

# Executive Summary: The Engagement of Fathers in Home Visiting Services: Learning from the Dads Matter–HV Study

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As home visitation services engage families at the point of birth or even prenatally, they present an especially opportune vehicle from which to engage fathers and promote their positive involvement. Although many home visiting programs across the U.S. are beginning to implement strategies that reach out to fathers, there are no evidence-based strategies to guide home visiting programs to best promote fathers' positive involvement with mothers, children, and families.

The "Dads Matter-HV" (home visitation) service enhancement is an intervention designed to be integrated into standard home visiting programs. The intervention directs home visitors in how to engage fathers in home visiting services to optimize fathers' positive involvement with young children. Dads Matter-HV is a packaged, user-friendly, home visitor manual, training, and supervision protocol that guides home visitors on how to optimize fathers' roles during the critical first four months of home visiting services, when family and service patterns are most malleable. In this early stage of service, parents' patterns of participation are established and become more difficult to change over time.

This report describes findings from a Randomized Controlled Trial (RCT) of Dads Matter-HV. Initial funding provided by the Oscar G. and Elsa S. Mayer Family Foundation, the Pew Charitable Trusts, and Michael Reese helped in the development and implementation of this research. Funding from the Fatherhood Research and Practice Network (FRPN) supported an investigation of home visitors' attitudes and expectations about working with fathers and the effects of implementing the Dads Matter-HV enhancement on fathers' participation in home visits and the home visitors' relationships with mothers and fathers.

The development and testing of the Dads Matter-HV service enhancement has been conducted entirely under real-world conditions to best ensure the model is feasibly implemented in the field. Findings from this study indicate that home visitors report generally positive attitudes toward engaging fathers, training home visitors in Dads Matter-HV increases dads' participation in home visiting services, and it does not compromise workers' relationships with mothers. Moreover, home visitors trained in Dads Matter-HV describe using more, and more varied, approaches to engaging fathers in services.