

Information kit

Focus on New Fathers program

This Information kit has been designed to help you understand what the Focus on New Fathers program is about and how you can get involved.

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Introduction

Healthy child development starts early and dads have an important part to play. It's rewarding being a dad, but it can be challenging and stressful.

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 (LHDs) - Northern NSW, Murrumbidgee, Northern Sydney and Western Sydney.

FoNF provides a free text message based service called SMS4dads.

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

NSW Health and the University of Newcastle have partnered to deliver the pilot project. The program is funded by the Commonwealth Government under the Health Innovation Fund.

The SMS4dads text messages

- have been designed to help new dads and dads-to-be connect with their baby, whilst supporting their partner and themselves
- are sent up to three times a week to dad's phone, until their baby is one year old
- 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
- provide practical tools, tips and links to reliable, credible online health information and services
- share tips about how their baby is developing, how to get along with their partner and stay healthy
- 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, new dads and dads-to-be 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 six months old
- live in either Northern NSW, Northern Sydney, Western Sydney or Murrumbidgee Local Health Districts and have a NSW postcode

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

Note: Dads who live outside the four pilot locations can use the SMS4dads service via the Tresillian website.

Registration

- New dads and dads-to-be can register via www.health.nsw.gov.au/focus-on-new-fathers
- Health care workers, community members and interested parties can trial the 'professional taster' for three weeks, by registering at <https://www.sms4dads.com/pt/land.aspx>

Promotion

To ensure that as many new dads and dads-to-be, 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), friends and colleagues about the service
- encouraging new dads and dads-to-be to register via 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 (the local coordinators) to your next team meeting to talk about the service
- organising or inviting us (the local coordinators) to events and networking opportunities to help us promote this invaluable service.

FAQs - Here are some common questions

1. Is this service only for first time dads?

No. Dads who already have children are encouraged to register because although they've had prior experience, every child and every birth is different.

2. Can LGBTIQ+ parents register for the service?

Yes - any non-birthing parent who meets the eligibility criteria is encouraged to register.

3. Does this cost anything?

No. This is a free text message based service being delivered by NSW Health in partnership with the University of Newcastle (who manage SMS4dads).



4. What if a dad lives outside of the pilot LHDs? Will they still be able to access the service?

Yes. New dads and dads-to-be who live outside the four pilot locations can access the SMS4dads service via the Tresillian website.

5. How many texts should a dad expect to receive?

Once registered, a dad will receive text messages from SMS4dads up to three times a week, to their nominated mobile phone.

6. What if a dad wants to cancel the texts?

A dad can, for any reason, choose to cancel the service (SMS4dads) at any stage.

7. Can someone register, on behalf of dad?

No because we ask dads to complete a questionnaire and fill out the consent form, as part of the registration process.

8. How were the four pilot areas chosen?

NSW Health asked for expressions of interest to participate in the program from all local health districts. Applications were assessed against a number of criteria by a selection panel. These included a demonstrated partnership with their local Primary Health Network. The four successful local health districts (LHDs) are Murrumbidgee, Northern NSW, Western Sydney and Northern Sydney. Together they have a significant annual birth rate and a diverse mix of dads.

9. Will the program and text messages be presented in languages other than English?

No, at this stage Focus on New Fathers is a pilot program.

10. What happens after the pilot is finished?

NSW Health is undertaking an independent evaluation of the Focus on New Fathers program. This will include a process and outcomes evaluation and economic analysis of the program. The evaluation will provide information on the effectiveness and sustainability of the FoNF Pilot, which will be used to inform future planning.

Contact us

If you can help us promote Focus on New Fathers or have questions, contact:

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