**Why Fathers and Partners in Maternal and Child Health?**

Fathers and partners involved during pregnancy and at the birth of the child (“Magic Moment”) tend to remain engaged throughout the life of the child.

1. Children with involved fathers/partners do better in school, have less behavior issues, are less likely to live in poverty, are less likely to be incarcerated, etc.
2. Healthy father/partner involvement can serve as a protective factor during pregnancy, birth and during the child’s first year.
   1. An informed and knowledgeable father/partner can provide support for mother’s healthy living to include: Healthy diet, healthy homes, smoking cessation, opposing drug use, prenatal appointments, decreased stress, transportation, etc.
   2. A father/partner can serve as a protective factor and safety net to increase the chances of child reaching his/her first birthday to include: Promoting and supporting breastfeeding, opposing drug use, decrease mother’s stress by sharing time and care for infant, provide economically (decrease chances of child growing up in poverty), support during well-baby check-up appointments and overall sharing in the responsibility of **properly** caring for his infant.
   3. A father/partner who reads to his/her infant/child (pre/post birth) enhances the development of his/her child and increases the chances of his child’s early learning development.
   4. A father/partner’s extended family support adds to the protective aspects for an infant’s safe environment to include: Additional family members to provide extended emotional, social and financial support for the child. The other half of the infant’s identity adds confidence and structure to the development during childhood.
   5. The father/partner’s financial support is as natural as breathing when there is a relationship between the father/partner and his child.

Involving Fathers/Partners in Preventing Infant Mortality

Pre and Post Natal Care Providers, Home Visiting Programs and Pediatricians have opportunities to engage and educate fathers and partners in some key ways to help prevent infant mortality:

1. Engage Fathers/Partners
   1. Proactively invite fathers and partners to appointments when they are scheduled
   2. Insure that the health care setting is father/partner-friendly and that all language is father/partner-inclusive
   3. Address fathers/partners directly during appointments/visits about the important role fathers/partners play in maternal health during pregnancy/childbirth and in infant health
   4. Provide father/partner-specific materials
   5. Encourage fathers/partners to attend all prenatal appointments, participate in the childbirth event and attend infant well-child appointments.
2. Educate Fathers and partners on specific ways they can be involved in Infant Health
   1. Support and help mother’s scheduling, transportation to and participation in prenatal, postnatal and infant care appointments
   2. Support mothers in healthy behaviors during pregnancy: reduce or abstain from smoking, drug/alcohol use and increase healthy nutrition
   3. Model healthy behaviors around mother and children
   4. Help mother prepare safe sleep environment and routine in her (or their) home
   5. Prepare and monitor a safe sleep environment and routine in the father/partner’s home if he/she does not live with mother
   6. Prepare and monitor a safe sleep environment and routine in other locations where the child may sleep or nap
   7. Teach fathers/partners the importance of breastfeeding and how they can support the mother’s breastfeeding of their infant
   8. Develop a reproductive life plan to prevent unplanned pregnancies