

Engaging Fathers



VHSA Health &
Family Institute

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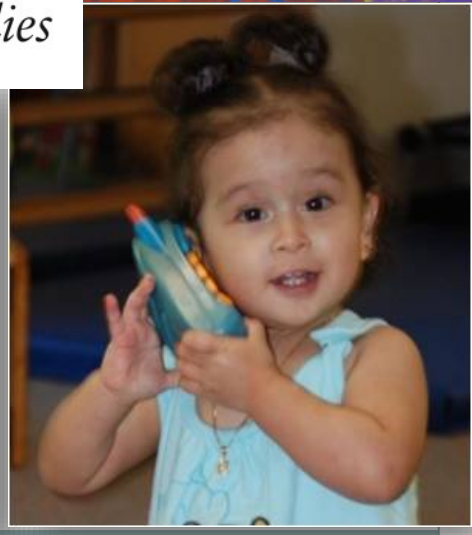
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CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

50 CDR | CHILD DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES

Changing the lives of babies, toddlers & their families



CDR's Programs

- **Central Point of Entry (566-TOTS)**
- **Infant-Parent Program (IPP) – Part C**
- **Early Head Start (EHS)**
- **Child Care & Development Centers**
- **Parents As Teachers (PAT)**
- **Parent Groups/Play Groups**
- **Community & Medical Interpretation Service (CMIS)**
- **Fatherhood (757-378-3177)**
- **1-2-3 READ Virginia!**
- **VA Infant Toddler Specialist Network**
- **Center for Professional Development**





Pathways to Responsible Fatherhood



- Five year federal grant from the Administration on Children and Families, Office of Family Assistance
- Focus on responsible parenting, economic stability, and healthy co-parenting

Services offered:

- Coaching and Mentoring
- Group training
- Home Visits
- Rookie Dads
- Linkages
- Workforce Development
- Counseling
- Conflict Resolution
- Links to Community Resources



Community Partners



- **Community Hospital**
- **Regional Jail**
- **Center for Child and Family Services**
- **Local departments of social services**
- **EHS, PAT, and Part C**
- **Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance**



Training Topics



- ❑ **Child Development**
- ❑ **Parenting**
- ❑ **Effective Discipline**
- ❑ **Communication**
- ❑ **Managing Anger**
- ❑ **Resolving Conflicts**
- ❑ **Developing & Maintaining Relationships**



Training Topics



- ❑ Decision-Making
- ❑ Literacy Development
- ❑ Dealing with Stress
- ❑ Managing Your Money
- ❑ Handling the Daily Needs of Children



Employment Assistance



- ❑ Job seeking
- ❑ Resume writing
- ❑ Interviewing techniques
- ❑ Skill Building to advance in current position
- ❑ Job placement
- ❑ Tips for being successful on the job



Learning Objectives



- Identify the barriers that may keep fathers from being involved in their children's lives
- Identify strategies for working with moms to help them understand the importance of fathers and help them figure out ways to involve fathers
- Identify strategies for engaging fathers in their children's lives and for engaging fathers in home visiting



What is a father?



- Biological father
- Stepfather
- Grandfather
- Uncle
- Significant male
- Positive male role model



No matter what children call them, fathers love their children, want what is best, and want to be involved.

What does an involved father look like?



- **Spends time with his children**
- **Participates in daily routines**
- **Provides financial support**
- **Shares decision making**
- **Shares care giving responsibilities**



Why Fathers Matter



Children with involved dads are more likely to:

- **Finish high school**
- **Attend college**
- **Find steady employment**
- **Have healthy relationships as adults**



Children need both parents

Contributions of Fathers



Men can use their own strengths and abilities to connect with children

- Provide a male role model
- Have less predictable parenting styles
- Challenge children to take acceptable risks



Benefits for Mom and Baby



- **Better pregnancy outcomes and improved postpartum health**
- **More competent as a mother**
- **Greater financial security**
- **Less parental stress**



Benefits for Dad



When dad is involved prenatally:

- He feels more connected to his child
- Begins to see himself as a dad



After the baby is born:

- Feel more satisfied with his life
- Increase in relationship stability
- Has his child's love and affection
- Better health

Barriers to Father Involvement



- Mom might act as gatekeeper
 - Domestic violence
- Tension because of child support
 - Incarceration



Identifying “Dad”



- Learn how each family defines “family”
- Help each family member work together to support the child



Cultural Competency



- Recognize the role of cultural values, beliefs and behaviors
- Create programs and interventions that incorporate those influences
- Learn from each family about their culture
- Ask open ended questions
- Be aware of ethnic identification, religious influences, socioeconomic status, age
- Be aware of your own biases

Involving Dads who Live in the Home



Even when mom and dad live together:

- Dad might feel inadequate if he can't provide financially for his child
- Mom might think dad is not a competent parent
- Dad might think child care isn't his responsibility
- Dad might lack confidence
- Dad might work long hours



Engaging Dads in Children's Lives



- **Help** dad identify ways he is a good dad
- **Teach** fathers about the importance of their role
- **Encourage** dads to take an active role
- **Discover** dad's interests
- **Invite** him to share his interests, talents, and skills



Engaging Parents in Shared Parenting



- **Educate** mom about the importance of dad's involvement
- **Encourage** dad and mom to share parenting
- **Invite** both to be actively involved in home visiting
- **Offer** referrals for relationship counseling



Engaging Fathers in Home Visits



- **Get direct contact info**
- **Try to include him from the first contact**
- **Share information if he cannot be present**
- **Engage him to set goals, find solutions**
- **Include him in activities**



Home Visiting Practices



- Use father friendly resources
- Provide activities that dad can do with his child

Encourage dads to:

- Believe in their ability to be a positive role model in their children's lives
- Decide how involved they wish to be and commit themselves to doing what they hope to do.
- Be strong and be the type of father they think their children need
- Work with their child's mother to create rules and come to a common ground regarding the parenting of their children. Remember that raising a child takes teamwork.

Home Visiting Practices



- **Keep** a positive outlook even though economic and other factors may get in the way of being actively involved in children's lives
- **Strive** to find creative ways to be involved and make consistent efforts to overcome barriers.
- **Actively seek** to involve fathers in home visiting
- **Advocate** for men and encourage their involvement and engagement as fathers



Home Visiting Practices



- **Help** fathers negotiate conflicting pressures and expectations that may interfere with their paternal role
- **Provide** social supports such as informal mentoring and support groups



Agency Practices



- **Believe** that dads and moms play equal roles in the lives of their children
- **Provide** training to staff on involving dads
- **Make** “father involvement” the agency standard
- **Develop** policies and procedures for working with dads where safety may be an issue
- **Include** positive images of men in all promotional materials

All forms should include information about both parents

Father-Friendly Assessment Tool

Individual Home Visitor



| Statement | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|
| Individual Level | | | | | |
| As a home visitor, do you make an effort to have contact with nonresident fathers? | | | | | |
| Do you recognize and reduce the barriers limiting father involvement? | | | | | |
| Do you have the information you need to help fathers take an active nurturing role in their children lives? | | | | | |
| Do you have the information you need to help fathers and mothers to have a respectful, affectionate and considerate relationship with each other? | | | | | |
| Do you ask about the mother's values and aspirations about involving father of her children in your program? | | | | | |
| Are you prepared to provide father with the resources that will support and promote appropriate father-child activities? | | | | | |
| Do you ask dads about their needs and interest? | | | | | |

Father-Friendly Assessment Tool

Supervisor/Program Level



| Statement | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|--|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|
| Supervisor/Program Level | | | | | |
| Does your agency/program involve mothers and fathers equally? | | | | | |
| Does your agency have collaborations with agency that serve men? | | | | | |
| Does your agency recognize the diversity of men, with respect to culture, age, experience and family influences? | | | | | |
| Is all agency material (assessments, flyers, brochures) father and family friendly? | | | | | |
| Are your forms and policies and procedures gender neutral? | | | | | |
| Does your agency recruit male staff as part of your strategies to engage fathers? | | | | | |
| Do you have staff time dedicated to engaging fathers? | | | | | |

Self-Reflection



- Do you need to advocate for change in your agency?
- How can you support and promote positive father engagement?
- What changes do you need to make?



Resource Links



ECLKC Parent, Family, and Community Engagement

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/family/father-engagement>



Annie Casey Foundation

<http://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/AECF-40TopFatherhoodResources-2011-Full.pdf>

National Fatherhood Initiative

<http://www.fatherhood.org/>

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