Together We Can: The Important Role of Co-parenting for Expectant and Parenting Teens and Young Adults

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1. Describe both positive and negative dimensions of co-parenting
2. List at least three ways in which co-parenting can benefit teen parents and their children
3. Identify links between positive co-parenting relationships and teen father engagement
4. Describe the content of common co-parenting program approaches
What is co-parenting?

definition n. l.
The teacher gave a definition of the new words. of an image (picture) (TV, screen)
What is co-parenting?

- Shared decision making or the degree of support and collaboration between parents and/or caregivers regarding the well-being of a child
What is co-parenting?

• An enterprise undertaken by two or more adults who together take on the care and upbringing of children for whom they share responsibility.
What is co-parenting?

- The interaction of two individuals who share decision making regarding the well-being of a child and are responsible for a child in a way that promotes the child’s well-being and positive development.
Co-parenting as part of a family system
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Multiple dimensions of co-parenting

• Positive and negative dimensions of co-parenting
Multiple dimensions of co-parenting

• Positive dimensions:
  ▪ Co-parenting support
  ▪ Co-parenting cooperation
  ▪ Shared decision-making
  ▪ Communication
  ▪ Conflict management

• Negative dimensions:
  ▪ Conflict/disagreement
  ▪ Undermining behaviors
Poll

Do you address co-parenting in your program?

☐ Yes
☐ No
Why co-parenting matters

• Co-parenting can benefit teen parents and their child.
Implications for child well-being

- Negative co-parenting can lead to:
  - Lower cognitive ability
  - Lower social skills
  - Increased behavior problems
  - Insecure attachment

- Positive co-parenting can lead to:
  - Better social skills
  - Fewer behavior problems
• Implications for parents

- Positive co-parenting can lead to:
  - Increased confidence in parenting ability
  - Increased confidence in relationship skills
  - Reduced parenting-related stress
Why co-parenting matters

- Positive co-parenting and father engagement
Measuring co-parenting

- Parenting Alliance Inventory (Abidin, 1988)
  - 20-items

- Sample items:
  - My child’s other parent enjoys being alone with our child.
  - During pregnancy, my child’s other parent expressed confidence in my ability to be a good parent.
  - When there is a problem with our child, we work out a good solution together.

- Response categories: Strongly agree, Agree, Not sure, Disagree, Strongly disagree
• Parenting Convergence Scale (Ahrons, 1981)
  ▪ 6-items

• Sample items:
  • *Please indicate how often these questions are true for you.*
    ▪ When you and your child’s other parent/guardian talk about how to raise the child, how often is the conversation hostile or angry?
    ▪ When your child complains about his/her other parent/guardian, how often do agree with him or her?
    ▪ How often do you and your child’s other parent/guardian have different ideas as to how to raise him/her?
  • Response categories: Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Always
Supportive co-parenting (Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study)

- 6-items

Sample items:

- When father/mother is with the child, he/she acts like the father/mother you want for your child.
- You can trust father/mother to take good care of the child.
- He/she respects the schedules and rules you make for the child.

Response categories: Never true, Rarely true, Sometimes true, Always true
Measuring co-parenting

• Shared decision-making (The Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Birth Cohort, ECLS-B)
  ▪ When it comes to making major decisions about your child, please tell me if your spouse/partner has No Influence, Some Influence, or a Great Deal of Influence on such matters as discipline, nutrition, healthcare, and childcare.

• Co-parenting conflict (ECLS-B)
  ▪ Do you and your spouse/partner often, sometimes, hardly ever, or never have arguments about your children?
Challenges to promoting co-parenting skills

• Few curricula are available
• Until recently, most targeted divorced couples
• Few programs target teen parents
• Promising co-parenting programs and their content
Characteristics of co-parenting programs

Promote a child-focused relationship
Characteristics of co-parenting programs

Improve communication skills
Characteristics of co-parenting programs

Increase problem solving skills
What is the most challenging barrier to addressing co-parenting relationships in your program?

- Lack of appropriate curricula for teens
- Difficulty recruiting teen fathers
- Too much conflict between parents
- Other
Two programs that have been rigorously evaluated with positive results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Foundations</th>
<th>Young Parenthood Program</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Group format</td>
<td>• Individual couples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 2-hour sessions</td>
<td>• 60-minute sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Consists of two parts</td>
<td>• Total of 10-14 weekly sessions</td>
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<tr>
<td>• 4 prenatal sessions</td>
<td>• Developed for adolescent and young adult expectant mothers and fathers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 4 postnatal sessions</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• For expectant couples</td>
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Co-parenting programs
Co-parenting programs

Results from a 4-year longitudinal study

Parent outcomes
↑ co-parenting
↑ parenting efficacy
↓ parenting stress
↓ physical punishment

Child outcomes
↑ social competence
↓ problem behaviors-
mainly for boys
Results from an 18 months longitudinal study

Father outcomes

↑ engagement at 18 months*
↑ relations with parenting partner

Mother outcomes

↑ relationship competence

* Improvements in father engagement were related to improvements in the co-parenting relationship
Experiences from the field

Dr. Paul Florsheim

• Primary Investigator for the Young Parenthood Study at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
The Young Parenthood Program (YPP)

1. Introduction & Engagement
2. Identify Strengths & Goals
3. Interpersonal Skill Development
4. Role Transitions
5. Summary and Preparation
6. Parenting Support and Booster Sessions
Reflective Listening Skills. Couples learn to be quiet and listen, to speak more directly and clearly, to “take in” their partner’s thoughts and feelings.

Support Skills. Helps both partners learn how to provide support, ask for support and receive support…and to recognize when support is needed.

Problem Solving Skills. Couples learn to brainstorm solutions to ongoing conflicts. Focus is on finding compromises that work for both partners.

Stress Management Skills. Couples learn how to help each other calm down when stressed out or anxious.

Acceptance Skills Partners learn to appreciate each other “as is,” including flaws.

Expressive Skills. Couples learn to express feelings positive, respectful ways.

Family Planning Skills Couples discuss if and when to have another child and how to avoid pregnancy in the meantime.

Minimizing Negativity High-conflict couples learn to communicate productively from a distance and avoid fights that could upset or harm their child.
Resources for co-parenting

New infographics about the important role of young fathers from OAH
Parenting plans

- Developed to promote custody arrangements that benefit the child
- Provide developmentally appropriate considerations for non-cohabitating parents
- AZ, MA, TX
• Defining co-parenting

• Measuring co-parenting
Co-parenting and child wellbeing


Co-parenting and father engagement


Co-parenting program evaluations


Questions?

Dial *1 on your phone to ask a question or click Q&A at the top of your screen to type your question.
Feedback

FEEDBACK

https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/BZFKXJY
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