What About Dad?
A Training for Human Service Providers to Effectively Engage Non-Resident Fathers
This one-day training is designed to provide managers, frontline workers, and volunteers with knowledge to develop and deliver services that will effectively engage fathers and men.

Mainstream human service and family strengthening programs are typically targeted to mothers, and as such, their content and delivery are often not sufficiently responsive to fathers’ specific experiences and needs.
THIS TRAINING WILL HELP PARTICIPANTS:

Recognize their own biases and presumptions about men and fathers;

Better comprehend the cultural and emotional needs of men and what it means to “be a man” in today’s culture;

Understand the benefits and overcome the barriers to engaging non-resident fathers and men; and

Develop practical approaches to delivering trauma-informed and male and father-inclusive services.

CURRICULUM AUTHORS:

Stacey Bouchet, Ph.D. and
Kenneth Braswell, Fathers Incorporated

1 Curriculum content has been adapted from various research and Social Worker Training Curriculum: Engaging the Non-Resident Father, The National Quality Improvement Center on Non-Resident Fathers and the Child Welfare System (QIC-NRF) - 09/2015
Federal government support to families seen as the “deserving poor” began in 1935 with a focus on destitute widows with children. As support categories expanded, the question about who is “deserving” has underwritten every social welfare policy debate, overtly or not. That question became racialized and gendered when Black women began to access welfare benefits in the 1960s. The uptake of AFDC benefits reached its peak in the early 1970s and declined steadily thereafter, in an era when minority presence on the AFDC rolls and nonmarital births steadily increased. 

The mid-1970s produced a watershed moment for family policy. Efforts to target noncustodial parents crystallized in 1974 with the creation of the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement. While 1974 is the year when federal child support enforcement efforts got underway, it also was the year when the earnings of most less-educated workers began to decline, reducing their capacity to pay child support. By the 1980s and 1990s, the welfare system was under constant attack. Public views about welfare programs were increasingly being formed by public views about welfare recipients, and the language around welfare recipients was decidedly race-coded. Terms like “urban poverty” and “underclass,” along with images like “welfare queen” or “gang member” served simultaneously to demonize African Americans and undermine public support for welfare programs for all low-income families. Within this imagery, lower-income and out-of-work Black and Brown young men and fathers were framed as predators and “dead-beat dads.” Further, some viewed federal safety net programs as incentivizing non-marital births.

In 1996, then President Bill Clinton ended “welfare as we know it” with an unprecedented overhaul. The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA), or “welfare reform,” enforced time limits, sanctions, and employment requirements on recipients and brought fathers to the forefront in several respects: through streamlined paternity establishment, stronger child support provisions, marriage promotion, and the declared desirability of two-parent families. Its emphasis was as much about child support reform as it was about reform of the cash benefit (welfare). Both provisions got stricter. Work supports were more readily available for mothers to leave welfare than for fathers to move into work. Still, the Responsible Fatherhood movement pushed against the stereotype of “deadbeat dads” to advocate that employment support was needed for those “dead broke dads” who were without the means to pay child support. PRWORA ended the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) entitlement program, and established the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) block grant. It put time limits on receipt of welfare, raised requirements for work, and enforced a family cap. Since paternity establishment was a hallmark of the 1996 reforms, more Black (and other low-income) fathers were being drawn into the child support enforcement system. but because their earnings had been declining since the mid 1970’s, they had limited capacity to pay.
Fatherhood movement begins to emerge with primarily local grassroots services and advocacy led by African-American men.

Public concern over father absence is growing along with increases in divorce, single motherhood, and welfare receipt. Researchers noted the need for studies looking at the effects of father absence.

Creation of the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement

Family Support Act is the first federal legislation linking employment and training services to child support obligations, launched national demonstrations to test policy and practice, and emphasized paternity establishment.

Moynihan Report

Al and Tipper Gore host first Family Re-Union Conference

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA), or "welfare reform" includes promotion healthy marriage as a key anti-poverty strategy.

National philanthropies begin investments to develop national responsible fatherhood founding organizations.

Deficit Reduction Act created the first federally funded discretionary grant program to fund responsible fatherhood organizations at the local level passes.

White House Faith Based and Community Initiatives Office expands the field funding faith and community-based organizations (FBCOs) to meet the needs of families.

Claims Resolution Act expands funding for responsible fatherhood discretionary grants passes.

President Obama creates White House Task Force for Fatherhood and Healthy Families.

President Obama announces My Brother's Keeper Initiative.

Fathers Incorporated – What About Dad?
Traditionally, public policies often ignored or discouraged men’s direct participation with their families. Welfare and child support policies, combined with poor job prospects and low levels of human capital, left many men feeling alienated from their fatherly roles. Most family policy was mother- and child-focused. In the case of welfare and child support, the State had often filled the provider role for unwed mothers through temporary cash assistance and child support collection and enforcement. These systems presumed a father’s absence and then functioned in ways that discouraged or penalized fathers’ visibility and engagement. A focus on fathers was limited to paternity establishment and child support payment to the child support agency rather than directly to the family.

Alongside the foregoing forces, by the late 1980s, advocacy for fathers had begun to emerge. The Responsible Fatherhood movement, whose leadership included African American men, was the result of this advocacy. In the mid-1990s, responsible fatherhood began developing into a true field, with the founding of organizations such as the Institute for Responsible Fatherhood and Family Revitalization, The National Partnership for Community Leadership, The National Practitioners Network for Fathers and Families, National Fatherhood Initiative (NFI), The Fathers and Families Coalition of America, and with financial support for fatherhood work from foundations such as the Ford Foundation, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation.

The bipartisan group within the Responsible Fatherhood movement forged a common ground agreement around mutual and interlocking responsibility. The agreement was that men be required, encouraged, and enabled to accept the responsibility to contribute to the social, emotional, and economic well-being of their children, regardless of whether those fathers lived in the same home as the children. The first step in that process is paternity declaration, after which they agreed that men should receive the services and supports needed to be successful fathers. Those supports crystallized around jobs, relational skills, fathering skills, and child support intermediation.

As its infrastructure and capacity grew, the Responsible Fatherhood movement was instrumental in shifting the policy climate. Its research-based advocacy succeeded in reshaping images of fathers from “deadbeat dads” to the growing realization that too many dads are “dead broke” and that most fathers, even when they don’t live with their children, want to be engaged.

Armed with research documenting the devastating effects on children from father absence, policy-makers increasingly embraced actions that would address the barriers men face to helping their children do well. Also, advocates pointed to a growing body of research showing the link between father absence and the nation’s seemingly most intractable social problems — poverty, crime, and drug abuse.

Importantly, at this critical time research began to re-conceptualize the relationship between Black fathers and their children through an appreciation of father’s desire for engagement and recognition of the needs of “fragile families.”
By the time of TANF reauthorization in 2006, the impact of the Responsible Fatherhood movement was more evident. It included $150 million for each of five years (FY2006 through FY2010) for the promotion and support of responsible fatherhood and healthy marriage. The language and funding reflected the belief and growing bipartisan buy-in that responsible, involved fathering occurs most often within the context of marriage, and that marriage is the best family configuration for children.

The notion of “mutual responsibility” that guides the Responsible Fatherhood movement calls for public policy and practice to affirm and support parents’ capacity to do their family work well. Bipartisan interest in, and support for, Responsible Fatherhood at the federal level can be traced through the five most recent Presidential administrations:

- In the Reagan administration, fathers received policy attention for the first time in the 1988 Family Support Act, which linked employment and training services to child support obligations, launched national demonstrations to test policy and practice, and emphasized paternity establishment.
- Under President George H.W. Bush, the USDHHS created the Minority Male Initiative, providing grants to “address the complex set of issues that leave too many minority youth vulnerable to problems like violence, alcohol and drug use, sexually transmitted diseases, homelessness, teen-age parenthood, failure to finish school or unemployment.
- President Clinton issued an Executive Memorandum to all federal agencies to include fathers in their work. The USDHHS responded by creating the Fatherhood Initiative. As already noted, the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) sought to strengthen federal and state child support enforcement programs.
- In the administration of President George W. Bush, the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 included $150M for fatherhood, parenting, and healthy marriage programs from 2006-2010.
- President Barack Obama created the White House Task Force for Fatherhood and Healthy Families, which is conducting regional town forums around the country to highlight what dads, organizations and communities are doing to address the challenges fathers and families face.
- In addition, bipartisan Task Forces on Responsible Fatherhood work in the Senate and House ensure that fatherhood issues remain on the legislative agenda.
Bipartisan support for the work of Responsible Fatherhood can be found at the state level, too. By 1999, 98% of states had policy or programs to strengthen fathers as economic providers, and 37 states had initiatives to help prevent unwanted or unplanned early fatherhood. At least 36 states have revised their TANF eligibility rules to promote responsible fatherhood. Some of the most innovative state child support programs in the country came out of the cross fertilization provided by responsible fatherhood practitioners, who left the non-profit field to go into child support enforcement.

A growing number of corrections institutions and at least 40% of all Head Start programs have developed fatherhood programs as components of their work. Almost 100 local foundations have made Responsible Fatherhood part of their work because they recognize that their missions will not be accomplished without the active and constructive engagement of fathers.

In short, family policy has more recently sought to engage fathers and support them in their roles. Leadership has occurred at both federal and state levels for funding and regulatory change. Much has already been learned from completed demonstration projects, including the significant employment barriers faced by low-income non-custodial fathers: limited educations and employment histories, low wages from work, and histories of incarceration. Our nation’s service provisions to fathers are a critical companion to its family policy when mapping the supports needed for low-income men and family well-being.

This training is based on the premise that fathers are essential to the well-being of children. This training is based on the following Nine Father-inclusive Practice Principles:

- States have revised their TANF eligibility rules to promote responsible fatherhood
- States had initiatives to help prevent unwanted or unplanned early fatherhood
- States had policy or programs to strengthen fathers as economic providers

- 72% of states have revised their TANF eligibility rules to promote responsible fatherhood
- 74% states had initiatives to help prevent unwanted or unplanned early fatherhood
- 98% states had policy or programs to strengthen fathers as economic providers

- 40% of all Head Start programs have developed fatherhood programs as components of their work
**PRINCIPLE 1. FATHER AWARENESS**

Services develop an understanding of the role and impact of fathers including separated fathers, father figures and stepfathers. A clear vision of fathers as a social group and an understanding of different cohorts of fathers will underpin policies and practice. Organizations and services recognize the current nature of fatherhood is shaped by gender role socialization, biology and gender construction. This recognition includes the understanding that all children incorporate as part of their identity, to varying degrees, the knowledge that they have a mother and a father.

### Examples of practice implications for service providers

- Staff are able to articulate why father inclusion is important
- Fathers in the catchment area/target group of the service are identified
- The needs of groups of fathers not accessing the service are identified to assist shaping the organization’s approach to fathers
- The implications of historical patterns of fatherhood are explored including how personal, social, and economic use of power has impacted on parenting roles and patterns
- Staff are aware of different roles that fathers can play and the fluidity of roles over time among different men
- Father focused promotional material, especially visual, is utilised
- The term ‘father’ is included in service titles
- It is acknowledged that fathers have been marginalised
- Father-inclusive practice is inserted into service guidelines and protocols
- Positive stories about men and fathering are circulated
- Models or stories of fathers sharing parenting responsibility are promoted
- Include participation/access by fathers in routine data collection and statistical reporting
1. **STAFF VALUES, SKILLS, AND KNOWLEDGE OF FATHER ENGAGEMENT**

**OBJECTIVE:** To help workers examine potential thoughts, biases, values, and beliefs that they may personally bring to their work and their view of the fathers in their programs. To identify and discuss with participants the value of father involvement for programs, children, and families. Participants will be able to realign perspectives to incorporate strengths and utilize those strengths in engaging fathers.

**ACTIVITY:** Values Voting on Fatherhood

For the following questions, indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement:

A – you strongly agree
B – you agree
C – neutral
D – you disagree or
E – you strongly disagree.

1. Men should pay for the first date. _______
2. Mothers are more nurturing than fathers. _______
3. Fathers are more suited to disciplining children than mothers. _______
4. Women don’t need fathers to help them raise their children. _______
5. Too many men are creating families and then walking out the door - On to next one. _______
6. Services for children should not include fathers unless they are primary provider. _______
7. Women make it difficult for fathers to be positively involved in the lives of their children. _______
8. Fathers who aren’t paying child support should not be permitted to see their child. _______
9. Women and men working together in our families, programs, community and government is our best opportunity to improve the lives of children, families and communities. _______

**Fathers Matter: The Effects and Correlates of Father Absence**

President Obama, past administrations, and prominent public figures agree that we should have certain expectations of a man once he becomes a father:

A. Establishment of legal paternity;
B. Being physical present versus absent;
C. Being actively involved in the physical and emotional care of the child from pregnancy forward; and
D. Contributing to the financial support of the child from pregnancy forward.³

PRINCIPLE 2. RESPECT FOR FATHERS

Services engage with Fathers as partners with respect for their experience, strengths, and capacities as fathers. A systematic and integrated approach is required to include fathers and father figures in research, policy development, implementation and evaluation of services. Organizational policies, service information and advertising include specific references to and engage fathers as important participants in their families and in the lives of their children.

Examples of practice implications for service providers

- Value the relationships of fathers with their children and their partners
- Create a father-friendly environment
- Create a male presence
- Use positive images of fathers
- Address fathers by name
- Engage fathers in informal conversations focused on their children
- Provide a range of opportunities for fathers to give feedback
- Acknowledge the diversity of fathers in service training
- Acknowledge distinct and specific strengths of fathers
- Address assumptions about fathers in the internal and external community
- Inclusion of reference to fathers and families as a whole rather than only the mother-child dyad in organizational values and statements of organizational aims
Research has shown—and society is finally beginning to recognize—that children who do not have consistently engaged fathers are often deprived of economic and socio-emotional resources. Fathers play a critical role in the successful development and wellbeing of children. They provide several things in their role as parent: financial resources, a model of adult behavior, and emotional and behavioral support. So, what are the effects on children raised with low levels of father involvement or absent fathers? Fatherlessness has been correlated with many disturbing experiences for children that extend into their adulthood:  

1. Poverty  
2. Early Sexual Activity  
3. Drug and/or Alcohol Abuse  
4. Depression  
5. Suicide Attempt or Suicidal Thoughts  
6. Poor Educational Performance  
7. Behavior Problems in School  
8. Incomplete Education  
9. Use of Social Services  
10. Teen Pregnancy  
11. Unplanned Pregnancy  
12. Anger  
13. Aggression or Violence You Inflicted on Someone Else [E.g., Physical, Verbal, Emotional, Bullying]  
14. Delinquency or Breaking The Law  
15. Arrest or Incarceration  
16. Low Self-Esteem  
17. Feelings of Inadequacy  
18. Unstable Intimate Relationships  
19. Physical Abuse [E.G., Spankings to Beatings]  
20. Emotional Abuse  
21. Sexual Abuse  
22. Neglect [E.G., Left Alone for Long Periods of Time; Not Listened to, Etc.]  
23. Child Protective Services or Foster Care Placement  
24. Abuse Resulting In Serious Injury[s] that Received or should have Received Medical Treatment  
25. Feelings of Hopelessness, Particularly about Your Future  
26. Feelings of Mistrust toward Others  
27. Excessive Need to be in Control of Situations or Others  
28. Fear of Abandonment or Rejection  
29. Defensiveness  
30. Feelings of Guilt and Shame and Self-Criticalness  

Read the list above again, and circle anything on the list you have experienced as a child or an adult or that you have observed others experiencing. Is there anything you would add to the list?

---

PRINCIPLE 3. EQUITY AND ACCESS

All fathers have equal and fair access to the support provided by high quality family services regardless of income, employment status, special educational needs, or ethnic/language background. As part of service provision fathers are invited to seek equity with the other parent in their joint parenting responsibilities. Some services are for fathers alone while other targeted or universal family services include fathers as clients.

Examples of practice implications for service providers

- Address parents as ‘fathers and mothers’; replace ‘for mothers’ with ‘for parents’ or with ‘for mothers and fathers’
- Assess all aspects of service delivery to identify potential barriers to fathers’ participation
- Develop a specific service statement about the commitment to father friendly approaches and support of father-child relationships
- Recruit in the places where men are
- Incorporate initial identification of fathers into management approaches using team involvement
- Take advantage of engagement points; e.g., pickup and drop off of children
- Use men’s language and avoid professional jargon
- Advocate for more men in the service
- Seek contributions to policy from men and women who value father/child relationships
- Acknowledge that it is acceptable for fathers not to be involved
- Create a framework, establish benchmarks and set standards for father inclusion
- Explore the needs and preferences of fathers
2. SERVICE CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

OBJECTIVE: Participants will develop a deeper understanding of the benefits and barriers to engaging the non-resident fathers in their caseloads.

BRAINSTORM a list of barriers to effectively engaging fathers in your program or services:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Benefits to Children of Involved Fathers:

• Infants of highly involved fathers are more cognitively competent at 6 months
• School-aged children have better quantitative and verbal skills
• Children of involved fathers are more likely to enjoy school, have better attitudes toward school, participate in extracurricular activities, and graduate
• Children are more likely to be securely attached to their fathers, are better able to handle strange situations and are more resilient in the face of stressful situations
• Father warmth and nurturance significantly predicts children’s moral maturity, and is associated with more pro-social and positive moral behavior in boys and girls
• Promotion of healthy child development
• Higher academic achievement among children
• Better emotional and social development among children
• Ties into expectations of family involvement evaluated by CFSR
• Creates opportunity to have more eyes on the child
• Helps meet reasonable and diligent efforts
• Broadens circle of others by including paternal relatives who can be utilized in permanency planning
• More informal supports in a constrained system
PRINCIPLE 4. FATHER STRENGTHS

A strengths-based approach recognizes fathers’ aspirations for their children’s well being and the experience, knowledge, and skills that they contribute to this wellbeing. This principle also acknowledges that many fathers have unrealized capacity to contribute positively to their children and that services have a role in inviting fathers to work towards change both in their own family role and with other fathers and men.

Examples of practice implications for service providers

- Identify and celebrate the strengths of fathers
- Understand that fathers are the experts on identifying their support needs
- Design programs that are active, fun and centred on father-child or father-infant interaction
- Use active listening and reflective listening
- Acknowledge the father’s presence and purpose
- Provide an environment that is visually inclusive and reflects cultural diversity and men’s interests
- Involve fathers in the design and delivery of the program
- Engage fathers with purposeful tasks
- Acknowledge the fathers strengths and resilience in the face of often complex competing demands
**Reflection Exercise**

We are the products of our experiences. Those experiences include people who have been a part of our lives, or have not. We know we are the biological result of two people pairing—either fleetingly or more permanently. Think about your own father or the father of your child(ren). Depending on whether he was present, and functional, or absent, or dysfunctional, you may struggle with the concept that there could be anything about your father or child’s father that still influences you. This is why it is so important to find ways and time to understand the presence (or absence) of a man who helped to shape, in a positive or not so positive way, some of the ways you view the men you serve.

**What does it mean to be a man in today’s culture?**

There are many different forces that shape men’s lives. These forces include level of income, experience of poverty, level of education, social determinants (conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age) community conflict, war and the impact of their own family’s upbringing. Intertwined throughout all of these is gender role socialization-- the process of learning the social expectations and attitudes associated with one’s sex. Sociologists explain through gender socialization why human males and females behave in different ways: they learn different social roles. For example, girls learn to do different household chores than boys; girls learn to bake and clean, and boys learn to mow lawns and take out garbage. Gender socialization occurs through such diverse means as parental attitudes, schools, how peers interact with each other, and mass media.

**Small Group Activity:**

**Question 1:** How are boys and men socialized in our culture and how does this affect the way they parent?

**Question 2:** How do you think cultural expectations of manliness affect the way men and fathers seek help?

**In His Shoes: Understanding Fathers’ Circumstances and Barriers to Engagement**

Being able to stand in a father’s shoes, understand him better, and see things from his perspective is critical to effectively engaging him in program services and deepening his connection with his child. Some of you may already have a deep understanding of the barriers fathers face. It is important to lean as much as possible about the strengths and limitations of fathers in your program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barriers</th>
<th>Solutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PRINCIPLE 5. PRACTITIONERS’ STRENGTHS

The existing skills, knowledge, and special qualities of the staff for working with fathers are acknowledged. A strengths based approach recognizes that female and male staff have the capacity to develop the skills, knowledge and attitudes for father work.

Examples of practice implications for service providers

- Highlight the skills, knowledge and attitudes already operating within your work as elements applying to fathers; e.g., good interpersonal skills, maintaining confidentiality, being reliable and non-judgmental
- Develop special competencies for father engagement; e.g., rapport with men, ability to talk and listen to men, capacity to work with issues of conflict and power
- Form partnerships with other agencies to promote inclusion of fathers
- Network with and mentor other professionals
- Undertake professional learning; e.g., training days, seminars, conferences
- Use a strength-based approach in working with fathers
- Encourage co-facilitation by male and female staff
- Acknowledge that women can facilitate groups of men
- Promote fathers mentoring fathers
- Be aware of referral services suitable for fathers
- Keep up to date with research and current practices relating to fathers and share knowledge with other practitioners
- Use communication styles which are specific for males and females as well as developing a common language
- The culture of the organization accepts parallel roles of male and female staff
- Develop engagement skills for fathers from culturally and linguistically diverse groups
What’s In It For Me?

How will the efforts put forth to engage non-resident fathers “pay off” for your program?

First, think about the basic goals of your service/program: How can engaging fathers help to achieve these goals?

What’s In It For Mothers?

How will the efforts put forth to engage non-resident fathers “pay off” for the mothers you serve?

What’s In It For Children?

How will the efforts put forth to engage non-resident fathers “pay off” for the children you serve?

SAFETY FIRST

Several issues may challenge your ability to safely engage the father. The primary indicator to assess whether to engage the father relates to SAFETY for the child and for you. Some issues may include:

- Domestic violence
- Violent criminal behavior
- Chronic and severe substance abuse
- Severe physical and emotional abusive and neglectful behavior
PRINCIPLE 6. ADVOCACY AND EMPOWERMENT

Services aim to empower fathers to develop their capacity rather than focus on interventions that try to prevent them from doing harm. The beginning of empowerment is to understand and value the experience of fathers and the constructions, which shape their lives. Advocate for fathers in order to overcome the personal, community, and societal barriers that exist to men becoming positive fathers.

Examples of practice implications for service providers

- Advocate for fathers with employers, women, community members and other organizations
- Assist fathers to actively communicate their needs
- Include fathers in developing policies and services
- Insert father inclusion into service plans
- Promotional material includes father stories and father images
- Develop partnerships including government promoting open conversations around the benefits for fathers and families
- Make information available to fathers in the media and web, in services, and in educational institutions
- Raise debate on the implications of father-inclusion in professional and community forums
PRINCIPLE 7. PARTNERSHIP WITH FATHERS

Services aim to work in partnership with fathers and their families to build on their knowledge, skills, and abilities and to help fathers enhance their positive roles with their children and as part of families. This principle also recognizes and honors the role of mothers and others who care for children.

Examples of practice implications for service providers

- Work in partnership with fathers to develop appropriate services for fathers
- Inform mothers and other family members about the purpose of father inclusive initiatives
- Involve mothers and other family members in the recruitment of fathers for programs
- Invite mothers and other family members to be advocates for father inclusion
- Support fathers to network and connect with each other
- Advocate for fathers with employers for access to services and family friendly conditions
- Actively recruit fathers for boards and management committees
- Frame the partnership with fathers to reflect a two way process
1. EVERYONE DESIRES RESPECT

This principle is based on the idea that all people have worth, and recognizes everyone’s right to self-determination — to make their own decisions about their lives. Acceptance of this principle leads one to treat clients with respect and to honor their opinions and world view. True partnership is impossible without mutual respect.

In addition, equality in the relationship is important. Be aware of actions that are not supportive of treating the client with impartiality and a sense of fairness that requires not generalizing and lumping all fathers into one group.

2. PARTNERS SHARE POWER

This principle is based on the premise that power differentials create obstacles to partnership. Since society confers power upon the helper, it is the helper’s responsibility to create a partnership with clients, especially those who appear hostile, resistant, etc. Clients do not owe us their cooperation; we must earn it.

One way of doing this is recognizing that it is important to both give and receive. Social workers are “receiving” a lot of personal and often uncomfortable information about the client. Try to level the field a bit by “giving” a bit of information through the sharing of stories that are humanizing and normalizing. Appropriate self-disclosure is a very powerful tool in building worker-client relationships.

3. EVERYONE HAS STRENGTHS

This principle recognizes that all people have many resources, past successes, abilities, talents, dreams, etc. that provide the raw material for solutions and future success. As “helpers” we become involved with people because of their problems; these problems then become a filter that obscures our ability to see strengths. Acceptance of this principle doesn’t mean that one ignores or minimizes problems; it means that one works hard to identify strengths as well as problems so that the helper and the client have a more balanced, accurate and hopeful picture.

Though it may be difficult, try to visualize how the father may view the service provider. Broadening your perspective can be done by asking, “What would it be like to be him right now?” “How might I feel?” “How might I respond?” etc. In this way, you can seek to reframe what may present as a negative into a strength.

4. EVERYONE NEEDS TO BE HEARD

This principle is based on Covey’s “seek first to understand,” and is accomplished primarily through empathic listening. While empathic listening looks very much like active or reflective listening, what differentiates it is the listener’s motivation. Active and reflective listening are techniques that are often used to manage or manipulate someone’s behavior so that the listener can advance his own agenda. Empathic listening is motivated by the listener’s desire to truly understand someone’s point of view — to enter someone’s frame of reference — without a personal agenda. When one feels heard and understood, defensiveness and resistance are unnecessary, and solutions can be sought.

Let go of the “expert role.” Try to establish some mutual ground between the role of the worker and who the worker is personally. Use statements such as: “none of us is perfect.” “Yeah, I recall when….” “I struggle too as a single parent.”

5. JUDGMENTS CAN WAIT

This principle recognizes that once a judgment is made, one’s tendency is to stop gathering new information or to interpret in light of the prior judgment. Therefore, since a helper’s judgments can have an immense impact on a client’s life, it is only fair to delay judgment as long as possible, then to hold it lightly, while remaining open to new information and willing to change one’s mind. Acceptance of this principle does not mean that decisions regarding safety cannot be made quickly; it simply requires that ultimate judgments be very well considered.

6. PRINCIPLE: PARTNERSHIP IS A PROCESS

This principle recognizes that each of the six principles is part of a greater whole. While each has merit on its own, all are necessary for partnership.

Each principle supports and strengthens the others. In addition, this principle acknowledges that putting the principles into practice consistently is hard. Acceptance of the principles is not enough; it requires intention and attention to practice the principles.
PRINCIPLE 8. RECRUITMENT & TRAINING

Appropriate training, credentialing, and professional support for staff is a foundation for quality father-inclusive service provision. Services build strategies for recruiting and retaining a qualified, diverse, mixed-gender workforce and for ensuring that a career in family-related service provision is satisfying, respected and financially viable for both males and females.

Examples of practice implications for service providers

• Insert father inclusion competencies in position requirements for recruitment of new staff and practice standards or guidelines
• Support staff training in father inclusion
• Insert father inclusion learning outcomes into undergraduate and postgraduate courses for professionals supporting and working with families
• Employ men and women from diverse cultures
• Develop an accredited course for working with men
• Provide training for female staff in working with male staff
• Develop policies to include men in management and advisory committees
• Advocate in the industry sector for father-inclusive training
• Address the issue of males’ preferential promotion in organisations
• Profile men in the sector
• Recognize that low remuneration and part-time work are barriers for employing male and female staff when they are the main income providers for families
• Challenge a remuneration structure which rewards managerial positions above direct work with families
4. **STRATEGIC PLANNING AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

**OBJECTIVE:** Participants will articulate concrete steps they can implement to effectively engage non-resident fathers.

**BRAINSTORM** Responses to the following scenarios.

A. Review the scenarios assigned to your group.
B. Identify the strengths 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.

**Scenario 1 – Father states...**

I appreciate you all trying to help my kid and everything, but I don’t have anything to offer them. I’ve been struggling to keep a job, all I can get right now is temp work and most times that isn’t enough. I’m living with my brother and his wife because I got evicted from my own place. I wish I could be involved with my two kids but I just don’t know.

**Scenario 2 – Father states...**

You met my baby’s mom right? So, you know she’s crazy. I can’t fool around with her. I’ll end up going to jail. She is always threatening to call the police on me. Yeah, we get into fights and sometimes it gets physical… she pushes me and I push her back off me. She throws stuff at me, screams at me and I end up leaving her alone for a few days to let her cool off. I love my baby girl and all, but I don’t know. How can I be in her life if we are always arguing around her, that can’t be good for a baby right?

**Scenario 3 – Father states...**

I know how the welfare works. I got placed in foster care when I was a kid. I don’t trust you people to do anything for me or anything for my kid. I just want you out of our lives. I know his mom made a mistake and all leaving him alone for a time, but that can’t be as bad as sending him to foster care. I know what it was like. You all are going to make us jump through a bunch of hoops and it still won’t be good enough. You keep him in foster care with people that don’t care about him and are there just to collect a paycheck, just like you. There isn’t anything you can offer me other than letting my kid out of foster care.

**Scenario 4 – Father states...**

I really can’t help you all out. I have two other children I have to take care of and I can’t afford to be ordered to pay more child support. I’m barely making it now. I do love my kids, I want you to know that and I will do what I can for them but honestly, I am afraid of what might happen if I get involved in all this. I was put in jail once because I got behind in my child support. I nearly lost my job. I have a steady job now and I don’t want to end up back in jail so I think it’s best for me to say out of this.

**SMALL GROUP ACTIVITY**

1. How can you better engage fathers in your program, activities, community, homes?
2. What strategies can you implement?
3. Who and what do you need to successfully implement the strategies? [resources]
4. How will it help fathers/families/community? [outcomes]
5. How will it help your fatherhood/family efforts? [outcomes]

---

6 Adapted from Social Worker Training Curriculum: Engaging the Non-Resident Father, The National Quality Improvement Center on Non-Resident Fathers and the Child Welfare System [QIC-NRF]
PRINCIPLE 9. RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

Research and evaluation of services should specifically measure father engagement and outcomes relating to this engagement. Where services involve children, women and families, gender-based analysis should be used to monitor and evaluate father involvement.

Examples of practice implications for service providers

- Keep staff up to date with research on fathers and work with fathers
- Collect data systematically; e.g., men utilising the service, partners of women service users
- Encourage referral agencies to collect data
- Introduce procedures to update collected data
- Include all stakeholders in research and evaluations throughout the complete process, e.g., children, other family members, service managers and other participants in the service
- Build research and evaluation into the service plan
- Communicate the results of research and evaluation to stakeholders and the wider community
## 1. Service Culture and Environment

1.1 I reach out to fathers and try to get to develop a rapport with them

1.2 I am comfortable in interacting with fathers

1.3 I include fathers at the first point of contact with the family; e.g., outreach, enrollment, etc.

1.4 Fathers are as equally represented as mothers

1.5 Fathers are effectively informed about the service and programs

1.6 Male staff are actively sought through selection processes

1.7 Male volunteers are actively sought through recruitment processes

1.8 The aesthetic environment is inviting for men (not overly feminized)

1.9 Parenting programs that specifically target or engage fathers are provided

1.10 Fathers feel comfortable and welcomed in the service/program

1.11 There is a team commitment to increasing involvement of fathers

1.12 There are positive and constructive images of fathers and children displayed in public areas

### Total

## 2. Staff Skills, Knowledge, and Attitudes

2.1 I understand and value the importance of fathers in the lives of their children

2.2 I apply this knowledge in service delivery

2.3 I understand the term ‘father’ includes biological fathers, father figures, other significant male caregivers and role models

2.4 I understand the demographic composition of the community and am inclusive of all fathers

2.5 I have developed my knowledge about father-inclusive practices through participation in professional development events

2.6 I model effective and respectful communication; e.g., verbal, non-verbal, listening, empathy when interacting with fathers

2.7 I deliberately endeavor to engage fathers in programs and events through a range of effective strategies

2.8 I am knowledgeable about the barriers many low-income fathers and fathers of color face, and local services for fathers, and can refer as appropriate

2.9 I critically reflect on my practice to ensure I am inclusive of fathers and aim to improve my engagement of fathers

2.10 Staff operate from a strengths based perspective when working with men

2.11 Staff value and acknowledge the experience, skills and knowledge fathers bring to families and children

2.12 New staff and volunteers are informed and trained on how to effectively engage fathers.

### Total

---

### What About Dad?

**Fatherhood Inclusive Practice Assessment Tool**

Organization or Program Name: 
Date: 
Type of Agency: 

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INDICATORS OF FATHER INCLUSIVE PRACTICE AND SERVICE DELIVERY</th>
<th>5 = HIGH</th>
<th>1 = LOW</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1 I reach out to fathers and try to get to develop a rapport with them</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 I am comfortable in interacting with fathers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 I include fathers at the first point of contact with the family; e.g., outreach, enrollment, etc.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Fathers are as equally represented as mothers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 Fathers are effectively informed about the service and programs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6 Male staff are actively sought through selection processes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.7 Male volunteers are actively sought through recruitment processes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.8 The aesthetic environment is inviting for men (not overly feminized)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.9 Parenting programs that specifically target or engage fathers are provided</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.10 Fathers feel comfortable and welcomed in the service/program</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.11 There is a team commitment to increasing involvement of fathers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.12 There are positive and constructive images of fathers and children displayed in public areas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Total

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2. STAFF SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE, AND ATTITUDES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1 I understand and value the importance of fathers in the lives of their children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 I apply this knowledge in service delivery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 I understand the term ‘father’ includes biological fathers, father figures, other significant male caregivers and role models</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 I understand the demographic composition of the community and am inclusive of all fathers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5 I have developed my knowledge about father-inclusive practices through participation in professional development events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6 I model effective and respectful communication; e.g., verbal, non-verbal, listening, empathy when interacting with fathers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7 I deliberately endeavor to engage fathers in programs and events through a range of effective strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.8 I am knowledgeable about the barriers many low-income fathers and fathers of color face, and local services for fathers, and can refer as appropriate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.9 I critically reflect on my practice to ensure I am inclusive of fathers and aim to improve my engagement of fathers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.10 Staff operate from a strengths based perspective when working with men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.11 Staff value and acknowledge the experience, skills and knowledge fathers bring to families and children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.12 New staff and volunteers are informed and trained on how to effectively engage fathers.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Total

---

What About Dad? is a tool designed to assess the inclusiveness of fatherhood in professional settings. It helps organizations identify areas where they can improve their engagement with fathers.
## 3. Service Relevance and Accessability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Strategies are in place to seek fathers input into service planning and the provision of relevant programs and activities</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Programs are accessible and responsive to the diverse needs of fathers; e.g., recreational, social, parenting</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Operational hours support the involvement of men; e.g., events and key services are available after hours and on weekends</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 The service provides outreach programs for fathers from different locations</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5 Information and services for particular groups of men are provided; e.g., new fathers, cultural groups, separated fathers</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6 The service/program supports fathers to connect with other fathers</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7 The service provides information to separated fathers</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.8 Father focused events are held in both inside and outside environments</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.9 Programs and activities are designed to support all fathers incorporating intervention and prevention approaches</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.10 Interactions with fathers are child focused and support the parent-child relationship</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.11 Barriers to the participation of fathers are identified and addressed</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.12 The service is easily accessible to fathers; e.g., location, transport, cost</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total**

## 4. Strategic Planning and Accountability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1 The service/program has a policy on engaging fathers</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Father-inclusive practice is prioritized in the annual strategic plan</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 Strategies and processes are in place to identify areas where a more father-inclusive approach will be implemented</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4 The service/program adds father inclusivity as a regular topic for reflection and planning at staff meetings</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5 Promotional material is specifically inclusive of men</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6 The service undertakes regular reviews to assess the involvement of fathers</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7 The services undertakes regular reviews to assess the relevance of services in response to the diverse needs of fathers</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.8 The service undertakes regular reviews to assess staff skills and competencies in father-inclusive practices</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.9 The service provides professional development to all staff about how to engage and work with men</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.10 The service regularly reports to governing bodies about fatherhood inclusivity</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.11 The service reports of progress made in relation to implementing father-inclusive practices in the Annual Report</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.12 The service raises public opinion and promotes the important role of fathers within the community</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total**