

**Baby's Daddy:** fathers' impact on family health, and what WIC can do about it



## Objectives

### Why should WIC care about dads?

- Dad's impact on family health

### Are dads really that present in WIC families?

- Addressing assumptions about dads in forming families

### What can we do now?

- Opportunities in a WIC setting for including fathers in support of family health

## My Biases

- I think children need the care, support, and full involvement of fathers just as much as mothers
- My main concern is children – not mothers or fathers – so child well-being drives my perspective

## Pre-Test

1. The single biggest predictor of whether a pregnant woman will get early and adequate prenatal care is:
  - a) support of her mother
  - b) her education level
  - c) her income level
  - d) support of her male partner

## Pre-Test

2. If a father approves of breastfeeding, a mother is...
  - a) 4x as likely to breastfeed, than if he is indifferent
  - b) 2x as likely to breastfeed, than if he is indifferent
  - c) Neither more or less likely to breastfeed.

## Pre-Test

3. Approximately what percentage of unmarried fathers come to the hospital for their child's birth?
  - a) 11%
  - b) 38%
  - c) 56%
  - d) 79%

## Pre-Test

4. Which of the following is true regarding children living in father absent homes:

- a) they are 5x more likely to live in poverty
- b) they are twice as likely to drop out of school
- c) boys are 2-3x more likely to end up in jail
- d) all of the above

## Why should WIC care about Dads?

When Dad is positively involved in the family system...

### Mom is

- more likely to initiate **breastfeeding**
- more likely to receive **early prenatal care**
- **less likely** to consume alcohol, tobacco, or illegal substances during pregnancy

## Why should WIC care about Dads?

When Dad is positively involved in the family system...

### Child is

- more likely to have **fewer behavior problems**
- more likely to have **higher levels of sociability**
- more likely to perform **better in school**
- **less likely** to be incarcerated

## Why should WIC care about Dads?

When Dad is positively involved in the family system...

### Dad is

- more likely to **establish paternity**
- more likely to provide on-going emotional and **financial support**
- **less likely** to have separated from the mother by the child's third birthday

## Why should WIC care about Dads?

When Dad is positively involved in the family system...

### Family is

- **less likely** to experience infant mortality
- **less likely** to be poor
- **less likely** to be food insecure

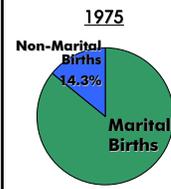
## POP QUIZ!

Let's test our assumptions about dads in forming families...

## POP QUIZ!

In Texas in 2006, how many babies were born to unmarried parents?

- a) about 1 out of 10
- b) about 4 out of 10
- c) about 6 out of 10



## b) about 4 out of 10

- In Texas in 2006, over 157,000 babies were born to unmarried parents



- That's 39.4% of all births

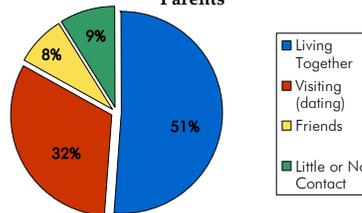
## POP QUIZ!

What is the relationship status of most unmarried parents at the time their child is born?

- a) just friends
- b) not speaking
- c) romantically involved

## c) romantically involved

Relationship Status of Unmarried Parents



The vast majority of unmarried parents (over 80%) are romantically involved at the time their child is born.

## POP QUIZ!

Most unmarried mothers want their baby's father to be involved in their child's life.

- A) TRUE
- B) FALSE

## TRUE!



- 93% of unmarried mothers said they want the father to be involved in raising their child

- 83% said they planned to put the father's name on the birth certificate

## POP QUIZ!

Most unmarried fathers are not involved during the pregnancy and rarely spend time with their baby (0-3 yrs.)

- A) TRUE
- B) FALSE

## FALSE!

- 80% of unmarried dads provided financial or other support to the mother during her pregnancy
- 70% of unmarried dads saw their 0-3 year-old child at least once a week.



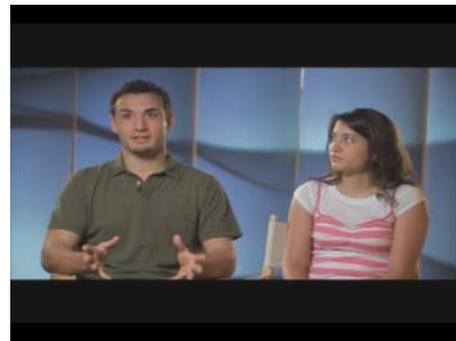
## Here's the Good News about Forming Families\*

\*forming/fragile families = A term used to describe unmarried couples and their children.

- **Dads are present!** Over 80% of these couples are in a romantic relationship when their baby is born.
- **Dads are valued!** The vast majority of moms and dads want *both* parents to be involved in raising their baby.
- **Dads contribute!** The vast majority of these dads are spending time with their young children and contributing emotionally and financially to the family system.



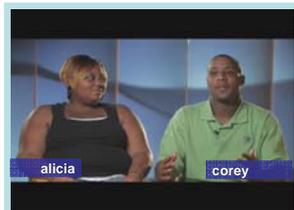
## Let's hear what some dads have to say...



## Now what?

### 3 Scenarios of Possible WIC Dads

- **Alicia and Corey**  
→ Corey drives Alicia to most of her appointments and classes at WIC. Sometimes he waits in the car, but if he has his children with him he brings them into the waiting room. Corey and Alicia seem to have a good



## Now what?

### 3 Scenarios of Possible WIC Dads

- **Maria**  
→ Maria and David have two children and one on the way. They are not married, but they recently moved in together. David never comes in to the WIC office, but Maria says he sometimes helps to



## Now what?

### 3 Scenarios of Possible WIC Dads

- **Lauren**

→ Lauren is 18 and has one baby and one toddler. Their dad is out of the picture, and Lauren thinks that is best for all of them. Sometimes she is overwhelmed by taking care of her kids, working, and taking classes. Lauren and her two children live in



## Now what?

### 3 Scenarios of Possible WIC Dads

1. What is healthy in this parenting system and how can you support it?
2. How could this Dad (or other parenting support) contribute to WIC goals?
3. What can you do to increase Dad's participation in family health?

- **Alicia and Corey** - good relationship, Dad in the office
- **Maria** - good relationship, Dad involved but not in the office
- **Lauren** - Dad out of the picture, maybe other family support?

## Strategies & Skills

### Key Concepts:

- **YOU matter!** – make it known (to everyone!) that you believe positive father involvement leads to better family health
- **Make your office more father-friendly** – hours, appearance, communications, and more
- **Focus on the child(ren)** – don't get personal, keep focus on what is best for overall family health
- **Everybody wants this information** – assume that no one parents alone...get your information to everyone

## Post-Test

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## BONUS QUESTION:

- When an unmarried young father has a child, he automatically has which of the following legal rights and responsibilities?
- a) access and visitation
  - b) financial support
  - c) access to medical records
  - d) none



Questions?  
Contact us!

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