



What is the Worcester County Fathers & Family Network?

By Jack Bonina, Network Coordinator

I am often asked, "Why is it necessary to have a coalition that addresses 'Responsible Fatherhood'? Don't fathers know they are supposed to be responsible for their children?"

The answers to these questions are not as easy as they may first appear. First, without a doubt, the overwhelming majority of fathers are interested in their child's well being. Many fathers do a wonderful job of co-parenting and investing in their children through their time and resources. However, for many other fathers, the answers are not as clear. Divorce and separation, along with changing family demographics in which parents have never lived together, can impact on consistent and active involvement by fathers. Lack of parenting skills, inadequate support, and unfavorable visitation schedules complicate a dad's ability to be involved. Sometimes fathers battle their own issues; such as, shame that they don't have enough money because of inadequate education and vocational skills, substance abuse, or even incarceration. Sometimes they want help, but don't know where to turn because services don't exist or are only available at times that conflict with rigid work schedules.

The *Worcester County Fathers & Family Network* is here because we believe that children suffer when fathers are not involved in an active, consistent, or healthy way. Research clearly shows that children do better in many ways when fathers are involved. They will get better grades in school, have increased self-esteem, have better mental health, and are less likely to commit crimes as juveniles. Teenage girls are at a significantly lower risk for pregnancy. We know that it's not always possible for fathers to be involved, but the Network believes that by working together as a community, we can improve our support systems for families. When both fathers and mothers are involved and working together for their children, we will all benefit.

We hope that you will help the *Worcester County Fathers & Family Network* carry out its mission by pledging your financial support. Please address checks to **WCF&FN, c/o Family Services of Central Massachusetts** and mail them to 31 Harvard Street, Worcester, MA 01609 using the donation coupon below.

With your help, the Network can positively impact on the support systems essential to families in our community to make a real difference in the lives of children.



Enclosed is my tax-deductible, charitable contribution for \$25 \$50 \$100 Other \$_____ in a check made payable to the *Worcester County Fathers & Family Network*, c/o Family Services of Central Massachusetts, and mailed to 31 Harvard Street, Worcester, MA 01609.

My name is: _____
(First Name ~ Middle Initial ~ Last Name)

My address is: _____
(Street, City/Town, State, Zip Code)

E-mail address: _____ Telephone No.: (_____) _____ - _____