



Fatherhood
is
Essential

Fathers Matter for Child and Family Well being

Thurston Early Childhood Coalition

February 23, 2023

Anne Stone – Washington State Fatherhood
Council Director

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Your Strongest Father Memories

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Frank
[#Dadication](#)
Fatherhood
Involvement
Ad Council

Why do we need to focus on Fathering why not just Parenting?

We
know
that:

Child and family well-being improve when fathers are positively engaged in their children's lives.

Fathers play a unique and important role in children's development.

Fathers should have support and resources to become the fathers they aspire to be.

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Washington State Interagency Fatherhood Council

- Founded in 2018 after the first Washington State Fatherhood Summit State, local, grassroots organizations and fathers with lived experience
- One third of the council “professional fathers”



“Help by accepting us as fathers”.

Father respondent

Survey respondents

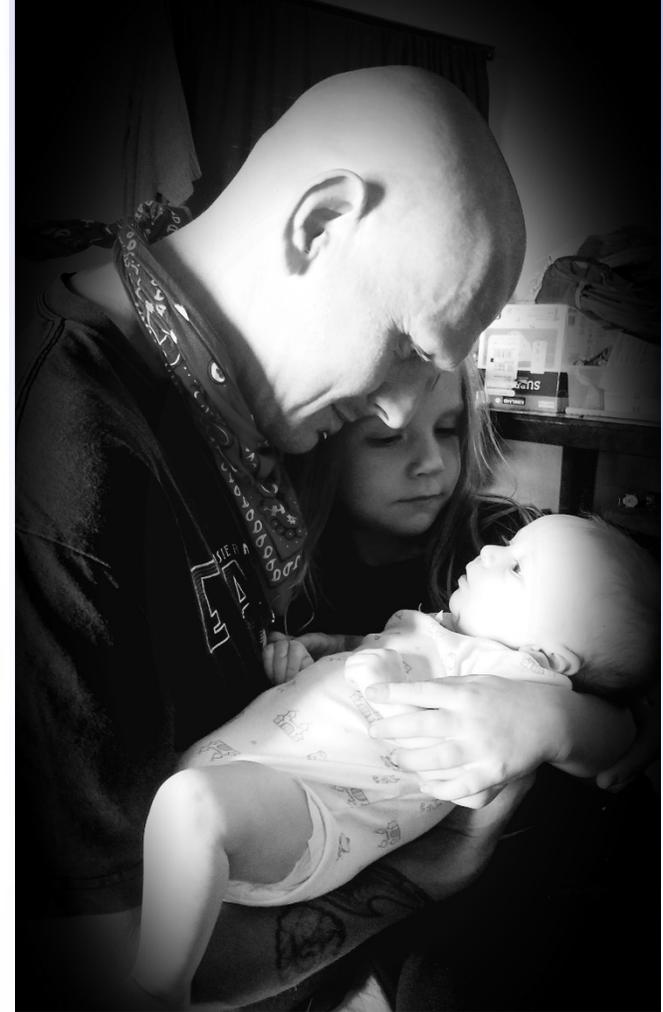
“Transforming systems through fathers voices” Washington Fatherhood Council 2019

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Vision | Fathers and father figures in Washington become the parents they aspire to be for their children and families.

Mission | We amplify the voices of fathers and father figures in Washington State to promote fatherhood inclusion, equity, diversity and research activity that strengthens families and maximizes children's potential.



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Children with fathers who are nurturing and engaged achieve better life outcomes²



Overall health



Academic success



Engaged as parents



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Fathers and children's development

Fathering impacts all areas of children's development

- Communication and language
- Learning and cognition
- Relationships and social-emotional skills

Fathers impact children

- Directly (father-child relationship, provision/protection)
- Indirectly (coparenting relationship, family system)
- Uniquely



Facts compiled by the Department of Justice

63% of youth suicides are from fatherless homes

90% of all homeless and runaway youths are from fatherless homes.

85% of children who exhibit behavioral disorders are from fatherless homes.

71% of high school dropouts are from fatherless homes.

70% of youths in State institutions are from fatherless homes.

75% of adolescent patients in substance abuse centers are from fatherless homes.

Photo by [Laura Nyhuis](#) on [Unsplash](#).

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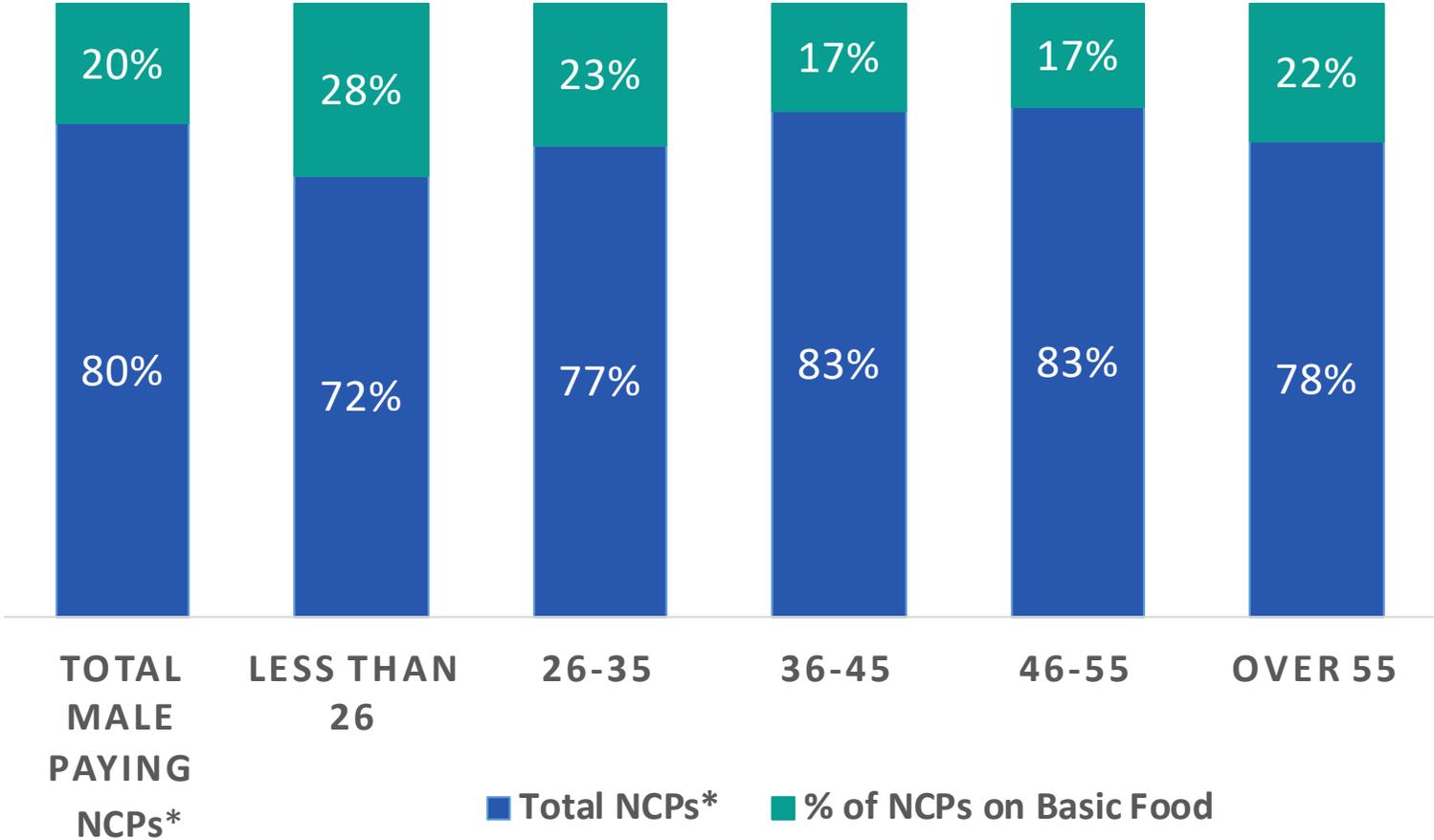
Unmarried Fathers' Involvement, By Parents' Relationship Status at Birth

	COHABITATING (%)	VISITING (%)	NON – ROMANTIC (%)
GAVE MONEY, BOUGHT THINGS	97	84	28
VISITED HOSPITAL	97	71	29
NAME ON BIRTH CERTIFICATE	96	80	52
MOTHER WANTS FATHER INVOLVED	99	99	74

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While Dads contribute \$648,921,014 in Child Support, many rely on food assistance to make ends meet



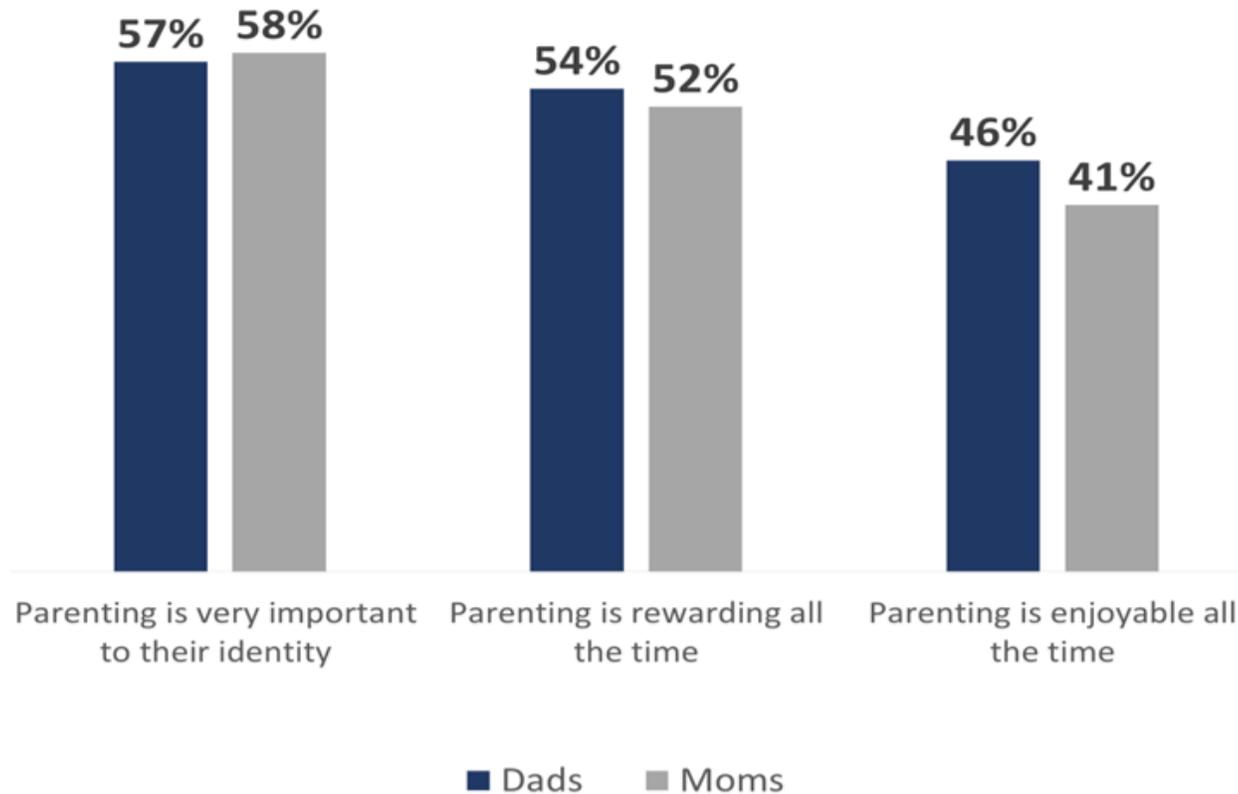
Economic Services Administration,
EMAPS Data 2020
NCP: Non-Custodial Parent

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Fatherhood Experience

- Dads and moms report similar attitudes about parenting¹



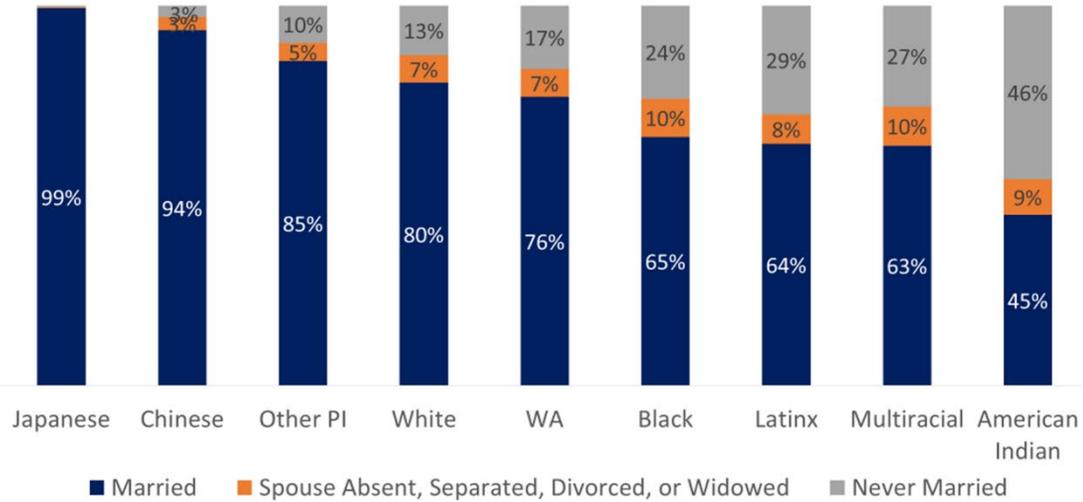
1. Pew Research Survey of parents with children under the age of 18, 2015

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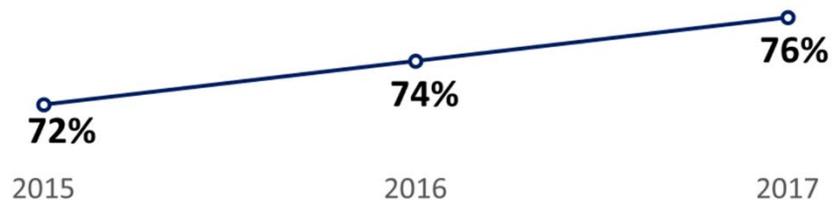


Important Trends

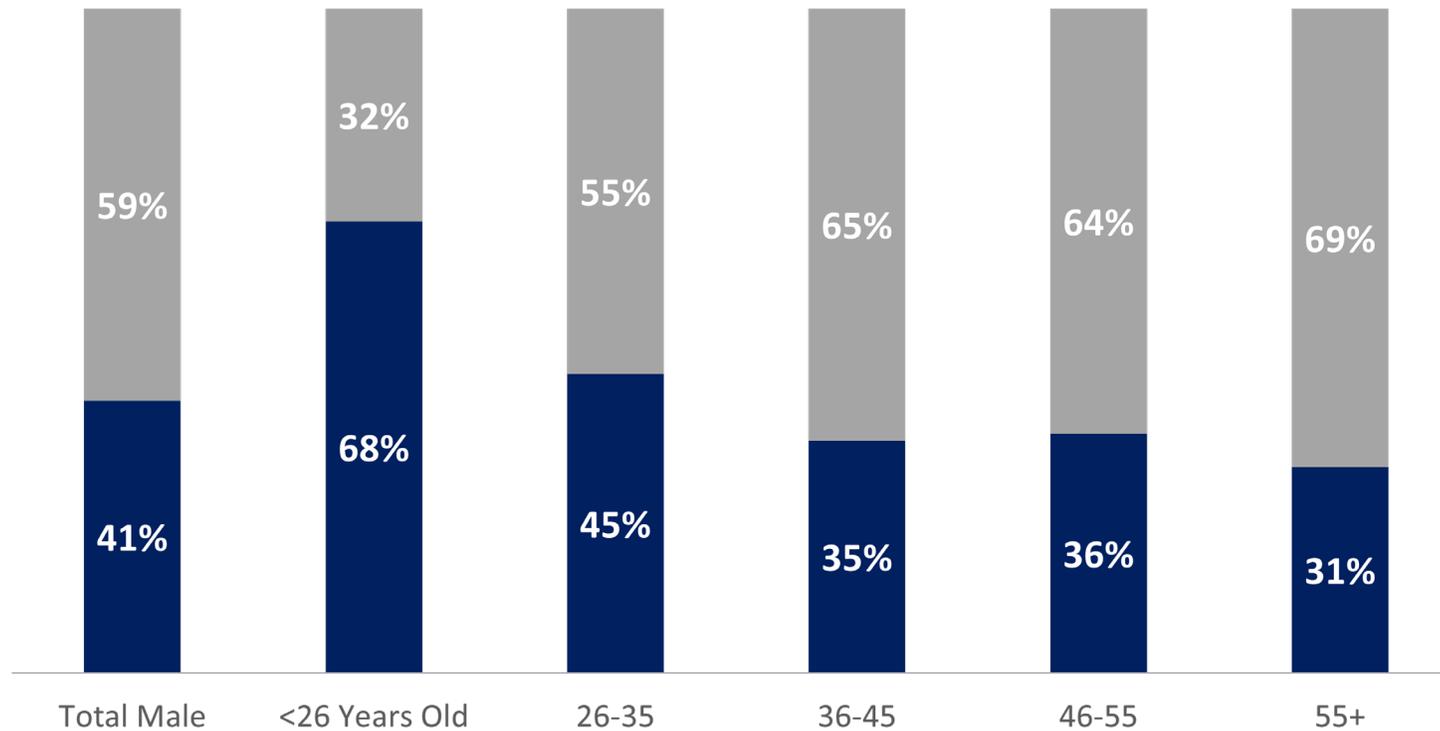
❑ An increasing number of parents are not married as they start their family₁



❑ The majority of dads acknowledge their parental responsibility and the percent is increasing₂



Important Trends



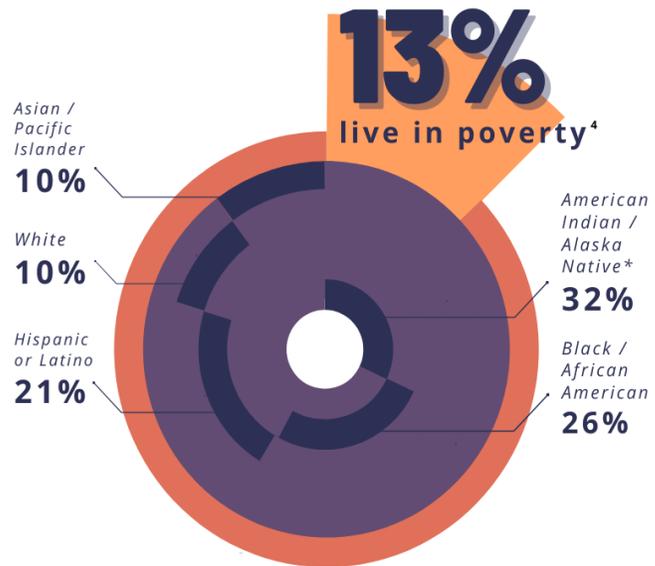
Total Male Paying NCPs*

- Number of paying male NCPs
- Male NCPs receiving Basic Food by age group

1. Economic Services Administration, EMAPS Data

*NCP: Non-Custodial Parent

Children in Washington State...



1 in 5 children
live without a father
in the home in WA⁵



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Children develop in the context of relationships



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4mPEHKdfPuU&list=P LWSyq30gd4ht_UftP8u5JPgDRF9gpcWDf&index=16&t=1s

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At Six Weeks Old...

- Infants respond differently to each parent's voice.
 - A quiet and alert infant will focus more quickly on a mother's voice.
 - An upset or fretting infant will calm more readily to a father's voice.

By one month of age, a mother will often pick up and hold her infant the same way 9 times out of 10.



On the other hand, a father will pick up and hold his infant a different ways 9 times out of 10.



At Eight Weeks Old...

When a baby sees daddy, the eyes widen, shoulders raise, the heartbeat and breathing increases. The infant becomes excited in the presence of dad.



When a baby sees mommy, the eyes narrow, the shoulders relax, heartbeat and breathing decrease. The infant becomes calm in the presence of mom.



2019 WA Survey of Father's Greatest Needs

5 Greatest Challenges

(1) Custody and parenting time agreements

(2) No services available for fathers

(3) Social stigmas about fatherhood

(4) Issues related to child support

(5) Financial insecurity

“Allowing fatherhood to be an admirable position in the family”

Survey respondent

“Transforming systems through fathers voices” Washington Fatherhood Council Survey 2019

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What are Fathers looking for?

Accessible information from credible sources

Father-focused resources

- Guidance about how to be a supportive partner to an expectant / new mother

Information about development

- How to engage with young children to promote healthy development
- Age expectations and behavior management

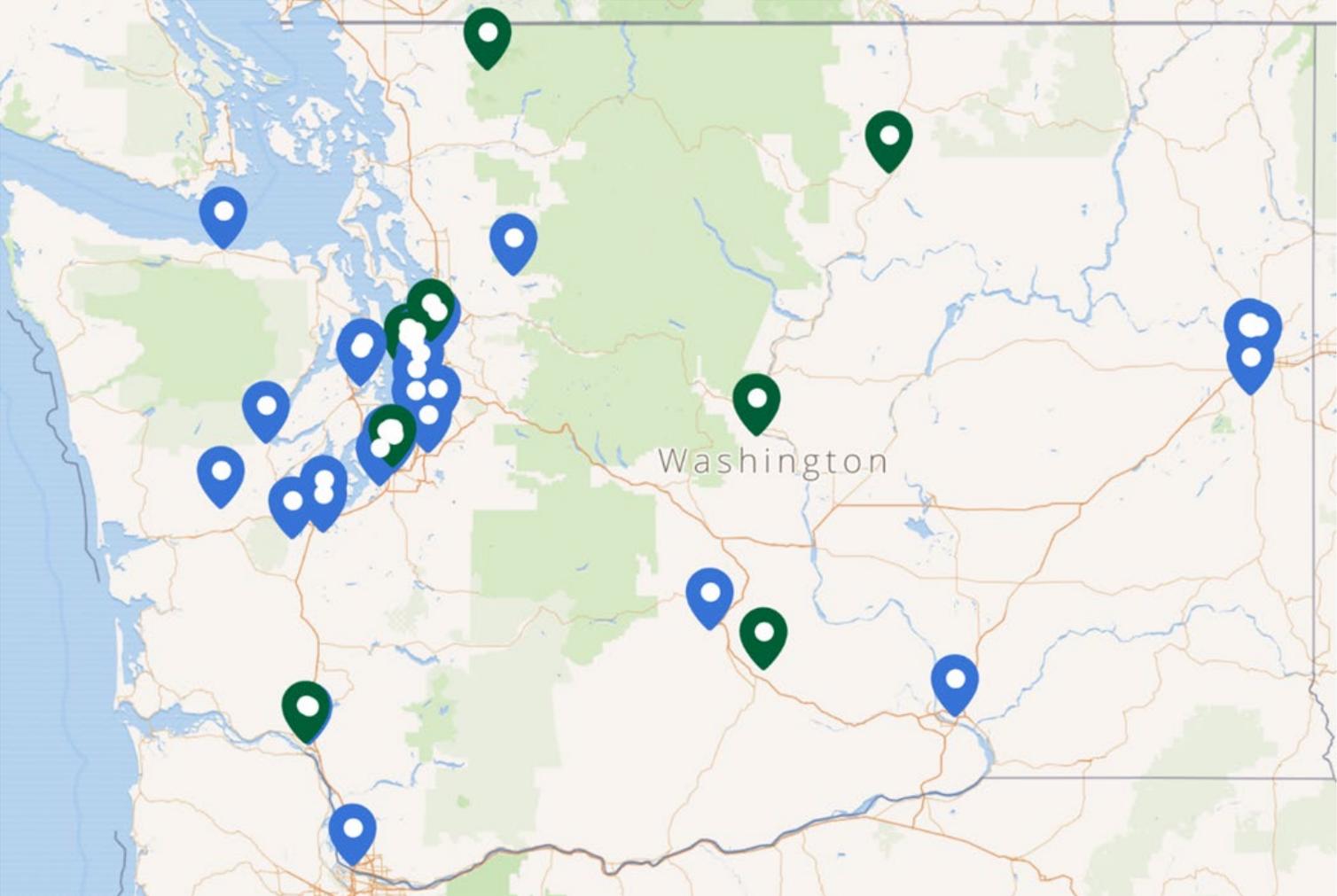
Ways to access services that are non-stigmatizing and focused upon their unique needs

Normalize the frustrations of parenting

Lee, Walsh, et al., 2013; ; Lee, Walsh, et al., Under Review; Walsh et al., 2014; Walsh, 2020



Map of Father-Friendly Service Providers



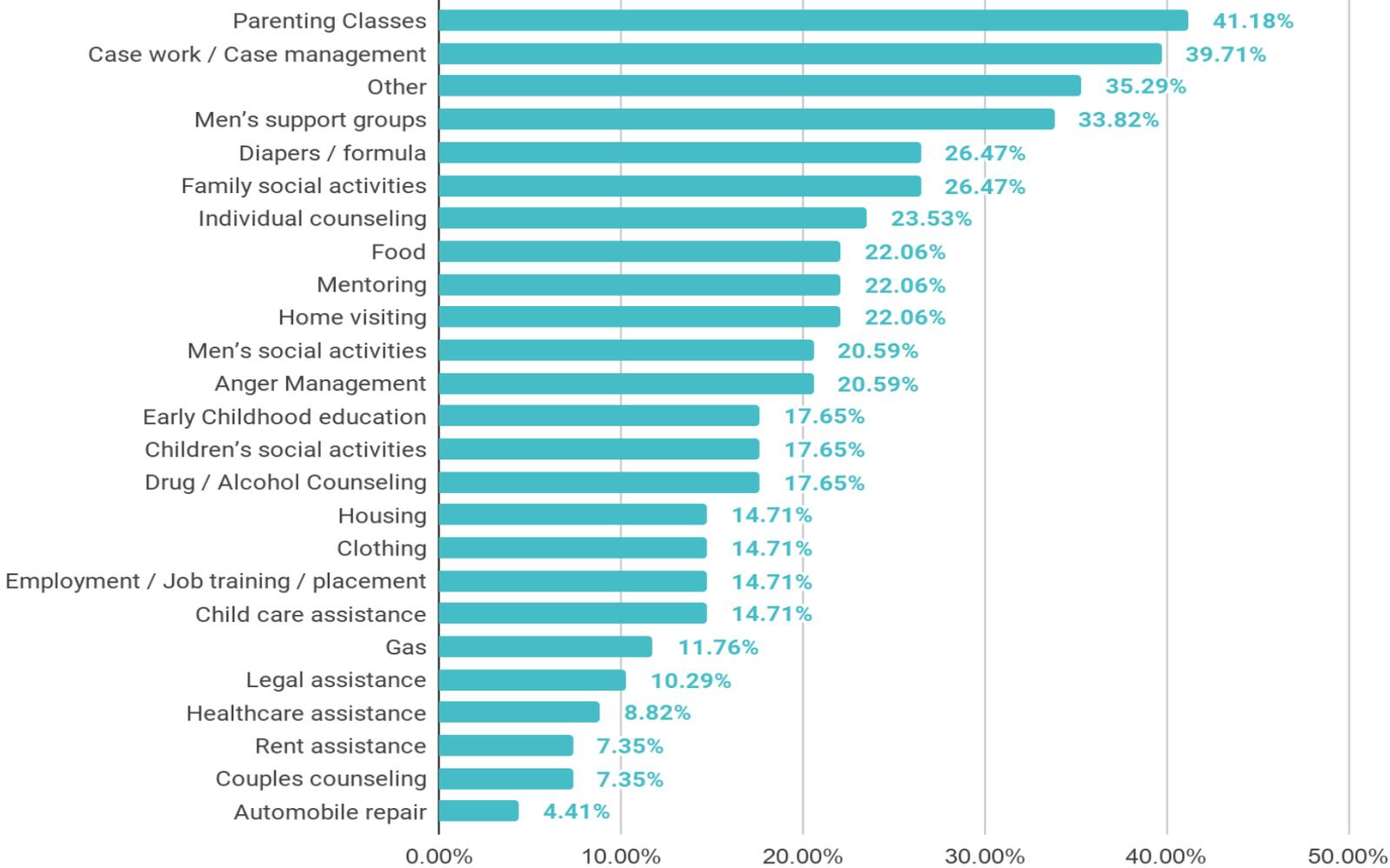
Blue Local / regional program that provides services for fathers

Green Program that serves entire State of Washington



Types of Services

Types of Services Organizations Provide, 2020, N=68



In Real Life...



Father Friendly Principles

- Recognize - **promote co-parenting** for better outcomes of children & families
- Involve fathers with **lived experience in the design of programs and policies**
- **Recruit, train, and retain staff** that better reflect the communities they serve and provide effective father specific services
- **Increase fatherhood specific resources**
- Recognize, address **individual and system biases** that marginalize fathers

Commit to equity, fairness and justice for all fathers and families.

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Father Friendly Principles Poll ...

To help us make the upcoming exercise most meaningful please indicate the top three FFP that you would want to discuss:

- 1) **promote co-parenting** for better outcomes of children & families
- 2) **lived experience in the design of programs and policies**
- 3) **Recruit, train, and retain staff** that better reflect the communities they serve
- 4) **Increase fatherhood service capacity**
- 5) Recognize, address **individual and system biases**



Breakout Exercise 20 minutes

- 1) Why was this principle important to you?
- 2) How does/can this principle guide your work now?
- 3) How does/can this principle guide your work in the future?



Questions and Comments

Anne Stone MA, MPA

Anne.Stone@dshs.wa.gov

[Dad Allies: Provider Learning Series | WA](#)
[Interagency Fatherhood Council](#)
[\(wafatherhoodcouncil.org\)](http://wafatherhoodcouncil.org)

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