

## **FAP FOCUS: Enhancing the Dad Factor in the Air Force**

A pilot program at Eglin Air Force Base and Hurlburt Field in Ft. Walton Beach, Florida, is providing additional support for military families with young children. The Coaching Young Fathers (CYF) project is one of multiple Department of Defense (DoD) Family Advocacy Program pilot projects at locations with high birth and deployment rates. The Eglin/Hurlburt CYF project focuses on fathers, providing services to involve new dads early in the lives of their children.

The CYF project encourages expectant fathers to attend an initial prenatal orientation meeting with their partners, followed by a separate briefing specifically for fathers, which addresses preparation for the challenges of pregnancy and parenting infants and young children. "Dads: The Basics" is a key component of the CYF project. A course developed by the National Center on Shaken Baby Syndrome (SBS) in partnership with DoD, "Dads: The Basics" supports expectant and new fathers by providing them with information on infant care, communication skills, and techniques for coping with parental stressors, particularly infant crying. The course curriculum is included in the DoD SBS Toolkit, available online at MilitaryHOMEFRONT for installation service providers working with parents of infants.

CYF project staff have also partnered with other base agencies to tailor CYF programs, leading to the collaborative launch of several other CYF initiatives, including a "New Dads Lunch and Learn" series, a bi-monthly Dads' newsletter, and a playgroup. All CYF efforts seek to enhance the quantity and quality of fathers' interactions with their children. The project has already made an impact, serving 1,884 individuals during the first six months.

Feedback from fathers participating in the CYF program has been positive. One participating father stated, "I liked getting the dads together separately. It emphasized the importance of our roles." Another stated that attending a CYF event, "made me realize how complex a small child's mind is and how much I can help even my newborn." At Eglin AFB and Hurlburt Field, the CYF pilot program is working to enhance the Dad Factor!

For more information on the CYF project at Eglin AFB/Hurlburt Field, contact Meg Walker, Air Force New Parent Support Program Manager.