

FATHERHOOD NEWSLETTER

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December is often a time of togetherness for families, and the Oklahoma State Department of Health Fatherhood Initiative team hopes that you enjoy time with your family this holiday season. We of course recommend that following the CDC guidelines on travel this holiday season. They include delaying travel until fully vaccinated, continuing to wear masks when in groups of people indoors (even people who are fully vaccinated).

Please connect with us!

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Fathers Can Be Great Gender Equity Advocates

While there have been many examples of messages for boys that praise the power of careers in science, technology, engineering, or math (STEM) there have not been nearly as many books, movies, or TV shows about girls in these fields. Michelle Travis, a professor at the University of San Francisco School of Law, wrote a new book titled *Dads for Daughters* as a guide for engaging men to support gender equity. Travis states, "Researchers have found that having a daughter tends to increase a man's support for anti-discrimination laws, equal-pay policies, and reproductive rights, and it tends to decrease men's support of traditional gender roles." Her book shares stories of fathers in this fight for equity for their daughters, and highlights examples of how other men can join them. These areas include sports fields, science labs, corporate leadership, and politics. Professor Travis also recommends that fathers make their homes places where daughters can access books, toys, and activities that empower them to imagine themselves as future engineers or scientists. Showing a path toward these careers is another way dads make a big difference.

How COVID-19 has impacted fathers

A new study examined the impacts of father-child interactions during the initial COVID-19 outbreak in the spring of 2020. Fathers in the study showed a perception that their children's emotional distress and inattention showed a significant increase during this time. This is certainly consistent with increased social isolation, interruption of the school and other activities, and uncertainty for the future. The study also identified that there were three primary risk factors that correlated with fathers' increased stress. These risk factors were: living in regions with higher rates of COVID-19 contagion and death, high levels of paternal anxiety, and high levels of perceived worsening of the relationship with their child(ren) during the pandemic.



Chickasha Festival of Light

Chickasha is again hosting their annual festival of lights in Shannon Springs Park, 2400 S 9th St, in Chickasha. The festival is ongoing through the end of the year. This light show is known as one of the largest in the nation, with over 3.5 million twinkling lights synchronized to music. You can walk or drive through this light show, and don't forget to see the iconic 172 foot Christmas tree. There are also horse-drawn carriage rides, opportunities to take your photo with Santa, and a food truck park. The park is open for visitors until 10:00 each night through the end of the year so don't miss this great event!



New dad tool for your toolbox for December: ³How to Hold a Baby

1. Cradle Hold:

- Crook of arm supports head and neck
- Hand supports butt
- Lean back when possible to avoid strain on your back and shoulders

2. Belly Hold:

- Chest and belly drape over your forearm
- Head turned outward, resting near crook of arm

3. Face-to-Face Hold:

- Support neck and head

4. Snuggle Hold:

- Head rests against chest or lower shoulder
- Support neck (with one hand)
- Support butt (with other hand)
- Keep head turned to one side so baby can breathe

5. Football Hold:

- Baby curls around your body
- Legs extended behind you
- Draw close to waist or chest
- Supported on your hand and arm
- Support Head

Impact of Fathers' Absence

⁴According to the US Census Bureau, **1 in 4 American children live without a father in their home**. This is a trend that has increased to nearly 3x the amount from 1960. There is research documenting the **impact this has on children** that do not have consistent contact from their fathers. Emotional regulation, seeing the **benefits of the secure attachment** to their father and example of how to father their own children, as well as **relationships skills from their fathers**. Having parenting and relationship skills built-in to the academic curriculum in high schools may be a way to combat the loss of these skills, although not a true replacement this may be a vital component to bring future generations this critical knowledge.



Need Resources?

Throughout the state you can call 211 or go to <https://www.211oklahoma.org> for help with housing, food, utilities, mental health, transportation, COVID-19 information, or other needs.



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