



“What makes you a man isn't the ability to conceive a child. It's having the courage to raise one.”
 — President Barack Obama

Raising a child means raising your game and developing your skills. The L.A. Fathers Program is a free resource to help 15- to 25-year-old dads find work and learn the parenting skills necessary to succeed. For more information, call 323-361-5108.

L.A. FATHERS PROGRAM
 CHLA.org/LAFATHERS

Sponsored by
 Children's Hospital LOS ANGELES
 DIVISION OF ADOLESCENT MEDICINE

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INFORMATION ABOUT L.A. FATHERS

What is the L.A. Fathers program?

L.A. Fathers is a free comprehensive support program for fathers, fathers-to-be and father figures ages 15-25 funded by the Office of Family Assistance.

L.A. Fathers is run by **Children's Hospital Division of Adolescent Medicine** under Project Nateem. The program offers case management (by CHLA), a nonviolent parenting series (Echo Parenting & Education), a healthy relationship series (CHLA), job training and support for placement (Managed Career Solutions / Hollywood WorkSource), as well as other support services like food bank, bus tokens, and diapers.

Who can be a part of L.A. Fathers?

Any young man, between 15-25, who has a child(ren), is expecting a child or who plays an important support role in the life of a child or children (this could include older siblings, step-parents, boyfriends, uncles, etc.)

What do we do in L.A. Fathers?

Weekly meetings are two hours (generally from 5pm-7pm) and consist of an informal meal time and interactive class discussion on a variety of topics. See below for an overview of topics covered in each 10 week session. All aspects of the program are offered at these weekly classes - job training, parenting and healthy relationships.

Child care is provided free of charge during our meeting times.

How do I enroll in L.A. Fathers?

A simple intake form is all that is needed to enroll in the L.A. Fathers program. You will usually meet with an L.A. Fathers staff to do the initial paperwork.



What are the parenting classes all about?

Echo Parenting & Education runs a 10 week interactive nonviolent parenting class that has been tailored to meet the needs of young fathers. Our certified parent educator provides information, activities and support for embracing a philosophy of child raising that is rooted in connection and empathy. Topics covered include nonviolent limit setting, emotional literacy, understanding the brain and child development, building/strengthening communication skills and conflict resolution.

What about the healthy relationships classes?

Staff from L.A. Fathers facilitate the healthy relationships classes. Topics covered include improving communication skills, understanding your own needs in a relationship and perspectives on healthy and unhealthy relationships.

Can you help me find a job?

Managed Career Solutions/Hollywood Worksource assist with job readiness (resumes, interview skills), certification (specifically fork lift and guard card training) and job leads. Job specific case management is offered to all L.A. Fathers participants.

When does LA Fathers meet?

We have ongoing classes on Tuesday and Wednesday evenings from 5pm-7pm in Hollywood. Free child care is available at both sessions. Contact LA Fathers staff to get more information on locations.

What about the mom?

If you have a large group of young mothers please contact us to talk more about what LA Fathers might have to offer. During our Wednesday evening group, a separate parenting support group for young mothers is run by Children's Hospital Los Angeles staff (not directly connected to LA Fathers). Due to LA Fathers' federal funding we are not allowed to exclude anyone interested from attending our classes. Interested mothers should contact us to get more information.

I have a lot of young parents, parents-to-be or parental figures -- I'd like to bring LA Fathers to my organization, how would I do that?

If there is a large enough group, the LA Fathers program staff are able to provide case-management, job training, parenting and healthy relationship services in an on-site setting. If you are interested in bringing LA Fathers to you please contact us to talk about the possibilities, logistics and to set a time to meet.

Outline of Weekly Parenting and Healthy Relationship Classes

<i>WEEK</i>	<i>Parenting & Healthy Relationships Class Topics</i>
1	Making introductions, building safety and getting to know each other
2	Communication & Safety Guidelines, creating our timeline and setting our intentions
3	Communication, communication styles and connected communication and active listening
4	Gender socialization and gender roles, story/counter story
5	The story of the dominant culture and the nonviolence story & human needs
6	Introduction to power and oppression, trauma and healing
7	Understanding and communicating feelings and needs, building emotional literacy and introducing empathy bookmaking
8	Unpacking anger, brain development, regulation/safe coping , cycles of violence
9	Presenting the OFNEEDS Tool for practicing empathy, Getting needs met in a relationship
10	Child development and supporting bringing limits and setting boundaries in relationships



LA FATHERS | PARENTING

KEY POINTS

- **Building skills for nonviolent conflict resolution and limit setting, connected communication, building emotional literacy and empathy.**
- **Offering tools that help to strengthen the parent / children relationship and build resiliency.**
- **Emphasis on building cooperation through connection -- creating routines and structures that support optimal brain growth, offer opportunities for children to build autonomy and practice regulation.**
- **Information on child and brain development, larger social dynamics and how those are connected to attached parenting.**
- **Opportunity to share your history and look at how that impacts your parenting practice.**
- **Offering tools and support to help understand the motivations connected to children's everyday lives.**

Los Angeles Times

Children's Hospital L.A. program reaches out to teen dads

The L.A. Fathers Program aims to reach the often forgotten partner in teen pregnancies, providing young dads with free parenting and relationship classes, job placement and social services.

By Stephen Ceasar, Los Angeles Times

5:52 PM PDT, July 13, 2013



Frank Mariano walked up the block and made a right turn toward a group of carefree teenage boys who spent the muggy summer day in Koreatown skateboarding and checking their phones for text messages.

Frank approached the youths — who eyed him with puzzled looks — but then the 16-year-old pushed a stroller into the playground where he would spend the afternoon with Anabell, his 1-year-old daughter.

Frank would later leave the toddler with her 17-year-old mother and head to Children's Hospital Los Angeles to meet with two dozen other fathers — between the ages of 14 and 25 — to discuss their shared struggles and to learn skills to help ease their lives.

The L.A. Fathers Program at the hospital is designed to reach the often forgotten partner in teen pregnancies and dispel the stereotypes attached to the young men — deadbeat, irresponsible or absent fathers.

The voluntary program scours some of the poorest neighborhoods in Los Angeles to find young fathers and provide them with free parenting and relationship classes, job placement and social services. In about a year, they've had nearly 250 teen fathers go through the program. They receive free food, diapers and condoms for attending.

It has developed into a haven where the young men feel safe to relax and talk about the challenges they each face — and sometimes to vent about their "baby mama," if needed.



"A lot of young dads feel alienated and experience a lot of judgment — from their family, from their friends, at school," said Frank Blaney, the program's coordinator. "Here, there are other dads that are going through the same experience they are."

The program, which began last summer, aims to help the young men learn the skills to become responsible parents and be active in their children's lives. The hospital has long had a similar program for teenage mothers, and hospital officials recognized a need to reach young fathers as well.

The program includes 10 weekly classes on job skills training and nonviolent parenting and relationship classes. Program coordinators find the youths by reaching out to social workers, school counselors, and mental health and probation offices. This year, they launched an ad campaign on buses and trains around the city.

During a recent class, Blaney asked participants to raise their hand if they grew up without a father figure; nearly all raised their hands.

He then asked what they were taught about what it means to be a man. "Have a lot of women," said one. "Men don't cry," said another. "Control your woman," someone said. Blaney explained that those are the prevailing stereotypes — but men can be sensitive, loving, caring and still be a man.

Then one shouted: "Provide for your family!"

"That's right. There's the player — then there's the man who is at home holding it down for his family," Blaney replied. "We can pick the path we want to take as men."



The pressure to immediately be providers, however, can be detrimental in the long term, Blaney said. Often, teenage fathers immediately drop out of school to get whatever work they can because they feel that a man should be the breadwinner. They frequently get stuck in low-paying, low-skilled jobs as a result. "It becomes a dead-end trap," Blaney said.

The program stresses finishing high school and continuing their education if possible — stressing the higher earning potential — and helps them find jobs that can accommodate both.

"It's very difficult for most of these guys to have a long-term viewpoint," Blaney said. "They have such immediate needs."

The program is funded by a three-year, \$784,500 grant from the U.S. Office of Family Assistance. For the funding to be renewed, officials must demonstrate that they have been effective in getting participants jobs. Blaney has been reaching out to local employers to explain that the program involves young, highly motivated men who are looking for work. "It's basically, 'Please — give our dads a chance,'" he said.

Frank Mariano has been able to balance school and work. He continues to go to high school and works in construction on days off. He hopes to attend culinary school after graduation and become a chef. His girlfriend, the mother of his child, recently graduated from high school and will attend junior college in the fall.

"I put school before work," Frank said. "Without my education I won't be able to complete my goals."

The class also saved his relationship, he said. In 2011, Frank said, he was arrested on suspicion of domestic battery after a fight with his girlfriend. He was put on probation.

They argued often and lacked communication. It was a session with Ben Wright, who conducts the parenting courses, that marked a change.



Wright brought out two animal hand puppets — which always draws skeptical laughter from the guys — each representing separate approaches to parenting and relationships. The jackal represents an aggressive, angry form of communication rife with criticism, judgment and blame. The other puppet, a giraffe, represents cooperation and understanding. The giraffe's heart, Wright explains, is large because it must pump blood all the way up its neck to the brain.

The fathers act out situations with each — demonstrating the hurtful and long-lasting effects the jackal can have on their children and their partners. "When I saw him take out the puppets I was like 'What the hell?' " Frank said. "But after — he had a point."

He added: "I'm more giraffe than jackal now."

stephen.ceasar@latimes.com

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