


Silberman School of Social Work



Module Six

Engaging Fathers Involved in the Child Welfare System



**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 impact of father involvement on safety, permanency, and well-being
- Identify strategies child welfare systems can use to engage fathers
- Describe engagement techniques to involve fathers in the child welfare system

Guided Group Discussion

- What were your overall reactions to this story?
- If you were in his position, what would be your perceptions of the child welfare system?
- How did he utilize informal supports to get custody of his son?
- If you were working with Carlos at the beginning of his journey in child welfare, how would engage him?
- How does this digital story relate to the readings for this module? What are some commonalities? What are some differences based on the readings?

Group Discussion

- What were your overall reactions to this story?
- If you were in his position, what would be your perceptions of the child welfare system?
- How did he utilize informal supports to get custody of his son?
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Child Welfare and Fatherhood

- Historically, child welfare services have been primarily focused on mothers.
- Over the past decade, increased interest and attention paid to fathers, their contributions to family stability, and their impact on healthy development of their children.
- Focus has grown to include the identification, location, and involvement of fathers.
- Many of the children served by child welfare agencies have nonresident fathers.



Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 (ASFA)

- Renewed focus on expediting permanency for children in out-of-home placement
- Increased focus on fathers
- Set forth the principles of safety, permanency, and well-being

Fostering Connections (2008)

Four activities highlighted that can bring fathers and paternal kin together:

- Kinship navigator programs
- Intensive family finding efforts,
- Family group decision making meetings
- Residential family treatment programs



Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSR) Goals

1. Ensure conformity with federal child welfare requirements
2. Determine what is actually happening to children and families as they are engaged in child welfare services
3. Assist states in helping children and families achieve positive outcomes



Possible Explanations for Service Gaps

- The extra workload required of caseworkers to involve two parents who may not be cohabiting
- Perception that fathers are not interested in being involved
- Lack of resources for fathers who request services and supports

Importance of Father Involvement in Achieving Positive Child Welfare Outcomes



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Barriers for Fathers in the Child Welfare System

- Historical view of the mother as the primary parent
- Lack of quality data to inform policy and practice
- Female orientation of the child welfare system
- Personal issues
- Familial issues
- Societal factors
- Ineffective child welfare agency practices and policies

Young Fathers in the System

- Foster youth themselves
- Those exiting out of foster care
- Those whose children are in foster care



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Unique Challenges Faced by Young Fathers

- Lack of attention to the dual roles and needs of young fathers who are simultaneously navigating a transition to adulthood while learning to parent
- Invisibility of young fathers in child welfare systems and the dearth of opportunities for them to support the well-being of their children and families;
- Lack of data on the characteristics and needs of young fathers; and
- Lack of cross-system collaboration among the education, juvenile/criminal justice, early childhood education (ECE), child support enforcement, health care, homeless services, housing and mental health systems to support young fathers and their families.

Policy Recommendations

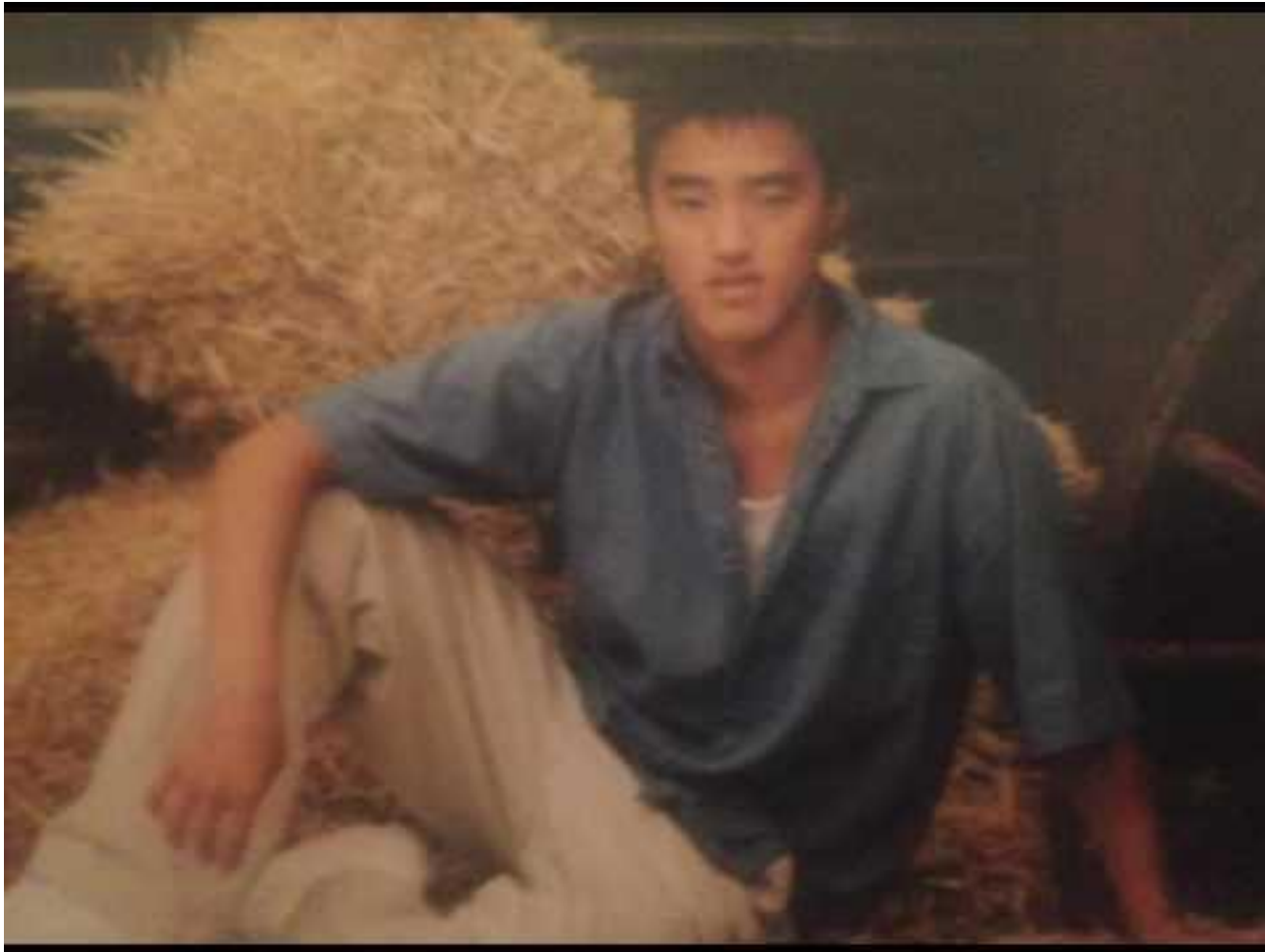


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Robby's Digital Story



Robby's Digital Story (cont.)

- How does Robby's journey through two foster care systems impact how he experiences the world?
- What are some key events in Robby's life that he identifies as having a great impact on him?
- What are some of the images that stood out for you?
- What can the child welfare system learn from Robby's story?
- What does the child welfare system have to do differently to prepare young people as they transition into adulthood?
- How might these life experiences impact how he has approached fatherhood?



Child Welfare Systems Engagement



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Father Friendly Check Up- Seven Categories

1. Leadership and organization philosophy
2. Program management policies and procedures
3. Parent-involvement program
4. Program physical environment
5. Staff training and professional development
6. Collaboration and organizational networking
7. Community outreach

Group Discussion

- How has the child welfare community addressed these seven categories?
- Which categories has the child welfare community shown the greatest development? Give examples
- Which categories still need further development?



Six Principles of Partnership

1. Everyone desires respect
2. Partners share power
3. Everyone has strengths
4. Everyone needs to be heard
5. Judgments can wait
6. Partnership is a process



Approaches to Engaging Non-resident Fathers



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Challenges in Working with Non-Resident Fathers

- Anger
- Co-parenting and parental conflict
- Working with culturally diverse families



Engagement Strategies



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Case Scenarios

- a) Review the scenarios assigned to your group.
- b) Identify the strengths noted based upon what you have read.
- c) Identify the father's needs...look beyond the surface.
- d) Identify how to respond to the father's concerns based on his strengths and needs.

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