



# THE IMPACT OF MALE INVOLVEMENT IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Summary Report  
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## About Quality Care for Children

For more than four decades, Quality Care for Children (QCC) has been deeply impacting the lives of children ages 0-5 and their families across the state of Georgia. As a prominent non-profit agency, our mission revolves around ensuring that every child in the state receives high-quality early care and education. Through various initiatives, we've tirelessly worked towards enhancing the overall growth, development, and welfare of infants and toddlers while also prioritizing the overall success and advancement of their families.

QCC holds a crucial role in elevating the standard of early childhood education (ECE) statewide. We offer training and support to early care providers, arming them with the necessary tools and expertise to cultivate nurturing and engaging environments for our youngest learners. By championing best practices in early childhood education, we positively impact school readiness for numerous infants and young children throughout Georgia through the power of ECE.



## About Parent Services at QCC

The Parent Services Department at QCC offers vital support to families in need through a range of impactful programs. The 877-ALL-GA-KIDS Call Center, funded by the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) through the Federal Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) grant, provides families with free and confidential child care referrals, equipping parents with essential information to make informed decisions regarding care. Additionally, our BOOST scholarship program is a leading private subsidy in Georgia, assisting families with crucial child care funding needs for tuition.

Recently, we've expanded our support services to include wrap-around assistance, serving as Gateway partners to help families access vital resources such as SNAP, TANF, WIC, and CAPS. Additionally, our interactive online chat feature offers access to a convenient platform for parents to seek assistance through our website.

Through community outreach efforts, we extend in-person assistance directly to parents in their communities, ensuring on-demand, personalized support is available when and where it's needed most. Our Georgia Parent Power initiative utilizes modern communication methods like text messaging, blogs, and interactive webinars to connect, inform, and empower parents statewide. Moreover, our HealthyUs program provides comprehensive case management services to enhance the health and well-being of underrepresented families in underserved communities.

Through these comprehensive efforts, the Parent Services Department at QCC plays a crucial role in assisting families in finding affordable and high-quality childcare solutions. These initiatives significantly contribute to the overall well-being and success of Georgia's youngest residents and their families.



## About the Importance of Male Involvement in ECE

In early childhood education, the involvement of males, both as teachers and fathers, is crucial in shaping children's holistic development. In fact, the importance of male involvement in early childhood education is gaining increasing recognition (Rimm-Kaufman et al., 2020). Research shows positive impacts on children's cognitive development, social skills, and emotional well-being when fathers are engaged in their education and care (Mukuna & Mutsotso, 2021). Moreover, a growing presence of male educators in early childhood settings encourages the value of male figures as role models and contributes to diverse teaching styles, fostering a more gender-balanced learning environment (Schindlaler, 2020).

This highlights the need for initiatives that cultivate spaces where men have careers in early childhood education as well as creating welcoming spaces for father engagement in their children's learning.

## Misconceptions of Men in ECE

Societal misconceptions surrounding men's roles in childcare continue to be a barrier to their engagement in early childhood education, both as teachers and fathers (Cheung & Sawada, 2022). One prevalent stereotype portrays nurturing and emotional caregiving as inherently feminine, leading some to question a man's suitability for working with young children (Jeon & Zhai, 2021). This perception can discourage qualified men from pursuing careers in ECE and create a perception of these roles as less desirable for men (Cheung & Sawada, 2022). Furthermore, fathers may face judgment for their involvement in ECE activities, with some perceiving their presence as unnecessary or even suspicious (Marsiglia et al., 2023). These misconceptions can create a sense of isolation and discourage fathers from actively participating in their children's early education.

## Male Involvement in ECE as Teachers

Traditionally, ECE classrooms have been dominated by female teachers. However, recent years have suggested there is a growing need for male educators in this field (Aaltonen et al., 2022). Research suggests that male ECE teachers bring unique strengths to the classroom, such as promoting physical activity and fostering positive risk-taking behaviors in young children (Jeon & Zhai, 2021). Their presence can also challenge traditional gender stereotypes and provide much-needed male role models for young learners (Aaltonen et al., 2022). Despite these benefits, the number of male educators in ECE remains low. Initiatives aimed at attracting and retaining men in the profession, such as targeted recruitment programs and addressing any potential disparities, could be beneficial in creating a more balanced and representative teaching workforce in ECE settings.



## Male Involvement in ECE as Fathers

Fathers play a vital role in shaping a child's early development, and their involvement in early childhood education is increasingly recognized as beneficial (Marsiglia et al., 2023). Studies prove that children with engaged fathers tend to have stronger cognitive skills, better emotional regulation, and higher academic achievement (Cabrera et al., 2021). This positive impact is attributed to the unique ways fathers interact with their children, often promoting physical play, exploration, and problem-solving (Cabrera et al., 2021). Furthermore, fathers serve as vital male role models, especially for sons, helping them develop a healthy sense of masculinity and navigate social interactions (Marsiglia et al., 2023).

However, societal expectations and traditional gender roles can often hinder paternal involvement in ECE settings. Encouraging fathers to participate in activities, workshops, and parent-teacher events can bridge this gap and foster a more collaborative learning environment for their children (Cabrera et al., 2021).

Despite the clear advantages of father engagement, there's still a need to address existing disparities. Promoting a more inclusive environment that welcomes fathers of all backgrounds is crucial in ensuring all children reap the benefits of high-quality early learning experiences.

## The First Fathers Matter ATL Breakfast Club Meeting

Quality Care for Children's strategic plan emphasizes the importance of expansion in this area. We recognize the significant role of fathers in early childhood education and the disparities in their involvement across the state on this issue. Understanding the importance of community partnerships in driving meaningful change, we partnered with [Fathers Matter ATL](#), a multi-sector collaborative focused on promoting and supporting father engagement, which includes but is not limited to Morehouse School of Medicine, Reaching Our Brothers Everywhere, Fathers Incorporated, and the Father Movement.

QCC joined forces, among many others, to sponsor the first Fathers Matter ATL Breakfast Club event at Roosevelt Hall. This event aimed to tackle ongoing challenges related to male involvement in ECE. This groundbreaking event provided a platform for fathers to come together, share experiences, and engage in crucial discussions surrounding various pressing issues.

The event went beyond mere dialogue, offering practical support and resources to fathers. Participants were treated to a hot meal, creating a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere conducive to open conversation. Fathers had the opportunity to delve into topics such as fatherhood legitimization, early childhood education, prenatal health, child support, housing, health and wellness, justice involvement, and child care support with professionals who could provide immediate assistance.

By addressing a wide range of relevant issues, the Fathers Matter ATL Breakfast Club fostered holistic support for fathers, recognizing their multifaceted roles and challenges. Moreover, the event facilitated networking and community-building among fathers and professionals, empowering them to form connections and support systems that extend beyond the confines of the event itself.



## The Fatherhood Survey

At the conclusion of the Fathers Matter ATL Breakfast Club event, a survey was conducted to gather feedback from participating fathers about their experiences. The survey aimed to capture their perspectives on various aspects of the event, including its organization, content, and overall impact. Fathers who completed the survey were offered a \$25 Visa gift card as a token of appreciation for their time and input.

By collecting feedback through the survey, organizers sought valuable insights into the event's strengths and areas for growth, ensuring that future iterations could better meet the needs and expectations of participating fathers.

## Summary of the Fatherhood Survey Results

The survey results shed light on the profiles of fathers who attended the event as well as nuances regarding the prevalence of single-father families in Georgia. The event saw participation from over 40 fathers, including 29 who opted to take the survey on a voluntary basis. These fathers represent a diverse range of counties in Georgia. Fulton, DeKalb, and Clayton counties stood out, with 34%, 31%, and 20% of fathers residing in each, respectively. In terms of age demographics, approximately 35% of the fathers fell within the 25-34 age bracket, while another 35% were in the 35-44 age range. In terms of employment status, the majority (59%) of fathers reported working full-time. Nearly 69% of the surveyed fathers reported being single, with 24% indicating they were married. LendingTree, in 2022, revealed that 45,137 homes in the state of Georgia fit this description of single-father families (Davis et al., 2022). 61% of fathers reported that counseling services, playgroups for fathers and children, and financial planning workshops were the most pressing needs, with 54% reporting parenting workshops as a beneficial and worthwhile support service.

72% of fathers in attendance were fathers of children ages 0-5.



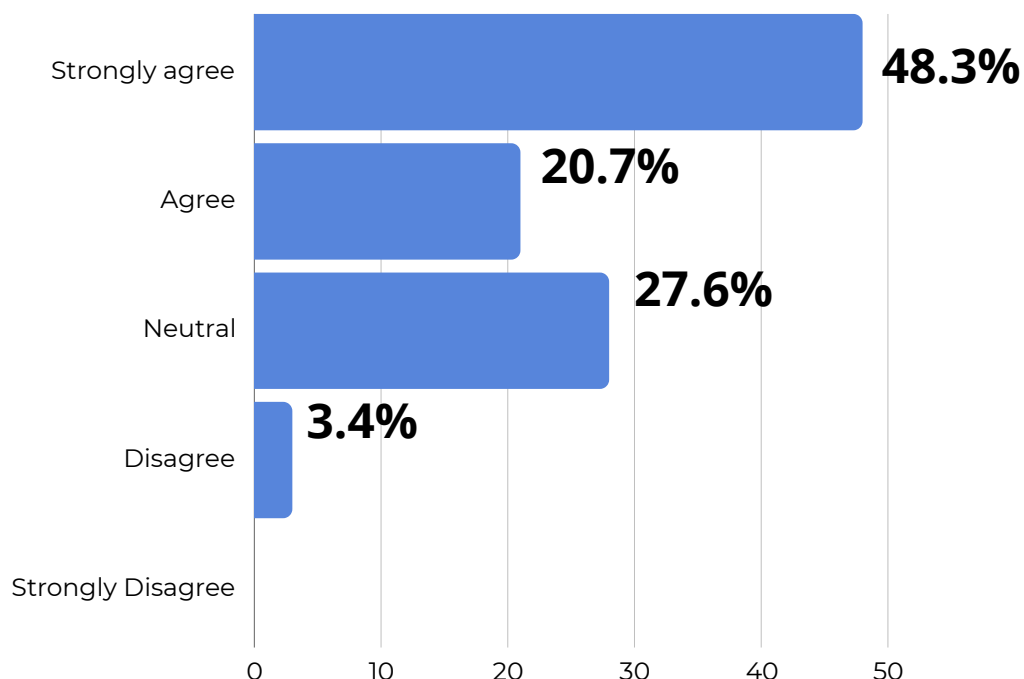
# Results & Outcomes





## Here are some of the important key metrics reported by fathers about the event:

**More than half (69%) of respondents face challenges as a father.**



**Nearly 80% reported being involved in their child's life.**

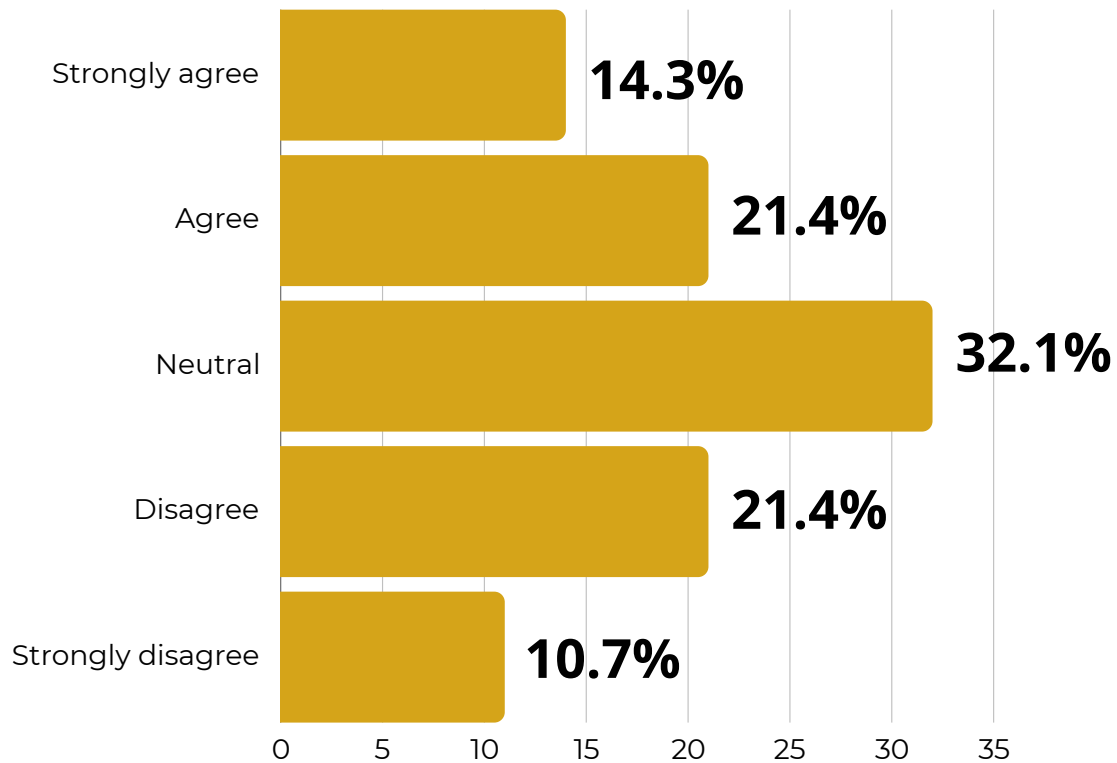


**90% of fathers reported feeling confident in their parenting abilities.**

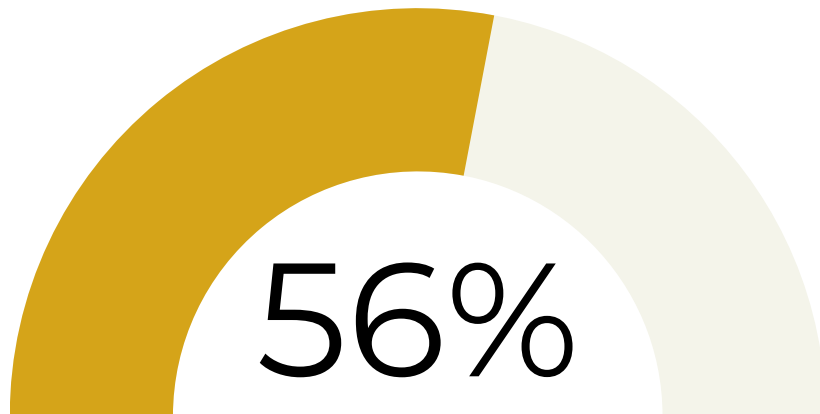




**Only 36% reported knowing of available support services for fathers in their community.**



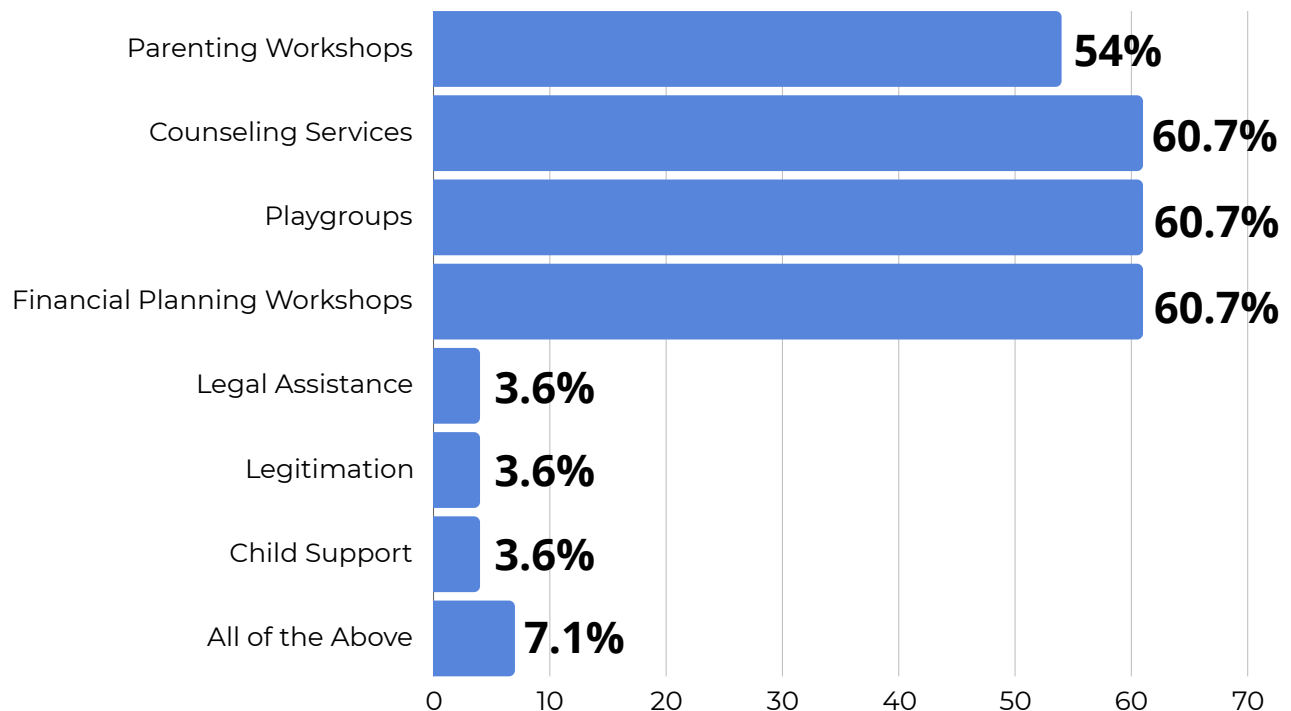
**More than half reported not utilizing fatherhood support services in the past.**



**97% are interested in attending similar events in the future.**



**Respondents indicated that counseling services, playgroups for fathers and children, and financial planning workshops would be the most beneficial support services.**



# Takeaways & Recommendations





## Takeaways and Recommendations

During our exploration of research and practice, here are some things we have learned that would benefit early childhood education.

### 1. Creating father-friendly spaces within ECE Centers:

The research on fatherhood involvement underscores the importance of incorporating elements such as comfortable seating areas, male role models on staff, and father-child interactive zones; centers can actively engage fathers further in their children's early education.

### 2. Increasing program funding to reach fathers in underserved areas:

Research reveals that fathers need expanded funding opportunities, especially in underserved regions. This funding can support outreach efforts, workshops, and community events tailored to engage fathers effectively.

### 3. Adding supports that address the unique challenges of single fathers in Georgia:

Research shows us the growing percentage of single fathers, as also reflected in our survey, so targeted resources such as facilitated peer support groups, counseling services, and assistance with child care arrangements can address the specific challenges they face in balancing parenting responsibilities alone.

### 4. Providing centralized counseling & mental health resources for dads:

Recognizing the importance of mental health in parenting, the survey suggests a need for centralized counseling and mental health resources tailored specifically for fathers. These resources can offer a safe and supportive space for fathers to address any emotional challenges they may encounter in their parenting journey with a licensed clinical professional.

### 5. Creating & identifying playgroups for fathers & children:

The survey highlights fathers' desire to bond with their children through playgroups. By organizing and identifying playgroups specifically for fathers and their children, ECE institutions can foster a sense of community among fathers and provide opportunities for shared experiences and support.

### 6. Offering financial planning workshops to help dads with fiscal duties:

Given the reported employment status of fathers in the survey, financial planning workshops can provide valuable support in managing fiscal responsibilities effectively. These workshops can offer guidance on budgeting, saving for childcare expenses, and planning for their children's future education.

### 7. Organizing workshops to provide coaching & work-life balance solutions:

Workshops focused on parenting strategies and achieving work-life balance can equip fathers with practical tools to navigate the demands of parenting while pursuing professional goals. By providing coaching on effective parenting techniques and time management strategies, these workshops can support fathers in balancing their roles as caregivers and providers.

### 8. Recruiting, supporting, & retaining male educators in ECE spaces:

Research indicates the importance of male role models in ECE. Efforts should be made to recruit, support, and retain male educators within ECE spaces. This can be achieved through targeted recruitment strategies, professional development opportunities, and creating a supportive work environment that values and respects the contributions of male educators while acknowledging their unique challenges through a strengths-based lens.

## 9. Delivering implicit bias and stereotype training to ECE staff:

Training staff members to recognize and address implicit biases and stereotypes against men in ECE spaces can create more inclusive environments where men feel respected and valued as active participants in children's education. By promoting awareness and sensitivity towards the contributions of fathers and male teachers' roles in ECE, staff members can foster a supportive and welcoming atmosphere for all stakeholders.

## 10. Centering fathers as the experts of their own children:

Many research studies emphasize the importance of recognizing fathers as essential partners in their children's development. By centering fathers as the experts of their own children, ECE programs can create a collaborative environment where fathers feel empowered to contribute their insights and experiences to their children's learning journey.

## Conclusion of the Recommendations

In conclusion, the insights gleaned from the research and survey data underscore the gravity of actively involving men in early childhood education initiatives. The success of the event, coupled with the comprehensive recommendations provided, highlights the need for intentional efforts to create more inclusive environments for male involvement in ECE, particularly for fathers, male teachers, and childcare administrators. By implementing the recommended strategies, programs and institutions can foster meaningful engagement and support for men in their desire to serve as positive catalysts on children's educational journey.

Overall, promoting male involvement through increasing the prevalence of male teachers and fatherhood engagement in early childhood education is essential for creating inclusive and nurturing learning environments. By embracing diverse perspectives and fostering strong relationships, we can better support the holistic development and success of all children.

## Why Our Work Matters

At QCC, our mission revolves around adopting a 2Gen approach, which underscores the crucial connection between parent and child. We understand that the involvement of fathers in the lives of children aged 0-5 is paramount, as it significantly impacts their development and overall success. By providing comprehensive services and resources that cater to both generations simultaneously, we create a nurturing environment where all children can thrive.

In Georgia, supporting male involvement in early childhood education is particularly vital to QCC's mission. Men involved in the lives of young children face unique challenges that require a specialized approach to ensure their successful participation and sense of belonging. Through tailored programs, resources, and scholarships, we empower fathers to engage actively in their children's education and development. By championing a gender-balanced workforce in ECE and utilizing research-driven strategies, we strive to create a system that encourages and supports male involvement across the state. Our efforts aim to foster positive family dynamics and ensure that every child in Georgia reaches their full potential.

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