



# Father Involvement Research Alliance

FIRA is a national alliance of researchers, community organizations and fathers, dedicated to the development and sharing of knowledge on father involvement.

 Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada  Conseil de recherches en sciences humaines du Canada 

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[www.fira.uoguelph.ca/](http://www.fira.uoguelph.ca/)  
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## Personal and political ...

- Private challenge of being a father (individual responsibility):
  - “Am I doing it right?”
  - Changing standards, questions about role models
  - Many kinds of fathers (Traditional, dual earner, Married/cohabitating, Separated, divorced, step – living apart/together, young fathers, gay fathers, immigrant fathers ...)
  - Relative isolation from other fathers
  - Working it out with partners

## Personal and political ...

- Public issues of fathering (structural conditions):
  - Isolation – how have our traditions limited support?
  - Invisible in delivery of some parenting services
  - Public images of fathers: incompetent; absent or irresponsible
  - Workplace practices or policies:
    - focus on performance
    - Conditional support; passive opposition
  - Public policies

## Community-University Research Alliances (CURA)

### Objectives:

- Accountability to the public
- Connect with “end users” of knowledge and expertise
- Support alliances and ongoing collaboration in order to:
  - foster innovative research
  - training of students, professionals
  - Enhancement of community resources
  - advancement of knowledge in areas of importance for the development of communities

## History of FIRA partnership

- Small working group (2000)
- Scan of research/programs in Canada (Health Canada)
- National roundtable on fathering issues (March 2002)
- National Steering Committee, vision, objectives
- LOI to CURA program (Fall, 2002)
- Development of full proposal (2003)
- Funded start January 2004

## FIRA Objectives

- to establish a sustainable Canadian network of people interested in enhancing father involvement
- to generate a baseline of Canadian knowledge and research on father involvement
- to inform public decision making, community development, and policy development
- to develop tools, resources and training to be used in practice



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## FIRA Program Areas

Creating a Canadian knowledge base on father involvement  
*(demographic & policy analysis)*

Engaging for change with fatherhood research  
clusters *(clusters and thematic overview)*



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## A Canadian Knowledge Base

Analysis of census and survey data

- Profiles of Canadian fathers with demographic, economic, and socio-cultural characteristics

Overview of Canadian policies

- Overview paper
- Policy reference group
- Commissioned policy papers
- Policy conference in year 5



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## Engaging for change: fatherhood research clusters

- Participatory action research
- Socially defined subpopulations facing unique challenges
- Development of evidence based tools & resources



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## Participatory Action Research

- Research defined collaboratively researcher and community of interest
- Research agenda is rooted in, and shaped by experience, not the “literature”
- Data gathering is planned in response to created questions
- Collaborative drawing of conclusions and plan for collective action

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## Research Clusters

- Immigrant fathers
- Gay fathers
- New fathers
- Young fathers
- Indigenous fathers
- Separated & divorced fathers
- Fathers of children with special needs



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## Immigrant Fathers

- Parenting challenges faced by immigrant men
- Impact of racism
- Isolation and un/under-employment
- Role conflict due to children's rapid acculturation

*Research in Calgary with links to Toronto, Montreal  
David Este, Social Work, University of Calgary*

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## Gay Fathers

- Effects of homophobia on gay fathering with social, legal and cultural barriers
- Access to services
- Parenting from outside traditional gender dynamics

*Research in Toronto  
Rachel Epstein, LGBT Parenting Network/David Kelly Services, Family  
Service Association*

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## New Fathers

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- Support services for fathers from prenatal through the first 18 months of the child's life
- New father's physical and mental health
- The degree of support afforded fathers by the health care system

*Research in London, York Region, Toronto  
Ed Bader, Focus on Fathers, Catholic Community Services of York  
Region*

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## Young Fathers

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- Young fathers' multiple service needs in work, school, housing, relationships
- Challenging negative experiences and perceptions in social services and the courts

*Research in Ottawa/Hull Region  
Annie Devault, Social Work, University of Québec in Outaouais*

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## Indigenous Fathers

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- Unique issues for Indigenous fathers' caring for children (0-6) enrolled in centre-based child care
- Improving community outreach
  - Altering program structures, program materials, and program activities to better serve fathers.

*Research in Victoria, Vancouver, Northern B.C.  
Jessica Ball, School of Child and Youth Care, University of Victoria*

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## Separated and Divorced Fathers

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- Patterns that sustain or interfere with positive father involvement
- Salient legal, emotional and financial issues
- Strengths-based approach with evidence based solutions

*Research in Vancouver/Vancouver Island  
Edward Kruk, Social Work and Family Studies, University of British Columbia*

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## Fathers of Children with Special Needs

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- Challenges and factors that limit or facilitate involvement
- Improving the practice of “family-centred” care
- Work with fathers of children who experience a chronic health condition and/or a physical disability

*Research in Toronto, London  
Ted McNeill, Director of Social Work, The Hospital for Sick Children*

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## Partnership

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- Researchers from 8 universities
- 25+ community partners:
  - Community service agencies
  - Hospitals
  - Public health
  - Network organizations
- \$1 million in federal funding
- \$650 K partner funding

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## Foundation Partners

- DadsCan
- Prospère
- Father Involvement Initiative-Ontario Network (FII-ON)



Father Involvement in Educational Institutions Action Group (FI-EI)  
My Daddy Matters Because...  
Centre for Families, Work & Well-Being

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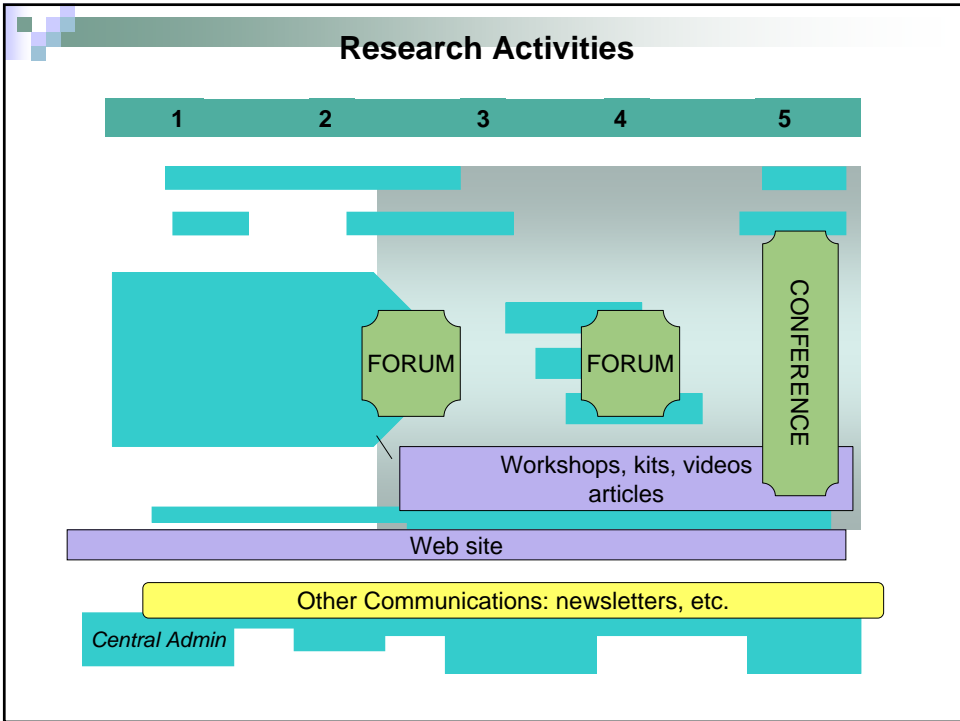
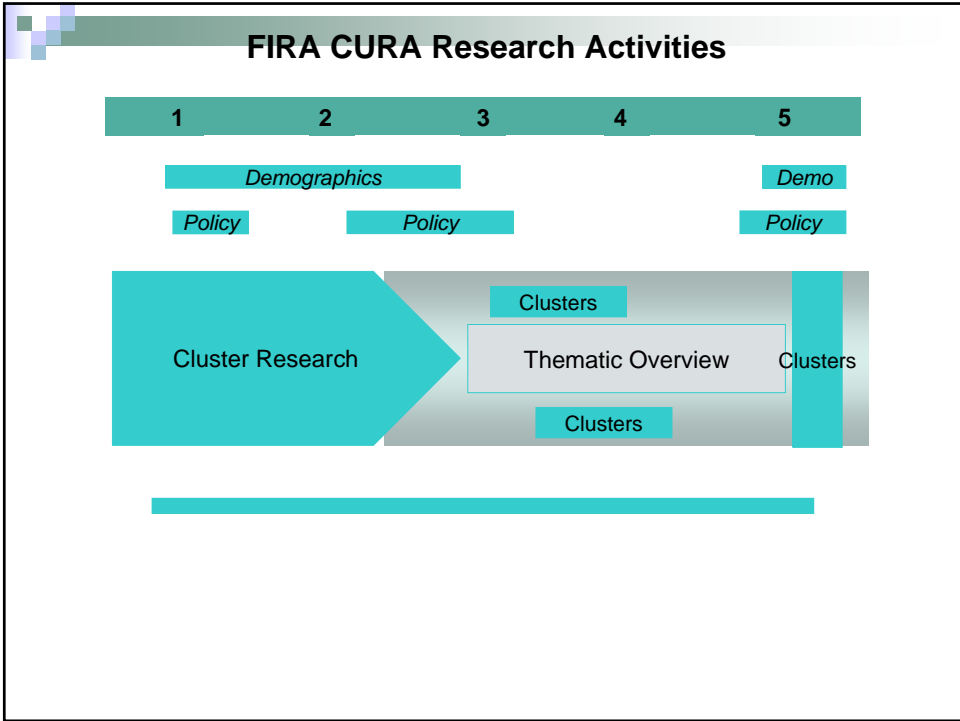
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## Additional Partners

Vanier Institute of the Family · Bow Valley College · Brighter Futures for Children of Young Single Parents, Ottawa · Early Years Health Program, Ottawa · African Community Association of Calgary · Canadian Institute of Child Health · Research Alliance for Children with Special Needs · Thames Valley Children's Centre · Catholic Community Services of York Region · St. Michael's Hospital · LGBT Parenting Network, Family Service Association of Toronto · Canadian Association of Paediatric Health Centres · Ontario Association of Children's Rehabilitation Services · Bloorview MacMillan Children's Centre · Centre of Excellence for Children and Adolescents with Special Needs · The Hospital For Sick Children · Prince George Native Friendship Centre · Prince George Aboriginal Head Start Program · Pqusalhwc Child Care Centre, Lil'wat Nation · BC Men's Resource Centre · Nanaimo Men's Resource Centre · Wazdidadilh Aboriginal Infant & Family Development Program · Catholic Family Services of Greater Vancouver · Univ. of Guelph (Family Relations, Psychology, Sociology) · Carleton Univ. (Sociology) · University of Victoria (School of Child and Youth Care) · Univ. of B. Columbia (School of Social Work and Family Studies) · Univ. of Québec in Outaouais (Social Work) · Univ. of Western Ontario (Population Studies) · Wilfrid Laurier Univ. (Psychology) · Univ. of Calgary (Social Work) · Univ. of Toronto (Social Work and Family and Community Medicine) ...

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