

Father/Teen Talk About Dating, Sex, and Relationships

By Jennifer Grossman, Ph.D., and Amanda Richer, M.A.

We interviewed 44 fathers, 16 mothers, and 22 teens. Here's some information about the fathers:

- 82% biological fathers, 11% step-fathers, 7% adoptive fathers
- 36% white, 34% Black, 23% Latino, 5% Asian, 2% Middle Eastern
- 27% postgraduate degree, 21% college degree, 21% some college, 21% high school diploma, 9% some high school, 2% no response



Do fathers talk with their teens about dating, sex, and relationships?

73% do

- 59% reported talking about it once or twice a month
- 36% felt very comfortable talking about it
- 27% felt pretty comfortable talking about it

“Most men are told and taught to never talk. They’re, you know, they’re told to never have emotions, they’re told to just kind of sit over there...it makes it difficult for dads, and we’re taught to never ask for help.”

What gets in the way of fathers talking with their teens about dating, sex, and relationships?

- They don't know what to say
- They feel uncomfortable
- They don't realize these conversations matter

90% of fathers

would be very or somewhat open to a program that helps them talk with their teens about these topics

What should a program to support father/teen talk look like?

Recognize that fathers matter

Share tips on how to talk with teens about dating, sex, and relationships

Give fathers opportunities to learn from each other

Share program information in multiple ways (e.g. website, app, videos, emails, texts, and/or phone calls)

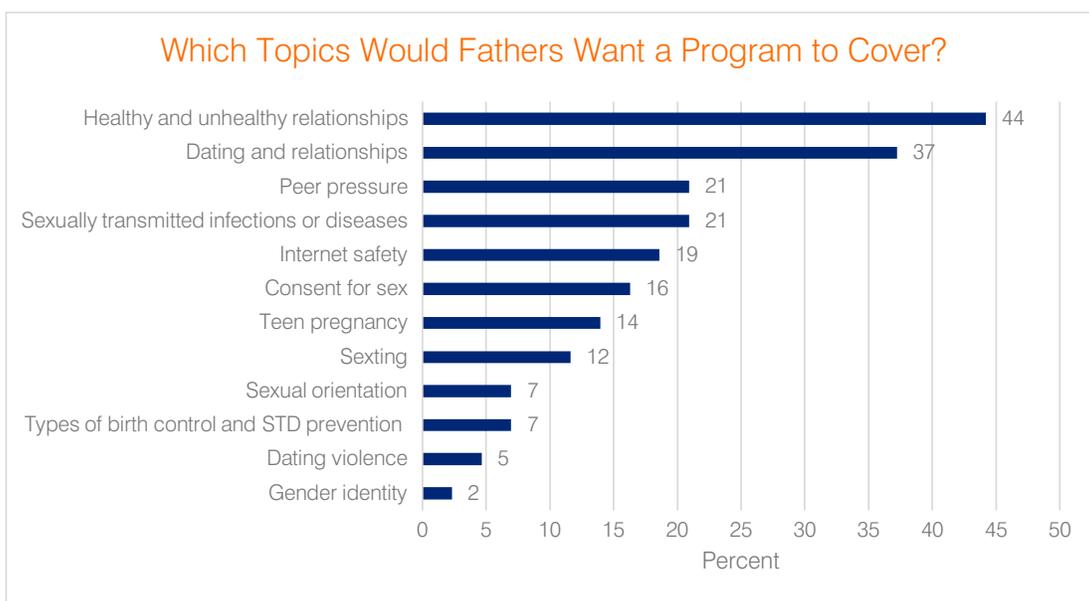


Fathers wanted programs that offer opportunities to learn from each other:

“Having that ability to talk to a dad as a friend, nonjudgmental, gonna listen to me and just be able to say, ‘Dude, I’m running into this. I don’t know how to talk to my son or daughter about sex.’”

Fathers wanted programs to show that they matter:

“Start meetings by sharing the value and the power of, the power of fathers who are involved... not to show that dads are more important than mothers, it’s to show that dads are way more important than what the culture is expressing.”



This project was supported by the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute Of Child Health & Human Development of the National Institutes of Health under Award Number R21HD100807. The content is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official views of the National Institutes of Health.