

Dads Rock

ENGAGEMENT TOOLKIT



Based on the *Building Community,*
Building Hope film
Dads Rock: Nurturing Father Engagement



CANTASD is a service of the Children's Bureau



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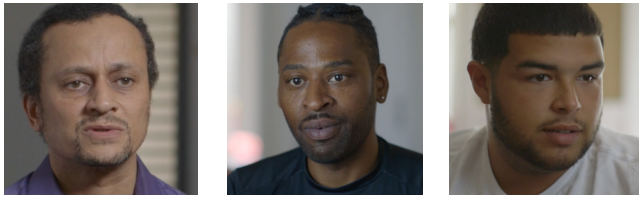
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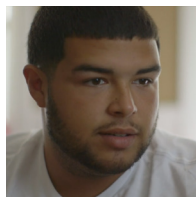
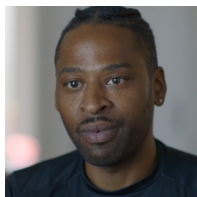
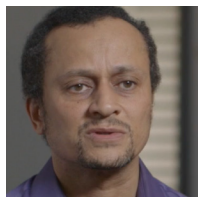
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INTRODUCTION

The film *Dads Rock: Nurturing Father Engagement* follows fathers on their journey to deepen their bonds with their children and the professionals working to improve father engagement. Research shows that children do better when dads are involved.

Yet, agencies often struggle to attract fathers to their services, and fathers face unconscious bias that keeps them at arms' length. Highlighting the work of the Children's Trust of Massachusetts Fatherhood Initiative, *Dads Rock* provides a first-hand look at home visiting programs for dads, father support groups, and professional men's family service providers' groups that are working differently with dads and addressing existing biases.



Research shows that children do better when dads are involved.





We designed this toolkit for professionals working to establish healthy relationships with fathers to improve service and/or program engagement. It includes a full complement of tools to help you use this film in your work. These tools and more are available at cantasd.acf.hhs.gov/bcbh/dads-rock.

- **Videos:** *Dads Rock* and other films in the *Building Community*, *Building Hope* series
- ***Building Community*, *Building Hope User's Guide*:** A comprehensive guide to incorporating film in your work to enhance your ability to engage others in your mission
- The ***Dads Rock Engagement Toolkit***
- Resources and links to learn more about father engagement

All of these films and tools are freely available for you to use as if they were your own. Post them, share them, screen them, and adapt them. Make them work for your needs.

WHY DOES FATHER ENGAGEMENT MATTER?

Several decades of research on the impact that fathers have on the lives of children demonstrate that fathers have a significant influence on their children's lives—whether by virtue of their presence, or by their absence.

Sociologist David Popenoe was one of the pioneers of research into fathers and fatherhood. In his words, “Fathers are far more than just ‘second adults’ in the home. Involved fathers bring positive benefits to their children that no other person is as likely to bring.”¹ He surmised that the benefits of father involvement in a child's life fall into four main areas:

- Cognitive ability and academic achievement
- Psychological well-being and social behavior
- Financial security
- Impact of a positive father-mother relationship

¹ Popenoe, D. (1996). *Life without father*. Free Press: New York, NY.

As you watch the film, keep these thoughts in your mind:

- Did the film change anything about the way you think about father engagement?
- Who are some people in your community who might benefit from watching this film? Can you start a conversation about father engagement and how you might work together to serve fathers in your community?
- How do you think you are doing at effectively striving for father engagement? How is your agency doing?
- How could increasing the impact of your work with fathers impact your ability to meet the needs of the families and children you serve?



Studies show that when fathers are involved, toddlers start school with higher levels of academic readiness and children have better educational outcomes. These benefits carry over through adolescence and into young adulthood.²

- Highly involved biological fathers have children who are 43 percent more likely than other children to earn mostly A's.³

When fathers are involved in children's lives, those children enjoy more emotional security and confidence to explore their surroundings and learn, and are more likely to build better social connections with peers.⁴

- Teen boys with fathers are less likely to become involved in criminal activity.⁵
- Girls who have involved fathers early in their lives are less likely to experience adolescent pregnancy.⁶
- A comprehensive study that analyzed results from 47 different studies on the impact of father absence found strong evidence that father absence negatively affects children's social-emotional development and is associated with adolescents' risky behavior.⁷

Fathers add financial security to a child's life, which in turn reduces other stresses that can contribute to abuse and neglect.

- A study conducted in 2012 found that children living in female-headed homes with no spouse present had a poverty rate that was over four times the rate of children living in married-couple families.⁸



2 Rosenberg, J., & Wilcox, W. B. (2006). *The importance of fathers in the healthy development of children*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau. Retrieved from <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pub-PDFs/fatherhood.pdf>.

3 Nord, C. W., & West, J. (2001). *Fathers' and mothers' involvement in their children's schools by family type and resident status*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Education Research and Improvement, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES 2001-032). Retrieved from <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2001/2001032.pdf>

4 Rosenberg, J., & Wilcox, W. B. (2006). *The importance of fathers in the healthy development of children*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau. Retrieved from <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pub-PDFs/fatherhood.pdf>

5 Harper, C. C. & McLanahan, S. S. (2004). Father absence and youth incarceration. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 14(3), 369-397.

6 Ellis, B. J., Bates, J. E., Dodge, K. A., Fergusson, D. M., Horwood, L. J., Pettit, G. S., & Woodward, L. (2003). Does father absence place daughters at special risk for early sexual activity and teenage pregnancy? *Child Development*, 74(3), 801-821.

7 McLanahan, S., Tach, L., & Schneider, D. (2013). The causal effects of father absence. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 39, 399-427.

8 Vespa, J., Lewis, J. M., & Kreider, R. M. (2013). *America's families and living arrangements: 2012*. Current Population Reports, P20-570. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Census Bureau. Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/prod/2013pubs/p20-570.pdf>

“Fathers are far more than just ‘second adults’ in the home. [They] bring positive benefits to their children that no other person is as likely to bring.”

Identifying and honoring the special strengths of fathers can go a long way toward improving the quality of engagement.



In addition, when fathers have a respectful, productive relationship with their children’s mothers, even if they are no longer partners, their children will grow up happier and more secure.⁹

In our conversations with the field, we observed a disparity between how father engagement is perceived at the academic/research/policy level and how service providers actually experience it. We asked, what are the barriers to putting into practice what the research suggests so clearly? **What is causing a gap between what we know and what we do?**

⁹ Rosenberg, J., & Wilcox, W. B. (2006). The importance of fathers in the healthy development of children. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Children’s Bureau. Retrieved from <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/fatherhood.pdf>

GENDER BIAS AFFECTS CLIENTS AND PROVIDERS

As we’ve seen through the research, fathers play a unique role in children’s lives that contributes to children’s health and well-being in ways that are not duplicated in any other relationship. Successful father engagement is based on honoring this unique role of fathers through mutually respectful and strength-based practices that can build and support those special characteristics, talents, and contributions of every father.

Mutual respect starts at the point of entry for services, where fathers and service providers can begin to build healthy relationships. This respect and value for fathers’ roles should permeate throughout services, including peer engagement and advocacy. Fathers need to feel valued for what they can bring to childrearing, not as secondary or “backups” to mothers’ roles. Identifying and honoring the special strengths of fathers can go a long way toward improving the quality of engagement.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics Current Population Survey for 2016, men make up just over 18 percent of the social work field. As we’ve learned in other arenas, diversity matters—for inclusion, for building knowledge, and for representation of the communities we seek to serve. And yet, in this arena, lack of gender diversity continues to create barriers to effectively reaching as many families as possible with the supports and services they may need. Here, we’ve excerpted a few statements from the professional providers who discuss these issues in the *Dads Rock* film.

“As a society, we’ve become much more aware of cultural competence...we generally mean that to refer to ethnicity, or country of origin. But gender is really a big component of culture. So when we look at the fact that systems are denying a huge percentage of men the ability to be involved in a program—if we were denying any other cultural group, the same access to services, it would be a huge travesty... Without reflecting on your relationship with maybe the father or other men in your life, you might not even see that you are biased towards the men that you’re working with.”

**—Haji Shearer, The Fatherhood Initiative,
Children’s Trust of Massachusetts**

“I think one of the things that could change in the field is thinking that only women can actually do this type of work. Only women can talk about breast-feeding. Only women can talk about birth control and menstrual cycles and all these things. I mean, I’m in the field right now and I have those conversations freely, and I have no problem asking those questions to a mom. The participants who are receiving services couldn’t care less whether you’re male or female. If you’re there to provide the services that they want, they’re going to accept it regardless.”

**—Mike Caban, People Incorporated,
Fall River, Massachusetts**

“We need to move from seeing men as the problem and doing risk assessment of men to... doing a strengths assessment of men... I understand there’s a need for risk assessment in terms of domestic violence, but that’s not okay when the bias is that men essentially represent potential problems. So why not turn that around and find out what does this guy have to bring to the table and how can we do more of that?”

**—John Badalament, The Fatherhood Project,
Massachusetts General Hospital**

“I was working with a single father who just received full custody of his son. He’s in recovery and doing excellent right now. He wants to go to one agency called WIC. And he is terrified out of his mind because he says “It’s called Women, Infants and Children. Can I still go and get services for my child?” Well absolutely. We have to change some of the language. Why not call it Families, Infants and Children, so fathers also feel welcome?”

—Xavier Cordona, Father Group Facilitator



What are the barriers to putting into practice what the research suggests so clearly? What is causing a gap between what we know and what we do?

FOSTERING ENGAGEMENT AROUND THIS FILM

We invite you to download the *Building Community, Building Hope User's Guide*, which is full of ideas for using film in your real-world practice to engage others and start meaningful conversations. If you haven't, you can find the guide at <https://cantasd.acf.hhs.gov/bcbh>.

On the following pages, you'll find a series of discussion guides intended to prompt a conversation with different sets of stakeholders. Feel free to use these questions as they are written, or as inspiration for a conversation that is tailored to the unique interests of your group.

We believe that engagement begins within, so the very first set of questions are intended for you to stop and take time for some personal reflection. From there, you'll find guidance



Use the film and this guide in your practice to engage others and start meaningful conversations.

for facilitating conversations with ever-increasing circles of allies who can join you in your efforts.

At the end of the discussion guides, you'll find a few agency checklists to get you started on thinking about areas of improve-

ment in your practice. In some cases, these have been adapted from more robust tools developed by others. We provide links to the full tools.

At every stage, we recommend meeting with partners that you're excited to work with on this issue and recording your thoughts and insights on paper. We recognize that you are very busy in your daily work, so we encourage you to keep moving forward in small increments. Consistently share notes with your partners and follow up on each round of conversations with concrete next steps. Whenever possible, encourage team members to take ownership of the work so that you are all invested in a successful outcome.

To get the ball rolling, here are five things you can do after watching the film:

- 1. Take a moment and think through the personal reflection questions in the *Discussion Guide*.**
- 2. Share this film with at least three other people who you think might be interested in this work. Invite them to discuss it with you.**
- 3. Organize a team meeting of your peers to share this work inside your agency and identify gaps in your agency's father engagement strategy.**
- 4. Think of at least one potential partner in the community who has significant touch points to fathers—perhaps a school, a faith-based group, or even a local sports team. How can you initiate a conversation to understand how you might appeal to fathers more effectively? Organize a meeting and screening to understand each other's successes and challenges and discuss how you might work together to meet the needs of families in your area.**
- 5. Download and study *A Guide to Strengthening Fatherhood in Your Community*[™], provided for free by the National Fatherhood Initiative. This thorough, step-by-step guide turns theory into practical advice. It offers a primer on how to develop a community-wide focus on father engagement. You can find the free tool at <http://www.fatherhood.org/strengthening-community>.**



DISCUSSION GUIDES TO BE USED AFTER SCREENING THE FILM

GUIDE FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION

The best place to start is with yourself. Here are a few questions to consider after watching the film to focus on your own ability to make change in this arena.

We suggest you find 10–15 minutes of quiet time to reflect on this film and its messages. It may be helpful for you to jot down some responses in the space provided below. This exercise is meant to prompt new ways of thinking and provide a starting point.

What were your key takeaways from the film? Did any particular points made in the film really resonate with you, or really bother you?

How did it make you feel to hear almost exclusively from men in this film?

Thinking about your professional practice, how much do you engage fathers in your work with families? Make a list of five tangible ways, big or small, that could increase father engagement in your daily practice, without needing permission from above.

As an experiment, commit to trying some or all of these changes for 2 weeks to see what happens. Keep a journal of your experience.

Jot down a list of five people in your immediate circle with whom you'd like to share the film and have a conversation. These might be co-workers, colleagues at other agencies, family members, leadership, community partners, or even people in your social media network.

The film suggests that a bias against fathers exists in society, social services, and other environments that involve parents, such as schools and doctors' offices. Reflect for a moment— do you feel you have any negative opinions about fathers that you would be willing to challenge? What are they? What are they based on?

Do you have any *personal* beliefs about whether men are able to parent as well as women? Are you willing to challenge these beliefs?

DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR USE WITH YOUR TEAM

How well do you think our agency is engaging fathers in our work with families?

Before seeing the film, were you aware of the research about the importance of father engagement? Did it surprise you? How can we raise awareness of some of the compelling research within our organization?

What are some possible reasons that fathers are not as involved in our family support programs as we would like them to be?

What precautions do we have in place for safety checks? How do we balance these with strengths assessments? Could we change our practice in this area?

What are the key elements of a father-friendly environment? How does our environment measure up? Could we engage a few fathers to walk through our sites and meeting locations with us to point out things we could improve?

Being honest with ourselves, are there preconceptions about men that we may be bringing to the work? What are they? How might they be getting the way of us delivering services to support the whole family?

Are we concerned that being more inclusive to dads may be seen as a threat to the moms we serve? If so, what information can we share about how engaging dads effectively can actually reduce stress on moms?

Social service agencies often go to great lengths to reach resistant moms and overcome their complex challenges, including mental illness and substance use. Do we have the same determination when it comes to engaging resistant dads?

What resonated most about the fathers and male providers highlighted in the film? What was surprising or unexpected?

Professionals who have built a successful father engagement practice attest that they often need to approach men with different language, in different settings, and with different opportunities. How might we approach men differently and offer them opportunities to engage in a dialogue about their role as fathers?

Identify five to eight partners outside of your agency that you have not traditionally worked with in the past, but with whom you share a common interest in improving father engagement in the community. These might include schools, faith-based programs, healthcare providers, or even the local gym!

Invite these partners to watch the film, then use the discussion guide to host a conversation.

In general, do we feel that we have support from leadership to focus on father engagement work in our agency? If not, how can we make the case to pursue work on developing this practice?

What is the gender balance in our workplace? Do we have male home visitors or group leaders? When we host events, do we make sure we have male staff there as greeters too?

Is gender considered with the same level of cultural sensitivity and inclusiveness as other diversity areas in our agency? Do we have honest internal conversations about gender bias?

Are we willing to do an audit of our materials, website language, forms etc. to check that language is as friendly and equitable to fathers as it is to mothers? How should we approach this work?

How will we follow up on this discussion?

DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR USE WITH YOUR FATHER GROUPS

Dads Rock can be used with father groups. Here are some questions that may help guide conversations with fathers about the film. If you do not currently have father groups, consider using the film and discussion below as an invitation to fathers in your community

What in the film resonated and rang true?

Were there any parts of the film that you disagreed with?

What were some of the important reasons that you started to come to group and you keep coming back?

What could we be doing to make these groups more meaningful for you?

What could we be doing to expand our reach to other dads like you in the community?

What types of activities or outreach ideas including language, images etc. do you think would help more dads be interested in this type of group?

Have any of you ever thought about working professionally in this field as a result of these groups? Do you feel having more men in the field would help with this issue?

What could we be doing to recruit more men as professionals in the field?

How well do you feel our schools, healthcare systems, faith-based organizations, parks, and other community centers are reaching out to dads, both in terms of programs for dads, and in treating dads and moms as equally important when it comes to parenting?

If you could offer some tips to these community organizations about small things they could do to make you feel more welcomed, what would those be?

How could we approach these community groups with this message and help them be more inclusive to dads?

Would you be interested in working on some materials that could be shared with these partners?

Would you be interested in helping us review our website, our materials, etc. and offer suggestions for how we could become more father-friendly?

DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR USE WITH FUNDERS

What specific interests do you have in this arena?

What opportunities may exist for support in the following areas?

- Collecting important data to assess how well we are engaging fathers in our community

- Building a public awareness outreach effort about the importance of dads in our community

- Creating funding opportunities that mandate specific focus on dads

- Encouraging men to join our workforce in the field

What data do you feel is missing that could help promote more of this type of work?

From your perspective, what are the challenges in funding this type of work?

What performance measures should be incorporated before funding community agencies?

What are the key elements needed to ensure community agencies are held accountable for effectively engaging fathers and supporting them as they build protective factors?

What father engagement contractual language should be considered and stipulated?

A COMMUNITY-PARTNERS APPROACH TO IMPROVING FATHER ENGAGEMENT

Leaders in the father engagement field and fathers who receive services agree that fathers feel disenfranchised in small, but significant ways by systems that deal with parents and children. For example, schools may only send messages to the mother, or doctors may choose to look at Mom instead of Dad at pediatric appointments. Each of these interactions taken in isolation doesn't seem like a big deal, but the aggregate effect of receiving noninclusive messages over and over can be quite powerful.



Fathers can feel disenfranchised in small, but significant ways by systems that deal with parents and children.

On the positive side, however, this situation presents many opportunities to improve interactions with fathers. Showing the film to community partners who may not be thinking about dads can be a powerful way to raise awareness of implicit biases and inspire small changes that can make a big difference.

We encourage you to invite some community partners to sit around a table and talk with each other after viewing the film. Below, you'll find some questions to guide a cross-sector conversation. If you collectively agree that you could have tremendous impact on the children and

families you serve by embarking on a community-wide approach to father engagement, we offer some specific ideas that different stakeholder groups can try.

A cross-section of community partners might include:

- Schools and teachers
- Law enforcement
- Religious or social organizations
- Parent group leaders
- Community-based care organizations
- Homeless shelters
- Early learning and child care organizations
- Substance abuse/mental health agency
- Local government leaders
- Business leaders
- Who else in your community?

DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR USE WITH COMMUNITY PARTNERS

What are some of the most pressing issues facing dads in our community?

What are our responsibilities towards dads in our community?

What beliefs do you have about the contributions men make to children and their development? Do we all agree that it's important to work with dads?

Why is it important to make sure that dads are both fully engaged in the parenting process, and have places to seek out knowledge and support when they need it? *(Share some research.)*

What are some of the ways that dads might feel like “less important” parents in your setting?

What would our programs look like if more men were involved? In what ways are men interested in being involved? How could we find this out? Are there ideas about reaching men directly, without having to go through the wives/partners/mothers?

Brainstorm ideas of how your systems could collaborate and exchange information to improve the father experience for men in your community.

- What research and knowledge can you share?

- What events or programs could you co-sponsor and plan together, with dads in mind?

- What information about the impact of dads on children’s lives could be shared with moms you both serve? What tensions might arise and how can you manage those?

- Could your community create a community-wide focus on dads around special days like Father’s Day? How could this be creatively approached to share a coordinated set of messages across schools, community centers, and others?

- How will you commit to father involvement in the long term, beyond a special event day?

Using your collective knowledge bases, brainstorm a local resource list that could provide key community-based supports for dads and their kids. What other supportive groups are in your community?

- Some examples: Churches, home visiting programs, schools, sports programs, Boy Scouts/Girl Scouts, sobriety support meetings etc.

Are there sensitivities or set beliefs about men that you would have to address within your organizations? How can solid research help you with this?

How will you add distinct programs that will appeal to men without adding workload to your staff?

Note: Don't forget to check out the National Fatherhood Initiative's free *Guide to Strengthening Fatherhood in Your Community* at: <http://www.fatherhood.org/strengthening-community>. It's a step-by-step guide to building a father-engaged community and can guide you on this continuing work.

A COMMUNITY-WIDE APPROACH: IDEAS FOR DIFFERENT STAKEHOLDERS

The following is an informal set of practical tips to consider as you seek to engage your community in adopting a more father-friendly approach.

For schools:

- Include in mission statements, parent handbooks, and family communications information about the contributions men make to the lives of children.
- Set the expectation among all staff and personnel that men will be warmly welcomed.
- Include men as speakers and trainers at staff in-service trainings.
- Review policies on how non-custodial parents can participate in program activities.
- Make all staff responsible for involving men, and designate one person who is committed and accountable to lead the efforts.
- During enrollment, identify at least one man who has a significant relationship with each child.
- Design enrollment, emergency contact, and other forms to be inclusive of men in different parent, guardian, and nurturing roles.
- Mail school communications to the man identified for each child when his address is different from that of the child.
- Ensure that communications are inviting to men by monitoring color of paper, type of graphics, topics, and language.
- Make sure the parent room or bulletin board displays pictures of men and includes



Promote men's involvement as something that benefits children—not just something women want men to do.

information and magazines of interest to men.

- Survey men with children in the program to find out their interests.
- Invite men to participate, and make the invitations loud, clear, and frequent.
- Encourage men who are involved to invite other men to participate.
- Accept any kind of involvement a man is most comfortable with, whether it is observing, reading, tutoring, fixing things, serving on a committee, etc.
- Offer a variety of specific involvement opportunities that fill program needs and consist of more than discussion activities.
- Make male participation an ongoing focus and also plan special “Dad and Me” or “Me and My Guy” events.

- Promote men's involvement as something that benefits children rather than something that women want men to do.
- Encourage men whose children have graduated to stay involved as mentors and leaders.
- Recruit men from community organizations as volunteers.
- Actively recruit and hire male staff.
- Keep track of male participation, acknowledge your progress, and keep looking for ways to increase and maintain men's involvement.

For teachers:

- Learn the names of the father and other significant men in each child's life.
- Greet fathers and other men by name and seize the opportunity to chat when you see them.

- When calling a child’s home, rather than routinely asking for the mother, talk with the man who answers the phone.
- Talk equally to both parents at teacher-parent conferences.
- Schedule intake and enrollment sessions, teacher parent conferences, home visits, and parent meetings at times when working parents can participate.
- Provide advance notice of events so people can arrange time off from work to attend.
- Include information about men in the curriculum; for example, by inviting a man as a guest speaker or by scheduling a field trip to a father’s place of work.
- Read and display children’s books that show men and children together in a variety of roles and activities.
- Stock the dramatic play area in an early childhood classroom with clothing and other props associated with men.
- Display images of men in posters and in photographs from children’s families.

Set the expectation among all staff and personnel that men will be warmly welcomed.

For employers:

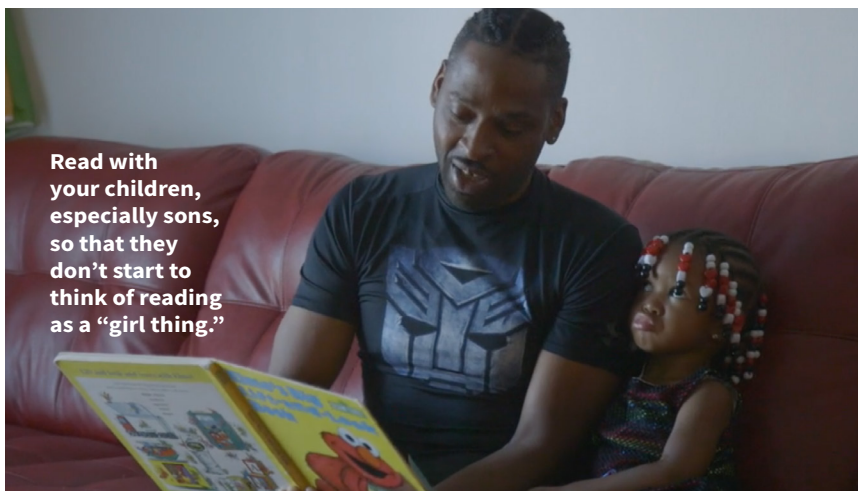
- Explore the possibility of flexible work schedules that allow employees to spend time with children at school—either with their own children or in mentoring and tutoring other children.
- Encourage other men at your workplace to speak to school classes and youth groups about their work.
- Arrange for workplace “lunch and learn” sessions that provide parenting information for men.
- Support programs for men and children through donations, publicity, and in-kind services.

For community groups:

- Make information on fatherhood and parenting resources generally available.
- Target support and activities for specific groups of men, such as first time fathers, non-custodial

fathers, teen fathers, stepfathers, incarcerated fathers, and grandfathers.

- Market support programs for men about such specific childrearing issues as behavior management, moral development, or raising a child of color.
- Address men’s interests and needs at teachable moments, such as in premarital counseling, childbirth preparation classes, and when enrolling children in school and child care.
- Assist men in understanding their legal rights in relationship to their children, and connect men with legal representation that is sensitive to issues of paternity and fatherhood.
- Provide fun and educational activities, recreation programs, and service projects for men and children.
- Sponsor one-time events such as a “Fathers’ Fair” as well as ongoing programs for men and children.
- Organize a community celebration for men and children—perhaps on Fathers’ Day.
- Compile a directory of services and programs that meet the interests and needs of men.
- Advocate for public policies that support fatherhood and male involvement in children’s lives.
- Organize merchants in the community to offer occasional discounts to fathers, grandfathers, etc., who purchase goods or services to be enjoyed together with children.



Read with your children, especially sons, so that they don’t start to think of reading as a “girl thing.”

- Work with the media to create news stories and ads that value fatherhood and portray a variety of men in nurturing roles with children.
- Undertake in-service training designed to make staff in community agencies more “father-friendly” and welcoming to men.
- Use a checklist to assess the ways your services are accessible and welcoming to men.
- Include a column written by men or about fathers and men in newsletters.
- Make ongoing contacts with colleges to recruit men for human service positions.
- Include men in paraprofessional roles for which background is as important as professional preparation.
- Recruit men to serve on governing and advisory boards and screening/hiring committees.

For men:

- Attend school events such as open houses, parent meetings, and teacher conferences.
- Talk with your child’s teacher and stay informed about classroom activities, homework assignments, and school events.
- Arrange to take time from work to spend at the child’s school.
- Become involved at your level of comfort and interest—for instance, by eating school lunch with your child, volunteering in the classroom, going on field trips, participating in a parent-teacher organization, or serving on a school committee.

- Learn the names of your child’s friends; greet them by name and invite them to go on outings with you and your child.
- Get to know the parents of your children’s friends.
- Take your son or daughter with you to work one day each year.
- Create a ritual or special time together such as a bedtime routine or a regular time to read together.
- Talk with other men, women, and your parents about the changing roles of men and women in caring for children.
- Read with your children, especially sons, so that they don’t start to think of reading as a “girl thing.”

For women:

- Share the same information with a child’s father that the teacher, school, or program has shared with you.
- Accept that men and women may diaper, feed, and play in different yet beneficial ways.
- Speak well of the child’s father to your child and other adults rather than sharing your side of relationship disagreements.
- Encourage the man to spend time with the child and accept this as a special time when they can enjoy themselves.



Make information on fatherhood and parenting resources generally available.



AGENCY CHECKLIST

A number of existing family support and father engagement organizations have developed robust agency checklist tools to help organizations assess how father friendly they are and help them improve their practice.

Below, we have included a self-assessment tool adapted as noted from a tool developed by the National Center for Strategic Nonprofit Planning and Community Leadership (NPCL) in partnership with the National Head Start Association (NHSA); the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families, Region V; and the Illinois Department of Public Aid, Division of Child Support Enforcement.

For agencies who wish to enter into a deep assessment and strategic realignment around father engagement, we recommend that you look at the Father Friendly Check-up, a robust checklist and planning tool from the National Fatherhood Initiative, which you can access for free at <http://www.fatherhood.org/ffcu>.

FATHER-FRIENDLINESS

Organizational Self-Assessment

Below are a number of statements that describe father-friendly practices. Many agencies do very few of them. No agency, that we are aware of, does them all. Please try to provide an accurate description of current practices in your agency, rather than an idealized picture of what you think should happen. Try to answer all questions, even if you are not certain of your answer.

Please use the following scale to rate your organization for each of the statements included in the assessment:

- 1 = We haven't even thought about this/completely disagree with statement.**
- 2 = We've started to think about this but haven't made much progress.**
- 3 = We've made some good efforts but still have some work to do.**
- 4 = We have successfully completed this step/completely agree with statement.**

- A ___ Funding for serving fathers is consistent and ongoing.
- B ___ The organization is recognized by community partners as a good resource for fathers.
- C ___ Intake and other data collection methods are standardized for both parents rather than just modified from the forms for mothers.
- D ___ Program hours are scheduled to accommodate the time constraints of both working parents.
- E ___ Periodic staff development is provided to upgrade new personnel on including fathers.
- F ___ Staff members are aware of issues faced by low-income fathers.
- G ___ Male staff are available to work with fathers, especially in the area of recruitment.
- H ___ Male staff feel comfortable and respected within the agency.
- I ___ Female staff are comfortable working with fathers.

- J ___ Work with mothers includes a focus on working cooperatively with fathers
- K ___ When a mother doesn't want the father of their children involved, efforts are still made to gain her support and to work with that father (except in domestic violence and abusive situations).
- L ___ Services for fathers focus on assets fathers bring rather than deficits fathers have.
- M ___ Parenting groups have been designed with the issues of both mothers and fathers in mind.
- N ___ Information about community services for fathers (e.g., legal assistance, education and employment assistance, batterers' programs) has been collected. Relationships have been forged with key people in these agencies.
- O ___ Staff make, or are prepared to make, referrals for fathers to other agencies (e.g., domestic violence, substance abuse, mental health, employment/training).
- P ___ Fathers who have completed programs are asked to work as mentors, recruiters, group facilitators, and so forth.
- Q ___ Staff recognize and respect father-mother differences in parenting styles.
- R ___ The physical environment has a general feel that is inviting to men/fathers.
- S ___ Books, journals, articles, videos, and other materials directed toward fathers are available to look at or borrow.
- T ___ Efforts are made to interact with fathers who accompany mothers to the program even when they tend to hang back.
- U ___ Contact information is typically collected from the father regardless of parents' living arrangements.
- V ___ The message is given to fathers that their role as active parents is critical to their children's development.

Thoughts After Filling This Out

REFERENCES

Cowan, P.A., Cowan, C.P., Pruett, M.K., Pruett, K., & Wong, J.J. (2006). Promoting fathers' engagement with children: Preventive interventions for low-income families. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 71 (3) (2009), pp. 663-677.

National Center for Strategic Nonprofit Planning and Community Leadership; National Head Start Association; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families Region V & Illinois Department of Public Aid, Division of Child Support Enforcement. (1999). *Father-friendliness organizational self-assessment and planning tool*.

National Practitioners Network for Fathers & Families. (2000). *The Assessment Guide on Father Inclusive Practices*. Adapted from Tift, N., Assessment Guide on Father Inclusive Practices. Native American Fatherhood and Families Association, Mesa, Arizona.

USING THE FILM IN YOUR OWN COMMUNICATIONS

We encourage you to consider how you can use this film in your own communications to help engage others in the importance of the work you do and to help build a growing dialogue about innovative ways to work on behalf of children and families.

When considering effective communications, it is important to remember that everyone is overwhelmed by messages. If you want people to read your message, the subject line or the content of your social media post has to resonate with your intended audience.

Keep your subject lines/headlines short, pithy, and intriguing. Is there a question you can pose that will resonate with your audience? Can your message help them address a “pain point” they may be experiencing in their day-to-day work?

Here are some ideas for using the film on your communications channels, with suggested messages you could use or adapt, based on your audience.



SHARE IN AN EMAIL

Consider how using this video in an email may give your audience a new point of entry into reading and understanding your message. You can adapt these suggested subject lines to your role and your audience. Think about what may capture their attention.

Suggested subject lines:

- What does an effective father engagement practice look like?
- How to support dads and change a community in the process.
- Is it time to rethink WIC, or maybe just change the name?
- Want to know how to improve your father engagement? Ask a dad.

- How do we grow our male workforce? Look to our clients.
- Is gender the missing piece of cultural competency in the social work field?
- Male home visitors may reach parts that other home visitors can't.

BLOG/HOST A WEBINAR

Does your website have a blog, newsletter, or other system for sharing updated news? Do you host regular webinars to share learning with your community? Websites that regularly update and refresh their content rank higher in online search results and tend to draw more traffic. The more you post about your work, the more you define yourself as a

credible expert for others seeking knowledge on your issues. Using the video together with an original blog post or a focused webinar is a very effective way to guide people to your site to read more. Consider posting/embedding the video together with an original piece that ties it back to your work. Ideas might include:

- Facing the facts about father impact on the well-being of children (focus on research).
- An honest conversation about our gender problem.
- What can we change about our practice to engage more dads?
- What is the effect of engaging fathers more effectively?

Help build a growing dialogue about innovative ways to work on behalf of children and families.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Facebook: We suggest you follow the CANTASD page on Facebook (www.facebook.com/cantasd), where we have posted Dads Rock and other films in the Building Community, Building Hope series. The videos are captioned so viewers can watch the content without speakers if needed. Feel free to share our messages, or simply share the video and add your own message to the post.

In addition to the films, the CANTASD Facebook page also has 30-second trailers available. Consider posting one as a “teaser” on your social media. The films are short enough for people to watch quickly and a powerful way to pull them back to your page or your blog post to watch the whole film and learn more.

If you’re an advanced user, think about making a small, targeted Facebook ad/sponsored post to extend the reach of your message. A very small purchase can go a long way to target the kind of audience you are trying to build. Play with Facebook’s ad tools to narrow down and pinpoint your audience.

Twitter: As above, consider posting one of the 30-second teasers on twitter, with a short URL directing your readers back to your blog or website. You can add the hashtag #dadsrock. Remember that tweets can be informal and fun!

Here are some suggested tweets (leaving space to add your URL):

- Tips for effective father engagement: a sense of humor, free pizza, and some real talk. #dadsrock
- Which workforce has a major gender inequity problem, but not the kind you’d expect? #dadsrock
- Why don’t dads want to be more involved in parenting? Maybe we should ask them! #dadsrock
- Does the home-visiting field have a gender problem? #dadsrock
- Is it hyperbole to say that if you change a father, you can change a community? #dadsrock
- What does it take for fathers to see themselves as nurturers, not just providers? Sometimes, just an invitation. #dadsrock

- Dads: Does your doctor or school take time to acknowledge you directly? How does that feel? #dadsrock
- Moms: Do you make space for Dad to take on responsibilities, trusting that he’ll get it done? #dadsrock

Fathers play a unique role in children’s lives that is not duplicated in any other relationship.



FINAL THOUGHTS

THINK EVERGREEN

It is important to remember that you don't have just one chance to use a film. The films in this series have been designed to be "evergreen" so the content remains relevant and fresh for audiences over the long term. Tackling the issues addressed in these films and discussing innovations with new audiences is a long-term project. Sharing this film is an especially effective way to get new audiences quickly up to speed to take part in critical conversations.

As you encounter new organizations, develop new supporters, or unearth new opportunities within your communities, the films will remain a vital tool for creating a common understanding around the issues they address. You can post or email the content whenever a current event related to the issue occurs or when your organization has new initiatives or information to share. The key to using the film multiple times is to providing different viewpoints or topics that are associated with the film.

Over time, we hope you'll come to rely on the films in the *Building Community*, *Building Hope* series as one more effective tool in your arsenal whenever you need to quickly open a door for a conversation around a specific prevention topic, population, or family service innovation.

SPREAD THE WORD

The powerful message of *Building Community*, *Building Hope* is that there is hope for families under stress. **The films were designed to foster a learning community around solutions.** Once you begin to use the films to engage others in the work of prevention, you can empower them to use the films as well. This series is for everyone who wants to improve the well-being of children by strengthening families. Let them know that they, too, can use the films to reach out to others, access the discussion tools on the site to facilitate conversations, and explore links to learn more about the issue.

TELL US WHAT YOU THINK!

We would love to hear your stories of how the films and tools worked for you, tips you may want to share with others using the films, or feedback you may have for how these tools can be improved to better meet your needs. Send us a message at hello@cantasd.org to share your thoughts. We look forward to hearing from you!

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