



CREATING A DIVERSE COALITION OF PARTNERS TO SERVE DADS

Organization profile

First Things First of Greater Richmond is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to strengthening families through education, collaboration and mobilization. We are a vital community resource that collaborates with and is supported by a broad cross-section of community organizations, groups and individuals. We are modeled after a similar partnership forged in Chattanooga, Tennessee, in 1997.

The Challenge

The city of Richmond, VA and the two surrounding counties sees a lot of poverty, incarceration, and unemployment. The folks who now make up First Things First also saw that the high rates of out-of-wedlock births and father absence were both causes and consequences of these serious social problems. While a coalition of clergy members had organized to address these issues in the church and in the broader community, more needed to be done. So, this coalition affiliated with First Things First of Chattanooga, TN to provide more substance and structure to its work. However, they needed researched, proven curricula to address the variety of needs in the community around marriage, relationships, and fatherhood.

The Solution

In 2007, First Things First received a capacity-building grant from National Fatherhood Initiative to start building the foundation it needed to create a sustainable fatherhood program. With the foundation in place, they began adding the elements that would make up an effective fatherhood initiative across the city and surrounding counties.

First, they began using NFI curricula (along with curricula from other organizations) to meet the community's needs. Specifically, they partnered with AmeriCorps and Richmond City Human Services for a grant to hire two part-time staff to deliver NFI's InsideOut Dad® in the Richmond City Jail. They also partnered with the Henrico County Public Schools Fatherhood Initiative - Man Up, which was not using a curriculum, to begin offering NFI's 24/7 Dad® program.

They also started to raise public awareness in the community about the importance of serving fathers. For example, NFI's Fatherhood Resource Kiosks, filled with brochures for dads, were a public, visible sign that services were being provided to dads.

First Things First also worked with the Richmond Family and Fatherhood Initiative to help them diversify their resources and provide instructors to deliver various programs.

The Benefits

On the most basic level, First Things First and its various partners are reaching many more fathers than they were before. They are also effectively using publicity to ensure that the community knows the positive work they are doing, such as working with the jail to promote the use of InsideOut Dad®, which resulted in a story in the Richmond Times Dispatch. More importantly, they are seeing changes in the attitudes and behaviors of the men in the jail as they go through the program. Additionally, they are using various resources at their disposal to educate and inspire their partners and their community

about the importance of providing services to fathers.

NFI Products and Services Used

- [InsideOut Dad®](#)
- [24/7 Dad®](#)
- [Fatherhood Resource Kiosk](#)

Services provided by other groups or companies

First Things First partners with various organizations and entities to carry out its work:

- Richmond City Sheriff's Office
- Henrico County Public Schools Fatherhood Initiative – Man Up
- U Turn Ministries
- Central Library