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EDUCATION PROFILE

# The Father Factor

The construction of a home begins with the laying down of the foundation. The foundation is the strongest base of a home to keep it from sinking. In the family unit, we recognize the importance of fathers as an important part of the foundation.

We know there is a “father-absence” crisis in America, with more than 1 in 4 children living without a father in the home. Statistics aside, single fathers are getting a bad rap, especially in communities of color. If you talk to today’s young fathers, they’ll probably tell you that they love nothing more than connecting with their children and being a provider, but they just need some guidance and support.

For fathers, parenting advice can come in many forms. Sometimes the best results can come through mentoring or the sharing of experiences. Dr. Mi-



The Men’s Resource Center at KCC is one of many programs offered in colleges to assist young fathers economically, educationally and in parenting.

chael Rodriguez, who has headed the Men’s Resource Center at Kingsborough Community College (KCC) for 11 years, said it best that “great mentors do not simply pass on knowledge. They freely share all their

knowledge and experiences to help someone else learn from the totality of their life experiences.” Through mentorship, his program has seen countless young fathers cultivate healthy relationships on and off

campus, graduate and become successful.

In academics, we recognized the needs of students who are single fathers, trying to juggle classes, hold down a job and be good role models. It’s important that they don’t give up. For this reason, the CUNY Fatherhood Academy (CFA), opened its doors. This free program promotes responsible parenting and economic stability for unemployed and underemployed fathers ages 18-30. Fathers, who many have dropped out of school, will receive help in attaining a High School Equivalency (HSE) diploma, enrolling in college and acquiring gainful employment. Through CFA, fathers are given the opportunity to invest in themselves. The program’s mentors take a personal interest in the participants.

“I personally believe that a father is an important role in our lives and

usually the first example of manhood our children are exposed to. It is this belief that helps me push fathers to be introspective, and redefine their masculinity and approach to being fathers not based on some of the societal stereotypes, but to push to be their best self through accountability and love,” said Kymel Yard, the CFA program director at KCC.

These are just two examples of a number of programs found in our city’s colleges and universities that can help young father improve their employment and educational expectations, and become better and more engaged parents.

*Dr. Claudia V. Schrader is president of Kingsborough Community College. For more information on the Men’s Resource Center and the Fatherhood Academy at KCC, visit [www.kbcc.cuny.edu](http://www.kbcc.cuny.edu).*