


Silberman School of Social Work



Module Four The Importance of Fathers' Involvement and Effective Engagement



Department of
Social Services

Human Resources Administration
Department of Homeless Services

Office of Child
Support Enforcement

HUNTER
The City University of New York

Learning Objectives

- Explain the importance of father involvement.
- Describe techniques and strategies for engaging resistant fathers.
- Identify components of successful father engagement.
- Identify program components to engage young and incarcerated fathers.
- Outline effective strategies for engaging fathers in services.

Importance of Father Involvement

- When children have a secure, supportive, sensitive, warm, and reciprocal relationship with their fathers, they are more likely to be well adjusted and to have other positive psychosocial and behavioral outcomes.
- Father involvement also contributes to overall family well-being and leads to less domestic violence and less maternal involvement in Child Protective Services.

Benefits to Mothers

- Experiences an increase in patience, flexibility and emotional responsiveness toward children
- Sees overall positive outcomes for children and their well-being

Benefits to Fathers

- A more positive father-child relationship
- Increased self-confidence and satisfaction from parenting
- A higher level of empathy and understanding towards others
- Increased resiliency in stressful situations
- The ability to feel greater pride and find more meaning and joy from life

Benefits to Fathers

- A more positive father-child relationship
- Increased self-confidence and satisfaction from parenting
- A higher level of empathy and understanding towards others
- Increased resiliency in stressful situations
- The ability to feel greater pride and find more meaning and joy from life
- More likely to engage in community and service oriented activities
- More social and involved in extended family interactions

Stressors and Life Circumstances Impacting Engagement and Relationship Building

- Spousal conflict, separation, and divorce
- Previously modeled father-son relationships
- Adverse circumstances such as unemployment, mental illness, substance use, and domestic violence
- Incarceration
- Child welfare
- Financial circumstances and child support

Discussion Questions

- What are some reasons fathers may be resistant to engaging in services?
- What are some strategies that could be used to relax a father's resistance?

Engaging Resistant Fathers

Four useful skills, using a cultural humility perspective:

1. Active Listening
2. Reflecting
3. Reserving Judgment
4. Enter the Client's World Journey

Hasan's Digital Story

<https://youtu.be/99mowu60uDI>

Hasan's Digital Story (cont.)

- How did the absence of a father figure impact Hasan?
- How has that experience influenced the way he is raising his children?
- How does Hasan's story relate to the difficulties fathers have when they seek assistance?
- What are some strategies that programs can implement to dissipate the “where's mom” perspective?

Discussion Questions

- Think about engaging fathers in individual work. What are some engagement strategies you would use?
- What do you think organizations (e.g., CBOs, schools, private child welfare agencies and city agencies) need to do to be more inclusive in engaging fathers?

Components of Successful Engagement

Emphasis needs to be on services delivered in a manner that conveys that fathers are worthy, the agency is on their side, and fathers can be hopeful they will remain in their children's lives.

Typical Outcomes Targeted

- Securing employment
- Promoting self-sufficiency
- Developing healthy relationships
- Becoming responsible fathers
- Improving mental health
- Reducing risky behaviors
- Reducing recidivism

Components of Model Fatherhood Programs

- Use of culturally appropriate teaching methods and materials, and when possible hire staff members who are similar to the target population
- Have a low staff to participation ratio, and establish clear program and goals and targeted curriculum (e.g., Cowan evidenced based curriculum Supporting Father Involvement)
- Use different teaching methods that are focused on addressing fathers as individuals
- Allocate enough time to complete core program activities
- One-on-one interaction between staff and participating fathers
- Offer incentives to encourage participation by fathers

Engaging Young Fathers (16-25 years of age) in Services

Programs for young fathers should incorporate a strengths-based perspective, recognizing that each participant begins the program from a different place and supports should be tailored to address the individual's needs.

Discussion Questions

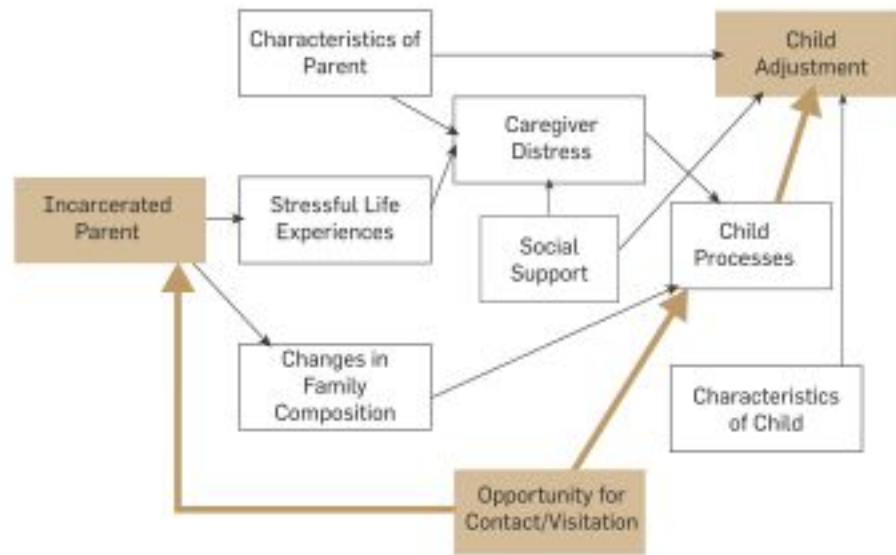
- How would you begin to engage a young father in services?
- What are some techniques that could promote engagement (e.g., eco maps, genograms, mobility mapping, etc.)?
- How might an organization design their program to engage young fathers?

Incarcerated Fathers

Approximately 7.4 million children have a parent in prison, in jail, or under correctional supervision.

(Herman-Stahl, Kan, & McKay, 2008)

Factors Influencing Outcomes for Children with Incarcerated Parents



Source: Brito, N., Barr, R., Rodriguez, J., & Shauffer, C. (2012). *Developing an effective intervention for incarcerated teen fathers. Zero to Three*. Retrieved from <http://elp.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Britoetal2012ZTT.pdf>

Daniel Beaty's "Knock, Knock"

<https://youtu.be/LxpO9KkRkGg>

Daniel Beaty's "Knock, Knock" (cont.)

- What are some feelings you took away from this spoken word piece?
- What messages do you take away from the spoken word piece?

The Baby Elmo Program

- A parenting and structured visitation programs, aims to form and maintain bonds between children and their incarcerated teen fathers.
- Taught and supervised by probation staff in juvenile detention facilities.
- Based on building a relationship between the teen and his child, rather than on increasing the teen's abstract parenting knowledge.
- Fosters hands-on learning and increases the opportunity for contact between these young fathers and their children.

Discussion Question

What are some strategies that can be implemented to support incarcerated fathers?

Strategies to Engage Fathers While Incarcerated



Department of
Social Services

Human Resources Administration
Department of Homeless Services

Office of Child
Support Enforcement

Strategies to Engage Fathers Transitioning to the Community

- Work with the social worker that is employed by the jail, prison, and half-way house.
- Connect with the social worker before the transition period to discuss preparation for discharge.
- Offer your support and knowledge about resources.
- Consider employment, vocational, and educational opportunities, because these are often a father's first goals. Employment and vocational opportunities may be limited for a father with a criminal record, but they do exist.
- Consider being an advocate for that child and continue to promote the successful relationship rebuilding between the child and the father.

Calvin's Digital Story

<https://youtu.be/05bJ0sXY-yc>

Calvin's Digital Story (cont.)

- How does Calvin view his role of father?
- What are some strengths Calvin presents in his story?
- What combination of services was Calvin involved in when he transitioned into the community?
- How have these services assisted him in his re-entry?

Small Group Activity- Project Design Exercise