



PRESS RELEASE
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For Immediate Release
October 27th, 2015

FATHERS THE FOCUS OF NEW FEDERAL FUNDING
Healthy Start Coalition to launch comprehensive services for dads in the region

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. It's dad's time to shine. While social service programs in the region often focus on mothers, babies and children, the Northeast Florida Healthy Start Coalition is launching a comprehensive program for the oft left out, forgotten or marginalized component of families: fathers.

The Healthy Start Coalition was awarded a five-year grant from the Department of Healthy & Human Services, Administration for Children & Families New Pathways program to provide fatherhood services to dads in Baker, Clay, Duval, Nassau and St. Johns counties. The Coalition's "Growing Responsible Fathers" program will strengthen and expand responsible fatherhood, employment, housing, health care, mentoring and recidivism reduction services through case management, referrals and group classes.

The program will build on the foundations established by the Coalition and the Florida Department of Revenue – Child Support Enforcement Department's "Bringing Relief, Education and Assets to Children and their Household" Project (BREACH), which ceased services in August 2014.

The Coalition first established fatherhood as a priority in the 2009-2014 Service Delivery Plan, which guides the services, funding and efforts of the organization. Due to the growing need for fatherhood responsibility and its impact on maternal and child health, the Coalition has recently developed a Fatherhood Initiative Task Force for the region and plans to collaborate with area fatherhood providers.

The needs of referred fathers will be assessed and addressed through a three-tier case management system, that will include a text message personalized education and reminder system, peer mentorship, group classes and a variety of community referrals, including but not limited to financial literacy classes through RealSense, employment assistance through the Jacksonville Urban League, fatherhood training using evidence-based curricula from the National Fatherhood Initiative and more.

Program and partner agency staff will also receive training on domestic violence and preventing, detecting and reporting child abuse. The Northeast Florida Center for Community Initiatives at the University of North Florida will serve as local project evaluator.

About the Northeast Florida Healthy Start Coalition

The Healthy Start Coalition leads a cooperative community effort to reduce infant mortality and improve the health of children, childbearing women and their families in Northeast Florida. For more information, visit <http://nefhealthystart.org> or <http://www.facebook.com/nefhealthystart>.

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