INDIANA ENGAGING FATHERS INITIATIVE

Fatherhood is one of the best and most rewarding jobs in the world. If you've been away from your children for a while, chances are they are longing for your return.

This pamphlet will help you understand why it is so important to re-connect. It will also help you get started.

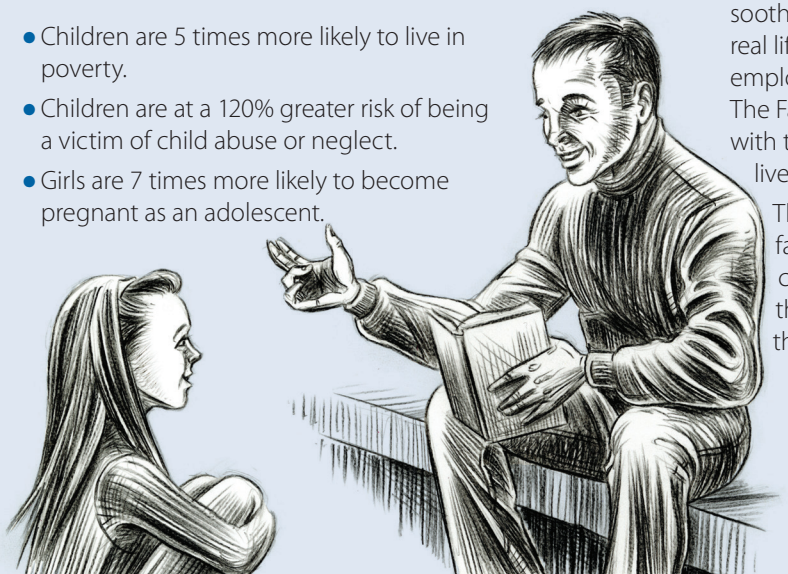
FATHER ABSENCE

It is well known the absence of a father plays heavily into the eventual success or failure of our children academically, as members of a community and most importantly, in their role as parents themselves. Evidence shows fathers play a vital role in their children's formative years. Infants with involved fathers tend to have higher IQs. Children are better equipped when they start school and can handle the stresses and frustrations of schooling more readily. Older children with dads in their lives have fewer behavioral problems.

WHY DADS COUNT

While all dads have different strengths, weaknesses and levels of parenting experience, if a father is genuinely involved, the positive contributions to their children's lives can be immeasurable. However, when dads are not around:

- Children are 5 times more likely to live in poverty.
- Children are at a 120% greater risk of being a victim of child abuse or neglect.
- Girls are 7 times more likely to become pregnant as an adolescent.



Dads Get Into the Game.

DADS BEHAVING DADLY

If you haven't seen your children for a long time, you may be wondering how to go about re-connecting with them. You may be unsure about how to play a positive role in your children's lives, especially if you're not a part of their mother's life. Maybe you're concerned about not knowing how to act around them or what kinds of activities would be appropriate if you did get to spend time together. If you're a new dad, you may be longing to hold your infant son or daughter, or you might be a bit skeptical about your ability to properly change a diaper or nervous about what to do when he or she starts crying.

The Indiana Department of Child Services understands your apprehension and has created a special program to help fathers just like you. It's called the Indiana Engaging Fathers Initiative and you can think of it as a toolkit for dads. You can learn key parenting skills like the best ways to discipline your children, how to handle teenagers, even how to change diapers or soothe a crying baby. You can also get help with real life concerns such as transportation problems, employment issues, housing matters and finances. The Fatherhood Initiative is designed to provide you with the tools you'll need to successfully re-enter the lives of your children. And it's free.

The first step on the road to being an involved father may be intimidating, but for the sake of your children, make a commitment to reunite with them and become a role model. Once you make that important pledge, it gets much easier.

For additional information and Contracted Agencies please visit:

http://www.in.gov/dcs/3424.htm

7 TIPS FOR DADS

There are many ways to be a good dad. It doesn't matter if you have boys or girls. Here are just a few suggestions:

When your child is very young:

- Play peek-a-boo with him or her. Of course you'll look silly. Do it anyway.
- Let your son or daughter ride on your shoulders. It's pure magic. But do it while you have a strong back and they're still tiny.
- Introduce him or her to a swing set.
- Take time to read to your children. Exposure to books at a young age is one of the most significant contributors to academic success.

When they get older:

- Enjoy the outdoors together. Fishing, playing catch and riding bikes are all good ways to bring dads and children together. They're great stress reducers, too.
- Write handwritten letters every year to your children on their birthdays. Don't present the letters until they're ready to leave home or when you think they need them most.
- Teach your teenage sons and daughters to change a tire. A flat tire should not be a source of panic in a teenager's life.

What is a dad?

"A dad is someone who wants to catch you before you fall."

"He wants to keep you from making mistakes."

"Dad holds your little sister when she cries or is upset."

"He's always ready to take you to the ball game."

We all know it's much easier to become a father than to be one. We also know there are children everywhere that don't have fathers around, but very much want those absent dads to be a part of their lives. There are also many fathers who genuinely want to re-enter their children's lives but don't know how.

Today's children need the presence and guidance of fathers more than ever. The transition to fatherhood is a monumental turning point in a man's life. Undertaking this responsibility can ultimately reap tremendous benefits for your children.

Dads Matter

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INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES

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The Indiana Department of Child Services does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, sex, age, disability, national origin, or ancestry.

DCS 10-13-2013

Dads Go the Distance.

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