

At-a-glance: Self-reported personal challenges of fathers in responsible fatherhood programs

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For this brief research report, we interviewed 71 fathers attending 9 responsible fatherhood programs about the types of challenges or barriers they experience to being involved with their children. To participate in the study, fathers had to be a nonresidential, biological fathers to a child under the age of 18.

Here is what the fathers reported:

- On average fathers reported a total of 6.83 challenges in the last thirty days.
- Unemployment was the challenge most frequently reported by fathers. Slightly more than 65% of the sample reported unemployment as a challenge in the last thirty days.

Other frequently reported challenges included:

- **65%** reported insufficient funds to buy things for one's child(ren).
- **35%** reported an inability to pay child support.
- **32%** reported difficulty keeping a job, and
- **30%** reported an inability to pay bills.
- **33%** of the sample felt their living situation prevented them from having their children stay with or visit them.
- **27%** of fathers indicated having problems dealing with family/civil court.
- **20%** of fathers reported having problems with anger, a history of being accused of abusing one's partner/spouse, and drug/alcohol problems.

Implications For Programs

- Employment, child support, and inability to financially support children are fathers' most frequently reported challenges. These should be a high priority among the services offered by fatherhood programs.
- Housing problems and difficulty managing one's own anger are frequently reported by fathers and should be addressed through case management and counseling services.

Implications For Researchers

- Researchers conducting evaluations of fatherhood programs should assess a range of challenges or risk factors. These challenges may moderate the effects of the fatherhood intervention/program on father and family outcomes.

