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Engaging Fathers In Child Welfare
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www.responsiblefatherhood.org

TRANSITION TO FATHERHOOD

Boyhood → Manhood → (Husbandhood) → Fatherhood

The icons illustrate the stages of development: a young boy with a recycling bin (Boyhood), a man running on a track (Manhood), a man with gears (Husbandhood), and a family (Fatherhood).

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Who's Your DADDY?


The icons represent concepts of responsibility, ideas, education, mechanics, and contemplation.

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WHAT FATHERS SAID...


Describe your father in the form of a cereal or candy?

- * "Shredded Mini Wheat...Sometimes sweet and sometimes bitter"
- * "M&M's...multiple personalities"
- * "Pop Tarts...Present sometimes and disappears often...Sometimes never pops back up"
- * "Sugar Pops...Always want my Pops"
- * "Corn Flakes...Nothing Special...Just plain"
- * "Cheerios...Empty"

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WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT MEN?

Roles of Men



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QUALITY IMPROVEMENT CENTER ON NONRESIDENT FATHERS & LESSONS LEARNED ABOUT ENGAGING FATHERS IN CHILD WELFARE

QUALITY IMPROVEMENT CENTER ON NON-RESIDENT FATHERS (QIC-NRF)

- ✦ Funded by the Children’s Bureau
- Partners:
 - ✦ American Humane Association
 - ✦ American Bar Association Center on Children and the Law
 - ✦ National Fatherhood Initiative
- ✦ Designed to promote knowledge development regarding the engagement of non-resident fathers and their children who are involved in the child welfare system



GOALS OF THE QIC-NRF PROJECT

- ✦ To promote and support a research-based and outcome-focused approach to inform best practices in engaging non-resident fathers and paternal family in the public child welfare system
- ✦ To promote and support a research-based and outcome-focused approach to determine the impact of father involvement on child safety, permanence and well-being
- ✦ To facilitate a collaborative information-sharing and problem-solving national network



WHAT ABOUT THE DADS? REPORT

- ✦ 1,958 cases of children removed from their homes where their biological father did not reside
- ✦ Interviews with 1,222 child welfare agency caseworkers showed that:
 - ✦ 88% of non-resident fathers were identified by the agency.
 - ✦ 55% of non-resident fathers were contacted by the caseworker.
 - ✦ 30% of the non-resident fathers visited their children.
 - ✦ 28% of non-resident fathers expressed an interest in assuming custody.
- ✦ 70% of caseworkers had received training on engaging fathers and were more likely to report having located fathers.

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**QIC-NRF PROJECT:
PEER-LED SUPPORT GROUP CURRICULUM**

Developed by AHA with input from ABA and NFI:

- x **Introduction Session**
- x **Dad as Part of the Solution:** Overview of the Child Welfare System
- x **Dad as Planner:** Service Planning in the Child Welfare System
- x **Dad as Part of the Juvenile Court Process:** Legal Advocacy and Court Etiquette
- x **Dad as Provider:** Supporting Your Children
- x **Dad as Part of Children's Placement:** Visiting With Your Children
- x **Dad as Team Player:** Shared Parenting
- x **Dad as Worker:** Workforce Readiness
- x **Dad as Community Member:** Identifying and Accessing Resources
- x **Dad as Cultural Guide:** The Role of Culture in Parenting
- x **Dad as Healthy Parent:** Taking Care of You

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QIC-NRF LESSONS LEARNED (GENERAL)

- x Peer groups empowered fathers and helped them feel supported by a segment within the child welfare system, and have helped them feel less isolated.
- x The project helped social workers develop a better understanding of the fathers' experiences and the importance of actively engaging them in their children's lives.
- x Based on feedback from interviews, it appears that the children have more involvement with their fathers and paternal relatives, as well as more permanency options.

2011 Children's Bureau Express, "Site Visit: Fathers Engagement Project" (<http://cbexpress.nfhs.gov>)

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QIC-NRF LESSONS LEARNED (SPECIFIC)

- x As part of their practicum experience, graduate students from the Child Welfare Training and Advancement Program at the University of Washington have learned more about engaging nonresident fathers and contacted them on behalf of their assigned social worker using the IRB-approved script.
- x The group facilitator has experiences similar to those of the fathers, and this has given him great credibility with the groups.
- x The project needs support from the county's judicial leadership and Office of Child Support .
- x The project began providing prepaid cell phones to the fathers in the third cohort to help with communication and tracking, and all fathers who received a phone continued to attend their peer group sessions.

2011 Children's Bureau Express, "Site Visit: Fathers Engagement Project" (<http://cbexpress.nfhs.gov>)

QIC-NRF LESSONS LEARNED (SPECIFIC)

- × Project staff need to know how to advocate for dads without "crossing the line" with social workers.
- × Project staff need to be familiar with role of child welfare workers.
- × Ongoing trainings for child welfare workers about father engagement is essential.
- × Projects and agencies should improve their relationships with community-based substance abuse treatment providers so they so they can provide additional referral sources for nonresident fathers.

2011 Children's Bureau Express, "Site Visit: Fathers Engagement Project" (<http://cbexpress.acf.hhs.gov>).

QIC-NRF LESSONS LEARNED (SPECIFIC)

- × Fathers need positive role-models to counteract some of the current negative role models in their lives.
- × "Lunch With Dads" sessions helped social workers better understand father's perspectives on their situation and the child welfare system.
- × Workforce issues were top priority for fathers.
- × Fathers often stated they wanted more communication with their caseworkers.
- × Persistent phone calls were most successful initial recruitment method. Home visits and letters were less effective but should not be eliminated.

2011 Children's Bureau Express, "Site Visit: Fathers Engagement Project" (<http://cbexpress.acf.hhs.gov>).

QIC-NRF LESSONS LEARNED (SPECIFIC)


- × CPS investigators should be trained to engage mothers and other family members about providing information on nonresident fathers.
- × Nonresident father should be encouraged to participate in child welfare case planning.
- × Court should hold caseworker and mother accountable for gathering or providing father contact information.
- × Project staff should keep fathers involved while not giving fathers undue hope about getting custody of their children.

2011 Children's Bureau Express, "Site Visit: Fathers Engagement Project" (<http://cbexpress.acf.hhs.gov>).

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MARK TWAIN


“When I was a boy of fourteen, my father was so ignorant I could hardly stand to have the old man around. But when I got to be twenty-one, I was astonished at how much he had learned in seven years.”



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MAN TAKE A STAND

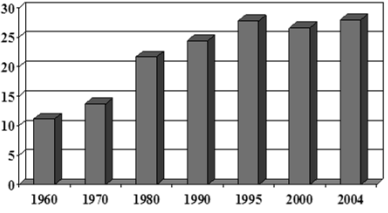
Agree Disagree



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FACTS OF FATHER ABSENCE

- In 1960, 8 million children lived in father-absent homes
- Today, over 24 million children live in homes without their fathers
- 1 out of 3 children nationally live in father-absent homes
- 2 out of 3 African American children live in father-absent homes



Proportion of Children in Father-Absent Homes

All data is from "The Living Arrangements of Children," U.S. Census Bureau, 2005.
© 2008 National Fatherhood Initiative

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EDUCATE - THE EFFECTS OF FATHER ABSENCE

COSTS
Children of father-absent homes are:

- × Five times more likely to live in **poverty**
- × Three times more likely to **fail in school**
- × Two times more likely to develop **emotional or behavioral problems**
- × Two times more likely to abuse **drugs**
- × Two times more likely to be **abused and neglected**
- × Two times more likely to become involved in **crime**
- × Three times more likely to commit **suicide**

BENEFITS
Studies show that children with involved fathers display:

- better **cognitive outcomes**, even as infants
- **higher self-esteem** and less depression as teenagers
- **higher grades**, test scores, and overall academic achievement
- lower levels of **drug and alcohol use**
- higher levels of empathy and other **pro-social behavior**


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GOOD NEWS!

- × Decrease in father absence in past 4 years (2004-2008)
- × 34.5 percent of children (2004) to 32.6 (2008)
- × 2 million more children live in homes with their biological fathers (2008 U.S. Census Bureau)






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WHY FATHERS SHOULD MATTER TO CHILD WELFARE CASEWORKERS

WHAT'S IN IT FOR...

- × Caseworkers
 - + Broadens circle of family support by including fathers and potentially their family/friends
 - + More "eyes" to survey the well-being of the child
 - + Increased informal supports and resources
 - + Positive well-being outcomes for child
 - + Promotes family and cultural connection




WHAT'S IN IT FOR...

- × Caseworkers
 - + Helps meet the expectations of the CFSR (permanency, safety, well-being and family involvement)
 - + Facilitates concurrent planning – more than one goal
 - + Supports required reasonable or diligent efforts
 - + Engages paternal relatives as possible permanency options

WHY FATHERS MATTER TO CHILDREN & MOTHERS

WHAT'S IN IT FOR...

- × Children
 - + Fathers provide unique support
 - × Emotional
 - × Financial
 - × Physical
 - + Involvement of paternal kin
 - × Expanded cultural & family ties
 - × Knowledge of family medical history



WHAT'S IN IT FOR...

- × Children
 - + Significantly more likely to exhibit healthy self-esteem & pro-social behavior
 - + Better educational outcomes
 - + More friendships & fewer behavioral concerns
 - + Both parents act as partners in raising them
 - + Increased family support that can ensure safety, emotional well-being & connection to caring adults

WHAT'S IN IT FOR...

Children

“Children whose biological fathers are absent are on average 2-3 times more likely to be poor; to use drugs; to experience educational, health, emotional and behavioral problems; to be victims of child abuse and to engage in more criminal behavior than their peers who live with their married biological parents (or adoptive parents). (Horn & Sylvester, 2002, p. 15)”

Horn, W., & Sylvester, T. (2002). *Father Facts* (4th ed.). Gaithersburg, MD: National Fatherhood Initiative

WHAT'S IN IT FOR...
Children

"Children with involved, loving fathers are significantly more likely to do well in school, have healthy self esteem, exhibit empathy and pro-social behavior, and avoid high risk behaviors such as drug use, truancy and criminal activity compared to children who have uninvolved fathers (Horn & Sylvester, 2002, p. 15)."

Horn, W., & Sylvester, T. (2002). *Father Facts* (4th ed.). Gaithersburg, MD: National Fatherhood Initiative

WHAT'S IN IT FOR...

× Children

"Children with involved, caring fathers have better educational outcomes. A number of studies suggest that fathers who are involved, nurturing and playful with their infants have children with higher IQs, as well as better linguistic and cognitive capacities."

-Rosenberg, J. (2006). *Fathers and their impact on children's well-being*. Child Welfare Information Gateway.

WHAT'S IN IT FOR...

× Mothers & Families

- + Overall positive outcomes for children's well-being
- + Additional support from father & paternal family
- + Commitment to family modeled for children
- + Increase in mother's patience, flexibility and emotional responsiveness toward child
- + Successful co-parenting sends consistent messages to child about right and wrong

Slide 29

mh2

Page 12....wasn't sure what citation format was being used so I did not make the change.

Michelle Howard, 5/28/2009

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RESOURCES

- ✘ National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse
www.fatherhood.gov
- ✘ National Fatherhood Initiative
www.fatherhood.org
- ✘ Quality Improvement Center on Nonresident Fathers
www.fatherhoodqic.org




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FATHER-FRIENDLY CHECK-UP


- ✘ Tool to help agencies create an environment that involves non-resident fathers and foster the healthy development of children
- ✘ Seven Assessment Areas
 1. Leadership & Organization Philosophy
 2. Program Management Policies & Procedures
 3. Parent Involvement Program
 4. Program Physical Environment
 5. Staff Training & Professional Development
 6. Collaboration & Organizational Networking
 7. Community Outreach



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ENVIRONMENT

- ✘ Description of the organization's physical environment which surrounds clients and employees
- ✘ Examples
 - + Environment exhibits positive portrayals of fathers/men and children in photos, posters, and display materials.
 - + Organization has a staff listing containing photos of both male and female staff.




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PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT




Special place

Father-child interaction






Reading material



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Educate – Public

PROMISING PRACTICES: RECRUITMENT

✘ Why Do Men Get Involved In Fatherhood Programs?

- > Child support
- > Help with locating resources
- > Parenting tips
- > Talk with other dads



PROMISING PRACTICES: RECRUITMENT

✘ Key Recruiter Characteristics

- + Keep your word
- + Persistence
- + No limit - "Outside the box mentality"
- + Good listener
- + Offers real solutions
- + "Firmth" (Firm plus warmth)
- + No fear of fathers and/or their environment





WHERE ARE THE FATHERS?

- | | |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| ✘ Fishing Locations | ✘ Educational Facilities |
| ✘ Hunting Locations | ✘ Entertainment Facilities |
| ✘ Sporting Events | ✘ Restrooms |
| ✘ "Bass Pro" type venues | ✘ Businesses |
| ✘ Barbershops | ✘ Religious Institutions |
| ✘ Fire Stations | ✘ Military |
| ✘ Correction Facilities | ✘ Airports |
| ✘ Healthcare Facilities | ✘ Racing Facilities |





SOCIETAL FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE DEVELOPMENT OF MANHOOD & FATHERHOOD

- Discouraging the expression of emotions - "Real men don't cry"
- Anger is an acceptable male emotion
- Dominant, disconnected and dangerous
- Being physically strong
- Ambition and competition
- Good occupational functioning
- Athletic ability
- Economic success
- Sexual conquests



mh1

Slide 39

mh1 I deteled the citation becasue as I reviewd and also looked at the website...the informatino was assimilated through a variety of resources. There is not a specific reference to these but my learning from what I read.

Michelle Howard, 5/28/2009

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GENDER




Masculine Feminine

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REAL MEN...




Help!

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WHAT FATHERS SAY...


- Many men are dealing with depression and other mental health challenges.
- Program staff/facilitator/recruiter may need to deal with other major issues before addressing the fatherhood/child welfare issue (i.e., homelessness, substance abuse, transportation, mental health).




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WHAT FATHERS SAY...


- ✘ Fathers feel like no one is hearing them or advocating for them.
- ✘ Recruiter/Facilitator needs to listen to the father's needs before "pushing the paperwork or program".
- ✘ Facilitator will initially serve as fathers' source of courage and self-esteem.




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WHAT FATHERS SAY...


- Many men lack confidence in government programs because of past unfulfilled commitments from government programs...ex., completed job training program but never received job.
- Men feel inadequate to face court system alone. "Me vs. The World" mentality.
- Self support is critical..."If you can't take care of yourself, it's hard to focus on your child or the program."




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WHAT FATHERS SAY...


- Due to personal father-absence, many men do not have any idea how to be a father...They learn parenting in the process..."Our kids are teaching us how to be parents."




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WHAT FATHERS SAY...

- Show successful stories of fathers via video who have regained custody of their children.
- Facilitator needs to consistently and continually acknowledge minor and major progress steps by the father




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WHAT CHILDREN SAY...

If your father wasn't involved in your life, did you want to know him better or see him more?

- × Yes-- He's in my life but I would love to be able to see him more."
- × "Yes - Because I still love him."
- × "No - I turned out fine without him."
- × "Yes - I wanted to see him and know him better."
- × "Yes - The system continued to schedule visits with my mom but would not let us have visits with my dad."
- × "Yes - I would love it if my dad was there my whole life."
- × "Yes - Because it's kinda hard being without a dad and so many things are going wrong"
- × "Yes - I want to feel like I have an actual father. I want to feel like he cares. I want to know my father. I want to feel like I actually have a father."

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"When you were born, you cried and the world rejoiced. Live your life in such a manner that when you die, the world cries and you rejoice."

Kabria (15th century Indian poet)


THANK YOU!

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Questions?
