

At-a-Glance: Coparenting and Low-Income Fathers' Satisfaction with Parenting

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One of the most important relationships in families with children is the coparenting relationship, which involves the ways in which adults work together in their roles as parents. The quality of coparenting support is particularly important for nonresidential fathers, who may not have access to their children without mothers' (or other coparents') cooperation. For this reason, many fatherhood programs promote healthy coparenting as a means of encouraging active and engaged father-child relationships.

We interviewed 511 low-income nonresidential fathers, including 168 enrolled in fatherhood programs, about coparenting relationships with the mother of a single "target" child under age 18. Our interview included questions addressing three positive (support, alliance, agreement) and three negative (undermining, gatekeeping, conflict) dimensions of coparenting relationships.

Highlights: Fathers' Reports of Coparenting

Fathers reported higher levels of positive dimensions and lower levels of negative dimensions of coparenting. Fathers who were enrolled in fatherhood programs at the time of their interviews did not differ in quality of coparenting relationships from those who were not participating in such programs.

Several dimensions of coparenting had an effect on fathers' satisfaction with their relationships

with target children. Fathers who reported greater levels of support, alliance, and conflict and lower levels of gatekeeping reported higher levels of father-child relationship satisfaction.

Implications for Programs and Researchers

Fathers with two or more children may have different coparenting relationships with each child's mother. Practitioners and researchers should ensure that assessments address specific mother-father pairs to avoid obscuring differences among fathers' coparenting relationships.

When assessing coparenting, practitioners and researchers may want to use measures developed by the Fatherhood Research and Practice Network, soon available at www.frpn.org.

Fathers' Self-Reports of Coparenting

Fathers in programs, n=168

