

# Family Engagement and Relationships

2024 Impact Report

*The Family Engagement and Relationships Program has significantly expanded its outreach to fathers, developing numerous programs tailored to their unique needs. These initiatives have enhanced fathers' knowledge of child development, strengthened social connections, and improved parental resilience. By empowering fathers, our efforts foster healthier family dynamics, benefiting the broader community in Wisconsin.*

## Enhancing Fatherhood Engagement

Fathers play a crucial role in their children's lives, contributing significantly to their development and well-being. Despite this, fathers are often underserved in parenting and family outreach programs. Five years ago, the Family Engagement and Relationships Program within the Human Development & Relationships Institute identified a gap in services specifically designed for fathers. With leadership support, Extension prioritized reaching more fathers and created a fatherhood initiative to address this unmet need.

## Program Response

Over the past five years, our institute has significantly increased its outreach to fathers and family-serving professionals. Key efforts include:

1. **Statewide Fatherhood Needs Assessment:** Conducted focus groups and interviews to create a comprehensive portrait of fatherhood in Wisconsin.
2. **Research Symposium:** Co-sponsored with the UW-Madison School of Human Ecology, serving 35 researchers and professionals.
3. **Fathers in Focus Conference:** Featured 20 presenters, two nationally recognized keynote speakers, four panelists, and served 248 fathers and professionals.

35

**researchers and professionals** served by the research symposium

248

**fathers and professionals** attended the Fathers in Focus Conference.

53

**fathers** served by new outreach programs

83%

of fathers **understood the importance of children's social and emotional development** after attending Focus on Fathers.



Extension  
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

4. **New Outreach Programs:** Developed and delivered two new programs – Focus on Fathers and a peer group pilot for fathers not living with their children full-time. These programs served 53 fathers.
5. **Dissemination of Research-Based Information:** Shared findings with 12 organizations and presented at five conferences.

## Impact and Outcomes

Our fatherhood initiative has shown significant positive outcomes, organized by protective factors known to strengthen family resilience and child well-being:

- **Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development:**
  - 83% of fathers understood the importance of children's social and emotional development after attending Focus on Fathers.
  - All fathers in the peer group pilot felt more comfortable connecting with their children when apart.
  - 76% of fathers at the Fathers in Focus Conference planned to apply a parenting strategy they learned.
- **Social Connections:**
  - 80% of fathers felt they could relate to at least one other dad in the Focus on Fathers class.
  - Fathers appreciated the safe space for sharing and receiving feedback from peers.
  - 95% of conference attendees wanted to connect more with presenters or attendees.
- **Parental Resilience and Concrete Supports During Times of Need:**
  - All fathers who attended more than one Focus on Fathers class reported a positive impact on their relationships.
  - Fathers in the peer group pilot felt more confident working with child support and placement systems.
  - 65% of conference attendees planned to contact at least one shared resource, and 58% intended to take better care of themselves.

# 76%

of fathers at the Fathers in Focus Conference **planned to apply a parenting strategy they learned.**

# 80%

of fathers felt they **could relate to at least one other dad** in the Focus on Fathers class.

# 95%

of conference attendees **wanted to connect more with presenters or attendees.**

# 100%

of fathers who attended more than one Focus on Fathers class **reported a positive impact on their relationships.**

