



FATHERS IN FOCUS

OCTOBER 18, 2025 • MADISON, WI

AGENDA AT-A-GLANCE

8–9 a.m.

Floor 1 • Cafe/Atrium

Check-In and Social Engagement • Visit Vendors

8:30–9 a.m.

Floor 1 • Cafe/Atrium

Breakfast

9–9:15 a.m.

Floor 1 • Room D1630

Opening Remarks and Welcome

DANIELLE Y. HAIRSTON GREEN, UW–Madison Extension

JENNIFER BERNE, Madison College

PAUL DELONG, UW–Madison Extension

9:15–10:15 a.m.

Floor 1 • Room D1630

Keynote: The Infinite Journey of Fatherhood

R. KWEKU SMITH, BLAQUESMITH Psychological Consultative Services

10:15–10:30 a.m.

Floor 1 • Cafe/Atrium

Social Engagement • Visit Vendors

10:30–11:30 a.m.

Floor 2 • Rooms C2402–C2455

Concurrent Session 1

11:30–11:45 a.m.

Floor 1 • Cafe/Atrium

Social Engagement • Visit Vendors

11:45 a.m.–12:45 p.m.

Floor 2 • Rooms C2402–C2455

Concurrent Session 2

12:45 p.m.

Floor 1 • Room D1630

Lunch • Social Engagement • Visit Vendors

1–1:45 p.m.

Floor 1 • Room D1630

Lunch Panel Discussion

ALVIN THOMAS, UW–Madison School of Human Ecology

MATT CALVERT, UW–Madison School of Human Ecology

ERIC L. CRAWFORD, UW–Madison Department of Counseling Psychology

FELIPE DE LOS SANTOS, Father

BEN KILLOY, New Definitions Consulting

1:45–2 p.m.

Floor 1 • Cafe/Atrium

Social Engagement • Visit Vendors

2–3 p.m.

Floor 2 • Rooms C2402–C2455

Concurrent Session 3

3–4 p.m.

Floor 1 • Cafe/Atrium

Social Engagement • Visit Vendors



For the full conference program with session descriptions, speaker bios, and track details, scan the QR code or visit go.wisc.edu/fathers



Human Development & Relationships Institute

DIVISION OF EXTENSION

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN–MADISON

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- Madison Gas and Electric
- UW–Madison Office of Child Care and Family Resources
- HEALthy Brain and Child Development
- Madison Metropolitan School District
- Edvest 529
- Summit Credit Union

The Fathers in Focus Conference aims to serve as a pivotal platform for fathers across Wisconsin to converge, connect, and collectively address the challenges in their roles. This gathering is not just about discussion but about catalyzing real change and empowering fathers to play a more active and fulfilling role in their families and communities.

CONCURRENT SESSIONS

Concurrent Session 1

10:30–11:30 a.m.

● **My Father’s House: How to Set the Tone through Intentional Parenting**

Joshua Zawadi, Life ReDefined Inc.
Room C2428

● **The Emotional Load: Fathers, Feelings, and the Invisible Work of Showing Up**

David Hilgendorf, UW–Madison School of Human Ecology
Room C2402

● **Pathways to Economic Stability: Family Income Trajectories, Child Support, and Development**

Quentin Riser, UW–Madison School of Human Ecology
Room C2408

● **Father First: Building Legacy through Leadership, Love, and Lessons Learned**

Sylvester Williams, Sly Williams Motivation
Room C2451

● **The Power of Presence: Fathers as Leaders in Every Space**

Tommy Walls, Council for Opportunity in Education
Room C2455

● **Co-Parenting After Incarceration**

Anthony Cooper Sr., Focused Interruption
Room C2426

Concurrent Session 2

11:45 a.m.– 12:45 p.m.

● **Roots and Wings: The Indispensable Role of Fathers in Raising Whole Children**

Otis Harris Jr., PushedN2Destiny Consulting
Room C2428

● **Bridging the Gap: Strengthening Parent-Child Relationships through Communication**

Marcus Meneese, Stronger Than My Father
Room C2402

● **Fatherhood, Child Support, and Custody: Who Defines Fatherhood?**

David Pate, UW–Madison School of Human Ecology
Susan Stanton, UW–Madison School of Human Ecology
Room C2408

● **Insights from Peer Support Programs for Noncustodial Fathers**

Adam Trunzo, UW–Madison Extension
Room C2451

● **From Absent to Engaged: The Role of Fathers for Family Mental Wellness**

Clayton Barksdale, West Mississippi Education Consortium
Room C2455

● **Building Justice and Equity: Supporting Fathers in Child Welfare, Child Protection, and Foster Care**

Devon Gilchrist, Minnesota Department of Children, Youth, and Families
Room C2426

Concurrent Session 3

2–3 p.m.

● **Better Together: Co-Parenting Evolved**

Terron Edwards, Fathers Making Progress
Room C2428

● **Helping Children Understand and Cope with Strong Feelings**

Robert Nix, UW–Madison School of Human Ecology
Room C2402

● **Child Support Overview**

Miguel Tovar McDonald, Dane County Child Support Agency
Room C2408

● **Engaging Fathers and Educators in Academic Settings**

Dwayne Meeks, Urban Colors Fatherhood Experience
Room C2451

● **(Re)Defining My Fatherhood Footing: Agency After an Accident**

Steve Hayden, Nevada State University
Room C2455

● **Successful Community Transitions**

Adam Trunzo, UW–Madison Extension
Room C2426

TRACK KEY



Track 1:
Co-Parenting



Track 2:
Relationship and Parenting Skill Building



Track 3:
Child Support and Finances



Track 4:
Custody Challenges



Track 5:
Mental Health



Track 6:
Justice-Involved Families



For the full conference program with session descriptions, speaker bios, and track details, scan the QR code or visit go.wisc.edu/fathers

GENERAL SESSION PRESENTERS

9:00 a.m. | Welcome

Opening Remarks



Danielle Y. Hairston Green
UW–Madison Extension

Danielle Y. Hairston Green, Ph.D., is the Assistant Dean and Director of the Human Development

and Relationships Institute at the University of Wisconsin–Madison Division of Extension. In this role, she is dedicated to enhancing the well-being of individuals and fostering resilient communities across Wisconsin. She serves on the Board of Directors for Wisconsin Humanities, chairs the Mental and Physical Health Committee for the Madison Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., and is a member of the Education Committee for the Black Political Social Action (BPSA) of Dane County. Beyond her academic and leadership roles, Hairston Green is also the host of *The Moth* in Madison and creator of *The Soul Currency* podcast. She earned her Ph.D. in Educational Leadership, a master's degree in Community Psychology, and a bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice from Pennsylvania State University.



Jennifer Berne
Madison College

Jennifer Berne became the ninth president of Madison College on July 1, 2025. Berne's 30-year

career in higher education includes roles as a professor, researcher, department chair, dean, vice president of academic affairs, and provost. Berne began her teaching career at Oakland Community College and went on to hold teaching, research, and leadership roles at several institutions, including Oakland University and National Louis University. She has authored five books on literacy education. Berne holds a doctorate in teacher education from Michigan State University, a master's degree in English from Northeastern University, and a bachelor's degree in English from the University of Michigan. She also holds a master's degree in business administration from the University of Michigan's Ross School of Business.



Paul DeLong,
UW–Madison Extension

Paul DeLong is the associate dean for policy, operations, and stakeholder engagement at

UW–Madison Extension. A longtime Wisconsin leader, he previously served as chief state forester at the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and senior vice president at the American Forest Foundation. Paul and his partner Abby live in Madison and are proud parents of two adult children.

9:15 a.m. | Keynote

The Infinite Journey of Fatherhood



R. Kweku Smith, BLAQUESMITH
Psychological Consultative Services

R. Kweku Smith will present "The Infinite Journey of Fatherhood." Participants will explore the

masculine developmental hierarchy, the three Ps of fatherhood – protect, provide, and passion – and the unique variations of fatherhood. This powerful keynote empowers fathers to understand their roles, embrace their growth, and build a supportive "village" of positive male influences for children.

1:00 p.m. | Lunch Panel

Moderator



Alvin Thomas, UW–Madison
School of Human Ecology

Alvin Thomas is a clinical psychologist and associate professor of human development

and family studies in the UW–Madison School of Human Ecology. His work focuses on the intersection of positive child and youth development and father involvement, particularly among Black children, fathers, and families. Through an ecological lens, his research addresses youth violence, fatherhood, parenting, race, and discrimination. Thomas's work has been recognized by the American Psychological Association and other organizations. He also hosts the award-winning Black Fatherhood Podcast, promoting and strengthening Black fatherhood.



Matt Calvert, UW–Madison School
of Human Ecology

Matt Calvert is a professor of civil society and community studies in the UW–Madison School of

Human Ecology. Calvert focuses on youth and community development. His research works to build youth-adult relationships that will benefit communities. Inspired by his experience as a father, he is committed to engaging youth within their communities.



Eric L. Crawford, UW–Madison
Department of Counseling
Psychology

Eric L. Crawford is a doctoral student in the UW–Madison

Department of Counseling Psychology and graduate research assistant in the Thomas Resilient Youth Lab. A father who's dedicated to child development, Crawford has worked in a community mental health setting with young children and families experiencing trauma.



Felipe De Los Santos, Father

Felipe De Los Santos became a father at 16 and experienced the realities of fatherhood within and outside of the family court system,

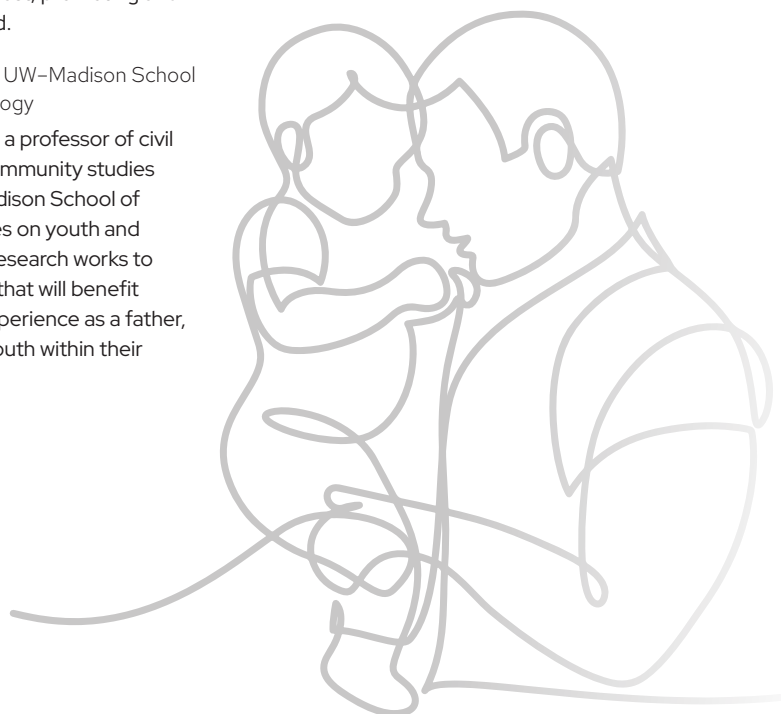
giving him direct insight into the ongoing challenges surrounding fathers' rights. These experiences have shaped the proud father's unique understanding of the grief and mental health struggles many men endure.



Ben Killoy, New Definitions
Consulting

Ben Killoy is the founder of New Definitions Consulting and a coach with 10+ years of experience

working with fathers and leaders on emotional intelligence, presence, and legacy. A Marine Corps veteran and father, Killoy is also a parental leave coach who specializes in fatherhood transitions and helping fathers heal and step into their role in the family.





Scan here to share your Fathers in Focus experience!
Your feedback matters – and helps make next year even better!

FATHERS IN FOCUS • CONFERENCE TRACKS

Track 1: Co-Parenting



In this track, we focus on fostering healthy and cooperative co-parenting relationships. Sessions will explore effective communication strategies, conflict resolution techniques, and ways to prioritize the well-being of your children while navigating co-parenting challenges. Whether you're newly separated or have been co-parenting for years, these sessions will provide valuable insights and tools to help you and your co-parent work together more effectively.

Track 2: Relationship and Parenting Skill Building



This track is designed to help you strengthen your relationships with your children and partner. Sessions will cover topics such as building strong emotional bonds with your children, effective discipline strategies, and nurturing healthy relationships within your family. Whether you're a new parent or looking to enhance your parenting skills, these sessions will provide practical tips and advice to support you on your parenting journey.

Track 3: Child Support and Finances



Managing child support and finances can be challenging. In this track, we offer sessions that provide guidance on navigating child support agreements, budgeting tips for single parents, and strategies for managing financial responsibilities. Whether you're seeking advice on negotiating child support or looking for ways to improve your financial literacy, these sessions will provide valuable insights to help you make informed decisions.

Track 4: Custody Challenges



Custody arrangements can present unique challenges for fathers. This track offers sessions that address common custody issues, legal considerations, and strategies for advocating for your parental rights. Whether you're facing a custody battle or seeking to modify an existing arrangement, these sessions will provide valuable information and support to help you navigate the complexities of custody challenges.

Track 5: Mental Health



Maintaining your mental health is essential for being the best parent you can be. This track offers sessions that focus on mental health and well-being, including stress management techniques, coping strategies, and resources for seeking help. Whether you're dealing with stress, anxiety, or depression, these sessions will provide valuable insights and tools to help you prioritize your mental health.

Track 6: Justice-Involved Families



Navigating the justice system can be overwhelming, especially for families. This track offers sessions that provide guidance on supporting your family through legal challenges, understanding your rights, and accessing resources for justice-involved families. Whether you're dealing with incarceration, legal issues, or reentry, these sessions will provide valuable information and support to help you navigate this complex system.