

Gender inequalities exist for fathers in the Swedish child health field

May 4 2015, by Anneli Waara

Fathers in Sweden are not provided with the same opportunities as mothers when it comes to learning about how to take care and raise their children.

A new dissertation from the Department of Women's and Children's Health at Uppsala University found that while Sweden strives for gender equality through its parenting policies, the [child health](#) field limits father involvement by not meeting their needs.

'Fathers who visit the different child health arenas, from the prenatal clinics to the child health centers, are typically seen as an added benefit, while [mothers](#) are often expected to visit. This means that the child health arenas often market to mothers more than [fathers](#), both with respect to their built environment and to how they talk with the parents', says Michael Wells.

The results show that when fathers feel neglected or do not have their questions answered regarding pregnancy and parenting issues, they can feel like their parenting role is not so important, which can further convince them to take less childcare responsibility.

'From the workplace to having role models to receiving family and professional parenting support, mothers are provided with much more parenting information and often have a bigger support network than fathers in Sweden. It is no wonder that mothers continue to take more responsibility for childcare.'

The findings of the dissertation have important implications for practice.

'Of course fathers in Sweden are more involved relative to other countries. But if Sweden wants to create a gender equal society, then changes need to be made to support and promote fathering, both within the child health care field and in other arenas, like in family policies, the workplace, and society in general.'

The dissertation concludes that fathers in Sweden need to feel that their parenting role is important, and that fathers should be specifically targeted when presenting them with parenting information.

'Father involvement positively benefits children, mothers, and themselves; therefore, Sweden should do more to [support](#) fathers, especially when trying to meet their parenting needs.'

More information: Read the [full dissertation](#)

Provided by Uppsala University

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