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Dads Make A Difference

Even though some TV shows and movies may make dads look like they don't have a clue what is going on; research and strong families know that **Dads make a Difference!** Over two decades of research confirms that parents, and that includes Dads, are an important influence on whether their teenagers become pregnant or cause a pregnancy. The quality of the relationships with their children can make a real difference.

The Father Factor: Facts of Fatherhood www.fatherhood.org/father_factor.asp

According to a U.S. Census Bureau report, over 25 million children live apart from their biological fathers. That is 1 out of every 3 (34.5%) children in America. Nearly 2 in 3 (65%) African American children live in father-absent homes. Nearly 4 in 10 (36%) Hispanic children, and nearly 3 in 10 (27%) white children live in father-absent homes.

Although only three out of ten non-marital births in the United States are to teenagers, nearly half (48 percent) of all non-marital first births occur to teens, the largest single group.

- ◆ Children in single-parent families are more likely to get pregnant as teenagers than their peers who grow up with two parents.
- ◆ In fact, teen girls without fathers are twice as likely to be sexually active at an early age and are seven times more likely to get pregnant than their peers with both parents.
- ◆ For teen boys, living with two parents decreases the odds of early sexual initiation by 70 percent.

Why Fathers Matter

Eight of ten teen fathers do not marry the mothers of their first children. These absent fathers pay less than \$800 annually for child support, often because they are quite poor themselves.

Research shows that involved and committed fathers are important to the well-being of their children. Unfortunately, children born to teen parents are often denied a close connection with their fathers because the relationship between their parents frequently dissolves over time.

- ◆ Children who live apart from their fathers are five times more likely to be poor than children with both parent at home
- ◆ Boys and girls without involved fathers are twice as likely to abuse alcohol or drugs, twice as likely to end up in jail, and two to three times more likely to need help for emotional or behavioral problems.
- ◆ Teen girls who don't have a father in their life are two times more likely to initiate sexual activity early and are seven times more likely to get pregnant compared to girls with fathers present.
- ◆ Also, teen girls who have a higher quality relationship with their fathers are less likely to initiate sexual activity compared to those who report a lower quality relationship with their fathers.
- ◆ Teen boys who live with both parents initiate sex at an older age compared to teen boys in other family situations.
- ◆ Teen girls raised by both parents are less likely to have sex or become teen mothers than are teens who grow up under any other family structure.
- ◆ Over two decades of research confirms that parents-both fathers and mothers-are an important influence on whether their teenagers become pregnant or cause a pregnancy.

Considering the large body of research on the benefits to children of growing up in a married stable family, the link between reducing teen pregnancies and improving overall child well-being is clear.

To see "10 Ways To Be A Better Dad" go to our website at www.guardyourself.org

"Why it Matters; Teen Pregnancy and Responsible Fatherhood", www.teenpregnancy.org
"The Fatherhood Initiative, "The Father Factor: Facts of Fatherhood, www.fatherhood.org