Increasing Engagement of Fathers in Services Through Father-Specific Programming

December 2nd, 2020

Webinar begins at 2pm EST/1pm CST/12pm MST/11am PST
• Benefits of father involvement
• What is father-specific programming?
• Insights from
  – Milwaukee Fatherhood Initiative
  – African American Breastfeeding Network
  – Dads Matter
• Take-aways for successful father-specific programming
• Questions and discussion
Who are fathers?

- Biological
- Stepfather
- Father figure

...in families ranging from married to cohabiting, single parent, and re-combined.

Notions of the role of a father are diverse, and may be influenced by cultural and demographic factors.
Benefits of father involvement
Positive father involvement is associated with positive social, emotional, and cognitive outcomes for children from infancy to adolescence, and into adulthood.

Amato, 1994; Deutsch, Servis, & Payne, 2001; Flouri & Buchanan, 2003; McBride, Schoppe-Sullivan, & Ho, 2005; Mosley & Thomson, 1995; Parke et al., 2002; Sarkadi, Kristiansson, Oberklaid, & Bremberg, 2007; Volling & Belsky, 1992; Yeung, Duncan, & Hill, 2000
Father involvement in programming – including permanency planning and parenting training, Head Start and schools – is associated with improved child outcomes.

Coakley, 2008; Fagan & Iglesias, 1999; Lindahl, Tollefson, Risser, & Lovejoy, 2008; Nord, Brinhall, & West, 1997
What is father-specific programming?
Father-inclusive practice aims to actively encourage father participation and ensure that services are responsive and accessible to fathers as well as mothers and children.

Father-specific programming is designed specifically for fathers, with the needs and interests of fathers guiding service delivery.
## Overcoming barriers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beliefs that act as barriers</th>
<th>Additional barriers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>– Father participation is not important, extra / optional</td>
<td>– Provider discomfort or uncertainty engaging fathers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Father-child relationship is secondary</td>
<td>– Competing responsibilities for fathers, particularly work related</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Fathers’ capacity to be caregivers is limited</td>
<td>– Tension between parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Fathers as risk factors</td>
<td>– COVID</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ahmann, 2006; Garfield & Isaaco, 2006; Harknett, Manno, & Balu, 2017; Minnesota Fathers and Families Network, 2011; Moore & Kotelchuk, 2004; O'Donnell et al., 2005; Phares, Fields, & Binitie, 2006; Yogman, Garfield, & AAP Committee on Psychosocial Aspects of Child and Family Health, 2016
Strategies for involving and engaging fathers

- Father-friendly environment
- Preparation and training
- Address practical barriers to engagement
- Reinforce fathers’ contributions
- Learn about and respond to fathers’ needs and interests
- Demonstrate awareness of differences between involvement of residential and nonresidential fathers AND awareness that nonresidential fathers may be highly involved
Milwaukee Fatherhood Initiative
Milwaukee Fatherhood Initiative

MFI is a collaborative effort between the City of Milwaukee Mayor, Housing Authority, and numerous partner organizations assisting fathers in helping their children to thrive.

The core belief is that positive father involvement strengthens children, families, and communities.
Milwaukee Fatherhood Initiative promotes…

- Responsible Parenting
- Economic Stability

via father specific group and individual education, fatherhood gatherings, and individual case management
The MFI is a hub in a partnership designed to facilitate fathers’ seamless access to a wealth of supportive services.

- Child support services
- Offender reentry services
- Workforce development / employment consultation
- Permanent supportive housing
- Energy assistance
- Behavioral Health services
- Child Development Screening

Some of these services are delivered at the same facility to allow for close coordination among agencies serving mutual clients.
Education provided by facilitators in “Nurturing Fathers,” 24/7 DAD, and other curricula:

- Character development
- Relationship education
- Teen Pregnancy Prevention
- Immunization schedules
- Breastfeeding support
- Referrals for home visiting programs
- Referral for substance abuse
Milwaukee Annual Fatherhood Summit

Milwaukee Fatherhood Initiative and partners host a large two day gathering in October typically connecting over 1,000 men to education, job training, employment, health, child support, driver’s license recovery, expungement and other resources.
Father 2 Father,
African American Breastfeeding Network
Advancing spiritual development to combat the effects of trauma, abuse and neglect in young people of color.

We inspire young leaders to achieve unlimited success in their potential by:

HEALING from their PAST,

GROWING into their POTENTIAL,

in order to

LEAD with LOVE!
• **Suicide** was the 2nd leading cause of death for Youth in Wisconsin and 3rd in the country.

• **58%** of Wisconsin adults reported growing up experiencing at least one ACE, while **25%** reported having 4 or more ACE’s.

• Reduce the *intergenerational* spread of negative influences on physical health, mental health, achievement, and overall well-being.

Sources: SAMHSA; Wisconsin DPI; SWWR
Positive Parenting, Communication, Healthy Relationships

Ways To Support Breastfeeding

Overcoming Adversity
LEAD

R.E.A.L. Fatherhood

- Empathy, Inspiration & Professionalism
- MENTORING MATTER
- “Healing The Broken Man” 2021 Campaign

Rick Polk, OWN IT

Damon Manns, Owen’s Place

Damian Smith, Safe & Sound
Engaging Fathers in Home Visiting Services - Dads Matter HV
FATHERS AS A “MISSING PIECE” IN HOME VISITION

• Growth of home visitation
• Fathers and child maltreatment risk
• Fathers and related child outcomes
• Fathers shape the effectiveness of home visitation
• Few home visitors report engaging fathers in services
Surveys with Home Visitors

- Workers espouse generally positive attitudes and expectations about working with fathers, but say:
  - Lack of time
  - Perception that fathers do not want to participate
  - Lack of training
  - Worry that if they work with fathers, it will take away from their work with mothers

  ....Prevents them from engaging fathers.
The Dads Matter HV Model

Engagement and Assessment

Usual Home Visiting Services

DADS MATTER HV

Family Enrolled in Study

Quick Assessment

Father Presents Low Risk; Engageable?

Reassess risk or capacity to engage at a later time

High Risk; Unengageable

Stop attempts with father; Services as usual with mother

Services/Modules

Father Engagement and Assessment Modules
Father Engagement Modules support the level of engagement that will need to occur throughout services.

Co-Parenting Modules
Co-Parenting Modules are meant to focus on the relationship between the mother and father.

I. Role Expectations
II. Problem Solving
III. Communication
IV. Linking Assessment to Co-parenting

Individual Parent Support Modules (as necessary)
Individual Parent Support Modules focus on challenges commonly experienced by fathers.

I. Managing Stress
II. Help Seeking
III. Managing Emotions
FATHER ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES - Control Group

• Incentives
• Leave him information
• Tell him he’s needed/important
• Communicate through mom
FATHER ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES-Intervention Group

- Talk to him
- Make eye contact
- Leave things for him
- Communicate through Mom
- Specifically/explicitly invite him
- Tell him he’s needed/important
- Referrals (jobs etc.)
- Using hands-on activities
- Use technology

- Being there/consistent/building trust
- Giving him information
- Providing opportunities to interact with other dads
- Explaining benefits of his involvement
- Using “other” activities: holiday parties, family events, etc.
- Respect/acknowledge his expertise
- Consider schedules
Dads Matter HV PRACTICE CHANGES

• More inclusion of fathers/paying attention to them in various aspects of services
  • Active encouragement of fathers and fathering
• Reflection on their own perceptions and beliefs about fathers
• More of a family approach
  • Talking to moms and dads about the importance of dad
• Getting over discomfort, uncertainty, hesitation
  • Increasing skills
**Take-Aways**

• Fathers can be engaged in home visiting services, but it takes:
  • Flexibility
  • Creativity
  • Persistence

• Home visitors will state that they generally value fathers, but they need consistent support and encouragement to identify and address barriers
  • Practice
  • Training on specific strategies
  • Cueing/asking
  • Supervision/leadership
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND THANK YOU

The Dads Matter HV Team:

- Neil Guterman, PhD, Dean, New York University
- Aaron Banman, PhD, Assistant Professor, University of Nebraska, Omaha
- Justin Harty, MSW, LCSW, Doctoral Candidate, University of Chicago
Takeaways for successful father-specific programming
Some takeaways…

• Know the fathers you’re serving
• Reinforce fathers’ contribution
• Reduce barriers to participation
• Connection with other fathers
• Parenting and co-parenting
• Coping with ongoing, chronic life stress
• Who does the outreach? Who provides services?
• Support and referrals to quality, culturally-sensitive community resources
Questions and Discussion
Thank You!

www.preventionboard.wi.gov

Contact the presenters:

Tova Walsh
tbwalsh@wisc.edu

Darryl Davidson
DADAVID@milwaukee.gov

Brooks Griffin
brooks.griffinaabn@gmail.com

Jennifer Bellamy
Jennifer.Bellamy@du.edu

Photo credit: Alameda County Father Corps’ Fatherhood Photo Bank
https://www.diversityoffatherhood.com/