


# Silberman School of Social Work



## Module Seven

### Engaging Fathers in Various Social Services and Systems



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 principles of strengths-based practice
- Explain the three elements of assessment
- Describe the various services and systems that work with fathers.
- Apply the strengths-based approach to assessment and planning with fathers.

# Strengths-based Assessment

“Strengths-based practice involves a shift from a deficit approach, which emphasizes problems and pathology, to a positive partnership with the family. The approach acknowledges each child and family's unique set of strengths and challenges, and engages the family as a partner in developing and implementing the service plan.”

(National Technical Assistance and Evaluation Center for Systems of Care, 2008)

# Principles of the Strengths Perspective

1. Every individual, group, family, and community has strengths.
2. Trauma and abuse, illness and struggle, may be injurious but they may also be sources of challenge and opportunity.
3. Assume that you do not know the upper limits of the capacity to grow and change. Take individual, group, and community aspirations seriously.
4. We best serve clients by collaborating with them.
5. Every environment is full of resources.
6. Caring, caretaking, and context.

# Discussion Questions

- If you practiced using a strengths-based perspective with clients you have worked with, how would your work be different?
- What additional skills would you need in order to work from this perspective?

# Three Elements of Assessment

1. Information Gathering
2. Analysis
3. Decision Making

Write down three questions typical of an initial interview with a father

# Areas for Assessment with Fathers



# Strategies for Involving Fathers in Services

- Fathers should be actively involved in setting goals and encouraged to express their concerns or questions about services.
- Create and provide services to meet the individualized needs of the father and/or paternal family.
- Services must be accessible to working fathers.
- If they are used, father support groups should address issues such as empowering men to take an active role in parenting, emotional issues, child development, and developing key skills such as active listening, anger management, positive discipline, and basic parenting techniques.

# Brian's Digital Story

<https://youtu.be/n6DwTimV8fM>

# Brian's Digital Story (cont.)

How can Brian's story be used to engage fathers  
in services?

# Responsible Fathering

“Responsible fathering means taking responsibility for a child’s intellectual, emotional, and financial well-being. This requires being present in a child’s life, actively contributing to a child’s healthy development, sharing economic responsibilities, and cooperating with a child’s mother in addressing the full range of a child’s and family’s needs.”

Source: The White House. (2012). *Promoting responsible fatherhood*. Washington, D.C.

# Goals of Responsible Fatherhood Programs

Improving men's:

1. Positive parenting skills and father involvement
2. Relationship with the mothers of their children
3. Economic self-sufficiency and financial support of their children

# Responsible Fatherhood Activities

1. Activities to promote marriage or sustain marriage through activities
2. Activities to promote responsible parenting
3. Activities to foster economic stability
4. Activities to promote responsible fatherhood that are conducted through a national clearinghouse that provides access to curricula, webinars, research products, and other resources to improve the implementation and success of responsible fatherhood programs

# Positive Parenting Skills and Father Involvement

Programs supporting this goal include services such as:

- Fatherhood peer support classes
- Parenting skills mentoring
- Individual life-skills mentoring

# Relationship with the Mothers of their Children

Ultimate goal of healthy relationship programs is to improve the family's relationship in order to ensure the social/emotional security of children through:

- strengthening co-parenting or cooperative parenting;
- alleviating the children's exposure to parental conflict;
- experiencing a father's increased willingness to engage in family life and parent the child;
- seeing improvements in the quality of parenting by the mother or father due to a better climate in the home



# Domestic Violence/Intimate Partner Violence

- Children exposed to IPV may experience:
- difficulties with attachment
- regressive behaviors
- anxiety
- depression
- aggression
- problems sleeping and eating
- low-self- esteem
- poor school performance
- poor family and peer relationships.
- negative beliefs about family roles
- negative impact on their later ability to partner and parent

# Father's Economic Self-Sufficiency

## Employment Services:

- Financial security and employment stability have important implications for their individual well-being, as well as for their children and families as a whole.
- Unemployment, job insecurity, and financial hardships are associated with poorer physical and mental health outcomes for fathers.
- Level and quality of fathers' involvement with their children, in addition to direct and indirect effects on their children's well-being, is also affected.

# Difficulties in Completing Fatherhood Programs

- Scheduling conflicts with work or school
- Lack of transportation, or child care
- Unstable living situations
- Current or past involvement with the criminal justice system and/or illicit employment (“hustling”)
- Substance use and/or mental health problems
- Limited English proficiency
- Mistrust of authority figures and/or skepticism about the program

# Programs for Formally Incarcerated Fathers

- Approximately 52% of state inmates and 63% of federal inmates in the U.S. have a child under the age of eighteen.
- Over the past two years, the Department of Labor has also awarded \$32.2 million through twenty-eight individual grants to nonprofit faith-based and community-based organizations under the Reintegration of Ex-Offenders Adult program.

# Dhavon's Digital Story

<https://youtu.be/7HLROCjs9xA>

## Dhavon's Digital Story (cont.)

- What does fatherhood mean to Dhavon?
- How has Dhavon dealt with issue of coparenting?
- How has the UPNEXT program helped Dhavon?
- What message did you take away from Dhavon's story?

# Andrew's Digital Story

<https://youtu.be/Cg05ZUH2heQ>

## Andrew's Digital Story (cont.)

- What does fatherhood mean to Andrew?
- What event defines Andrew as a father?
- How does Andrew's relationship with his father influence his relationship with his son?
- How has staff engaged Andrew in services?
- What has Andrew gained as part of the UPNEXT program?



# Maternal and Child Health/Head Start/Healthy Start

# Yahnick's Digital Story

<https://youtu.be/8w5GECWg6ck>

## Yahnick's Digital Story (cont.)

- How does Yahnick give back to his community?
- How did having strong male role models influence Yahnick?
- How does Yahnick's story differ from those we have viewed throughout this course?

# Marvin's Digital Story

[https://youtu.be/fzY\\_20SxU7k](https://youtu.be/fzY_20SxU7k)

## Marvin's Digital Story (cont.)

- Marvin describes his father as a “rolling stone.” How did his relationship with father affect how he defines fatherhood?
- How did Marvin's experience as a stay at home dad influence his relationships with his four children?

# K'von's Digital Story

<https://youtu.be/jkFo6ysVXBk>

## K'von's Digital Story (cont.)

- How would you engage K'von using a strengths-based assessment process?
- What areas would you explore with him during the initial assessment?
- What types of questions would you ask?
- What types of services, supports and/or opportunities would you discuss with K'von?