

MODULE SEVEN: Engaging Fathers in Various Social Services and Systems

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

Time: 4 hours

Materials:

Digital Stories:

Brian: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n6DwTimV8fM>

Dhavon: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7HLROCjs9xA>

Andrew: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CgO5ZUH2heQ>

Yahnick: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8w5GECWg6ck>

Marvin: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fzY_20SxU7k

K'von: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jkFo6ysVXBk>

PowerPoint

Recommended Textbook:

Cabrera, N.J., & Tamis-LeMonda, C.S. (Eds). (2013). *Handbook of father involvement: Multidisciplinary perspectives 2nd Edition*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Supplemental Resource:

Mazza, C., & Perry, A.R. (Eds.). (2017). *Fatherhood in America: Social work perspectives on a changing society*. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas.

Readings:

Karber, E., Aldoney, D., & Cabrera, N. (2017). Fatherhood in America: The context, practice, and gaps in responsible fatherhood programs. In

	<p>Mazza, C. & Perry, A.R. (Eds.), <i>Fatherhood in America: Social work perspectives on a changing society</i>. (pp. 302-341). Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas.</p>
<p>Strengths-based Assessment</p>	<p>Throughout this course, we have looked at different strategies for engaging fathers, which is the beginning of the helping process. The second step is the assessment process. The philosophical approach to fatherhood practice is important when conducting an assessment and helping connect fathers to services and systems.</p> <p>Introduce the concept of strengths based practice by presenting the following definition (National Technical Assistance and Evaluation Center for Systems of Care, 2008):</p> <p><i>“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.”</i></p> <p>Note that this differs significantly from an approach that is based on the premise of identifying problems to be fixed, things that are wrong, gaps in skills, things that have to change, etc.</p> <p>According to Saleebey (2005), practicing from a strengths perspective means that everything done as a helper will be based on facilitating the discovery, exploration, and use of clients’ strengths and resources in service of helping them achieve their goals and fulfill their potential.</p> <p>The Principles of the Strengths Perspective are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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.

Pose the following discussion questions to students:

- 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?

Review assessment as a continuous process of information gathering and analysis for the purpose of maximizing the strengths of an individual, while minimizing their challenges. A good assessment will assist in making decisions about the need for change and the actions that will take place promote it. The nature of the decision to be made inform the types of information to be gathered, the methods used to gather it, and the process used to analyze it.

The three elements of assessment are:

1. **Information Gathering:** The element of assessment considers underlying conditions (perceptions, beliefs, values, emotions, capability, self-concept, experience, development, family system, and culture) and contributing factors (mental illness, substance abuse, domestic violence, developmental disabilities, physical impairment, inadequate housing, environment which includes inadequate income and social isolation) that influence an individual's strengths and needs.
2. **Analysis:** The essential review of underlying conditions and contributing factors provides the general framework. These two elements influence an individual's strengths and needs and impact upon the strategy or intervention chosen.
3. **Decision Making:** The strategy of choice is dependent upon ascertaining what needs are being met by the present state of functioning as well as the individual's view and feelings of her/his issue or situation.

When conducting assessments with fathers, the process must be multi-dimensional. Assessment is a process that is conducted "with" fathers and should not be viewed as something done "to" them.

**Areas for
Assessment with
Fathers**

Ask students to write down three questions that are typical of an initial interview with a father. They can choose the context; child welfare, employment, child support, parenting, etc. Ask them to hold these questions for a few minutes.

Discuss with the class that when conducting the initial strengths- based assessment with fathers, there are various areas that should be assessed and/or taken into account. These include:

- Strengths, needs, resources/assets, and supports evident in the lives of the father and the paternal family, as well as services and supports needed by the father
- Fathers' parenting capacity
- Circumstances surrounding becoming a father
- Access to services for employment, social support networks, involvement with their children
- Histories with incarceration, mental illness or fears of intimacy
- Access parenting resources
- Co-parenting expectations
- Explore the father's and the paternal family's willingness and ability to contribute to the well-being of the child

For non-resident fathers:

- Physical separation limits interaction with children
- Presence of other adults involved with child

Assessments should be aimed at taking a pragmatic perspective to facilitate fathers' ability to make contributions to their children's growth and development within the context of their strengths, resources and limitations. They are used as the basis of case planning and interventions.

Assessment is contextual based on the fathers' circumstances (e.g. formally incarcerated, foster care, DV/IPV, child support, substance abuse). This context is essential in tailoring and accessing programs specific to fathers' individual needs. There are a variety of programs available to fathers based that address their specific needs.

Ask the students to share their three questions with a partner. Ask the pairs to make any modifications to their questions based on the

	<p>discussion. Ask for volunteers to share their questions.</p> <p>Throughout the assessment, planning, and intervention processes, these are some strategies for involving fathers in services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.
<p>Digital Story—Brian</p>	<p>Brian’s digital story offers advice to other fathers. Pose the following question to students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can Brian’s story be used to engage fathers in services? <p>We are now going to review the range of services available to fathers under the larger heading of “Responsible Fatherhood Programs”.</p>
<p>Responsible Fatherhood Programs</p>	<p>Review the definition of “responsible fathering” (The White House, 2012):</p> <p><i>“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.”</i></p> <p>The Claims Resolution Act of 2010 specifies three Responsible Fatherhood goals that federally funded programs must target (The White House, 2012). These include improving men’s:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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

Review the following Responsible Fatherhood Activities (Solomon-Fears, 2016):

Under federal law, responsible fatherhood activities are specified as the following four activities:

(1) Activities to promote marriage or sustain marriage through activities, such as:

- Providing information about the benefits of marriage and two-parent involvement for children
- Enhancing relationship skills
- Education regarding how to control aggressive behavior
- Disseminating information on the causes of domestic violence and child abuse
- Marriage preparation programs and premarital counseling
- Skills-based marriage education
- Financial planning seminars
- Divorce education and reduction programs, including mediation and counseling

(2) Activities to promote responsible parenting, such as:

- Counseling, mentoring, and mediation
- Disseminating information about good parenting practices
- Teaching parenting skills
- Encouraging child support payments

(3) Activities to foster economic stability, such as:

- Helping fathers improve their economic status by providing job training, employment services, and career-advancing education
- Coordination with existing employment services (e.g. welfare-to-work programs, referrals to local employment training initiatives)

(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

These activities to support responsible fatherhood are provided by both community-based, faith-based and formal organizations.

Programs supporting the goal of positive parenting skills and father involvement include services such as:

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

Some examples of published parenting curricula used to achieve Administration of Children and Families (ACF) goals are:

- 24/7 Dad
- Doctor Dad
- The Nurturing Fathers Program
- The Responsible Fatherhood Curriculum

Local program example:

New York City Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) Fatherhood Initiative:

Since 2002, DYCD has been committed to enhancing children's development through programs that encourage fathers to become personally involved with their children and relate to their co-parents. DYCD's Fatherhood Initiative helps fathers reconnect with their children and develop essential parenting skills by helping each participant (1) increase engagement and responsibility in his relationship with his child/children; and (2) provide material and financial support to his child/children. DYCD's program is informed by studies that show that children with involved fathers are less likely to get into trouble at home, school, or in the neighborhood, and that an active and nurturing style of fathering is associated with better verbal skills for infants, greater patience for toddlers, and better intellectual functioning and academic achievement among adolescents. Children with involved fathers are more likely to exhibit self-control and pro-social behavior.

The circumstances confronting non-custodial fathers must be addressed in order for them to establish positive, healthy, supportive relationships with their children. These can include: reconciling the roles of adolescence and fatherhood; surmounting challenges such as unemployment or homelessness; and addressing difficulties resulting from absence due to incarceration and reentry. To do this, DYCD has three program options to address the particular needs of the target

populations: young fathers aged 16 – 24 years; fathers aged over 24 years, and fathers with prior involvement in the criminal justice system. Programs help fathers by providing them and their children with up to six months of case management, with follow-up services as needed for up to one year, and service plans that address five core areas: parenting skills development, effective co-parenting with the child’s guardian; employment/education; child support; child visitation/placement.

Key services provided by program

- parenting skills classes
- individual and family counseling
- assistance with child support and arranging child visitation
- mediation and conflict resolution training
- employment counseling and referrals; HSE and ESOL referrals
- father-to-father mentoring

DYCD’s Fatherhood Initiative partners with the citywide fatherhood collaborative NYC DADS, and for the past several years has coordinated Dads Take Your Child to School Day, Mother’s Day Recognition, and Father’s Day events.

The following organizations were awarded contracts under this program from July 1, 2017 – June 30, 2020:

- The Fortune Society, Inc.
- Friends of Island Academy
- SCO Family of Services
- United Activities Unlimited, Inc.
- Brooklyn Bureau of Community Services
- Fund for the City of New York
- Forestdale, Inc.
- Leake and Watts Services, Inc.

Relationship with the mothers of their children

Healthy Relationship Programs

Healthy relationship programs work on helping couples or former partners become more proficient at communicating, managing conflict, and being supportive of one another. The ultimate goal 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

Co-parenting relationships for both resident and non-resident fathers, in particular, are critical to child functioning, parent-child relationships, and interparental relationships. For non-resident fathers, the relationship that they have with their children’s mothers is especially important for cooperation in gaining access to their children.

Domestic Violence/Intimate Partner Violence

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is a widespread problem that should be considered when discussing fatherhood programs. Research indicates that IPV is especially prevalent in the low-income populations served by fatherhood programs, with a significant number of men having engaged in IPV at some point in their lives. Evidence suggests that men who have engaged in IPV may have significant parenting difficulties, including displaying hostile-coercive parenting behaviors.

Fatherhood programs offer an excellent opportunity to educate fathers about the negative consequences of IPV on children. 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

IPV may contribute to incarceration, loss of employment, and separation from children— issues that fatherhood programs are

<p>Father's Economic Self-Sufficiency</p>	<p>attempting to address.</p> <p><u>Local program examples:</u></p> <p><i>Forestdale, Inc.</i> Forestdale receives funding through the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development's Fathering Initiative and provides a 12-week course to help noncustodial fathers strengthen bonds with their children and improve their parenting skills. The organization also addresses domestic violence prevention and offers job training and placement. Separate classes are offered for single fathers aged 16 to 24.</p>
	<p>An array of supports to promote and encourage fathers' economic self-sufficiency range from job training and job placement to GED classes and classes in various subject matters.</p> <p>Employment Services</p> <p>For fathers, 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. The 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.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fathers may experience adverse effects to their mental health (i.e. high levels of stress, feelings of hopelessness, low self-esteem, and depression) • These circumstances can also negatively impact fathers' physical health (i.e. higher body mass index, decreases in exercise and the consumption of healthy foods, and higher rates of smoking) <p>Long-term unemployment, job insecurity, or financial distress can further exacerbate these issues. Even fathers who are employed can experience psychological distress from conditions such as job insecurity.</p>

Employment is a key outcome for virtually all father self-sufficiency programs. These types of programs aim to help unemployed fathers obtain part- or full-time jobs or to assist employed fathers with obtaining better, higher paying, more stable jobs. For teen fathers, these programs have the potential to improve their lives, child support compliance, father involvement, and child well-being.

Fatherhood programs often have difficulty recruiting unemployed and underemployed fathers and have moderate to high attrition rates. Some reasons that fathers are reluctant to start or have difficulty completing fatherhood programs include:

- 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

Local program examples:

The CUNY Fatherhood Academy:

Launched in 2012 at LaGuardia Community College, CFA is now also offered at Hostos Community College and Kingsborough Community College. CFA is funded by New York City Young Men’s Initiative, with oversight from the New York City Center for Economic Opportunity (CEO).

CFA’s central focus is to help young fathers prepare for and enroll into college with the understanding that earning a college degree is the most effective path toward providing long-term economic sustainability for themselves and their families. The program is targeted to serve Black and Latino fathers, 18–28 years old, from throughout New York City. Increasing familial engagement, attaining a High School Equivalency (HSE) diploma, and acquiring gainful employment are all essential goals for the participants enrolled in the CFA.

Participants seek to improve their employment and educational

prospects, become better and more engaged parents, and provide increased emotional and financial support to their families. Those without a high school degree pursue a High School Equivalency (HSE) diploma in the program, while those with a degree prepare to enter college. All participants gain work experience through part-time employment or internships, and learn about effective parenting, financial literacy, and how to cultivate healthy relationships.

STRIVE

Strong Fathers, Stronger Families

Strong Fathers, Stronger Families is a program designed to help parents (male and female) by providing them with training, supportive services, and individual assistance in achieving economic stability, gaining employment, and empowering them to become self-sufficient and responsible role models for their children. To effectively address the needs of the families we serve, they have recently expanded their free services to include:

- Employment/Job Readiness/Retention Services
- Parenting Education & Healthy Relationship Workshops
- Monthly Family Engagement Activities
- Financial Literacy Education
- Housing Assistance
- Health Insurance & SNAP Benefits Screening/Enrollment
- Men's Health & Nutritional Workshops
- Child Support Assistance/Advocacy
- Child Care Assistance
- Certified Occupational Skills Training (CDL, Security Guard, Food Handling, Master Barber, HHA, CNA, OSHA 10 and more)
- Legal Assistance/Resources
- Peer Mentorship
- Transportation Assistance
- Career Development
- Father2Father Alumni Association

Structured Employment Economic Development Corporation (SEEDCO)- Strong Fathers, Stronger Families program

SEEDCO was awarded a federal grant from the Office of Family Assistance in September 2015 to continue the *Strong Fathers, Stronger Families* program, which helps low-income fathers in New

Programs for formally incarcerated fathers

York City with job preparation, placement assistance, and career advancement while supporting them in the process of building stronger, more meaningful relationships with their children, co-parents, and partners. Direct services are provided by partners at BronxWorks and STRIVE.

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. The purpose of these grants is to provide an employment-centered approach to reintegration. Services include job training and employment preparation, mentoring, and connections to support services such as housing, substance abuse, and mental health programs.

Program examples:

The Osborne Association: awarded a federal grant from the Office of Family Assistance in September 2015 to help previously incarcerated fathers and other justice-involved fathers rebuild ties with their children. The Fatherhood Initiative includes a range of services, including individual and family counseling, co-parenting skills development, legal assistance, peer counseling, GED classes, and classes on financial literacy.

Working Parents Program Osborne Foundation:

<http://www.osborneny.org/programs.cfm?programID=38>

The Fortune Society: provides parenting and employment services for previously incarcerated fathers at various community locations. The I-CAN (Individualized Corrections Achievement Network) program helps currently incarcerated men and women prepare for reentry by providing parenting classes, group counseling, professional development courses, continuing education, and relapse prevention workshops. Funding is received through the New York Department of Youth and Community Development's Fathering Initiative.

UPNEXT- Center for Court Innovation: a job training and family engagement program for unemployed men and/or non-custodial

<p>Digital Story— Dhavon or Andrew</p>	<p>fathers. The program provides tools, training, and resources for participants to successfully compete in today’s job market and connect with their families. There is a six-week UPNEXT program; job support fellowship and transitional work programs are also available. The UPNEXT Fellowship Program offers real-world work experience while supporting participants’ job search for an additional six weeks. The UPNEXT Transitional Work Program offers employment opportunities for three to six months to job ready participants through a partnership with the Times Square Alliance. The program served 176 people in 2014, offering intensive case management, counseling, job development assistance, and support connecting with their children.</p> <p>These two stories were made at UPNEXT. Show either Dhavon or Andrew’s story and use the following questions to promote discussion:</p> <p>Dhavon:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does fatherhood mean to Dhavon? • How has Dhavon dealt with issues of coparenting? • How has the UPNEXT program helped Dhavon? • What message did you take away from Dhavon’s story? <p>Andrew:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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?
<p>Maternal and child health/Head Start/Healthy Start</p>	<p>Efforts to support maternal and child health by engaging fathers in programs and initiatives such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding to States and Tribes for the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) Program, aimed at improving health and development outcomes for at-risk children through evidence-based home visiting programs. Fathers are included in the MIECHV program and state grantees are pursuing efforts to appropriately engage fathers specifically in their MIECHV home visiting programs.

- The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children’s (WIC) Fathers Supporting Breastfeeding Initiative provides educational messages about the advantages of breastfeeding. By supporting breastfeeding, some fathers can play a critical role in promoting the healthy development of their children and in strengthening family bonds. Fathers also allowed receiving nutrition education, counseling, and referral services on behalf of their children through WIC program.
- Head Start: In an effort to encourage fathers to shift their thinking and the way they interact with their children must be supported by the communities in which they live, the Office of Head Start promotes responsible fatherhood under the Obama Administration. Since its inception, the Office of Head Start has sought ways to provide education, guidance, and support for communities recommending best practice strategies to support responsible fathering efforts.

Local program example:

Brooklyn Breastfeeding Empowerment Zone (BFEZ): is a community-based initiative to make breastfeeding the norm North/Central Brooklyn and a program of New York City’s Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. The BFEZ workshop educates our participants on the importance of breastfeeding and its impact on the health and development of infants. Male partners play a critical role in infant feeding decision-making. By providing opportunities for peer-to-peer mentoring, the BFEZ helps males in the community take an active role in creating a breastfeeding-friendly environment for families.

**Digital Story—
Yahnick**

Yahnick’s story was made at the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene – Brooklyn Office and use the following questions to promote discussion:

- 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?

**Digital Story—
Marvin**

Marvin’s story was made at the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene – Brooklyn Office and use following questions to promote

<p>Digital Story: K’von and small group discussion</p>	<p>discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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? <p>Show K’von’s digital story and use the following discussion questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 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?
<p>Overview of Module Eight</p> <p>An Overview of Child Support</p>	<p>New York City Human Resources Administration. (2015). <i>Office of Child Support Enforcement annual report: 2015</i>. New York, NY. Retrieved from https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/hra/downloads/pdf/services/child_support/ocse_annual_report.pdf</p> <p>Sorensen, E. (2016). <i>The story behind the numbers: The child support program is a good investment</i>. Office of Child Support Enforcement, Administration for Children & Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved from https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/programs/css/sbtn_csp_is_a_good_investment.pdf</p> <p><u>References:</u></p> <p>Bronte-Tinkew, J., Carrano, J., Ericson, S., & Mbwama, K. (2009). <i>Promising practices in self-sufficiency & employment programs for fathers: Evidence-based and evidence-informed research findings</i>. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Family Assistance. Germantown, MD: National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse.</p> <p>Bronte-Tinkew, J., Horowitz, A., & Metz, A. (n.d.). <i>“What works” in fatherhood programs? Ten lessons from evidence-based practice</i>. U.S.</p>

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