment through presence, patience, and care.

The Importance of Understanding: Knowledge Strengthens Fatherhood

Being an engaged father is not just about showing up—it's about being informed. **Understanding how children grow, how to navigate health systems, and what your legal rights are as a parent empowers fathers to make confident and protective choices for their families.** Whether it's knowing how to advocate during doctor visits, understanding developmental milestones, or staying informed about custody and co-parenting laws, knowledge gives fathers the tools to lead with clarity and purpose. Too often, fathers are left out of parenting conversations or systems that assume they are secondary—but when fathers are equipped with the right information, they can challenge those assumptions, advocate for their families, and create lasting impact from day one.

Resources for Fathers

✓ Recognition of Parentage

What It Means and Why It Matters for Legal Standing

Recognition of parentage is a crucial legal step that affirms a father's role and rights in their child's life. It establishes the legal bond between father and child, which is essential for making decisions about the child's health, education, and well-being. Without formal recognition—through an Acknowledgment of Paternity or a court order—fathers may face barriers to custody, visitation, or even being listed on the birth certificate. Early recognition ensures that fathers are seen, respected, and protected in their parenting role from the very beginning.

You can find more information about the Recognition of Parentage in Minnesota here; <https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/vitalrecords/rop.html>.



Recognition
of Parentage
in Minnesota

✓ Access to Legal Counsel

How to Navigate Court Proceedings, Custody, and Parental Rights

Navigating the legal system can be overwhelming, especially when it comes to custody, visitation, and parental rights. Having access to legal counsel empowers fathers to understand your rights, advocate for your relationship with your child, and avoid costly missteps in family court. Whether dealing with a custody arrangement, establishing paternity, or responding to court orders, legal guidance helps fathers make informed decisions and ensures that your voice is heard.

You can search for legal services through LawHelpMN; <https://www.lawhelpmn.org/>



Legal Counsel
Resources

✓ Child Support

Strategies to Ensure Engagement and Fair Treatment

Child support systems are meant to support children's well-being. Engagement with child support is critical to ensure fair treatment, transparency, and encourage rather than punish father involvement. Strategies like income-based payment plans, mediation services, and holistic family support programs can help fathers actively engage in their children's lives and provide for their well-being. Child support centers the child's needs and the father's ability to help provide in meaningful, sustainable ways.

Find your local child support office through the Minnesota Department of Children Youth and Families;

<https://dcyf.mn.gov/individuals-and-families/family-services/child-support>



Child Support
Resources

✓ Family Home Visiting

Seeking Guidance and Support

Family home visiting programs offer personalized, in-home support to help parents navigate the early years of a child's life—and fathers benefit just as much from this resource. These visits provide guidance on child development, parenting skills, and connecting to services, all in a nonjudgmental and supportive setting. When fathers are included in home visiting services, it validates their role, strengthens co-parenting relationships, and builds their confidence as nurturers and protectors. It's a powerful way to support fatherhood from the ground up—right in the heart of the home.

You can find a family home visiting program near you using the Family Home Visiting Coalition's Directory; <https://www.mnfamilyhomevisiting.org/>



Support through
Family Home
Visiting

For more information contact Thomas TC Chatman at Thomas.chatmanjr@co.ramsey.mn.us, or visit the Birth Equity Community Council Facebook page; <https://www.facebook.com/birthequitycommunitycouncil/>