

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

Issue No. 2, Fall 2022



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CONNECTICUT
FATHERHOOD
INITIATIVE



Fall Edition

This Issue's focus:

Father's Mental Health

MENTal Health facts!

988 Suicide & Crisis Hotline

Urban Community Alliance

Contact Us

Welcome to the Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative Quarterly Newsletter!

Message from Our Network

Commissioner Nancy Navarretta

Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services

“Support for the changes and challenges new fathers face is largely absent from discussions of perinatal and postpartum health. For many men, this may mean that entry into fatherhood is confusing and stressful. Giving our fathers the resources to feel, talk, and take care of themselves is vital to their mental health and well-being. This, in turn, may support them in becoming confident, nurturing parents and realizing the full potential of a relationship with their children.” – DMHAS Commissioner Nancy Navarretta

Father's Mental Health

The mental health of fathers is one of the CT Fatherhood Initiative's highest priorities. A study cited by the CDC about parents' mental health indicated that when a parent has poor mental health, children are also likely to have poor mental, physical and emotional health and adverse childhood experiences such as poverty, violence and family discord.^[1] We know that historically, men have faced pressure to suppress feelings and never ask for help. Showing emotion equates to a weakness for males and males suffering from depression and stress often display anger and irritability, not sadness. While these emotions are much more socially acceptable, they result in higher rates of male suicide, substance use, mental illness and domestic violence. ([Read More](#))

Managing stress by getting adequate sleep, avoiding illegal and non-prescribed substances, eating nutritious foods and exercising are ways fathers can model positive self-care. Recognizing the symptoms of depression and anxiety, such as increased stress, too much or too little sleep, inability to focus, aggression and anger, can also cue fathers to reach out for support from loved ones or a professional. Additional resources offered by the Fatherhood Initiative, DMHAS and other state agencies can be found on page 4 of this newsletter or by calling 211.

Time for some MENTAL health facts!

Did you know...?

- About 10% of new fathers experience postpartum depression (compared to 15% of mothers), but there is no official diagnostic or screening tool for men¹.
- Fathers experience hormonal changes during a partner's pregnancy and after the birth of a child, especially dads who are more involved with their new babies².
- Fathers are more likely than men without children to be healthier physically and mentally. They are more likely to seek help and attend preventative doctor's visits³.
- Fathers have lower rates of depression when they are involved with their 3-5 year old children⁴.
- Dr. Derrick Gordon from the Yale School of Medicine stresses the link between mental and physical health. Mental stress can manifest through physical symptoms especially in men, which doctors need to keep in mind when questioning their patients.

Hear more via this [webinar](#).



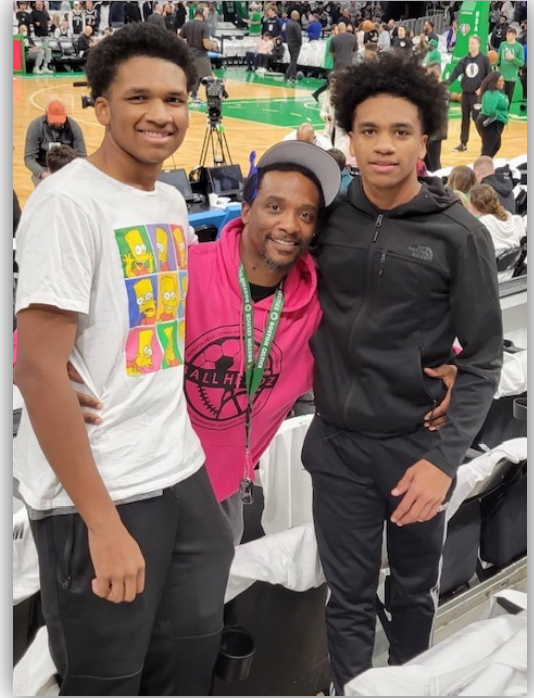
Connecticut has a new mental health crisis hotline. Anyone anywhere in the U.S. can dial or text **988** 24 hours a day, 365 days per year to connect to a counselor who can assist with suicidal thoughts and other mental health concerns.

The rate of suicide within the United States has risen in the last couple of years, making it a leading cause of death for people aged 14-34. In Connecticut there were 359 deaths by suicide in 2020. Men are at a much higher risk of death by suicide, as 278 of those 359 deaths in our state were males. Suicide is a concern across all ages, all gender identities and backgrounds. **988** does not replace 911 or 211 in CT if you need emergency services, all are active numbers for help.

Sports and Mental Health

It is widely accepted that participating in sports can be extremely beneficial to boys and men. Teaching life skills like discipline and resilience, sports are a positive outlet for stress and can distract from difficult life situations. In addition to having the physical release of energy, sports can allow males to channel painful emotions in a positive way. On a team, athletes bond with a support system that can last for life. When coaches create an atmosphere where everyone's wellbeing, including mental health, is paramount, it can be life changing.

Previously, a paralyzing stigma about men's mental health existed in sports, which prevented male players from admitting they needed help. I am proud to say that in the last two years, that stigma is dissolving quickly. Coaches are informing male players that they are there to support their mental health. By creating space where players feel comfortable sharing their stress or pain, coaches and teammates create an immediate support system that is only limited by team size. Coaches having training in identifying symptoms of breakdowns in mental health is invaluable, as they typically interact with their athletes on a daily basis and could be the first to spot trouble. By recognizing symptoms early, coaches can quickly connect the athlete to help. As a coach of male high school football players, I am proud to support their mental and physical health and to empower them to be strong athletes and men.



Submitted by Melvin Wells, III; Yale School of Medicine Research Assistant, New Haven Prevention Council, Hamden Hall Country Day School Football Coach, 4 year member of the Curry College Football team where he earned a selection as team captain, becoming the second African American captain of the football team in college history.

Did you know?

Having trouble with gambling may also be a mental health issue! There are programs funded by DMHAS called "Bettor Choice Programs" that are gambling-specific treatment programs. Services are offered at more than 16 locations in Connecticut through community agencies. Call 211 for contact info on these programs or click [here](#) for a list.

CFI Partners

CT Departments of:

- Children and Families
 - Correction
 - Developmental Services
 - Education
 - Housing
 - Labor
 - Mental Health and Addiction Services
 - Public Health
 - Social Services
 - Veterans Affairs
- also**
- Office of Early Childhood
 - Judicial Branch Court Support Services Division, Support Enforcement Services, and Family Support Magistrate Division
 - Board of Pardons and Parole
 - Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity and Opportunity
 - CT Coalition Against Domestic Violence
 - CT State Colleges and Universities
 - United Way of CT
 - Legal services, researchers and numerous community-based, family- and youth-serving providers.

Urban Community Alliance

Urban Community Alliance (UCA) is one of the CT Fatherhood Initiative programs, located in New Haven, that understands and prioritizes men's mental wellness. Thomas Harris, the Male Involvement Network Manager at UCA, shared with us a success story linked to mental health support:

About five years ago, Marcus, a father of four, experienced some hard times after separating from his children's mother. Depressed and despairing, Marcus initially turned to substances to help him cope and consequently lost his job and home. On his own, Marcus entered rehab, got clean and re-employed, but felt hopeless when he learned that the state was pursuing him for thousands of dollars in back child support. Marcus turned to the Fatherhood Program at UCA for guidance.

The Connecticut Child Support Arrearage Adjustment Program, as well as the support from staff at UCA, helped Marcus to get on a path of mental wellness and to regain hope. With guidance and advice from UCA and their weekly men's group, Marcus was able to meet his financial obligations to his family and was even able to achieve his dream of bringing his children overseas to meet his father. Five years later, the programs at UCA continue to help Marcus with his sobriety and mental health, as he knows he is supported and not alone in facing the challenges of life.

Urban Community Alliance
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(203)-786-5970

5 Inpatient Mental Health treatment facilities funded by DMHAS:

CT Valley Hospital **860-262-5515** & Whiting Forensic Hospital in Middletown **860-262-6092**
CT Mental Health Center in New Haven **203-974-7414**
Greater Bridgeport Community Mental Health Center in Bridgeport **203-551-7428**
Capitol Region Mental Health Center in Hartford **860-297-0973**

Local Mental Health Authorities funded by DMHAS provide crisis intervention and therapeutic services.

Region 1: Bridgeport and Stamford
Region 2: Branford, New Haven, Meriden, Middletown & Others
Region 3: Norwich and Dayville
Region 4: Windsor, New Britain, Hartford, East Hartford
Region 5: Waterbury, Danbury, Torrington

The Department of Social Services (DSS) programs are available to all applicants and recipients without regard to race, color, religion, sex, gender identity or expression, marital status, age, national origin, ancestry, political beliefs, sexual orientation, intellectual disability, mental disability, learning disability or physical disability including but not limited to blindness.

DSS has a TDD/TTY line for persons who are deaf or hearing impaired and have a TDD/TTY: 1-800-842-4524, or dial 7-1-1. Auxiliary aids are also available for blind or visually impaired persons. The DSS is an equal opportunity, affirmative action employer.