

## OUR POSITION

Fathers in New Zealand are doing a great job but need support to help them balance work and family roles.

## OUR GOAL

Fathers should be given a range of support options to help them balance their roles as providers and caregivers. This includes adequate parental leave provisions and support groups designed by fathers for fathers. Teenage, single and step dads need targeted strategies for the different issues they face.

## WHAT THE COMMISSION HAS DONE SO FAR

2007: Couch poll for fathers.

2008: Couch poll for fathers around Families Day.

2009: Submission to the Jobs Summit regarding paid parental leave.

2009: *Heart and Head* Blue Skies Fund report.

2009: *Pathways through Parental Separation* Innovative Practice Fund report.

2009: *Supporting Kiwi Dads* research report. Sample size 1,700.

2009: Couch poll based on *Supporting Kiwi Dads*.

2010: Member of Ministry of Social Development working group which produced guidelines for service providers working with teen dads

2011: Fathering Forum: Making a Difference for Fathers

## COMMISSION'S VIEW

- > New Zealand today has a diverse range of fathers, such as those living with their partners and children, step-dads, separated, single and teenage dads, as well as fathers of different ethnicities, and all are doing a great job.
- > Fathers think they could do an even better job if they could spend more time with their children. The main barrier to fathers spending time with their kids is work, which illustrates the need for flexible workplaces.
- > Fathers have an important influence on their children but there are limited services, support and information specifically designed for dads.

- > Support services and training courses for fathers should be targeted rather than universal, as teenage, single, step and separated dads may need specialised support.
- > Fathers have asked for antenatal courses that have content specifically for them and which recognise their role as fathers to their children.
- > Paid parental leave provisions should be improved to further encourage fathers as well as their partners to spend time with newborn babies.
- > Some fathers' interactions with children have been constrained by media stories and organisations' rules that treat all men as potential abusers.

## REFERENCES

Couch polls:

2007: <http://www.thecouch.org.nz/member/report/18>

2008: <http://www.thecouch.org.nz/member/report/24>

Families Commission Research and press releases:

<http://www.nzfamilies.org.nz/category/topic/parenting/fathers>

<http://www.nzfamilies.org.nz/search/node/fathers>

Ministry of Social Development:

Resource for service providers working with teen dads:

<http://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/planning-strategy/teen-fathers/index.html>

<http://www.diyfather.com/>

