

**Cost & Solutions
to Family Fragmentation
&
Father Absence
In Richmond, VA**



**Richmond Family &
Fatherhood Initiative**

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Cost & Solutions to Family Fragmentation and Father Absence in Richmond, VA

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About Benjamin Scafidi

The cost of family fragmentation and father absence was calculated using methodology designed by a native of Richmond Benjamin Scafidi, Ph.D., economist from the Georgia Family Council. Dr. Scafidi is also an associate professor in the J. Whitney Bunting School of Business at Georgia College & State University. His research has focused on education and urban policy. He received his Ph.D. in Economics from the University of Virginia and his bachelor's degree in Economics from the University of Notre Dame. Dr. Scafidi, his wife Lori Scafidi and their four children reside in Milledgeville, Georgia.

Note

The link between poverty and family fragmentation has been well researched and is widely accepted. Family fragmentation and father absence has caused an increase in taxpayer cost to antipoverty programs, justice system programs and education programs. Compared with Medicaid and Food Stamps, Justice System costs (courts, police, prisons, jails) present the most likely source for redirecting funds into preventive, alternative and reentry programs as those presented in the Solutions portion of this report.

Cost and Solutions to Family Fragmentation and Father Absence in Richmond

The Cost

Much of the public discourse over fatherhood and marriage focuses on two parent homes and marriage as a social, moral or religious institution. “But marriage is also an economic institution, a powerful creator of human and social capital. Increases in divorce and unwed childbearing have broad economic implications, including large expenditures of the federal and state governments.” Scafidi, 2008.

This is the first ever report that attempts to measure the taxpayer costs of family fragmentation and father absence in Richmond for taxpayers. The cost of family fragmentation in the US and Richmond should make us all raise the question about the existence of prevention strategies. “Every program that results in very small decreases in divorce and unwed childbearing could yield big savings for all taxpayers.”¹

There is an immeasurable cost to those impacted directly by father absence. Research revealed the compelling links between family breakdown and the core social issues facing the community. This research shows the high cost to mothers, children and the fathers of these children in terms of broken relationships, lost dreams, poorer health outcomes, poor school performance and unresolved anger driving a culture of hopelessness and poverty. Often young men, impacted by family fragmentation and father absence will disconnect from the mainstream, drop out of school and enter a drug-based economy. The result of our young men disconnecting from the mainstream is often an increase in criminal records and a decrease in employability and their potential for marriage.

Using the Scafidi costing model¹, we applied a simple and extremely cautious assumption that conservatively, one third (1/3) of all the taxpayer costs for antipoverty programs stem from the effects that family fragmentation has on poverty, a causal mechanism that is well-accepted and has been reasonably well quantified in the literature.

Based on this methodology we estimate that family fragmentation in Richmond costs taxpayers *at least \$205 million each year* or over a billion dollars every 5 years.

**Table 1. Estimated Costs of Family Fragmentation for U.S. Taxpayers*
Richmond, Virginia**

Medicaid	\$51,148,124
Justice System	\$35,420,027
Food Stamps	\$17,550,122
Child Welfare	\$16,868,541
Housing Assistance	\$13,389,250
Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)	\$9,364,739
School Lunch and Breakfast Program	\$6,384,564
State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP)	\$5,222,548
Head Start	\$4,948,755
Women, Infants & Children (WIC)	\$2,906,739
Low Income Heat & Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)	\$1,268,826
Additional FICA Taxes Paid	\$17,228,921
Additional State & Local Taxes Paid	\$12,386,806
Additional U.S. Income Taxes Paid	\$11,260,733
Total U.S. Taxpayer Cost of Family Fragmentation	\$205,348,695

* These costs include federal, state and local costs

These costs arise from increased taxpayer expenditures for antipoverty, criminal justice, medical and school nutrition programs, and through lower levels of taxes paid by individuals who, as adults, earn less because of reduced opportunities as a result of having been more likely to grow up in poverty. The table values include a coefficient based on a bundle of actual Richmond program costs (Medicaid, TANF and SNAP) and the Consumer Price Index to reflect price inflation since 2007.

This \$205 million represents a conservative or minimum estimate, given the cautious assumptions used by Scafidi and our data collection on like costs for residents of Richmond. The \$205 million per year is the total figure incurred in federal, state and local program service expenditures – it does not include the administrative costs associated with these programs, many of which are personnel intensive and could double the costs associated with some of these programs.

How should policymakers, and others respond to the large social costs and large taxpayer cost of family fragmentation? Scafidi noted that even very small increases in stable marriage rates as a result of government programs or community efforts to strengthen marriage would result in very large savings for taxpayers. He noted that a 1% reduction in family fragmentation would save the US taxpayers an estimated \$1.1 billion each and every year. Using this estimate, a 1% reduction in family fragmentation would translate into a \$2 million savings every year in Richmond. See page 5 for the 1% solution.

The Issue

The most significant demographic trend in Richmond City, like many similar cities, is the trend toward single (father absent) births, with one of the highest non-marital birth rates in the US; 64% of all births in Richmond occurring to women who are single at the time of birth. This is not just a teen pregnancy issue. 75% of these non-marital births are to women 20 years of age or older. Non-marital births are up from 10% in 1950, 20% in 1965, to 63% in 2007. See chart on page 3. Where are the fathers?

In an effort to understand the cycle of non-residential fathers a profile of the absent father was developed focusing on the proximity to the child, educational challenges, perspectives on family planning, contact with the criminal justice system, poverty and the effect of father absence during their childhood.

Profile of Richmond Absent Father

- **Likely to be a non-resident father**
 - 28% of non-residential parents had no contact with their children in the past year¹
 - 20% of all non-resident fathers earn less than \$6,000 a year¹
 - 32% of non-residential fathers nationally have contact with their children less than twice a week¹

(Source: ¹Father Facts)
- **Dropped out of school between 9th-10th grade**
 - Reading comprehension level at time of drop out 5th-6th grade¹
 - Males are at the greatest risk of drop out²
 - 1073 high school students missed 10 days or more in 2008-2009 (truancy rate 18%)³

(Source: ¹Richmond Public Schools, ²Peter Paul Development Center, ³Father Facts)
- **Sexually active not practicing monogamy**
 - 95% sexually active before marriage¹
 - Male participants stated that family planning is the primary responsibility of females²
 - 1198 fathers have multiple child support cases³

(Source: ¹Community Foundation, ²Rubicon Focus Group, ³Johnson, Inc.)

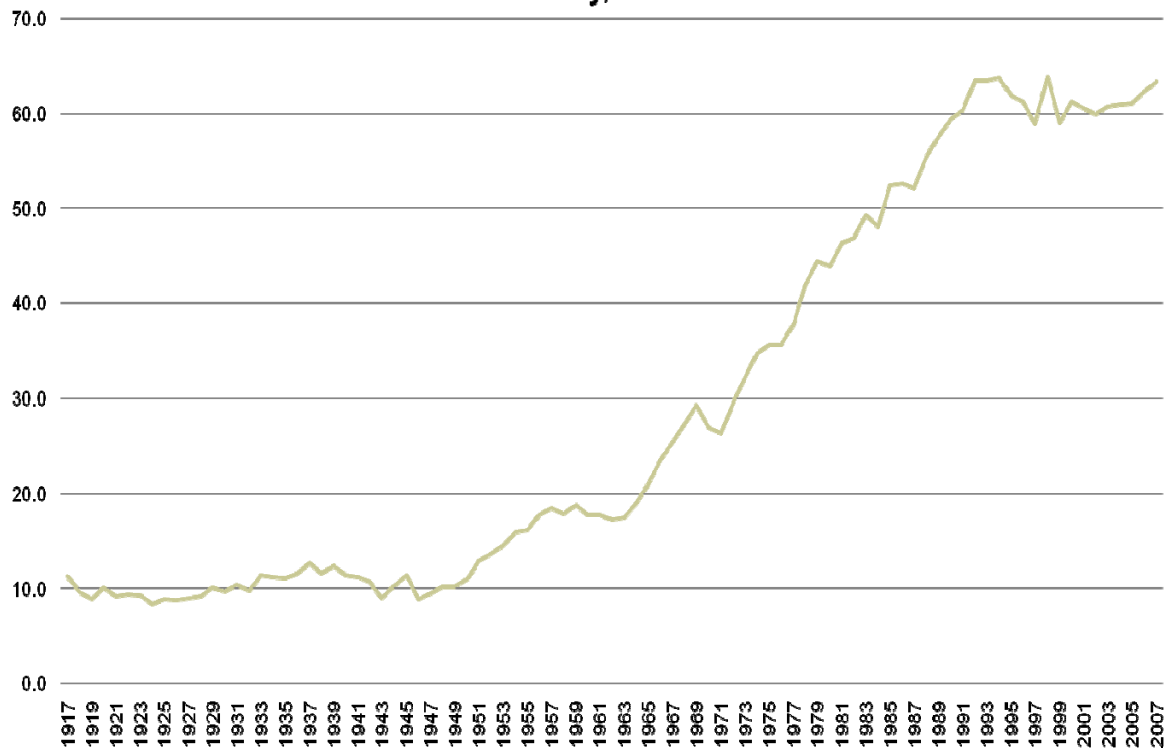
- **Contact with criminal justice system resulting in a felony record**
 - 2009 the average daily population was 1463 inmates (capacity 852)¹
 - 6500 inmates were classified as first time offenders in 2009¹
 - Felony records become a significant employability barrier²

(Source: ¹Richmond City Jail, ²National Urban League 2007 Annual Report)
- **Childhood impacted by poverty**
 - Raised in household at or beneath national poverty level¹
 - 80% of the students in RPS are eligible for free and reduced lunch²
 - 26% poverty rate in Richmond due to the economic climate and high unemployment²

(Source: ¹U.S. Census Bureau 2007, ²City of Richmond)
- **Lacked father's emotional and financial connection**
 - 2054 non-marital births in Richmond City 2009¹
 - Absence of father's affirmation impacts school "readiness"²
 - 4987 child support cases with no payment made as of February 2010³

(Source: ¹Richmond City Health District, ²Morehouse Research Institute, ³Virginia Department of Social Services)

Percent Non-Marital Births among Richmond City, VA Residents



Father absence is not a racial issue, it is impacting all of America. It is a social justice issue as it disproportionately impacts the African American community where 80% of all African American children can now expect to spend at least a significant part of their childhood years living apart from their fathers. And even more disconcerting, according to the National Urban League boys who grow up without fathers are more likely to become unmarried fathers themselves at a young age, perpetuating the cycle of absentee fatherhood; girls growing up without fathers are more likely to fall victim to early sexual involvement and teenage pregnancy, perpetuating the cycle of single-parenthood; boys raised in single parent homes are twice as likely (and boys raised in step-families three times as likely) to commit a crime leading to incarceration; and a child growing up without both parents also faces a greater risk that he or she will be a victim of a crime, especially child abuse.²

The Solution

At the first Annual Family and Fatherhood Forum (2009) a draft fatherhood strategic plan was presented and participants had an opportunity in a set of workshops to edit and augment the proposed solutions. Below is a summary of the proposed Family and Fatherhood Strategic Plan.

Community Mobilization-the purpose of Community Mobilization is to connect, equip and empower a grassroots network of stakeholders working to create a community culture connecting fathers with their families.

1. Organize and fund a city-wide Family & Fatherhood Initiative
2. Identify and connect a network of agencies, service providers, organizations, CBO's, faith based groups and individuals committed to fatherhood programs, manhood training, mentoring, marriage promotion, domestic violence prevention and family stability (Task Force)
3. Alpha Male Project-identify and engage 100 youth (13-18 years) of positive influence for the purpose of equipping them to positively influence their peers
4. Partner with Communities In Schools, Richmond Healthy Start Male Involvement strategy and Head Start's Father Engagement and reading mentors programs
5. Father & Son Camps-Partner with the Richmond City Health District, the Richmond Department of Parks and Recreation and the Richmond Family Courts to foster improved relational connections between fathers and sons

Social Marketing-the purpose of social marketing is to leverage multiple media strategies in communicating the value of fathers, resulting in the creation of a community culture connecting fathers with their families.

1. Hold an annual Family & Fatherhood Forum
2. Engage a social marketing firm in research, development and the execution of a marketing campaign using television, radio, print media, billboards, bus wraps, websites and social networking channels
3. Support a Richmond Talent Search-using an "American Idol" model for attracting rappers, singers, dancers, poets, comedians, musicians and artists willing to share a positive message
4. Partner with First Things First of Greater Richmond and other organizations in creating a "Father of the Year" recognition
5. Support the Annual African American Men's Health Forum-sponsored by the Baptist General Convention of Virginia promoting the impact of father emotional and financial connections with children resulting in improved health outcomes

Resource Development-the purpose of Resource Development is to identify, gather and leverage informational, financial, technical and human resources, resulting in a community culture connecting fathers to their families.

1. Research other successful models and bring them to Richmond
2. Research and publish regional data highlighting the Cost and Solutions to the Family Fragmentation & Fatherhood issue
3. Create a Family & Fatherhood Resource Guide
4. Provide technical assistance to stakeholders through training from organizations such as Virginia Department of Social Services, Family Strengthening & Fatherhood Initiative, Virginia Mentoring, the National Fatherhood Initiative and First Things First of Greater Richmond's Boot Camp For New Dads and other organizations (Task Force Institute)
5. Assist stakeholders and organizations with submissions for funding opportunities

Policy Development-the purpose of Policy Development is to identify existing or potential policy initiatives assisting or detracting from the creation of a community culture connecting fathers to their families.

1. Establish the 1% solution through 63.2-214.1, of the Code of Virginia, amending the code to read that the Virginia Department of Social Services “shall” spend 1% of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds to support healthy marriages and strengthening families rather than “may”
2. Child Support Enforcement should support programs offering alternatives to incarceration focusing on improving employability, parenting skills and healthy relationship building
3. Support incentives for marriage prior to conception; focusing on the tax code and benefits eligibility
4. Support the removal of the felon label for non-violent offenders following incarceration and probation to enhance employability prospects upon community reentry
5. Partner with the National Center for African American Marriage & Parenting at Hampton University in the formation of policies designed to strengthen families and the role of parents

Workforce Development-the purpose of Workforce Development is to increase the employability profile and employment opportunities, resulting in the creation of a community culture connecting fathers with their families.

1. Promote the Mayor’s Youth Academy-Summer Works Initiative
2. Local unions and employers to receive fidelity bonds as incentives for the creation of apprenticeships leading to full-time employment for successful candidates with felonies and youth ages 20-29
3. Promote school dropout prevention strategies such as the Richmond Public Schools partnership with The United Way, America’s Promise and Communities in Schools outlined in the 2009 Richmond Drop Out Prevention Summit
4. Promote GED training efforts such as J. Sergeant Reynolds Middle College Program
5. Assist Richmond Public Schools with incentives for recruiting and retaining male teachers

Alternatives to Incarceration & Reentry-the purpose of Alternative to Incarceration & Reentry is to employ pre and post incarceration strategies and programs focused on creating a culture connecting fathers to their families as crime prevention and recidivism reduction solutions.

1. Support the Governor’s state wide Reentry Council
2. Support the Richmond Reentry Council
3. Support the Community Criminal Justice Board’s recommendations for alternatives to incarceration
4. Provide training and mentoring for inmates prior to and after release from incarceration and the facilitation of family connections through the National Fatherhood Initiatives, Inside Out Dads curriculum and model programs such as the Henrico County Department of Social Services Fatherhood Program
5. Partner and support existing reentry efforts such as Prison Fellowship, the Discover Life Center, the Believe Program, New Jubilee Educational & Family Life Center, Boaz and Ruth and other model programs with increased emphasis on individualized reentry plans, counseling and case management support for fathers, mothers and children

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2. 2007 Annual Report: State of Black America. National Urban League www.nul.org

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