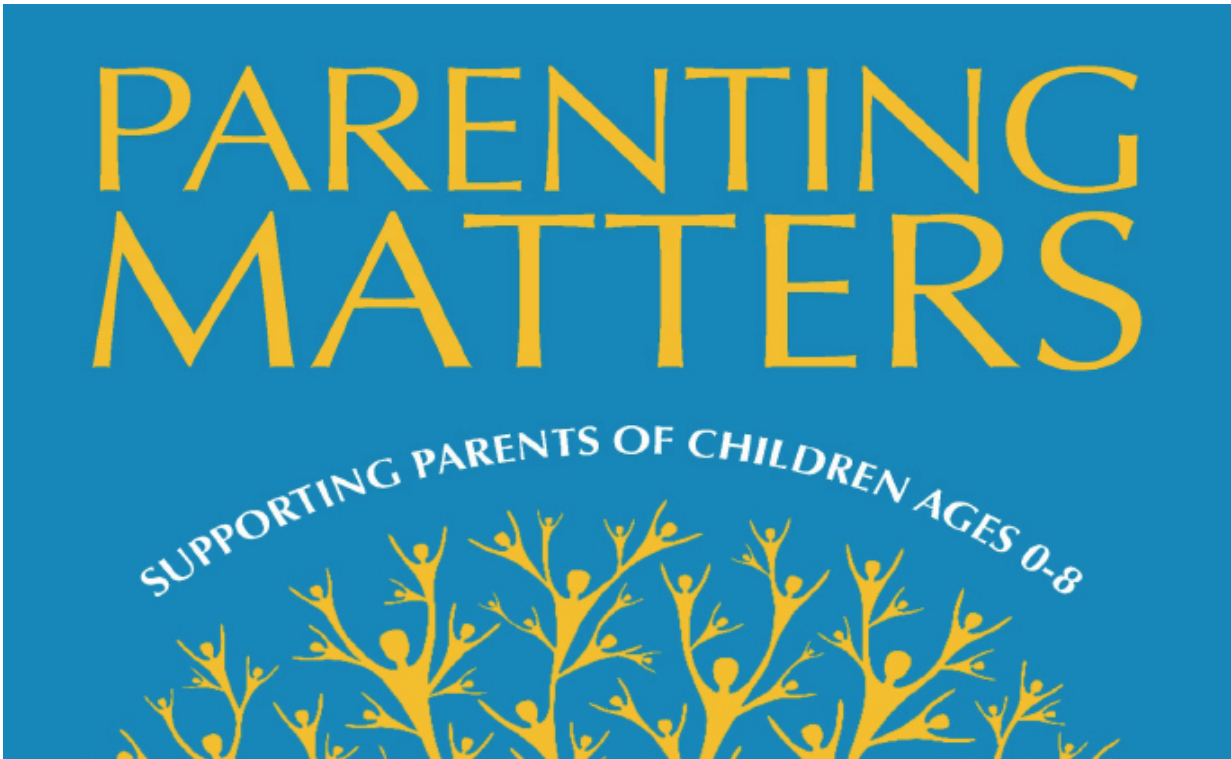


# Making parenting a national priority

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The National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine today released Parenting Matters, a new report about improving supports for parents who need help caring for their young children. Credit: National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine

Ask any mom or dad and they will tell you: parenting is hard work. For those parents and caregivers who struggle with the nature or the demands of child rearing, sometimes help is hard to find.

A broad range of interventions and support programs have been assembled by researchers, social workers, government agencies and community-based organizations. Whether a parent in need receives the appropriate and effective program sometimes comes down to the luck of the draw, according to experts.

A new National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine report, co-authored by Lynch School of Education Associate Professor Eric Dearing, recommends health, human services, and education agencies develop a national framework to uniformly expand access to the best evidence-based strategies that support [parents](#) who need help.

"We are calling to make parenting a priority," said Boston College developmental psychologist Eric Dearing, a report co-author on the National Academies-convened Committee on Supporting the Parents of Young Children. Dearing and his co-authors presented their findings today in Washington, D.C.

The 400-page report Parenting Matters focused on supporting parents of children ages zero to eight by examining the leading research on a range of programs, the work of practitioners in the field and the oversight of local, state and [federal agencies](#) and systems.

"Overwhelmingly, parents want their young children to thrive, yet it's a really hard job and many parents are struggling to find the supports to help them do that job," said Dearing, a member of the Lynch School of Education's Department of Counseling, Developmental and Educational Psychology. "Right now there are too many families who have not been fortunate enough to be in a situation where they are getting the supports they need."

The researchers, who began their work in early 2015, identified a core set of parenting knowledge, attitudes, and practices tied to positive

parent-child interactions and outcomes for children from birth to age 8.

The report recommends ways for health, human services, and education agencies and systems to promote wide-scale adoption of evidence-based strategies that support America's struggling parents, including specific populations, such as fathers, immigrant families, and parents of children with disabilities.

Ten specific recommendations spell out ways to create a unified, nationwide approach to supporting and sharing proven strategies with a range of institutions and organizations that work with men and women on parenting skills or other issues that require intervention.

"One of our major findings was that there are professionals working with parents, but their focus is not on parenting - nurses, pediatricians, [social workers](#), teachers and child welfare services are all doing work with adults, many of whom are parents," said Dearing. "There is a missed opportunity there to treat them in ways we can support these adults to help them as parents, which is, in essence, supporting their children."

The report recommends more support and collaboration from leading federal agencies, including the Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Education, Centers for Disease Control, National Institutes of Health, Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services.

"The primary goal is to offer some guidance for research, policy and practice concerned with the parents of young children," said Dearing. "It is something of a blueprint for how we can work toward a national framework that would provide a more comprehensive approach to supporting parents of [young children](#)."

**More information:** [DOI: 10.17226/21868](https://doi.org/10.17226/21868)

Provided by Boston College

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