



**Fact sheet for  
health professionals**

# **Focus on New Fathers program**

NSW Health has, for many years, provided parenting support, information and screening that has focused on new mums.

Now NSW Health is piloting the Focus on New Fathers program (FoNF) to offer support to new dads and dads-to-be in four Local Health Districts: Northern NSW, Murrumbidgee, Northern Sydney and Western Sydney.

FoNF provides a free text message based service called SMS4dads.

The program aims to help dads-to-be and new dads feel confident and supported in their role as a parent.

## Free support, directly to their phone.

To help dads-to-be and new dads navigate their role, NSW Health and SMS4dads at the University of Newcastle have partnered to launch a 12 month pilot service.

Once registered for FoNF, dads will receive free text messages from SMS4dads (a service managed by the University of Newcastle), directly to their phone.

## The text messages:

- have been designed to help dads connect with their baby, whilst supporting their partner and themselves
- are sent three times a week to dad's phone, until their baby is one year of age
- are timed to be appropriate to the developmental stage of the baby from pregnancy until 12 months
- help dad understand how their baby is developing and what they may need
- provide practical tools, tips and links to reliable, credible online health information and services
- regularly check in with dads about how they are feeling
- trigger a referral to support services for dads who may find the challenges of becoming a dad overwhelming.

## Eligibility criteria

To be eligible for the Focus on New Fathers program, dads need to:

- be 18 years old or older
- have a partner who is at least 16 weeks pregnant or a baby who is up to 6 months old
- live in either the Northern NSW, Northern Sydney, Western Sydney or Murrumbidgee Local Health Districts

The service is available to all non-birthing partners regardless of gender.

## A mum said:

**It (SMS4dads) helped my partner to feel part of the 'baby process' and that his experiences were also important. This made for a more cohesive family unit. The messages gave us both confidence and helped avoid fights when extreme fatigue set in.**

## Promotion

To ensure that as many dads, babies, partners, families and their communities benefit from this service, we need your help to promote it.

You can do this by:

- telling your clients (dads and mums) and your colleagues about the service
- encouraging new dads and dads-to-be to register via [www.health.nsw.gov.au/focus-on-new-fathers](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/focus-on-new-fathers)
- sharing our client focused flyers with dads, mums, grandparents, friends and dad support networks
- encouraging mums to tell their partners about the service
- inviting us to your next team meeting to talk about the service
- organising or inviting us to events and networking opportunities targeted at health care providers and clients.

**For more information and how to register, go to**

[www.health.nsw.gov.au/focus-on-new-fathers](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/focus-on-new-fathers)

