

the  
**state**  
of the  
family



FIRST<sup>®</sup>  
things  
FIRST

# the state of fathering



Only 29 percent of African American children in Hamilton County live in a two-parent home.



Of families with children under the age of 18 in Hamilton County:

26 percent are female-headed families; and

5.5 percent are male-headed families.

## what we believe

91 percent of residents believe that most fathers in Chattanooga should be more involved in their children's lives.

93 percent believe that, in order to develop emotionally, it is very important for a child to have a positive male role model in his or her life.

A total of 93 percent of residents said that spending lots of one-on-one time with his children, to get to know what is happening in their life, is a very important responsibility of fathers.

## Perceived Important Responsibilities of a Father

1. Spend one-on-one time
2. Attend child's activities
3. Discipline children
4. Be financial provider
5. Take a week off when child is born

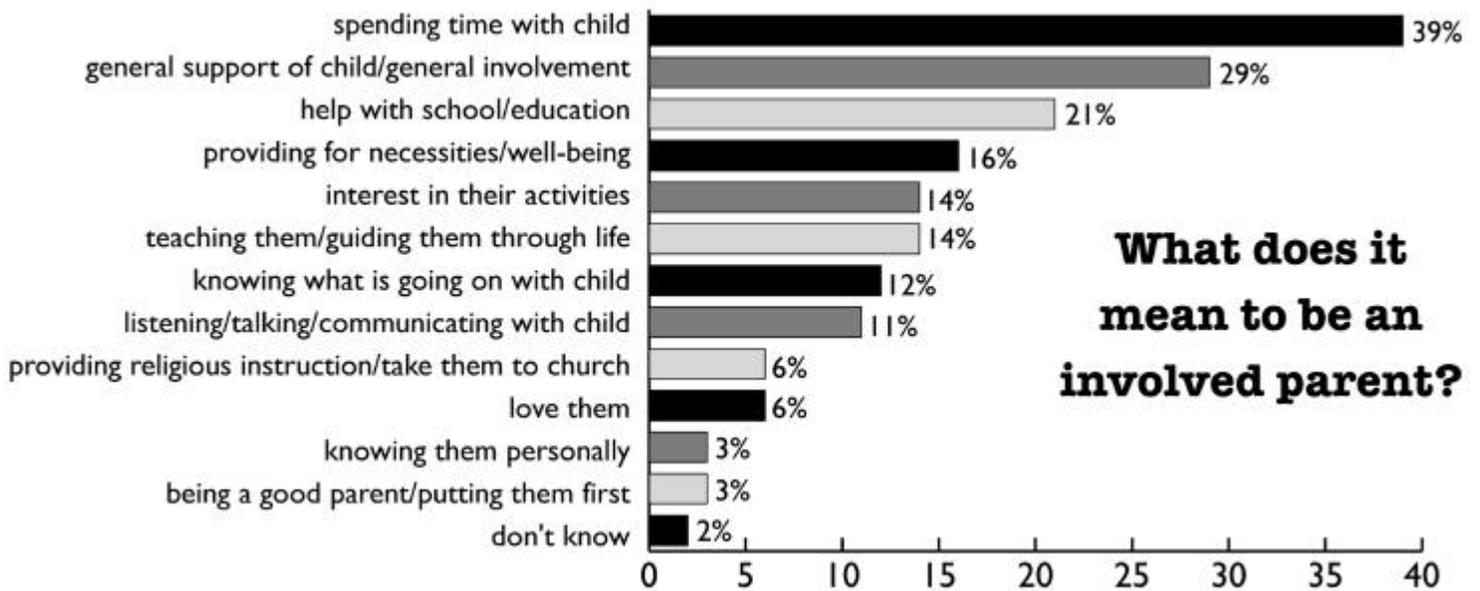
## Perceived Important Responsibilities of a Divorced Father

1. Spend one-on-one time
2. Pay child support
3. Stay respectful of mother
4. Attend child's activities
5. Discipline children
6. Provide additional financial support
7. Have partial custody

## parent involvement

Only 34 percent of children with a non-resident parent saw that parent on a weekly basis, and 28 percent of children with a non-resident parent had no contact with their non-resident parent in the past year.

Four in ten (39 percent) Hamilton County residents defined involvement as spending time with their child. This included interacting, showing attention, playing, doing things with them, and spending quality time with them.



A review of respondents' self-reported information revealed that mothers were far more likely to spend time with their children than fathers. On a typical weekday, mothers said they spent an average of 4.5 (median) hours doing things they knew were important to their children, compared to only 2.5 (median) hours for fathers. In addition, mothers said they spent one hour in conversation on a topic of importance to their children (median of 1.0) compared to only a half hour for fathers (median of 0.5).

## Time Spent with Children: Fathers versus Mothers

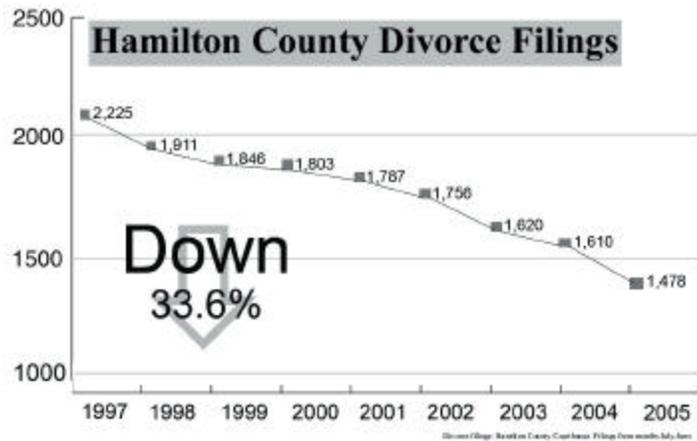
Yesterday, how much time in total did you spend with your children doing things that you know are important to your child/children? [those with children under age 18]

	All	Fathers	Mothers
■ none	8%	14%(+)	4%(-)
■ <2 hours	11	15(+)	8
■ 2 up to 4 hours	19	21	18
■ 4 up to 6 hours	16	10(-)	20(+)
■ 6 up to 8 hours	15	15	15
■ 8 or more hours	16	9(-)	20(+)
■ don't know	15	15	16

# the state of marriage



Four out of five (80 percent) Hamilton County adults have been married. Currently, 50 percent of the adult population in Hamilton County is married.



## The Most Important Priority in Life

1. Family
2. Faith
3. Children
4. Career/Work
5. Health
6. Money/Finance
7. Hobbies/Leisure
8. Getting ahead in life
9. Marriage/Spouse
10. School

## what we believe

54 percent of residents believe that if the traditional family unit falls apart, the stability of American society will collapse.

69 percent believe the typical marriage today is weaker than the typical marriage 30 years ago.

69 percent agree that, in most cases, children who are raised in a home with both of their natural parents will grow up to be more stable emotionally than will children raised by one parent.

88 percent of adults disagree with the statement: "Marriage is an old-fashioned, outmoded institution."

The message from the vast majority of Hamilton Countians is that marriage is worth preserving, even when it takes some work. More than four out of every five people (83 percent) say that a couple unhappy in their marriage should "remain together and work to re-establish the love they once felt," while only 13 percent said that the same unhappy couple should "get a divorce."



When asked which of these points of view came closest to their own point of view, more than two-thirds (78 percent) of Hamilton County adults said marriage should be considered a promise "til death do us part," while nearly one-fourth (20 percent) said marriage should be considered a promise "as long as love shall last."

## cohabitation

More than one in four (29 percent) adults in Hamilton County has cohabited without being married. Of those who have cohabited: 27 percent are white, 38 percent are black.

59 percent of adults agreed with the belief that "it is a bad idea for couples to live together before marriage."

40 percent of those who have ever cohabited have been divorced or separated.

### Why we decided to live together

- 26% save money
- 14% get to know each other
- 12% determine compatibility
- 12% planning on getting married
  - 10% for children
  - 6% for convenience
  - 5% in love
- 5% test sexual relationship
- 2% didn't want to marry yet
- 10% other

## married with children

32.4 percent of households have children under 18 years of age in their home.

Among parents whose biological children under 18 are not living in their home, the actual residences of the children were fairly evenly split - with 35 percent living in another state or country, 33 percent living elsewhere in town, and 31 percent living in Tennessee, but not in town.

90 percent of Hamilton County adults agree that children are better off when they are raised by a married mother and father.

## premarital education

28 percent of Hamilton Countians who have been or are married report participating in premarital education.

82 percent of residents agree that every couple that wants to get married should be required to complete some type of marriage education before getting married.



## divorce

More than one in four (27 percent) Hamilton County adults have experienced divorce. Among those ages 40 to 59 more than 40 percent have been divorced at some point.

Overall, more than one-quarter (29 percent) of adults said their parents divorced.

A majority (53 percent) of those currently divorced wish they and their spouse had tried harder to work through their differences.

While there is not a clearly dominant opinion on whether or not a couple with children should seek a divorce, a substantial majority (64 percent) of Hamilton County adults believe that people who divorce are often trading one set of problems for another. Only one-quarter of adults (28 percent) believe that divorce is typically a "springboard to a better life."



# the state of out of wedlock pregnancies



## what we believe

When asked which statement was closer to their personal beliefs, about two-thirds (82 percent) of Hamilton County adults said they believe “couples should wait to have sex until they are married,” while 13 percent said “young people should have sexual experience before they are married.”

44 percent of Hamilton County residents believe there is nothing wrong with a woman giving birth to a child even though she is not married.

Out of Wedlock Pregnancy Rate  
for 20 to 44-year-olds in Hamilton County

2000 70.18

2001 69.98



85 percent say they make it a point to encourage their child/children to wait until marriage to have sex.

## Reasons Why Parents Encourage Children to Wait to Have Sex

(multiple responses allowed)

Spiritual or Religious 64%	Health 47%
Emotional 40%	Other 11%

# Agree or Disagree:

There is nothing wrong with a woman giving birth to a child even if she is not married.

	Agree	Disagree
1997	42%	53%
2000	50%	43%
2003	44%	48%



## Teen Pregnancy Rate<sup>2004</sup>

Tennessee 13.2  
Hamilton County 16.0

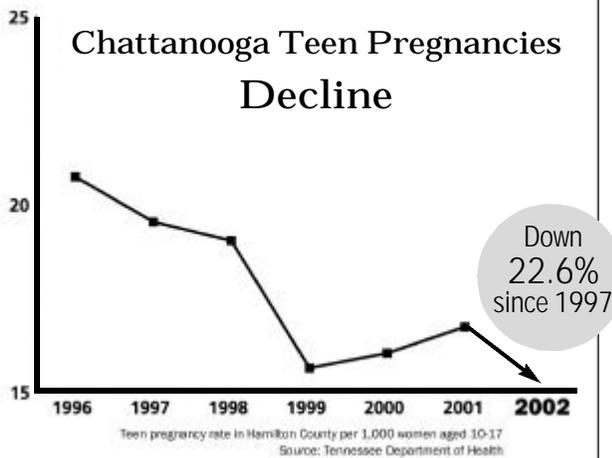
## what are local teens doing?

44 percent of Hamilton County youth admit to having sexual intercourse.

14 percent of Hamilton County youth say they have had four or more partners.

35 percent of Hamilton County youth were ages 13 or 14 when they first had sex.

A significantly higher percentage of black students (64 percent) than white students (38 percent) have ever had sexual intercourse.



Students from two-parent homes were **less likely** than students from parent/stepparent or single-parent homes to have engaged in sexual activity.

A Time/Nickelodeon poll asked the minority of 12 to 14-year-olds who do believe premarital sex can be okay, how old somebody should be before first intercourse. They set the age at 23. When the pollsters asked their parents the same question, the parents said 18.



# STATE OF THE FAMILY

# call to action



## Marriage

### In Your Family

- Take stock of your personal priorities to assure that relationships with your spouse and your children are getting the time and attention they need and deserve.

- Spend time with people who support you in your marriage and can offer you wise counsel in challenging times.

- Invest in the strength of your marriage by participating in premarital education before walking down the aisle and take advantage of marriage celebrations, seminars, retreats and books that will help you keep your marriage on track.

- When a family member is experiencing marital distress, encourage them to seek help from a pro-marriage counselor.

### Educators

- Present accurate information to students about the psychological, emotional, and physical benefits of marriage and the dangers of cohabitation.

- Teach healthy dating relationship skills to your students.

### Businesses

- Offer resources to your employees - books, tapes, videos or seminars - that deal with marriage and family topics.

- Make efforts to minimize the time employees spend away from their families by exploring flextime options, reducing overtime, and cutting back on work-related travel when and where possible.

### Faith-Based Institutions

- Honor and celebrate marriage.

- Require marriage preparation for all couples getting married in your place of worship.

- Sponsor monthly date nights for couples and provide free childcare.

- Establish marriage mentoring programs.

## Fathering

### In Your Family

- Encourage and affirm fathers in their parenting role.

- Be intentional about establishing one on one father-child time regularly.

- Foster an environment where love and affection is openly shown.

- Remind fathers that children watch everything they do.

### Educators

- Train prospective and current teachers on the important role that fathers play in the educational development of their children.

- Include positive portrayals of fathers in curriculum, educational materials and educational approaches.

- Use mentoring programs or activities for students lacking involved fathers.

- Invite fathers to be actively involved in the classroom.

### Businesses

- Encourage employees to take time off to be with their families and to avoid accumulating excessive vacation time.

- Sponsor employee assistance programs that provide confidential counseling for employees and their family members.

- Provide positive family resources in the workplace by establishing a book and tape lending library on family issues.

### Faith-Based Institutions

- Offer a broad program of teaching, supporting, counseling, and training for fathers.

- Challenge fathers to assume moral and spiritual responsibilities in their family.

- Encourage men to be mentors in single-parent families.

## Out of Wedlock

### In Your Family

- Talk to your kids early and often about sex.

- Encourage your kids to take a stand and praise them when they do.

- Don't let mistakes from your past keep you from talking with your children about sex.

- Educate yourself about the risks of sex outside of marriage.

### Educators

- Teach students the benefits of abstinence.

- Incorporate into the curriculum facts about out-of-wedlock pregnancies and its detrimental effects on the lives of students.

### Businesses

- Sponsor lunch and learn opportunities for adults, educating them about how to have conversations about life's tough issues with their children.

- Host Lunch & Learns to inform parents about this issue and help them in their parenting effort.

### Faith-Based Institutions

- Reinforce the beliefs that fathers are important as nurturers and role models, whether they are married to their child's mother or not.

- Teach young men and women moral responsibility and self-discipline.

- Reach out to teenagers with children, help them financially and spiritually, and educate them in the process.

- Preach sermons on this and other issues pertinent to raising healthy children.

# why is this important?



Having a loving and nurturing father is as important for a child's happiness, well-being, and social and academic success as having a loving and nurturing mother.

The National Fatherhood Initiative

Adolescent females between the ages of 15 and 19 years reared in homes without fathers are significantly more likely to engage in premarital sex than adolescent females reared in homes with both a mother and a father.

Journal of Marriage and Family 1994

The likelihood that a young male will engage in criminal activity doubles if he is raised without a father and triples if he lives in a neighborhood with a high concentration of single parent families.

Underclass Behaviors in the United States 1993

A child living in a two-parent family whose relationship with the father is fair or poor is 68 percent more likely to smoke, drink, and use drugs than a teen living in an average two parent household.

The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University

As an institution, the family's distinguishing trait is its powerful combination of love, discipline, and permanence. Families can teach standards of personal conduct that cannot be enforced by law, but which are indispensable traits for democratic civil society. These traits include honesty, trust, loyalty, cooperation, self-restraint, civility, compassion, personal responsibility and respect for others.

"Hardwired to Connect: The New Scientific Case for Authoritative Communities"

Parent-child, and especially father-child ties, have become more fragile, inconsistent and distant. Children's emotional lives have become more turbulent, insecure, and anxiety-filled as a result.

The National Marriage Project 2003

Children reared in non-intact families have more than twice the risk of social and behavioral problems as children reared in married-parent families.

The National Marriage Project 2003

Children whose parents remain married experience better health, fewer developmental problems and are less likely to be depressed.

"The Positive Effects of Marriage" by Patrick F. Fagan, Robert E. Rector, Kirk A. Johnson, Ph.D. and America Peterson

Most cohabiting relationships are relatively short-lived and out of 100 couples, only 55 will marry and only 12 will remain married a decade later.

David Popenoe and Barbara Dafoe Whitehead

Divorce and unwed childbearing create higher costs for taxpayers due to higher rates of crime, drug abuse, education failure, chronic illness, child abuse, domestic violence and poverty.

The Marriage Movement, Institute for American Values

A child whose mother cohabits with a man who is not the child's father is 33 times more likely to suffer serious physical child abuse.

The US Department of Justice, National Crime Victimization Survey 1999

Adolescent children from intact families are least likely to be sexually active as teenagers.

National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, Wave 2, 1996



Overall, 77 percent of all children suffering from long-term poverty come from broken or never-married families. Only 22 percent of children experiencing long-term poverty come from intact married families.

National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979-2000

**The first bond of society is marriage.**

- Cicero

# STATE OF THE FAMILY

# Summary

The vast majority of Hamilton County residents (95%) believe that family is the main building block of our community.

More than half of residents (54%) believe that the stability of American society will collapse if the traditional family unit falls apart.

Nearly one-half of Hamilton County residents (46%) claim family and children as their greatest priorities.

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## Marriage

More than two-thirds (78%) of Hamilton County adults said marriage should be considered a promise "til death do us part." And nearly one-fourth (25%) said marriage should be considered a promise "as long as love shall last."

27 percent of Hamilton County adults have experienced divorce.

One in four (29%) Hamilton County adults has lived in a cohabiting relationship.

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## Fathering

91% of Hamilton County residents believe fathers in Chattanooga should be more involved in their children's lives.

Residents maintained their strong feelings that a positive male role model is important in the emotional development of a child (93% total agreement).

Only 29% of African American children in Hamilton County live in a two-parent family.

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## Out of Wedlock Pregnancies

44% of Hamilton County youth admit to having sexual intercourse.

44% of Hamilton County residents believe there is nothing wrong with a woman giving birth to a child even though she is not married.