

*A note to new dads —*

*Becoming a first-time dad is a scary—and exciting!—time in life. We hope you'll find this father's needs checklist helpful. At Life Choices Center, we want to help you be the best dad you can possibly be. To find out more about our Smart Choices mentoring program for new parents, call us at 607.723.3342 or visit our website — [www.lifechoicescenter.org](http://www.lifechoicescenter.org).*

*Hope to hear from you!*

*Your friends at Life Choices Center*

## Father's Needs checklist

*Things for dads (and dads-to-be) to think about...*

### The nine months before the baby is born

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Decision Making         | Gather the info necessary to make a wise recommendation to your partner concerning the options of parenting, abortion and adoption.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Relationship w/ partner | Are you and the baby's mother still in a relationship? If not, how involved do you want to be with your child? How involved does the baby's mom want you to be? Discuss this openly and honestly with each other.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Support system          | Develop a support system of family, friends and/or community organizations that will be able to help you through this time. Now is a good time to make plans for child care.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Medical insurance       | Explore your options for medical insurance and other programs. Some ideas to start include—Healthy Start, Fideles, PCAP, your partner's parents' insurance, or insurance through your workplace. If you need help getting started, let us know and we can help.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Job                     | There's no way around it—babies cost money! If you don't have a job, now is the time to start looking. If you do have a job, hang on to it. And save your paychecks. Many new dads are surprised that such a little human being can create such a big dent in the bank account! If you want, we can help you with your resume and interviewing skills.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Paternity               | If you and your baby's mother are not married, you won't be considered the legal father unless certain things take place. Find out how to file an affidavit of paternity and get tests done to determine if you are the father. And make sure you know what your legal responsibilities are as a father. (For example, according to New York State law, a father has a legal responsibility to provide financial support for his child until the child is 21.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prenatal care           | Take prenatal care classes, either through our Smart Choices program, at a hospital, or with a community group like Family Enrichment Network or Catholic Charities.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Substance abuse         | If you smoke, now is a good time to think about quitting. Second-hand smoke can be harmful to babies. Also, to be the best father you can be, you will want to be free from drug or alcohol abuse. If you think you may have a problem in this area, now is the time to address it. We can help you find a substance abuse program.  |

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| ___ Childbirth coach | You may want to take a childbirth class with your partner during her pregnancy.   |
| ___ Hospital visit   | Help your partner by taking her to visit the delivery room before your child is born. This will allow you both to become familiar with the surroundings and meet some of the nurses who may care for her.   |
| ___ Material stuff   | It's never too soon to start collecting things your baby needs. At minimum you'll need: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A crib</li> <li>• Changing table</li> <li>• Car seat</li> <li>• Diaper bag with accessories</li> <li>• Baby clothes and blankets</li> <li>• Diapers</li> </ul> At Life Choices Center we can help you collect these baby items and more through our Smart Choices program. |
| ___ Education        | Now's a good time to work extra hard to complete your education—your high school diploma or a GED. Studying will be more difficult once you have a baby to care for!  |
| ___ Spiritual needs  | Talk with a pastor or a mature Christian man that you trust about your relationship with God. Do you have a faith you can pass on to your child? Are you ready for the responsibility of being a father?  |

### The first nine months after the baby is born

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| ___ Commitment       | Have you made the emotional mental transition from being a single man to a dad with a lot of responsibility? Are you willing to cut down on your own activities and personal spending so there is enough time and money to care for your family?   |
| ___ Changing diapers | Do you know how to change diapers and prevent your baby from developing diaper rash? Are you doing your share of diaper changing? New moms (especially if they're nursing) can get really tired. Your baby's mom needs her sleep!  |
| ___ Feeding baby     | Have you learned how and what to feed your baby? Are you taking an active role in feedings, especially during the middle of the night?   |
| ___ Change of foods  | Talk to your pediatrician and read about when to introduce your baby to solid foods. It's very important that both parents understand what is healthy for a baby to eat and drink.   |
| ___ Teething pains   | Talk with your pediatrician about teething and treatment for pain. Buy extra bibs and teething toys.   |
| ___ House safety     | As soon as baby can crawl, you will need to baby-proof the house. Cover electric outlets, and make sure nothing heavy can be pulled down. Create "safe rooms" with no sharp corners. Remove anything from the floor that a baby could swallow. This might feel silly, but you'll be surprised what you see—get down on your hands and knees and look at the room from your child's perspective. Imagine what kind of trouble a little tyke could get into, and remove any temptations. Some things are so familiar to you, it takes another look to realize they could be a hazard for your baby (like the cat food!). |
| ___ Doctor visits    | Talk with your pediatrician about the appropriate number of medical visits during your baby's first two years. Keep careful records of any shots your child receives because you will be asked for these many times as your child grows up.  |
| ___ Parenting skills | No one is born a good parent—everyone has to learn good parenting skills. As much as you can, listen to CDs, watch videos, read books and attend parenting seminars and classes.   |
| ___ Spiritual life   | You might find that your spiritual life seems more important now that you have a little one looking up to you. Find a church you feel comfortable with and get involved there. The people you get to know through church may turn out to be some of your biggest supporters.   |

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| ___ Child neglect/abuse     | Do you worry about losing your temper sometimes? Have you ever left your child unattended? If either question concerns you, talk to someone immediately. Better to confront a potential problem now before it turns into a disaster. Caring for children can bring up personality issues that you didn't even know you had.    |
| ___ Relationship w/ partner | If you are not married to your baby's mother, have you established paternity and worked out a system to pay child support on time? A child's needs are best met when mom and dad work together on solutions, so try to keep open and honest communication with your baby's mom, even if you aren't in a romantic relationship. |
| ___ Friendship              | Being a dad can be overwhelming. Having an older man as a mentor and friend can be a valuable resource during this time—to support you, give you advice, listen and help you find answers to your questions. We can help set you up with a mentor who will be there for you.   |



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