Dads Getting More Involved

The Challenge: Having adequate, sufficient and understandable health information is an important aspect of taking responsibility for one’s health and those we care about. While health information about the prenatal period is available for women, adequate information is not available for men. Research has shown that when fathers are involved during the prenatal period, they provide support that can reduce stress of the expectant mother, and in turn, improve the likelihood of a healthy birth outcome. More efforts to understand and develop health information for men during the prenatal period are needed.

Project Goal: The project sought to bring together a team of academic partners, a health planning agency and the Milwaukee County Medical Society with groups of African-American fathers. The team drew upon its combined health literacy expertise and the experience of African-American fathers. The project sought to (1) increase the team’s cross-disciplinary learning and (2) document perspectives from African-American men to inform the development of strategies to promote their involvement during the prenatal period.

Results: The project team worked with local organizations (Milwaukee Fatherhood Initiative, My Father’s House, Silver Spring Neighborhood Center and Next Door Foundation) to recruit fathers and expectant fathers into focus groups. Findings from the four focus groups identified a number of themes regarding needs, barriers and the interests of African-American men to be more involved during the prenatal period. Project partners secured a grant from the Greater Milwaukee Foundation for an American Evaluation Association fellow to further investigate effective health messaging practices. This project will help inform the content of a pilot program that focuses on training medical and public health students to work more inclusively with fathers when providing prenatal services and information.


Grantee: IMPACT Alcohol & Other Drug Abuse Services, Inc., Kathleen Pritchard

Grant Title: Engaging African-American Fathers to Reduce Infant Mortality by Improving their Health Literacy

Academic Partner: David J. Pate, Jr., PhD, UW-Milwaukee, Helen Bader School of Social Welfare; Kris A. Barnekow, PhD, UW-Milwaukee, Department of Occupational Science and Technology

Dates: June 1, 2013 – July 31, 2014

Amount: $50,000

Program: Lifecourse Initiative for Healthy Families

Project ID: 2575