

A Fallow Nexus:

The Impacts & Opportunities of Responsible Fatherhood Across the Commonwealth of Kentucky

Presented to : The Commission on Race & Access to Opportunity (CRAO)

Date: July 20, 2026

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Commonwealth Center for Fathers and Families (CCFF)
& Colleagues



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Presenters



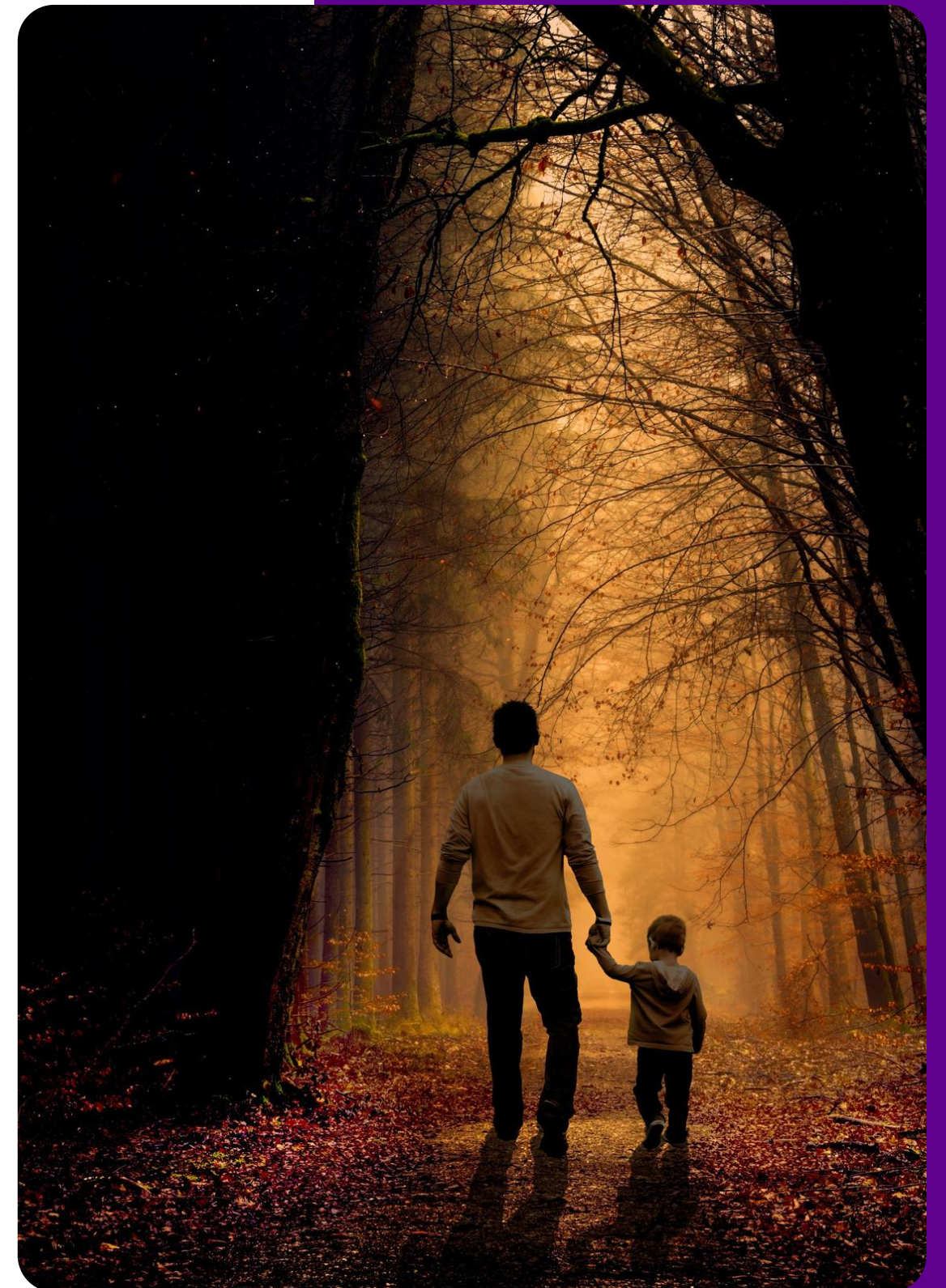
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Objectives

- Squarely Establish Responsible Fatherhood as a **substantial protective factor** and public health issue.
- Increase knowledge of the importance of responsible fatherhood and its impact on **life outcomes of families, children, and communities**
- Encourage principles and practices of **collective impact and system leadership efforts** particularly between/across governmental and community agencies
- Share **father-centered programs, approaches, and practices** that can be accessed and/or replicated
- Build alliances, resources, and networks to **enhance the human condition** here in the Commonwealth and beyond.



WARNING

Content Guidance: Fatherhood is a sensitive topic that can include emotionally challenging or distressing content. If you feel uncomfortable at any point, please feel free to take pause or step out of the room. Taking care of yourself is important.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Engaging and involving fathers in family services is a complex and often difficult endeavor. Various barriers to participation present a unique, and sometimes frustrating, challenge for those seeking to connect with fathers. We acknowledge that fatherhood engagement can come with its share of setbacks and requires persistent and creative efforts.



A black and white photograph showing the silhouettes of a man and a young child sitting on a grassy bank next to a body of water. The man is crouching, and the child is sitting next to him. To the left, a bicycle is parked. The water is calm with gentle ripples. The overall mood is peaceful and contemplative.

WHY FATHERS?

Upstream



Downstream

*Child/Family
Wellbeing*

*Homelessness/
Teen Runaways*

Mental Health

*Physical Health:
Child & Adult*

*Academic
Achievement*

*Poverty &
Economic
Stability*

*Healthy
Relationships*

Maternal Health

*Violent Crime:
Perpetrator &
Victimization*

*Addiction:
Recovery,
SUD's*

Incarceration

*Human
Trafficking*



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Father Absence in America

17.8 Million Children, 1 in 4, Without a Biological, Step, or Adoptive Father at Home

Living absent their biological fathers:

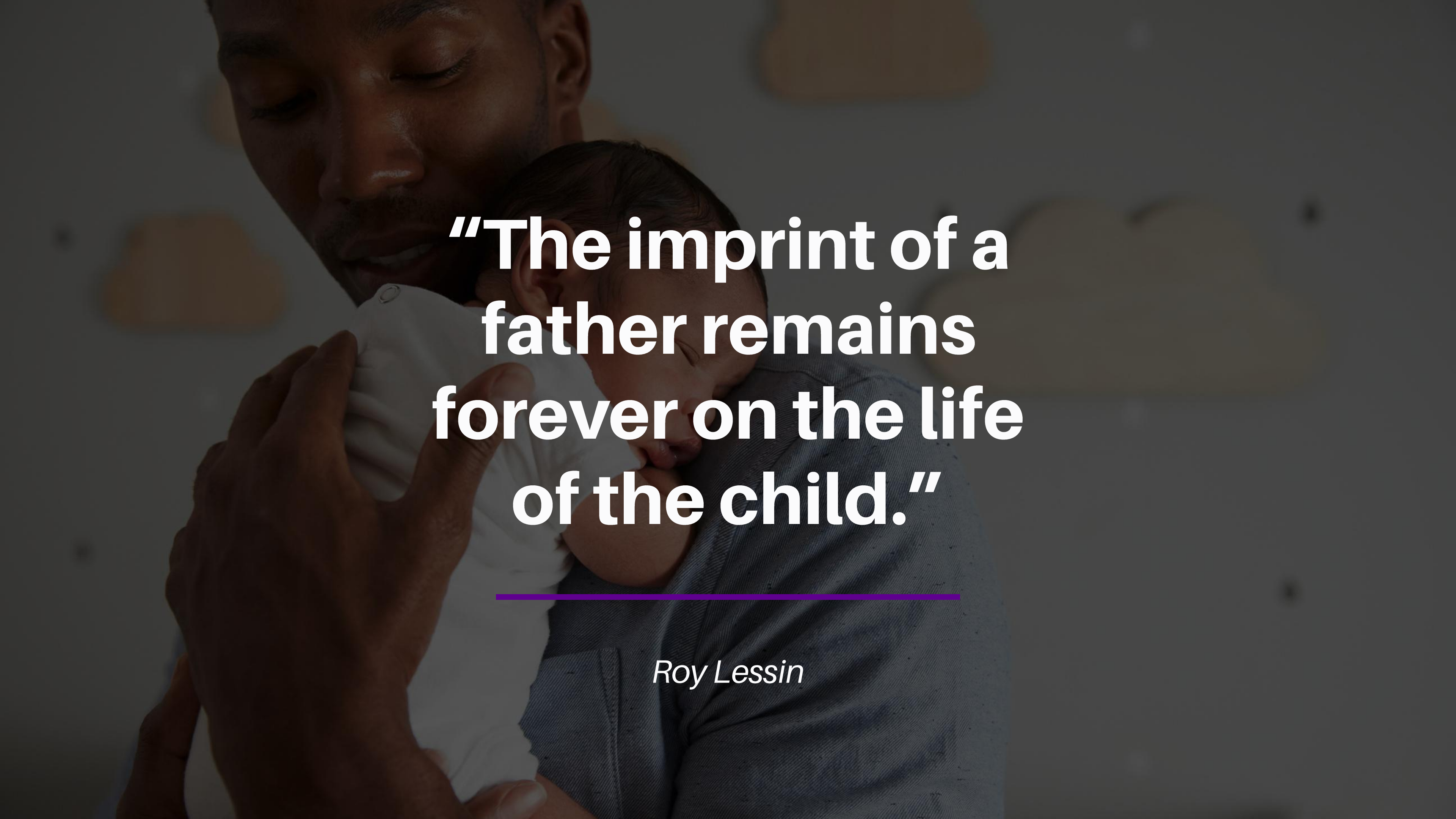
- 47.5% of Black children
- 28.8% of Hispanic children
- 19.6% of White children¹

In 2018 alone, the federal government spent \$154.2 billion on assistance to father-absent homes²

¹ U.S. Census Bureau. (2023). Current population survey. March and annual social and economic supplements, 1968 to 2023. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Census Bureau

² Wildfeuer, R., Pearson, J., Hrovat, E., & Brown, C. (2025). The \$154 billion man: The economic argument for investing in fathers. Center for Policy Research and National Fatherhood Initiative.



A close-up photograph of a man with dark skin and a beard, gently holding a newborn baby. The man's eyes are closed, and he has a peaceful expression. The baby is wearing a white onesie and is also sleeping. The background is softly blurred, showing what appears to be a wall with some light-colored decorations. The entire image has a semi-transparent dark overlay to make the text stand out.

**“The imprint of a
father remains
forever on the life
of the child.”**

Roy Lessin

WHERE'S THE FATHER?



WHEN THE FATHER ISN'T PRESENT:

- ➖ 7x Greater Risk of Teen Pregnancy
- ➖ 2x More Likely to Suffer Obesity
- ➖ 4x Greater Risk of Poverty
- ➖ 4x more likely to need help for emotional or behavioral problems
- ➖ Far More Likely to Abuse Chemical Substances
- ➖ Greater Risk of Infant Mortality
- ➖ More Likely to Drop Out of School
- ➖ More Likely to Go to Prison
- ➖ More Likely to Face Abuse and Neglect
- ➖ More Likely to Marry as Teenagers and More Likely to Get Divorced

WHEN THE FATHER IS PRESENT:

- ➕ Increased Emotional Stability
- ➕ Increased Confidence
- ➕ Greater Empathy
- ➕ Prevention of Risky Behaviors
- ➕ 43% More likely to get A's
- ➕ Improved Cognitive Abilities & Academic Achievements
- ➕ 40% Less Likely to Drink Alcohol, Smoke, or Use Drugs
- ➕ 80% Less Likely to Spend Time in Jail
- ➕ Decreases Delinquency and Economic Disadvantage in Low Income Families
- ➕ Lower Levels of Aggression

Sources:

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2. Bremberg, S., Kristiansson, R., Oberklaid, F., & Sarkadi, A. (2008). Fathers' involvement and children's developmental outcomes: a systematic review of longitudinal studies. *Acta Paediatrica*, 97(2), 153-158.
3. Fathers matter – pass it on (2024) America first policy institute. https://americafirstpolicy.com/assets/uploads/files/Fathers_Matter_%28pass_it_on%29_V2.pdf.
4. Martinez, K., Rider, F., Cayce, N., Sawyer, J., & Williams, K. (2011). A guide for father involvement in systems of care. Washington, DC: Technical Assistance Partnership for Child and Family Mental Health. <https://www.air.org/sites/default/files/FatherhoodInvolvementGuide.pdf>.
5. National Center for Fathering. (2015). The Fatherless Epidemic. National Center for Fathering. <https://fathers.com/wp39/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/fatherlessInfographic.pdf>
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10. Whitney, S., Prewett, S., Wang, Ze, & Haigin C. (2017). Fathers' importance in adolescents' academic achievement. *International Journal of Child, Youth and Family Studies*, 8(3–4), 101–126.

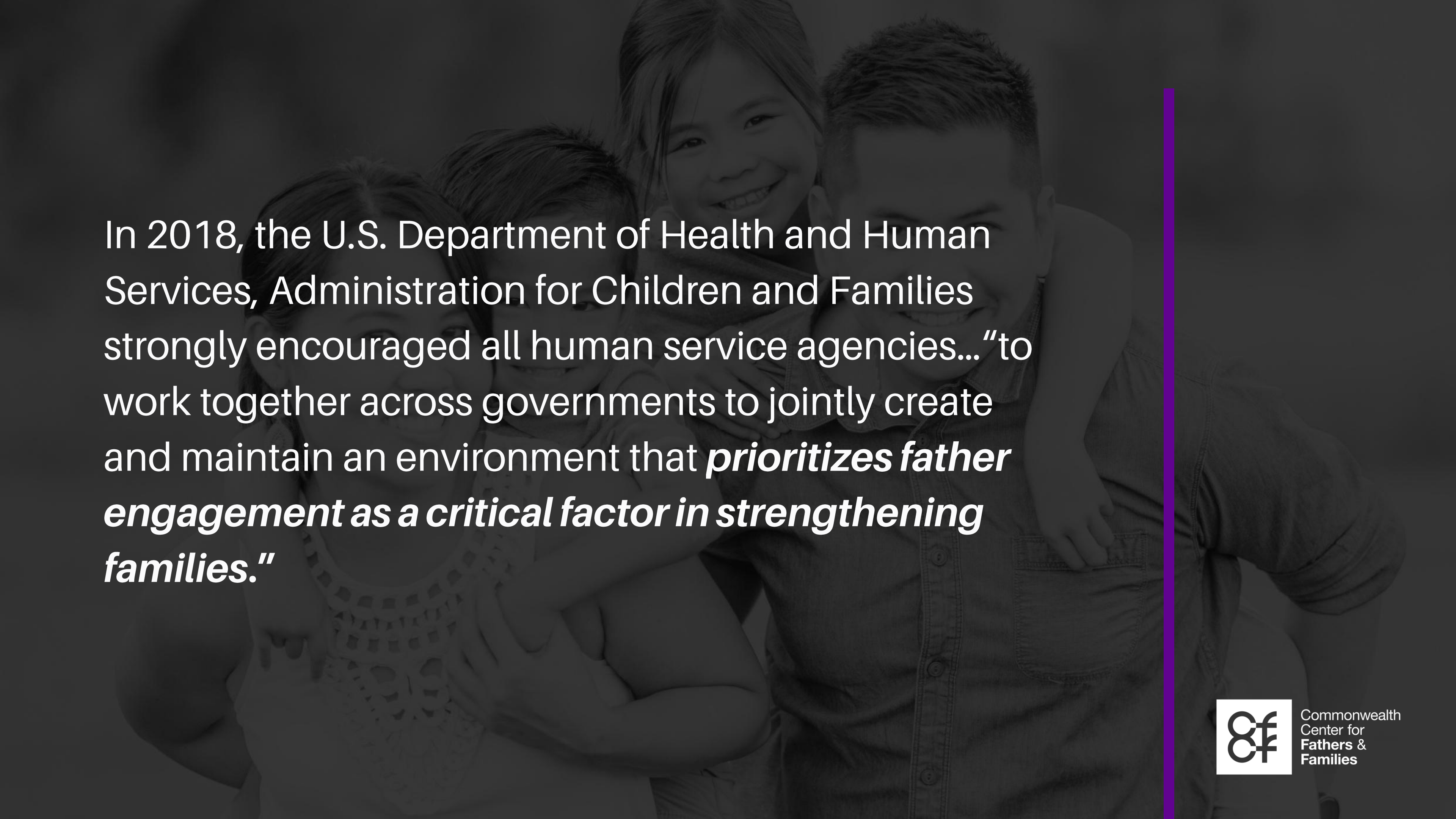


“The collapse of children's well-being has reached breathtaking proportions...One can think of many explanations for these unhappy developments: the growth of commercialism and consumerism, the influence of television and the mass media...the widespread availability of guns and addictive drugs, and the decay of social order...*But the evidence is now strong that the absence of fathers from the lives of children is one of the most important causes.*”

- David Popenoe



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In 2018, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families strongly encouraged all human service agencies...“to work together across governments to jointly create and maintain an environment that ***prioritizes father engagement as a critical factor in strengthening families.***”



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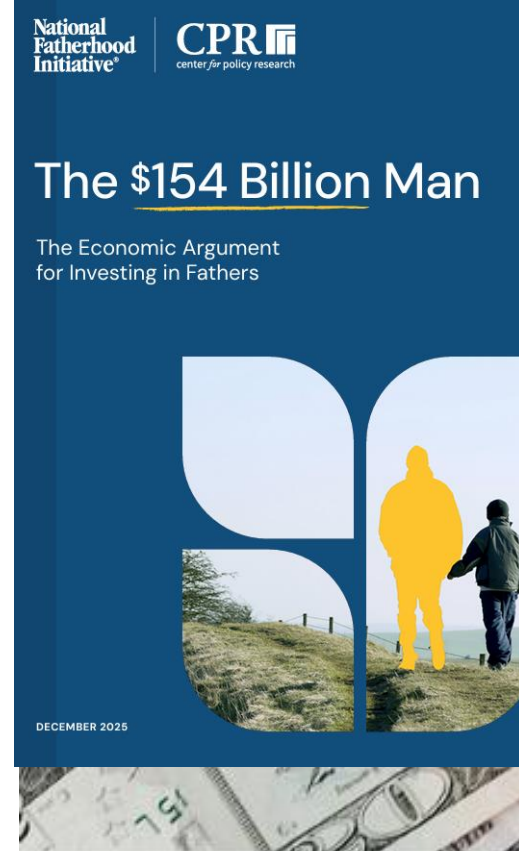
Analysis

Government Assistance Programs

This analysis estimates the direct cost of father absence to U.S. taxpayers by focusing on the proportion of federal expenditures for 14 government assistance programs used to help support children in single mother-headed households.

The government assistance programs included in the analysis are:

1. The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)
2. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
3. The child support program
4. Supplemental Security Income (SSI) for low-income disabled children
5. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as the Food Stamp Program
6. School lunch and child nutrition programs
7. The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)
8. Medicaid
9. The Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), formerly known as the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP)
10. Head Start
11. The Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF)
12. The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)
13. Public housing
14. The Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program, also referred to as Section 8



Results

2018 Spending

Table 1 shows total program budgets (in millions), the percentage of single mother-headed households that received benefits, and the cost of services provided to single mother-headed households (in millions) in FY 2018 for each of the 14 government assistance programs included in this report.

We estimate that the federal government spent \$154.2 billion in FY 2018 to assist father-absent households. This is 41.9 percent of the \$368.1 billion combined total program budgets of the 14 government assistance programs in the study. The \$154.2 billion spent directly on assistance to single mother-headed households comprised nearly 4 percent of the total FY 2018 federal budget of \$4.1 trillion,⁷⁷ and 30.8 percent of the estimated \$500 billion spent annually by the federal government to address child poverty.⁷⁸ The percent of single mother-headed households that received benefits in the 14 targeted government assistance programs in FY 2018 ranged from 31.2 percent (EITC) to 67.0 percent (child support program).

RECOMMENDATION #4

4. Another strand of needed intervention and research deals with educational **programs to enhance couple relationships and father involvement with their children.** The coparenting relationship is a priority because it is among the largest predictors of nonresident fathers' involvement with their children. Although most meta-analyses of educational programs to improve couple relationships have failed to find improvements in relationship stability, they have found modest but statistically significant impacts on relationship skills and quality. And several meta-analyses of the effectiveness of fatherhood programs targeted primarily to unmarried, low-income, nonresident fathers have found that they produced small but statistically significant effects on father involvement, parenting quality, and coparenting relationships, with the strongest effect size in coparenting. Unfortunately, they frequently failed to produce improvements in father employment and economic well-being, and payments of child support. On the other hand, numerous evaluations of noncustodial parent employment programs conducted since the 1990s have **found that they were effective in expanding employment, generating child support payments, and increasing parent–child contact levels among unemployed and underemployed fathers.**



Commonwealth Center for **Fathers & Families**

Mission, Vision, and Pillars



Commonwealth
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Families**

Our Mission

CCFF's mission is to support fathers in providing child and family safety, economic stability, and overall community well-being through education, advocacy, and collaboration.

OUR PILLARS



1

Policy & Advocacy

Ensuring that policies, practices, and procedures promote healthy father-family formation

2

KYDaD Academy

Training fathers to be ambassadors for father engagement across the Commonwealth

3

Mini-Grants

Providing capacity-building mini-grants of \$5,000-\$10,000 to organizations for engaging fathers

4

Training

Deliver training services to increase awareness regarding the benefits of father engagement

5

Fatherhood Summit

Promote collaboration and innovation through organization of local, state, and federal voices

OUR PEOPLE

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LEXINGTON

- Multiple Task Force/Committee Participation
- SUD/Recovery Emergence
- Research Development
- Curriculum Development
- 1MIL+ direct or project-based
- House Resolutions 112
- National Fatherhood Initiative Board
- National Recognitions, Presentations, Consults (PA, OH, TN, OR,+)
- International Impacts

Europe
Greece
North Macedonia
Latvia

Oceania
Fiji
Salamon Islands

Africa
Kenya
Ghana

Asia
Indonesia
Philippines

Americas
US
St. Lucia
Jamaica

Noteworthy

2,367

DADS EXPOSED TO POSITIVE FATHERHOOD ENGAGEMNT

6,773

TOTAL KENTUCKIANS IMPACTED BY POSITIVE FATHERHOOD
KENTUCKY REGIONAL FATHERHOOD SYMPOSIUMS

70+

COUNTIES IMPACTED

1,300+

KENTUCKY REGIONAL FATHERHOOD SYMPOSIUMS

61

KYDAD ACADEMY & KYDAD HUDDLE
GRADUATES

90

TOTAL KYDAD ALUMNI

46

TOTAL COUNTIES

3

PEOPLE CERTIFIED AS FACILITATORS
IN 24/7 DAD®

27

29

Trainings Delivered

58

KENTUCKY REGIONAL FATHERHOOD SYMPOSIUMS

1300

Trainees

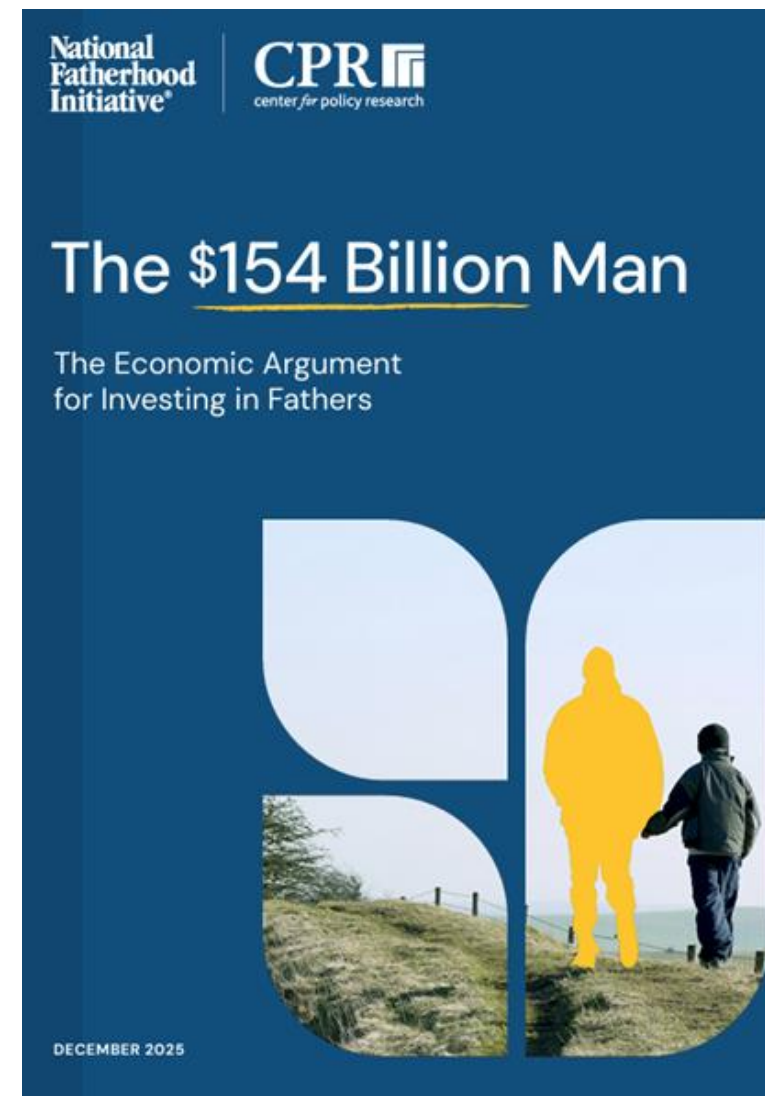
TOTAL MINI-GRANT PARTNERS

29 Total County Locations
25 Aditonal Counties Served

74%

INCREASE IN SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT SINCE 2024

- 2026 Summit
 - Pre-Summit
 - Planning
- 154 Billion Dollar Man
- Action Planning
- Families & Children Committee
- Legislative Participation
- National Model Continuation
- Regional Communities of Practice
- Appalachian Opportunities



THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND ATTENTION.
WELCOME AND WANT QUESTIONS FROM THE COMMITTEE ATTHIS TIME!



Let's stay in touch!

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Give feedback to
Commonwealth Center for Fathers & Families

