

MEDIA RELEASE

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Having FUN with kids builds confidence

A new report has found that dads who spend time with their kids improve their confidence in parenting capacity, skills and knowledge.

An evaluation report on the Fathers Utilising Networks (FUN) for Kids program also found a positive impact on the quality of co-parental relationships and the degree to which mothers and fathers supported one another and cooperated in matters of child care and children's development.

Relationships Australia (Victoria) has operated the FUN for Kids program since 2001 in conjunction with maternal and child health centres, preschools, kindergartens and primary schools.

The program is designed for new, kindergarten and primary school dads respectively. It aims to help men form positive relationships with their children and partners and to increase fathers' confidence and capacity for positive engagement.

With funding support from the Ian Potter Foundation, RAV commissioned the Australian Institute of Family Studies to evaluate the program to determine its impact on participating fathers' relationships with their children and partners.

The evaluation report also showed that the FUN for Kids:

- addressed barriers that prevent fathers from becoming more involved in direct child care
- gave mothers a break from infant care
- helped dads gain knowledge and confidence about children's learning and development
- enabled children to enjoy the activities and the time spent with their fathers
- gave fathers the opportunity to socialise with other fathers and to swap stories
- built connections within local communities.

It suggested the program could be expanded to facilitate the formation and support for ongoing fathers' groups, as well as extended to fathers in need of parenting encouragement and support who would not normally seek help from formal services.

Scott Hall, Men and Family Relationships Coordinator at RAV, said FUN for Kids programs were down to earth and practical. "They open the door for dads to build on their strengths as parents, learn new skills through sharing experiences and information with other guys."

He encourages all dads to reflect, plan and most of all have some fun with their families and communities.

"Try something relaxing or adventurous, share some food and laughter. Events like the Fathers Day DadsLink barbecue brunch at Riversdale Park, Camberwell, on Sunday 6 September from 10 am to 1 pm can be fantastic fun. Or organise something fun in your local community."

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