


# 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 Services

**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



## 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)

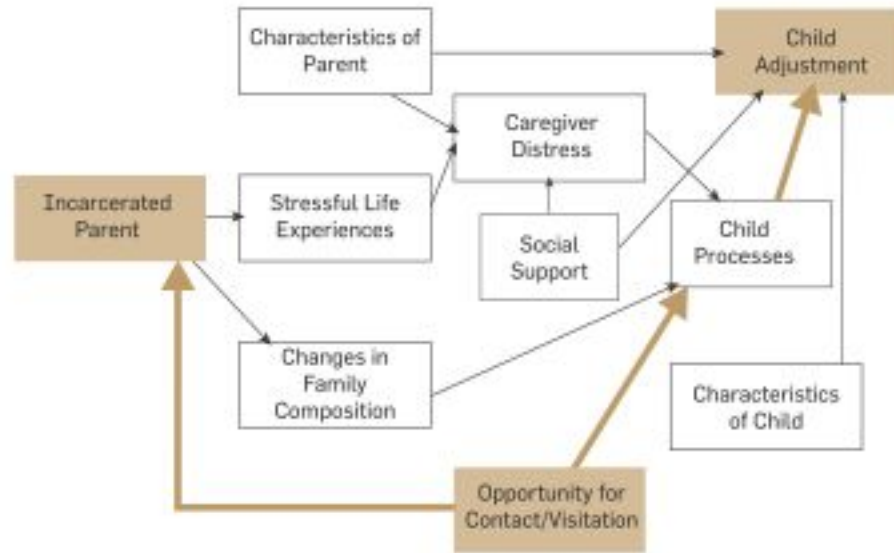


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# Factors Influencing Outcomes for Children with Incarcerated Parents



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"



## 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?



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# Strategies to Engage Fathers While Incarcerated



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# 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



## 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



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