

“This program has given so much to me that I wanted to give back. As a graduate of the program, I come back to teach the participants the importance of health screens because I want these men to be role models for their children, wife, and families. As a father, I find that children mimic what we do,”

Former participant  
and now Fatherhood Program  
instructor.

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# The Massachusetts Probation Service

## Fatherhood Programs



Photo credit: Kate Flock/The Cambridge Chronicle

## What is the Fatherhood Program ?

The Massachusetts Probation Service offers 13 Fatherhood Programs statewide in eight counties.

Program participants are ordered by a judge to attend the 12-week Fatherhood Program based on a Probation Officer's recommendation.

This program features a series of workshops, presentations, and discussion groups.

Topics highlighted in these sessions include child development, communications skills, domestic and family violence, men's health, substance abuse, employment, education, and legal matters such as child support.

Judges, clergy, social service providers and representatives from state agencies such as the Department of Revenue are among the guest speakers.

The program culminates with a graduation ceremony during the 13th week where the fathers' accomplishments are celebrated and acknowledged. Past participants have reported positive outcomes such as re-establishing relationships with their children as well as learning new approaches to positive interaction with the mothers of their children.

## The Five Principles of Fatherhood

The Fatherhood Program is based on five principles which are incorporated in the weekly meetings.

Fathers are required to learn the five principles which they recite at the start of each session. They are often called upon to provide examples of these principles which serve as the foundation of the program.

# 5

## Principles of Fatherhood

**As a Father it is my responsibility to:**

- 1. Give affection to my children.***
- 2. Give gentle guidance to my children.***
- 3. Provide financial support to my children and the mother of my children.***
- 4. Demonstrate respect at all times to the mother of my children.***
- 5. Set a proud example for my children by living within the law and without the taint of alcohol/ drug abuse.***

## Fatherhood Program Origins



Photo credit: Mark Garfinkel. Former Fatherhood Program participant Gilberto Colon and his three daughters.

The Fatherhood Program was first introduced in 1994 by former Norfolk Juvenile Chief Probation Officer Thomas Mitchell and Deputy Commissioner Steve Bocko who created the program to teach offenders to be positive and attentive parents to their sons and daughters.

Chief Mitchell said he found a common thread among court-involved men which he described as the absence of the father in the individual's life.

More than 2,000 fathers have graduated from the program since Mitchell first introduced the program. The first Fatherhood Program was established in Barnstable District Court more than 20 years ago.