

CUNY Fatherhood Academy



Program Overview

The CUNY Fatherhood Academy (CFA) is a cohort-based education, work readiness, and parenting program for young adult fathers and expectant fathers. Participants take part in parenting workshops, high school equivalency exam preparation and work readiness services. They receive post-secondary education transition support, tutoring, individualized counseling, and financial incentives. CFA helps participants improve their education and employment prospects, and enhance their knowledge and skills as fathers. The program is funded by the Young Men's Initiative (YMI) and offered at three City University of New York's (CUNY) community colleges: LaGuardia, Hostos and Kingsborough.



Agency	Start Date	FY24 Budget	FY25 Budget	FY25 # Served
CUNY	March 2012	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	159

Note: CFA at LaGuardia also received funding from NYC's City Council (\$1,074,306 for FY24 and FY25)

Problem Statement

A college degree is often a prerequisite to access to jobs with better benefits, increased job security and potential for career advancement. Attaining a college degree increases young adults' ability to earn more money and engage in higher skilled work.¹ Underemployed and unemployed low-income non-custodial fathers are less likely to be actively engaged in the lives of their children.² Encouraging fathers to become more and better engaged parents during early childhood promotes children's emotional regulation and cognitive development.³ In addition, a father's involvement increases as their earnings increase, improving the child's standard of living.⁴

¹ National Center for Education Statistics Fast Facts: [Income of Young Adults](#).

² Lerman, Robert I. [Capabilities and Contributions of Unwed Fathers](#) Future of Children, v20 n2 p63-85 Fall 2010.

³ Urban Institute National Home Visiting Resource Center Research, [Father Engagement in Home Visiting](#), April 2019.

⁴ Lerman, R., & Sorensen, E. (2000). [Father Involvement with Their Nonmarital Children: Patterns, Determinants, and Effects on Their Earnings](#). Marriage & Family Review, 29(2-3), 137-158.

Context & Evidence

CFA was modeled after a CUNY program for mothers called Perfect Opportunity for Individual Skills and Educational Development (P.O.I.S.E.D.) for Success.⁵ P.O.I.S.E.D. participants expressed the need for similar programs to be catered to fathers, given the economic challenges young fathers without postsecondary education face in their need to provide economic support to their families. The design of CFA differed from that of other fatherhood programs as it deliberately pursued an independence from a formal relationship with child support enforcement service so as to not interfere with program eligibility and recruitment. Programs that work with child support agencies have found that fathers can be wary of getting involved with child support enforcement, which suggests that fathers who might otherwise benefit from fatherhood programs are often deterred.⁶

Program Details

CFA integrates education, employment, and parenting skills enrichment. The program targets fathers and expectant fathers, ages 18 to 30, who are unemployed or underemployed and interested in improving their employment and educational prospects, becoming better and more engaged parents, and providing increased emotional and financial support to their families. Participants enroll as a cohort in one of two tracks: a 16-week high school equivalency test preparation program, or a 10-week college and career preparedness program. Both tracks include individualized case management services and workshops on topics such as parenthood, family bonding, health, and financial literacy. Participants receive a stipend to support their sustained engagement in the program. The program is offered at community colleges to increase participant motivation and confidence to pursue post-secondary education.

CFA was launched in 2012 at LaGuardia Community College, with initial funding provided by the Campaign for Black Male Achievement at the Open Society Foundations through 2014 and afterwards continued by CUNY and YMI. CFA was expanded to the Hostos and Kingsborough Community Colleges in 2016.

Program Goals and Expected Outcomes

- Academic preparation and assistance with GED attainment or college enrollment
- Peer support and peer learning opportunities
- Improving parenting skills, providing emotional and financial support to families
- Career readiness and exploration, job preparation and placement
- Addressing personal obstacles through one-on-one counseling

⁵ P.O.I.S.E.D. provided academic enrichment, job placement services, parenting workshops, and case management to eligible mothers with young children who were receiving Temporary Assistance to Needy Families.

⁶ Urban Institute, [The CUNY Fatherhood Academy: A Qualitative Evaluation](#), July 2014

Performance Data:

	FY25		FY24
	Actual	Target	Actual
Total Enrolled in Academy	159	210	160
Enrolled/re-enrolled in High School Equivalency (HSE) track	126	170	127
Enrolled in College Career Preparedness (CCP) track	33	40	33
Participants completing CFA program	124	-	128
Participants reporting increased parental engagement	64%	40% of participants	52%
Participants attaining HSE Diploma*	13%	30% of HSE	20%
Participants hired in employment post-program*	1%	30% of enrollees	12%

**CFA participants have up to two years to attain their HSE diploma, and can re-take the exam if they don't pass the first time. They also have up to two years to attain post-program employment. These numbers will likely increase. For additional data, please see our [Annual Reports](#).*

Evaluation

A NYC Opportunity [evaluation](#) of CFA conducted by the Urban Institute in 2014 assessed the program design and implementation, as well as the experiences and outcomes for participants, focused on the LaGuardia Community College pilot site.⁷ The evaluation found that participants earned HSE diplomas at rates above the New York State (NYS) average (61.3% average pass rate, compared to 56.4% among 19- to 24-year-olds in NYS).⁸ Additionally, participants credited CFA with increasing their motivation and their ability to pursue education and employment.

One of the main draws for participants was the program's strong focus on fatherhood. The fathers valued the parenting workshops and peer learning opportunities and highlighted the bond that developed between cohort members as key to program retention. Participants also credited CFA's location on a college campus as a source of motivation and self-confidence.

In the News

CFA was [featured](#) in PIX11 in April 2024.

⁷ Urban Institute, [The CUNY Fatherhood Academy: A Qualitative Evaluation](#), July 2014.

⁸ The HSE exam has dramatically changed since this research was conducted. The performance data for the program reflects the current iteration of the HSE exam.