



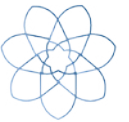
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مجلس السياسات  
POLICY COUNCIL



## FATHERS' PERSPECTIVE AND STAKEHOLDER MAPPING

**Policy Intervention for Enhancing  
Fathers' Role in Early Diagnostic  
Practices and Care for Young  
Children of Determination (YCOD)  
in Abu Dhabi and the UAE.**

in collaboration with



هيئة أبوظبي  
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## Preamble

This concept note outlines a research initiative aimed at understanding the role of fathers in early diagnostic practices and care for young children of determination (YCOD) in Abu Dhabi or the UAE as a whole from the perspective of healthcare professionals and stakeholders. The study seeks to identify the stakeholders involved in this process, examine their views on fathers' roles, and assess the factors influencing the promotion or hindrance of fathers' involvement.

MBRSG Ethics Approval: REC-01-2023

## The Policy Council Dialogue

The Policy Council Dialogues divided into two parts; part 1 focused fathers' engagement, which was held face-to-face on October 14th 2023 with those Fathers of YCOD. Then for Part 2, on March 19th -22nd the stakeholders engagement policy dialogue was conducted virtually and survey tool. The research project event's organizer, the Mohammed Bin Rashid School of Government (MBRSG, Dubai), believe that the relationship between understanding the role of fathers in early diagnostic practices and care for young children of determination (YCOD) is a priority topic for the context of the UAE. In this panel discussion, our objectives encompass a comprehensive exploration of various dimensions pertaining to YCOD.

Our goal is to investigate the engagement of dads in early diagnostic practices and care for Young Children of Determination (YCOD) from the perspective of professionals. We aim to understand the complex dynamics influencing parental participation in the developmental process of these children. We want to comprehend the role of dads in recognizing and addressing disabilities in young children by collaborating with healthcare practitioners, educators, and specialists. This study explores the detailed viewpoints of specialists who are leading in diagnosing and supporting YCOD. It focuses on the level of involvement of dads in this important process and the influence of their participation on the child's well-being.

Secondly, identifying the experts responsible for the early identification and care of YCOD is crucial for fully understanding the support system for these children. We aim to identify and outline the interdisciplinary team responsible for the early identification and treatment of disabilities, including pediatricians, therapists, special education experts, and community workers. We intend to clarify the joint efforts needed to provide prompt interventions and support networks for YCOD and their families by outlining the roles and responsibilities of these experts.

Thirdly, exploring the opinions of experts on the roles and duties of dads within the field of early diagnosis and care for YCOD offers significant insights into societal expectations and cultural norms. We seek to gather a variety of perspectives and experiences from experts through qualitative research and discussions on dads' involvement in their children's development. By researching existing attitudes and beliefs around paternal involvement, we may identify barriers and facilitators to dads' participation and advocate for more inclusive and supportive practices within professional settings.

Fourthly, analyzing the elements that affect fathers' participation in early diagnostic techniques and care for YCOD involves a comprehensive examination of environmental, cultural, and systemic impacts. We aim to examine how different factors such as knowledge frameworks, cultural norms, practitioners' interpersonal skills, and institutional structures interact with each other. We want to analyze these intricate dynamics to discover methods for improving dads' involvement, overcoming systemic obstacles, and creating a more comprehensive and encouraging atmosphere for the overall well-being of YCOD.



## Policy Dialogue Panel Objectives

### Part 1

- Exploring the influence of fathers on the development and well-being of their children aged 0-8 in Abu Dhabi.

### Part 2

- Investigate the role fathers play in early diagnostic practices and care for YCOD from the professionals' perspective.
- Identify the professionals directly or indirectly responsible for the early diagnosis and care of YCOD.
- Explore the perspectives of these professionals on the roles and duties of fathers.
- Examine the factors influencing the promotion or hindrance of fathers' involvement, including existing knowledge, cultural context, practitioners' skills, and service development requirements.

### Research Questions:

The policy dialogue panel event addressed several questions, including:

1. What is the extent of fathers' involvement in early diagnostic practices and care for YCOD?
2. Who are the professionals involved in the early diagnosis and care of YCOD in Abu Dhabi or the UAE?
3. How do professionals perceive the roles and duties of fathers in this process?
4. What factors influence fathers' involvement, including existing knowledge, cultural context, practitioners' skills, and service development requirements?

### Target audience

Fathers of YCOD, Mothers of YCOD, Professionals working with YCOD, senior policymakers/leaders from policymaking institutions within the healthcare sector.

### Stakeholder Mapping:

- The stakeholders to be engaged in this research include (but not limited to):
- Fathers of YCOD/ guardians
- Mothers of YCOD/ guardians
- Healthcare professionals (pediatricians, psychologists, therapists)
- Special education professionals
- Policymakers and government representatives
- Community and religious leaders
- Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working in the field of disability rights and advocacy/ people of determination

Panelists and Participants' views, experiences, and shared knowledge enriched the dialogue. The dialogue intended to encourage action and put the policy issue on the policy agenda by engaging with the stakeholders who took part in the dialogue and sharing the summary with those who may review the summary and take action within their own institutions.



## Policy Council discussion – Part 1- Fathers' perspectives

Title: Hearing from Fathers: Insights from Abu Dhabi Focus Groups on Fatherhood for Children of Determination with COM-B Model Guidance

### Preamble:

Fatherhood engagement is a crucial factor in child development, especially for children of determination. Despite the prevalent portrayal of fathers in Arab countries as disengaged and lacking motivation beyond financial support, there is a significant gap in actively involving them in focus groups to explore their perspectives. This absence of involvement is compounded by the lack of a framework for behaviorally informed, evidence-based fathering policies. Consequently, there is a pressing need to examine fathers' perspectives on their commitment to engagement, fill the existing void in the literature, and inform future policy recommendations. To address this need, this study phase aimed to investigate these issues using the Capability, Opportunity, Motivation, and Behavior (COM-B) model. The objective was to systematically pinpoint obstacles and motivators influencing fathers' engagement in Abu Dhabi with their children of determination, focusing on children aged 0-8.

Methods: Two focus groups, one in English and another in Arabic, comprising nine fathers convened on October 14, 2023. Each session lasted one hour. A snowball sampling method was employed to ensure the representation of both Emirati and expatriate participants. The selection criteria were established during the prescreening phase, incorporating various control variables to further ensure representativeness. Guided by a semi-structured questionnaire based on the COM-B framework (see below), the discussions were audio-recorded and transcribed. A thematic analysis was applied for coding and analysis.

### Policy Council Discussion – Part 1 Summary

#### 1. Financial Struggles and Impact on Child Care:

- Parents feel that service providers in the UAE are charging excessively high prices for childcare services, and there is a need for regulatory consideration regarding pricing.
- The high costs of childcare services are perceived as a business in the UAE, with concerns about transparency and accountability. Trust is a key factor for fathers in accessing or paying for support services.

#### 2. Challenges of Balancing Work and Parenting:

- Fathers face difficulties in balancing work and parenting responsibilities, often leading to time constraints and reliance on external caregivers (nannies).
- The presence of community demands and expectations regarding work and education adds to the challenges of balancing parenting roles.
- There is an internal conflict for fathers – being able to work to provide financially vs spending time to bond with their child and attend to their needs.

#### 3. Time and Resource Prioritization in Parenting:

- There is a trade-off between time and work, with the nature of work determining the extent of this challenge.
- If mothers stay at home, it facilitates parenting, but if they work, it becomes more problematic to balance responsibilities.



#### **4. Awareness and Participation for Societal Change:**

- There is a need to educate fathers on how to deal with children, especially those with special needs, and promote their involvement in childcare.
- Societal change is emphasized, with individuals and companies playing a role in fostering a more inclusive and supportive environment.

#### **5. Myth of Fathers Not Being Involved or Capable in Childcare:**

- There is a notion that fathers are less involved in childcare or not willing/capable of doing so, which needs to be addressed.
- Fathers are often understanding and capable of caring for their children, and their involvement should be encouraged and supported.

#### **6. Community-Level Factors in Father-Child Relationship:**

- Community demands and expectations can constrain parents' ability to dedicate time and resources to their children.
- There is a need for societal support and understanding to facilitate a healthy father-child relationship. (Trust in support providers remains key to improve fatherhood engagement.)

#### **7. Importance of Early Intervention:**

- Early intervention and therapies are crucial for children with special needs, as early developmental stages are critical for shaping their social and cognitive development.
- However, challenges exist in accessing and maintaining consistent early intervention service.

#### **8. Struggles in Finding Suitable Schools and Teachers:**

- Parents face difficulties in finding appropriate schools and qualified teachers who can effectively cater to the needs of children with special needs.
- Communication and consistency in the school environment are important factors.

#### **9. Challenges in Finding Shadow Teachers:**

- Finding and retaining suitable shadow teachers for children with special needs is a struggle, with issues such as lack of willingness to perform certain tasks or inflexibility.

#### **10. Issues with Nannies and Impact on Child Development:**

- Frequent changes in nannies (domestic helpers) can lead to regression in a child's development, highlighting the importance of consistent and stable caregiving.
- Nannies (domestic helpers) will generally not be as attentive to the child's needs as a parent would.

#### **11. Lack of Expertise and Medical Assistance:**

- There is a perceived lack of expertise and specialized medical assistance available for children with special needs.





## 12. Need for Government Regulation, Transparency, and Case-by-Case Approach:

- There is a need for government regulation, transparency, and a case-by-case approach in addressing the needs of children with special needs, especially in private schools and establishments outside the ministry's oversight.
- Disparities exist for expats in accessing support services, as many are not covered by insurance or company policies.

## 13. Motivation and Obstacles for Fatherhood Engagement:

- Fathers' motivation to be involved in their children's lives, especially those with special needs, is driven by a sense of responsibility and the desire to provide care.
- However, obstacles such as lack of understanding, acceptance, or societal norms can hinder their engagement.
- Balancing of responsibility and care: one parent must sacrifice work to be there for the child due to lack of trusted support. This reduces the family income. Costs associated with raising a YCOD is higher due to all the special needs.

## 14. Parental Concerns about the Future:

- Parents express concerns and worries about the future well-being and care of their children with special needs, particularly when they are no longer around.

Overall, the findings highlight the various challenges and barriers faced by parents, particularly fathers, in caring for children with special needs, and the need for societal, regulatory, and systemic changes to provide better support and resources.

## Based on Fathers' perceptions, policy recommendations along with the relevant stakeholders:

### 1. Regulatory supervision and price regulations involving the government, policymakers, and service providers.

- Enforce regulatory measures to guarantee transparency and fair pricing in childcare services, therapies, and educational institutions that serve children with special needs.
- Implement systems for routine audits and monitoring to deter exploitative pricing practices.

### 2. Financial assistance and insurance provisions (Stakeholders: Government, employers, insurance firms)

- Offer financial aid or subsidies to families with children who have special needs to reduce the impact of high expenses.
- Require employers and insurance companies to provide extensive coverage for therapies, interventions, and support services for individuals with special needs.

### 3. Parenting education and awareness programs including the Government, non-profit groups, and educational institutions.

- Create and execute educational initiatives and awareness drives to encourage active father participation and engagement in childcare, especially for children with special needs.
- Conduct workshops and training sessions for fathers to acquire good parenting tactics and approaches for children with special needs.



**4. Early intervention programs and resources including healthcare providers, educational institutions, and non-profit organizations.**

- Develop a strong network of early intervention programs and services that prioritize accessibility, consistency, and continuity of care.
- Offer assistance and guidance to parents in recognizing and obtaining early intervention services immediately.

**5. School and teacher training accreditation involving educational authorities and teacher training institutions.**

- Develop thorough training programs and accreditation criteria for teachers and educational personnel to ensure they are prepared to meet the requirements of children with special needs.
- Encourage and reward schools to implement inclusive policies and offer specialized support services.

**6. Shadow teacher certification standardization for educational authorities and professional associations.**

- Create uniform certification and training programs for shadow teachers to ensure they have the essential skills and abilities to properly assist students with special needs.
- Create a centralized database or platform to link families with certified and approved shadow teachers.

Support personnel extends beyond the typical roles for eg shadow teacher in schools. A wider catchment includes anyone attached to the school who will be involved in the care of the child of determination including bus drivers, bus monitors and assistant teachers. Awareness and training sessions should be provided all persons who interact with YCOD.

**7. Community support and awareness programs involving community organizations, non-profit groups, and media stakeholders.**

- Initiate community-based programs and campaigns to increase awareness of the difficulties encountered by families with children who have special needs and advocate for a more inclusive and supportive atmosphere.
- Promote community engagement and volunteer participation to assist families and offer respite care services.

**8. Workforce policies and workplace flexibility (Stakeholders: Employers, policymakers)**

- Establish policies and incentives for firms to offer flexible work arrangements and friendly settings for parents of children with special needs.
- To be included under the umbrella of employing and supporting people of determination, along with employees with children of determination.
- Promote the establishment of on-site or near-site childcare facilities and support services in businesses under an initiative such as "Parent Friendly Companies".

**9. Centralized information and resource center for Government and non-profit organizations stakeholders.**

- Develop a consolidated information and resource portal to offer parents current information on resources, support programs, and best practices for caring for children with special needs.
- Enhance collaboration and information exchange among service providers, educational institutions, and support organizations.



Create a government approved database of trusted care providers, from nannies to shadow teachers and other support personnel who are trained and whose services are available.

#### **10. Transition planning and long-term care involving stakeholders such as the government, social agencies, and healthcare providers.**

- Establish thorough transition planning and long-term care initiatives to alleviate parents' worries about the future welfare and support of their children with special needs.
- Promote coordination among different stakeholders to guarantee seamless care and assistance for the child over their lifespan.

Effective implementation of these suggestions necessitates coordination among government agencies, educational institutions, healthcare providers, employers, non-profit organizations, and community groups. A multi-faceted strategy can considerably enhance the overall support system for families with children who have special needs by tackling the highlighted issues.

## **Policy Council discussion – Part 2- Professionals and Stakeholders Perspectives**

### **Organization of sessions**

This policy council session dialogues with professionals and stakeholders which was divided into four parts tailored to each research aim as mentioned earlier:

#### **Part A. Investigate the role fathers play in early diagnostic practices and care for YCOD from the professionals' perspective:**

- a. Can you describe the involvement of fathers in the early diagnostic practices and care for young children of determination (YCOD) that you have observed in your professional experience?
- b. What are the typical roles and responsibilities fathers assume in the process of early diagnosis and care for YCOD?
- c. How do you perceive the impact of fathers' involvement on the overall well-being and development of YCOD?

#### **Part B. Identify the professionals directly or indirectly responsible for the early diagnosis and care of YCOD:**

- a. Who are the professionals that you collaborate with or are aware of who are directly involved in the early diagnosis and care of YCOD?
- b. Are there any specific roles or specialties within your field that are particularly instrumental in the early detection and management of disabilities in young children?

#### **Part C. Explore the perspectives of these professionals on the roles and duties of fathers:**

- a. What are your views on the roles and duties that fathers should ideally fulfill in the early diagnostic practices and care for YCOD?
- b. How do you perceive fathers' attitudes and behaviors towards seeking early diagnosis and participating in the care of YCOD?
- c. In what ways do you think the involvement of fathers can be enhanced or improved in this process?





**Part D. Examine the factors influencing the promotion or hindrance of fathers' involvement, including existing knowledge, cultural context, practitioners' skills, and service development requirements:**

- From your perspective, what are the main factors that either facilitate or impede fathers' involvement in early diagnostic practices and care for YCOD?
- How do you think the existing knowledge about the role of fathers in family dynamics affects their engagement in the care of YCOD?
- In what ways does the cultural context of the community influence fathers' willingness or ability to participate in the early diagnosis and care of YCOD?
- What do you believe are the key skills or competencies that practitioners need to effectively engage fathers in this process?
- Based on your experience, what are the service development requirements necessary to better support and involve fathers in the care of YCOD?

## Summary points for each of the policy dialogue discussion questions:

**Part A. Investigate the role fathers play in early diagnostic practices and care for YCOD from the professionals' perspective:**

- Can you describe the involvement of fathers in the early diagnostic practices and care for young children of determination (YCOD) that you have observed in your professional experience?
  - Limited involvement observed, often overshadowed by mothers.
  - Some fathers actively engage in seeking diagnosis and participating in care, while others seem less involved.
  - Fathers may participate in decision-making processes but may not be consistently present during diagnostic appointments or therapy sessions.
  - It is rare for fathers to be directly involved in long term therapy and in monitoring the child's development closely.
  - Observational differences in involvement based on nationality or cultural background with Asian fathers being the most involved throughout the whole process, Emirati fathers being highly involved in the early stages but tapers off as treatment continues and European fathers less involved throughout the whole process.
  - Fathers' involvement in school is dependent on their rapport with the staff at the school suggesting greater comfort when the staff is male and Arabic speaking for local fathers.
  - Fathers face more challenges associated with social stigma in early diagnosis.
  - Fathers have limited understanding of the roles of different professionals who are involved in the care of a YCOD which delays early intervention
  - Fathers provide a different perspective from others and often describe red flags or developmental delays when the mother may not perceive these as a problem.
  - Fathers are often more reluctant to proceed with investigations to confirm diagnoses, probably due to fear and cultural stigma.



- b. What are the typical roles and responsibilities fathers assume in the process of early diagnosis and care for YCOD?
- Providing emotional support to the family during the diagnostic process.
  - Participating in discussions with healthcare professionals regarding treatment options and interventions.
  - Engaging in caregiving tasks such as attending therapy sessions, administering treatments, and supporting the child's development.
  - Most fathers are involved at the early stages in terms of schooling needs for the child.
  - Fathers are the final decision maker in determining the care agreed upon in terms of special needs at school – (they sometimes override the mothers decision for care and support)
  - Fathers take on a more pragmatic role from the organizational and financial perspective e.g. coordinating, dropping off and paying for appointments/ sessions.
- c. How do you perceive the impact of fathers' involvement on the overall well-being and development of YCOD?
- Positive impact observed when fathers are actively involved, leading to improved family dynamics and support networks.
  - Fathers' involvement may contribute to better outcomes for YCOD, including enhanced social and emotional development.
  - This positive impact increases when both parents are present and involved throughout the entire course of care.
  - Lack of father involvement may result in missed opportunities for early intervention and support, potentially impacting the child's progress.

**Part B. Identify the professionals directly or indirectly responsible for the early diagnosis and care of YCOD:**

- a. Who are the professionals that you collaborate with or are aware of who are directly involved in the early diagnosis and care of YCOD?
- Pediatricians, Medical Doctors
  - Developmental pediatricians
  - Psychologists
  - Therapists - Speech and language therapists (SLT), Applied Behaviour Analysis therapists (ABA), Occupational therapists (OT), Physiotherapists
  - Special education teachers, teachers, nursery leads
  - Early intervention specialists
  - Nurses
  - Osteopaths



- b. Are there any specific roles or specialties within your field that are particularly instrumental in the early detection and management of disabilities in young children?
- Specialized in early childhood development, developmental pediatricians focus on children's growth and progress.
  - Early intervention professionals concentrate on detecting developmental impairments and offering solutions.
  - Specialized speech and occupational therapists focusing on pediatric treatment.
  - School Counselors
  - Teachers
  - Therapists - Speech and language therapists (SLT), Applied Behaviour Analysis therapists (ABA), Occupational therapists (OT), Physiotherapists

**Part C. Explore the perspectives of these professionals on the roles and duties of fathers:**

- a. What are your views on the roles and duties that fathers should ideally fulfill in the early diagnostic practices and care for YCOD?
- Fathers should be actively involved in pursuing early diagnosis and participating in the child's care.
  - The individual should offer emotional assistance to the family and participate in decision-making procedures.
  - Fathers should work together with healthcare providers to ensure the child's needs are successfully addressed.
  - Fathers should attend therapy sessions, doctors' visits, school visits so they can be more involved in the process to ensure better outcomes.
- b. How do you perceive fathers' attitudes and behaviors towards seeking early diagnosis and participating in the care of YCOD?
- Some fathers may be proactive and engaged, while others may have difficulty accepting the diagnosis or participating in the care process.
  - Cultural ideas and societal conventions can impact how fathers view and engage in seeking early diagnosis and care.
  - Denial and fear are common feelings amongst fathers during the early diagnosis phase.
  - Fathers adopt a more practical approach in trying to find solutions.
  - Fathers perceive that the professionals and school can "fix" the problems the child faces.
  - Fathers tend to have the upper hand in deciding the first steps to be taken
- c. In what ways do you think the involvement of fathers can be enhanced or improved in this process?
- Offering education and assistance to dads regarding the significance of their participation in the first detection and treatment procedures.
  - Providing adaptable appointment scheduling to suit the availability of fathers.
  - Establishing support groups or workshops designed exclusively for fathers to meet their distinct needs and issues.
  - Changing public perception of YCOD, for example, launching a public campaign referring to YCOD as super heroes.



**Part D. Examine the factors influencing the promotion or hindrance of fathers' involvement, including existing knowledge, cultural context, practitioners' skills, and service development requirements:**

- a. From your perspective, what are the main factors that either facilitate or impede fathers' involvement in early diagnostic practices and care for YCOD?
  - Insufficient awareness or comprehension on the significance of fathers' engagement.
  - Cultural attitudes and societal standards related to gender roles and parenting duties.
  - Accessibility and cost of healthcare services.
  - Obstacles to communication between fathers and healthcare experts – authenticity of communication.
  - Workload, work commitments, lack of flexibility at work
  - Trust and honesty between fathers and all professionals involved in the care of the child.
  - Community support.
- b. How do you think the existing knowledge about the role of fathers in family dynamics affects their engagement in the care of YCOD?
  - Inadequate comprehension of fathers' roles can result in presumptions regarding their lack of participation.
  - Appreciating and acknowledging dads' efforts can have a beneficial impact on their involvement in the care of YCOD.
  - There is not enough information on the statistics or case studies that highlight the positive effect of the fathers involvement.
- c. In what ways does the cultural context of the community influence fathers' willingness or ability to participate in the early diagnosis and care of YCOD?
  - Cultural norms concerning gender roles and family dynamics can influence dads' engagement.
  - Stigma or discrimination linked to disability could deter fathers from pursuing early diagnosis or participating in care.
  - Fathers see their place mainly as financial support for their families.
  - Gender of professionals may affect the fathers willingness to engage as most are female, fathers may think it is easier for the mothers to communicate with women.
- d. What do you believe are the key skills or competencies that practitioners need to effectively engage fathers in this process?
  - Developing cultural competence to comprehend and honor various family dynamics.
  - Developing proficient communication abilities to establish a connection and confidence with fathers. Communication skills to build trust and rapport through honest and authentic expression.
  - Capacity to offer customized education and support that align with the specific requirements and preferences of fathers.
  - Learning to how to involve both parents in home care of the child.



- e. Based on your experience, what are the service development requirements necessary to better support and involve fathers in the care of YCOD?
- Create specific outreach initiatives to increase awareness of the significance of dads' participation.
  - Integrating dads' viewpoints and experiences into the process of planning and providing services.
  - Offering training and resources to healthcare workers to engage fathers effectively in the treatment process.
  - Creating support groups or networks for fathers to engage with peers and obtain information and assistance.
  - Compulsory attendance of first visits.
  - Encourage more gender inclusion to have male professionals to join the field of work to support YCOD.

## Deliberations about the Policy Elements

The policy elements were presented along with the relevant literature to include: element description, the underlying factor it addresses, benefits, risks, cost and cost-effectiveness, and uncertainty around elements as cited in the examined literature.

### The policy elements were:

- **Element #1:** Father-Inclusive Early Diagnostic Practices and Care Guidelines
- **Element #2:** Training and Capacity Building for Healthcare Professionals
- **Element #3:** Father Support Programs and Resources
- **Element #4:** Advocacy and Awareness Campaigns
- **Element #5:** Cultural Sensitivity Training
- **Element #6:** Parental Leave and Workplace Support

Panelists and participants recognized the significance of all components and the difficulties involved in investigating the role of healthcare professionals in YCOD initiatives. Thus, taking into account the replies received and the participation of different stakeholders, the following policy recommendation proposals:

### 1. Policy Recommendation: Guidelines for Early Diagnostic Practices and Care Including Fathers

Stakeholders include government agencies such as the Ministry of Health & Prevention and Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratization, healthcare practitioners, health authorities, early childhood authorities, NGOs, and educational institutions.

Create detailed instructions that highlight the significance of paternal participation in early diagnostic procedures and care for Young Children of Determination (YCOD).

Integrate these suggestions into healthcare, workplace and education systems to promote father-friendly practices and encourage healthcare providers to actively involve fathers in the care process.





## **2. Policy Recommendation: Provide training and capacity building for healthcare professionals.**

Stakeholders: Medical associations, professional licensing bodies, healthcare institutions, medical education institutions.

Establish compulsory training programs for healthcare professionals that concentrate on comprehending and managing the distinctive requirements of fathers in the first diagnosis and care of YCOD.

Offer continuous professional development opportunities to improve practitioners' cultural proficiency, communication abilities, and capacity to engage fathers effectively.

## **3. Policy Recommendation: Programs and Resources to Support Fathers**

Stakeholders include NGOs, community organizations, and government entities.

Provide funds and resources to create and execute father support programs and resources, such as workshops, support groups, and online forums.

Partner with local community organizations to offer culturally relevant and easily available support programs customized for YCOD fathers.

Create an official platform where certified professionals and those trained to work with YCOD who act in any support capacity, can be vetted, verified and added to a network for parents to screen and access help as needed.

## **4. Policy Recommendation: Advocacy and Awareness Campaigns**

Stakeholders: Media outlets, advocacy groups, government bodies.

Initiate advocacy and awareness initiatives to combat prejudices and advocate for positive depictions of fathers' involvement in the care of YCOD.

Collaborate with media organizations to distribute information and resources emphasizing the significance of father engagement in early detection and healthcare.

## **5. Policy Recommendation: Cultural Sensitivity Training**

Stakeholders: Healthcare institutions, educational institutions, government organizations.

Integrate cultural sensitivity training into the curriculum for healthcare and education providers, focusing on the many ethnic backgrounds and family dynamics of YCOD.

Offer information and assistance to practitioners to comprehend and honor cultural views and conventions concerning fatherhood and parenting.

## **6. Policy Recommendation: Parental Leave and Workplace Support**

Stakeholders include employers, government labor bureaus, and advocacy groups.

Support legislation that offer fair parental leave and workplace assistance for fathers, enabling them to be involved in the early detection and care of YCOD without encountering financial or career obstacles.

Advocate for businesses to adopt family-friendly policies that support fathers' caregiving duties and enhance work-life equilibrium. Push to adopt the International Labour Organisation (ILO) recommendation for "Decent Working Time" to facilitate better work hours and flexibility of working to improve work-life balance.

Implementing these policy proposals with relevant stakeholders can create a more supportive and inclusive environment for fathers of YCOD, hence enhancing outcomes for these children and their families.



## Sphere of key sectors for father's role in the early diagnosis of YCOD



### Specific Stakeholders in the UAE:

1. Zayed Higher Organization for People of Determination (ZHO)
2. Ministry of Community Development (MOCD)
3. Ministry of Education (MOE)
4. UAE Down Syndrome Association
5. Rashid Pediatric Therapy Center
6. Child Early Intervention Medical Center (CEIMC)
7. Dubai Autism Center
8. Special Care Center for Early Intervention (SCC)
9. Abu Dhabi Early Childhood Authority (ECA)
10. Sharjah City for Humanitarian Services (SCHS)
11. Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratization



## Summary of Insights

### **Part 1: A summary of the insights derived from the policy recommendations mentioned above based on Fathers' perception with stakeholders:**

1. Regulatory oversight and pricing controls (Government, policymakers, service providers)
2. Financial support and insurance coverage (Government, employers, insurance companies)
3. Parenting education and awareness campaigns (Government, non-profits, educational institutions)
4. Early intervention programs and resources (Healthcare, education, non-profits)
5. School/teacher training and accreditation (Educational authorities, teacher training)
6. Standardized shadow teacher certification (Educational authorities, professional organizations)
7. Community support and awareness initiatives (Community organizations, non-profits, media)
8. Workforce policies and workplace flexibility (Employers, policymakers)
9. Centralized information and resource hub (Government, non-profits)
10. Transition planning and long-term care (Government, social services, healthcare)

The key stakeholders involved are government agencies, educational institutions, healthcare providers, employers, non-profit organizations, community groups, insurance companies, media, medical schools and professional associations. Effective implementation requires multi-stakeholder collaboration to address the financial, educational, social, and long-term care needs of families with children who have special needs.

### **Part 2: A summary of the insights derived from the policy recommendations mentioned above based on professionals and stakeholders:**

Policy suggestions stress the significance of acknowledging and encouraging dads' participation in the early diagnostic procedures and treatment for Young Children of Determination (YCOD). Policies strive to disrupt established conventions by emphasizing the crucial role fathers play in the care process and promoting their active involvement in their child's developmental journey.

Training and capacity building are necessary for healthcare practitioners to successfully involve dads in the care of YCOD.

Guidelines include compulsory training programs to improve professionals' comprehension of dads' requirements and provide them with the essential skills to support father engagement. Policy recommendations suggest creating support programs and resources specifically designed for fathers. The workshops are designed to equip fathers with the essential information, assistance, and resources needed to handle the difficulties of caring for a child with disabilities. Advocacy and awareness efforts are essential for combating misconceptions and encouraging positive representations of dads' roles in caregiving. It is advised to work with media outlets and advocacy groups to share information and resources emphasizing the significance of father engagement.

Cultural Sensitivity Training is emphasized in policies for healthcare and education professions. Practitioners can effectively involve fathers from various cultural backgrounds in the care of YCOD by comprehending and honoring unique cultural beliefs and customs. Parental Leave and Workplace help in terms of having policies to promote fair parental leave and workplace help to address the difficulties fathers encounter when juggling caregiving duties and job obligations. Employers can establish family-friendly practices such as the ILO's "Decent Working Time," to facilitate fathers' involvement in caring for YCOD without encountering financial or career obstacles.



The policy proposals attempt to establish a more supportive and inclusive environment for fathers of YCOD, with the ultimate goal of enhancing outcomes for these children and their families. Policymakers can promote father involvement in early diagnostic techniques and care of YCOD by addressing barriers and implementing supportive policies and practices, which can enhance their overall well-being and development.

## Next Steps

It was agreed that further steps need to be taken to build on the discussion and its findings, and the participants offered support in disseminating the dialogue summary and policy brief within their teams. In addition, both documents will be communicated with relevant departments, institutions, and professionals to advocate for action. All relevant stakeholders, subject matter experts, and institutions in public and private sectors shall be engaged in agenda-setting, priority-setting, and implementation in the policy brief report. Additional work is needed to set the implementation plan and evaluation process to ensure evidence is collected throughout the implementation and not only at the end-stage. Generated evidence can aid in planning the next steps.

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3. Ministry of Health And Prevention
4. Dubai Health Authority
5. Hospitals, doctors, psychologists, nurses, etc.
6. Healthcare professionals
7. Fathers of YCOD
8. Mothers of YCOD
9. Zayed Higher Organization for People of Determination (ZHO)
10. Ministry of Community Development (MOCD)
11. Ministry of Education (MOE)
12. Emirates Down Syndrome Association
13. Rashid Pediatric Therapy Center
14. Child Early Intervention Medical Center (CEIMC)
15. Dubai Autism Center
16. Special Care Center for Early Intervention (SCC)
17. Abu Dhabi Early Childhood Authority (ECA)
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The views expressed in this report are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect those of the trustees, officers, and other staff of the Mohammed Bin Rashid School of Government (MBRSG) and its associated entities and initiatives.



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