

# Searching for Heroes:

## *Engaging Families and Non-Resident Fathers*



Developed by:  
The Nevada Partnership for Training  
University of Nevada, Reno  
School of Social Work  
March 2012

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Handouts Section 1 Why Are We Talking about Family Engagement? .....	4
Child and Family Service Review (CFSR).....	5
10 Key Elements to Engagement .....	6
The Impact of Father Absence.....	8
Handouts Section 2 The Heart of Child Welfare Work: Family Engagement .....	9
Handout: Social Work Tools .....	10
Skills and Approaches to Engage Family .....	13
Handouts Section 3 Who are Fathers? Laws, Confidentiality and Rights .....	18
Father's Rights & Mothers Too of Course .....	19
Father Definitions in Nevada .....	21
Importance of Establishing Paternity.....	23
Working with Men on Paternity Issues .....	25
Handouts Section 4 Gender Roles and Parenting.....	26
Self-Awareness and Work with Men <i>Exercise</i> .....	27
Handouts Section 5 Strategies for Engaging Fathers.....	28
Male Help-Seeking Behaviors .....	29
Engaging Non-Resident Fathers 2010 American Humane.....	30
Working with Different Fathers in Different Situations.....	32
Interview Observation Sheet .....	35
Handouts Section 6 Engagement Challenges & Solutions .....	36
Standing Up for My Son.....	37
Strategies for Enlisting Mothers' Support .....	40
The ABCs of a Father-friendly Environment.....	41
Handouts Section 7 Working with Incarcerated Parents .....	42
The Effects of Incarceration .....	43
Barriers to Engagement of Incarcerated Parents .....	44
Working Collaboratively to Overcome the Barriers.....	45
Reasons to Engage the Parent and Advocate for Contact/Visitation .....	47
Tips for working with children who have incarcerated parents.....	49
Transfer of Learning .....	53
Handouts Section 8 What is Success? .....	54
A Snapshot: Including Fathers in Family-Centered Child Welfare Services .....	55
Handout: Success Stories .....	57
Self-Care Assessment .....	59

My Maintenance Self-Care Plan Worksheet .....	62
Additional Resources for Caseworkers & Parents .....	64
Advice to Nonresidential Fathers .....	65
Tips from a Father in Prison.....	67
Advice for Fathers .....	69
Tips for Fathers .....	71
Father Child Reunion Tips.....	72
Keys to Good Discipline .....	73
Child Development Activity .....	74
Fathers and Child Development .....	77
Online Web Sites for Fathers .....	83
Fatherhood Resources on Web.....	84



# HANDOUTS

## SECTION I

### WHY ARE WE TALKING ABOUT FAMILY ENGAGEMENT?

# CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICE REVIEW (CFSR)

Nevada's 2009 Child and Family Service Review Final Report noted several areas for improving work with children and families. The indicators (i.e. items) listed under each outcome are included in the assessment of the state's achievement for that outcome. Each of these indicators applies to work with fathers.

	Percent Strength (Goal is 95%)
<b>Permanency Outcome 1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations. <i>NOTE: The following indicators relate to the agency's efforts to achieve the stated permanency goal for a child</i></b>	
Item 8: Reunification, guardianship, and placement with relatives	71%
Item 9: Adoption	6%
<b>Permanency Outcome 2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.</b>	
Item 13: Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care	59%
Item 14: Preserving connections	76%
Item 15: Relative placement	64%
Item 16: Relationship of child in care with parents	39%
<b>Well-Being Outcome 1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for children's needs</b>	
Item 17: Needs/services of child, parents, and foster parents	37% (ANI 63%)
Item 18: Child/family involvement in case planning	44% (ANI 56%)
Item 20: Caseworker visits with parents	44% (ANI 56%)

# 10 KEY ELEMENTS TO ENGAGEMENT

- 1) Clear, honest, and respectful communication with families

Are you respectful of your clients in their presence and elsewhere?

- 2) Commitment to family-centered practice and its underlying philosophy and values.

Do you allow and respect self determination?

- 3) Sufficient frequency and length of contact with families and their identified formal and informal supports.

Do you make all you required monthly contacts?

What makes your family contacts have quality?

- 4) A strengths-based approach that recognizes and reinforces families' capabilities and not just their needs and problems upon goals and plans reflecting both the caseworker's professional training and the family's knowledge of their own situation.

How do you assess for strengths and protective capacities?

- 5) Broad-based involvement by both parents, extended family members, informal networks, and community representatives who create a web of support that promotes safety, increases permanency options, and provides links to needed services.

Do you return phone calls from service providers and relatives?

What do you do to link families to resources?

- 6) Understanding of the role of confidentiality and how to involve partners in case planning in a manner which is respectful of the family, but which also enables partners to plan realistically to protect the child and work toward permanency.

Do you ever breach confidentiality? Are there times you discuss confidential information in the hallway, the elevator, or at lunch?

Do you know who is within the ring of confidentiality? Do you disclose information appropriately to those who need in within the child and family team?

- 7) Recognition of foster and adoptive parents as resources not only for the children in their care, but for the entire birth family.

What are you biases regarding birth families?

What are your biases regarding foster and adoptive parents?

- 8) Individualized service plans that go beyond traditional preset service packages (e.g., parenting classes and counseling) and respond to both parents' identified needs, specific circumstances, and available supports.

Do most of your case plans look the same?

Are there times when you individualize your case plans or use out-of-the-box solutions or services?

- 9) Concrete services that meet immediate needs for food, housing, child care, transportation, and other costs, and help communicate to families a sincere desire to help.

What is your knowledge of resources in the community?

How do you identify and implement informal supports?

- 10) Praise and recognition of parents who are making life changes that result in safe and permanent living situations for their children (including reunification, adoption, kinship placement, or guardianship).

Do you ever offer your clients affirmations individually, in team meetings, in court hearings?

*Child Welfare Info Gateway 2010  
U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services*

## Action Plan

Area to be addressed: \_\_\_\_\_

Strategies:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# THE IMPACT OF FATHER ABSENCE

Children are:

- ✓ Five times more likely to live in poverty
- ✓ More likely to bring weapons and drugs into the classroom
- ✓ Twice as likely to commit a crime
- ✓ Twice as likely to drop out of school
- ✓ Twice as likely to be abused
- ✓ More likely to be homeless or a runaway (90% from fatherless homes)
- ✓ More likely to be sexually abused
- ✓ More likely to have emotional, psychiatric, behavioral issues
- ✓ More likely to have greater levels of aggression and violence
- ✓ More likely to commit suicide (63% from fatherless homes)
- ✓ More than two times as likely to abuse drugs or alcohol
- ✓ More likely to be a prison inmate
- ✓ More likely to become pregnant as a teenager
- ✓ More likely to become a rapists or a murderer (72% of adolescent murderers grew up without fathers, 60% of America's rapists grew up the same way).

Sources:

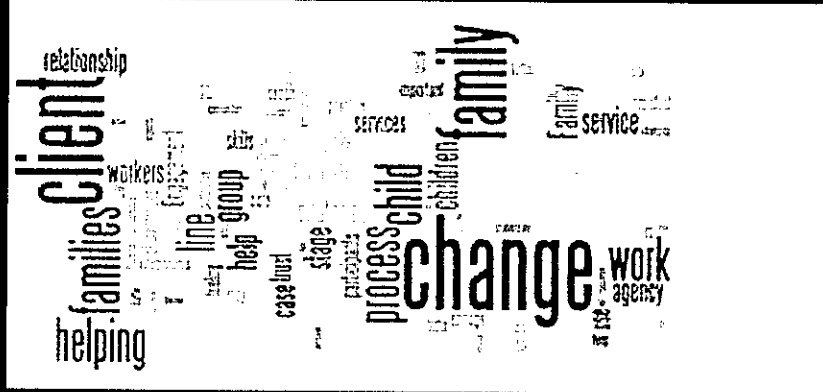
D. Cornell (et al.), Behavioral Sciences and the Law, 5. 1987. And N. Davidson, "Life Without Father," Policy Review. 1990.

N. Vaden-Kierman, N. Ialongo, J. Pearson, and S. Kellam, "Household Family Structure and Children's Aggressive Behavior: A Longitudinal Study of Urban Elementary School Children," Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology 23, no. 5 (1995).

Source: US Bureau of Justice Statistics, Survey of State Prison Inmates.

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Center for Health Statistics, Survey on Child Health, Washington, DC, 1993.





## THE HEART OF CHILD WELFARE WORK FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Nevada Partnership for Training  
University of Nevada, Reno

### HANDOUTS SECTION 2 THE HEART OF CHILD WELFARE WORK: FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

# HANDOUT: SOCIAL WORK TOOLS

Please use this handout as a refresher of the body of skills, behaviors, and knowledge that constitute the steadfast tools of the social work profession. We use these tools to facilitate interviews—the how of the casework contact. The challenge to the child welfare worker is to determine, while planning or in the midst of an interview, the appropriate skill, behavior, or knowledge to apply for the situation in the moment or the particular family. Sometimes we are so busy that we might overlook some of the tools and strategies that when used, help to engage families and develop the professional helping relationship. The following is a way to self-assess for incorporation of these tools on a daily basis.

<b>Attending</b>  The conveyance of respect, acceptance, and interest in a person through use of the environment and one's body, through observing and listening and through verbal and nonverbal responses.	Do my words and actions show that I am interested in this family? That I am following their words? That I am concerned about understanding their feelings? Are my nonverbals and verbals congruent?
<b>Communication</b>  We communicate with words and actions. Our non-verbal messages can often convey something different than the words we speak. 66% of our communication is non-verbal	When I choose my words, am I concerned not just with how I send a message, but how the listener will receive it? Do I try to minimize factors that will create “noise in the channel” for the listener and me? Do I frequently check whether the listener has understood my message as I intended it? When I am talking with a child or youth, how should I adjust my communication and the environment to encourage the youth to talk with me?
<b>Effective Questions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open</li> <li>• Closed</li> <li>• Indirect</li> <li>• Circular</li> <li>• Exception</li> <li>• Solution</li> <li>• Scaling</li> <li>• Miracle</li> </ul>	What can I ask that will help me as well as the family learn and understand more? What questions will help me achieve the tasks of this interview? Am I predisposed to use a certain style of questioning? What style of questioning is most effective with this family? What other types of questions do I need to use with this family?
<b>Reflection</b>  Reflections are concise re-statements of the verbal and non-verbal content or feelings <i>or both</i> of the person's immediate past message.	Am I reflecting both content and feelings? Do my reflections show this family my understanding—or my efforts to understand—what they've been sharing with

Reflection is not an easy skill to master, but once you get there... the payoff can be incredible.	me? Am I keeping the focus on the speaker(s), not on myself?
<b>Concrete Communication</b>  Concreteness is a surprisingly challenging standard to achieve. Many of us have come to use language in a more nonspecific fashion by custom and comfort. Being concrete supports accuracy in communication.	Am I using clear, specific language? Am I determining the parent's understanding of what I've said? Am I guiding the parent to be clear and specific in his/her expression? Are we each using enough detail to arrive at a clear, mutual understanding?
<b>Summarization</b>  "A good summarization contains no new or additional information, but brings together information regarding facts or feelings previously discussed."  <i>Lindsey</i>	Do I need to focus this discussion more? Would it be helpful to this parent to summarize frequently throughout the interview? Am I "on the same page" as the parent? Have I confirmed that? What points do I need to recapitulate at the end of this interview?
<b>Use of the Relationship</b>  It is important for caseworkers to recognize which stage of the helping relationship they are in with each member of the family. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre-Engagement</li> <li>• Engagement</li> <li>• Reaching for Mutual Understanding</li> <li>• Taking Action</li> <li>• Deciding to Continue</li> </ul>	Given the stage of our relationship, what behaviors and skills would be most helpful in encouraging this family to talk and plan with me? Do I need to focus on engaging—or re-engaging—this family? What skills or behaviors do I need to use to manage differences and to progress in the relationship? Given the stage of the casework process, what tasks do we need to be focusing on? What skills will help us do that?
<b>Managing Authority</b>  Caseworkers need to balance the sometimes conflicting responsibilities of being an authority and of trying to develop a change-oriented collaborative relationship.	How can I manage my authority to help the family promote the safety of the children? How can I manage my authority to build an effective relationship with this family? Have I been clear and specific about the non-negotiable issues related to the welfare of the children? Does my discomfort with this family or my authority lead me to over- or under-compensate in some way? What's my plan for dealing with my discomfort?
<b>Genuineness</b>  Being aware of one's own feelings and making a conscious choice about how to respond to the other person. Being real, truthful, honest, and	Am I being nonjudgmental? Are my verbals and nonverbals congruent? Within professional boundaries,

sincere	am I sharing my real thoughts and feelings?
<b>Empathy</b>  Sensing what the situation means to and feels like for an individual & communicating understanding and compassion for, the other's experience.	Am I trying to understand what this person is expressing about his/her thoughts, experiences, and feelings? Am I communicating to him/her—through listening, questions, and attending behaviors—that it is important for me to try to understand?
<b>Respect</b>  Respect refers to the caseworker's communication of acceptance, caring, and concern for the children and family. It involves valuing the individual family members as people, separate from any evaluation of their behavior or thoughts, although this does not mean that caseworkers sanction or approve thoughts or behaviors that society may disapprove.	Do my words and actions demonstrate to this family my regard for them as individuals and as a unit? Do I seek permission for certain actions, such as entering their home, speaking to the children, where I may sit? Do I genuinely seek the family's involvement in assessment and case planning? If I must express a challenge to what a family member has done, do I try, with my words and actions, to demonstrate consideration for who he/she is?
<b>Culture</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Caseworkers should understand and identify the critical cultural values important to the children and family as well as to themselves.</li> <li>• Caseworkers should be able to match services that support the identified cultural values and then incorporate them in the appropriate interventions.</li> </ul>	How are likenesses or differences in culture between me and this family influencing our professional relationship? How does the culture of this family influence the ways in which they protect and care for their children and meet their needs? What can this family teach me about their culture that will support our mutual efforts to promote the well-being of the children
<b>Strengths</b>  Parent strengths include any and all of the things that people do well, positive steps they have taken, their own potential to take charge of their lives, and unexplored resources that are available to them.	What are the strengths in this family? How do these strengths relate to the safety and well-being of the children? What successes has this family experienced?
<b>Needs</b>  Growth Autonomy Self-esteem Affiliation/Love Security Survival	Am I trying to learn more about the needs underlying the behavior of family members? Am I exploring factors and conditions within the family and between the family and their environment that influence their behavior? What are the essential connections of this family? What needs do they meet for members?

# SKILLS AND APPROACHES TO ENGAGE FAMILY

Successful family engagement involves:

- Identifying strengths, protective capacities and resilience in parents;
- Building relationships and rapport with parents through empathy and compassion;
- Promoting caregivers and young people involved in the system as the experts for matters concerning their family; and
- Supporting use of community-based resources to achieve positive outcomes for families.

## Shulman's Interactional Helping Skills

The Shulman Interactional Helping Skills model offers a framework to incorporate skills that are crucial to engaging families such that they can meet the needs of children/youth involved in the child welfare system. Below you will find the four phases of the casework process as well as the associated interactional helping skills. Note that just because the skill appears in a certain phase, this does not mean that this is the only phase in which you would use the skill. The skills are useful at all points of the casework process.

PRELIMINARY/PREPARATORY PHASE: (During this phase, the child welfare professional makes an effort to sensitize himself/herself, before each session, to themes that could emerge during the work.)

1. Tuning in to Self: the worker's efforts to get in touch with actual and potential feelings/concerns/beliefs/values that the worker him/herself brings to the helping encounter.

*NOTE* This skill can be used *in preparation* for an encounter with an individual (e.g., with a supervisor), and used "live" while interacting with the individual during any phase of the relationship.

Steps:

1. Pause and reflect. "How can my cultural context affect my interactions with/ understanding of the family and their situation?"
2. "What are my emotional, physical and cognitive reactions to this situation or family?" (I'm nervous about being in this neighborhood, I think that's what's causing my upset stomach—or it could be the smell of garbage in this alley.)
3. Ask yourself, "How will this reaction likely affect my actions?" (I might get angry with the individual or rush my contact so I can get out of here.)
4. Ask yourself, "What is the primary outcome that I want right now in working with this individual?" (I want the individual to know that I am here to help with her situation and that I have skills and resources that can help. I want her to be able to trust me as a helper.)
5. Ask yourself, "What do I need to do with my reaction?" (I need to be aware of my pacing and not rush through things. I need to calm myself so I can focus on her situation and not my upset stomach. Maybe taking a few minutes to think about a pleasant

situation will help me to relax and focus on her.)

6. Implement your answer to question “4” without any verbal discussion about your feelings or verbalize an “I-Feel” message as needed. (e.g. “I feel defensive about the fact that this person just said that my agency and I are just “baby snatchers”. I need to realize that this person is angry at the situation and who I represent. They are not angry at me. What is my next constructive step?”)

## 2. Tuning in to Others: the worker’s effort to get in touch with the primary feelings and concerns that the family member(s) might bring to the helping encounter.

### Steps:

1. What are this person’s possible emotional, physical, and cognitive reactions to this situation? Example questions to discover this might include:
  - a. “Why might they have those reactions?”
  - b. “How can I check to make sure that I understand the reactions?”
  - c. “What are the non-verbal/verbal behaviors I see that help me know this?”
  - d. “What is the person saying that helps me know this?”
  - e. “How can I let him/her know that I understand these feelings?”
2. Implement your answers to questions “b” and “e” and observe/analyze the other person’s responses.
3. Use of focused listening encourages the individual to talk so you can identify the primary (or most basic) part of the individual’s message. Focused listening requires:
  - a. Paying attention to, and analyzing, the individual’s verbalizations and non-verbal behaviors;
  - b. Using facial expressions and body language that reflect interest, concern and respect;
  - c. Blocking out all other distractions from your mind;
  - d. Centering your attention on the individual’s words, behaviors and feelings; and
  - e. Avoiding interruption of the individual with questions.
4. Display your understanding of the individual’s feelings by reflecting, or asking for clarification of, what you identify as the individual’s primary feelings (You sound fearful of child care workers) and thoughts (You believe that I think just like your last caseworker?).
5. Ensure that your words, voice tone, gestures, facial expression, physical posture, and touch (when appropriate) all match and communicate respect and concern for the individual and the individual’s situation.

**BEGINNING/CONTRACTING PHASE: (During this phase, the child welfare professional’s task is to develop a better understanding of the family’s situation, as well as to develop a contract for work ahead.)**

1. Clarifying Purpose, Function, and Role: simple (without jargon) opening statements by the worker regarding (a) their role/function at the agency, specifically as it relates to the stated problem or issue at hand, and (b) the general purpose of the meeting/encounter.

**Steps:**

1. State your name, job title, and the name of the agency you represent.
    - Show identification as needed
    - Use words rather than initials (Child Protective Services instead of CPS, Family Service Plan instead of FSP, Children & Youth Services instead of CYS, etc.).
  2. State the reason why you are making the contact.
    - Use clear, simple sentences without jargon or technical terms.
    - Respond to questions as needed.
  3. State the purpose/outcome of the contact.
    - Clarify what you will be doing (asking questions, talking to relevant others, looking at the home environment, etc.) and approximately how long you expect the contact to last.
    - Clarify, as needed, what will happen if you are not able to accomplish the purpose of your contact.
2. Dealing with Issues of Authority: using the least amount of protective authority required to achieve the legally mandated outcomes of safety, permanence and well-being for children. This means dealing with issues, raised directly or indirectly, about the worker's (and agency's) authority, such as requiring the acceptance of mandated services or the individual's past and possibly negative experiences with authority figures or social workers.

**Steps:**

1. Invite and clarify expressions of confusion, dissatisfaction, resistance, and complaints about you as the worker, the helping process, or prior experiences with protective authorities (You sound doubtful about what I am saying; is there something you disagree with?).
  2. Tune in to and assess the individual's understanding and cooperation with your purpose (I can hear that you both have strong feelings about talking to me).
  3. Tune into self as a way to manage your own defensiveness, anger, fear, etc. (I'm feeling increasingly defensive the more he sounds angry and suspicious about my visit here today).
  4. Realistically and simply clarify what is, and what isn't, within your role and the authority of your agency (If you're unwilling to meet with me to develop a safety plan for your daughter, that we both agree upon; then my agency will ask the court to legally force you to participate).
  5. Clarify your purpose and mission in working with the individual (My agency works really hard to help keep families together whenever possible, and removing children from home is only a last resort to keep them safe).
3. Reaching for Feedback: Is an effort by the child welfare professional to determine the family's perception of their needs. The working contract includes the common ground between the services of the setting and the felt needs of the family.

**Steps:**

1. Ask the individual to offer their perceptions concerning the situation that brought them to the child welfare agency's attention. (Ms. Jones, I just shared with you the

- information from the referral that our agency received, I'd like to hear your perspective on the situation.).
2. Recap what the individual said to you and ask them to clarify any points of confusion. (You look anxious whenever we discuss investigating the allegation, and I'm wondering what you're thinking about this process?).
  3. It is important to make sure that body language matches what the individual says and vice versa. It may be necessary to address inconsistencies; what is said compared to non-verbal cues. (Ms. Jones, you said that you agree with the plan; however, you appear frustrated with the situation. Am I right? If so, can you tell me more about where the frustration is coming from?).

**MIDDLE/WORKING PHASE: (This is where the work occurs. The work is based on the issues and concerns identified in the Beginning/Contracting Phase.)**

1. Questioning: the skill of making requests for more information related to the problem or situation so that you have a fuller picture of the concern that has been expressed. There are five types of questions used for interviewing.

- Closed-ended questions are useful for eliciting specific, yes or no, information. ("Was the child hurt while playing?").
- Open-ended questions are used for the purpose of stimulating conversation. ("Can you describe what you saw when the child got hurt?")
- Probing questions are used when an issue needs clarification at progressively deeper levels. (Tell me, what did you do immediately after Jessica was hurt?").
- Directive questions are used to tell the other person what information is needed, without being authoritarian or bureaucratic. ("We can best help Isaiah if we know some specific information. I will ask you some questions, and I'd like for you to answer them as best you can.").
- Redirective questions are used to interrupt if the information being given is unproductive or not relevant. ("What I need to hear more about is the specific way that the child was hurt.").

2. Reaching Inside Silences: being able to explore the meaning of an individual's silence by putting possible feelings into words.

Steps:

1. Being comfortable with silence;
  2. Offering non-verbal support in posture (leaning in slightly toward the individual without violating personal space needs) and facial expression to indicate that you are listening and want the individual to continue talking; and
  3. Encouraging the individual to share their thoughts (You are very quiet. Could you tell me what you are thinking? I'm not sure what you're thinking about right now... could you share your thoughts with me in words?) and articulating what the silence may mean (I can see that this is hard for you to talk about; Many mothers in this situation have felt angry, frightened, sad, etc.; Does your silence mean that you're having a hard time finding the right words to tell me what you are thinking?).
3. Communicating Information: imparting important information or clarifying issues about the casework process, including mutual expectations, goals and services, legal issues, timelines, court processes, and next steps.



Steps:

1. Provide information (facts, outcomes, deadlines, reports, diagnoses, values, beliefs, etc.) that the individual needs in order to manage the task at hand (The first visit is scheduled for Saturday the 15th, and we'll need to arrive at the jail by 9:00 am. So we need to leave here by 8:15);
2. When possible, information is provided in a manner that leaves it open to challenge by the individual (Dan does have the right to see his children and it's important that the kids stay connected with him, wouldn't you agree?); and
3. Give the individual an opportunity to ask questions and express feelings about the provided information (Please be sure to check in with Justin and Sara periodically to see how they're feeling about visiting their dad and any questions they have. Are you comfortable doing that?).

ENDING/TRANSITIONING PHASE: (The session is brought to a close. During this phase, the child welfare professional makes connections between the session/working relationship and future work or issues in the life of the family member(s).)

1. Identifying Next Steps: summarizing and reviewing important information or clarifying issues about the casework process (including mutual expectations; goals and services; legal issues; timelines; court processes) and next steps, while giving others the opportunity to ask questions and express feelings.

Steps:

1. Be specific, clear, and to-the-point when reviewing the main themes of the meeting (We spoke about what can happen if you get help for this problem, and what will happen if you don't, right Ms. Pruitt?);
2. Ask the individual if s/he has any questions or strong feelings about these themes (Do you have any other thoughts, feelings or questions about our meeting today?);
3. Articulate the next steps and timelines to be taken by both the worker and individual (So your next steps are to first, contact the detox center by tomorrow and find out what they may be able to do to assist you. Second, call your AA sponsor and let her know what's happened recently. And third, you know it's always important to be sure that all of the kids are in school on time in the morning. My next steps are to first, identify other possible resources, other than the detox center, that might be able to assist you, second I will continue to contact the school to monitor the children's attendance.); and
4. End the encounter by asking the individual if they understand and agree with the next steps (That wraps up our meeting for today. So, you know what is expected of you and will do these things as we agreed, right?).

Source: Shulman, L., (2006). The Pennsylvania Child Welfare Training Program



**Nevada Partnership for Training  
University of Nevada, Reno**

## SECTION 3

# FATHER'S RIGHTS & MOTHERS TOO OF COURSE

- ✓ The right to be involved in the development of the family service plan.
- ✓ The right to receive a copy of the family service plan.
- ✓ The right to appeal the family service plan.
- ✓ The right to receive services.
- ✓ The right to receive notification of court hearings.
- ✓ The right to have access to the family case record – other than sections prohibited due to confidentiality. Fathers have the right to receive services as needed to ensure safety and reduce risk to their child(ren).
- ✓ The right to receive a copy of an abuse report as well as all information in the central registry regarding themselves or their child(ren).
- ✓ The right to know the status of a report involving themselves and/or their child(ren).
- ✓ The right to receive a written notice of the existence of a report of child abuse.
- ✓ The right to know why child protection services became involved with their families and their child(ren).
- ✓ The right to receive assistance in recognizing and remedying conditions harmful to their child(ren) so that they might become a better parent.
- ✓ The right to receive immediate written notification, within 24 hours of an agency placing their child(ren) under protective custody, and reason(s) the agency took the child(ren) into protective custody – unless prohibited by court order.
- ✓ The right to be involved in a conference with the parent, guardian, and/or other custodian of their child(ren) whom an agency decided to take into protective custody.
- ✓ The right to receive reasonable notification prior to the commencement of any hearing.
- ✓ The right to court-appointed legal counsel without any financial responsibility if he is without financial resources or otherwise unable to employ counsel.
- ✓ The right to have an opportunity to introduce evidence at a court proceeding, for the court to hear him on his own behalf, and to cross-examine witnesses.
- ✓ The right to participate at court hearings.
- ✓ The right to inspect the court files and records in a proceeding, except those that reveal the names of confidential sources.
- ✓ The right to participate in the treatment, supervision, and/or rehabilitation of their child(ren).
- ✓ The right to receive notification should an agency decide to take their child(ren) into custody.
- ✓ The right to not let government agencies in their home without a warrant. Child welfare workers must assess on a case by case basis if this presents a safety concern for children.
- ✓ The right to be notified any time you have interviewed their child as a result of a abuse or neglect investigation.
- ✓ The right to not allow you into their home.

Adapted from The Pennsylvania Child Welfare Training Program

# FATHER DEFINITIONS IN NEVADA

## ➤ PUTATIVE or ALLEGED FATHER: NRS 128.016

“Putative father” means a person who is or is alleged or reputed to be the father of an illegitimate child.

## ➤ UNFIT PARENT: NRS 128.018

“Unfit parent” is any parent of a child who, by reason of the parent’s fault or habit or conduct toward the child or other persons, fails to provide such child with proper care, guidance and support.

## ➤ PRESUMED FATHER: NRS 126.051

1. A man is presumed to be the natural father of a child if:

(a) He and the child’s natural mother are or have been married to each other and the child is born during the marriage, or within 285 days after the marriage is terminated by death, annulment, declaration of invalidity or divorce, or after a decree of separation is entered by a court.

(b) He and the child’s natural mother were cohabiting for at least 6 months before the period of conception and continued to cohabit through the period of conception.

(c) Before the child’s birth, he and the child’s natural mother have attempted to marry each other by a marriage solemnized in apparent compliance with law, although the attempted marriage is invalid or could be declared invalid, and:

(1) If the attempted marriage could be declared invalid only by a court, the child is born during the attempted marriage, or within 285 days after its termination by death, annulment, declaration of invalidity or divorce; or

(2) If the attempted marriage is invalid without a court order, the child is born within 285 days after the termination of cohabitation.

(d) While the child is under the age of majority, he receives the child into his home and openly holds out the child as his natural child.

2. A conclusive presumption that a man is the natural father of a child is established if tests for the typing of blood or tests for genetic identification made pursuant to NRS 126.121 show a probability of 99 percent or more that he is the father except that the presumption may be rebutted if he establishes that he has an identical sibling who may be the father.

3. A presumption under subsection 1 may be rebutted in an appropriate action only by clear and convincing evidence. If two or more presumptions arise which conflict with each other, the presumption which on the facts is founded on the weightier considerations of policy and logic controls. The presumption is rebutted by a court decree establishing paternity of the child by another man.

## ➤ CUSTODIAL PARENT: NRS 126.021

Means the parent of a child born out of wedlock who has been awarded physical custody of the child or, if no award of physical custody has been made by a court, the parent with whom the child resides.

## ➤ NONSUPPORTING PARENT: NRS 126.021

Means the parent of a child born out of wedlock who has failed to provide an equitable share of his or her child’s necessary maintenance, education and support.

## ➤ PARENT AND CHILD RELATIONSHIP: NRS 126.021

Means the legal relationship existing between a child and his or her natural or adoptive parents incident to which the law confers or imposes rights, privileges, duties and obligations. It includes the mother and child relationship and the father and child relationship.

➤ **VOLUNTARY ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF PATERNITY: NRS 126.053**

1. After the expiration of the period described in subsection 2, a declaration for the voluntary acknowledgment of paternity developed by the State Board of Health pursuant to NRS 440.283 shall be deemed to have the same effect as a judgment or order of a court determining the existence of the relationship of parent and child if the declaration is signed in this or any other state by the mother and father of the child. A declaration for the voluntary acknowledgment of paternity that is signed pursuant to this subsection is not required to be ratified by a court of this State before the declaration is deemed to have the same effect as a judgment or order of a court determining the existence of the relationship of parent and child.

## Custody

**NRS 126.031 Relationship of parent and child not dependent on marriage; primary physical custody of child born out of wedlock.**

1. The parent and child relationship extends equally to every child and to every parent, regardless of the marital status of the parents.
2. Except as otherwise provided in a court order for the custody of a child:
  - (a) Except as otherwise provided in paragraph (b), the mother of a child born out of wedlock has primary physical custody of the child if:
    - (1) The mother has not married the father of the child; and
    - (2) A judgment or order of a court, or a judgment or order entered pursuant to an expedited process, determining the paternity of the child has not been entered.
  - (b) The father of a child born out of wedlock has primary physical custody of the child if:
    - (1) The mother has abandoned the child to the custody of the father; and
    - (2) The father has provided sole care and custody of the child in her absence.
3. For the purposes of this section, “abandoned” means failed, for a continuous period of not less than 6 weeks, to provide substantial personal and economic support.
4. As used in this section, “expedited process” has the meaning ascribed to it in NRS 126.161.

**NRS 128.012 “Abandonment of a child” defined.**

1. “Abandonment of a child” means any conduct of one or both parents of a child which evinces a settled purpose on the part of one or both parents to forego all parental custody and relinquish all claims to the child.
2. If a parent or parents of a child leave the child in the care and custody of another without provision for the child’s support and without communication for a period of 6 months, or if the child is left under such circumstances that the identity of the parents is unknown and cannot be ascertained despite diligent searching, and the parents do not come forward to claim the child within 3 months after the child is found, the parent or parents are presumed to have intended to abandon the child

# IMPORTANCE OF ESTABLISHING PATERNITY

## **Identity**

Only if unmarried parents acknowledge paternity will the father's information appear on the child's birth certificate.

## ***Adoption***

When a father signs the Paternity Acknowledgment Form, his information is automatically entered in the Putative Father Registry. This means that the father gains the right to be notified of any plans to have the child adopted by someone else. This provided an important safeguard for the father, the child, and prospective adoptive parents.

## ***Medical***

When parents acknowledge paternity, the child will have access to information about medical histories on both sides of his or her family. This is especially important in situations in which the child inherits a medical problem. Additionally, after a father completes a Paternity Acknowledgment, he may be able to add the child to his health insurance policy.

## **Father-Child Relationship**

It is important for a child to know his or her mother and father, and to benefit from a relationship with both parents. Once a child is legitimized, the father is more likely to maintain his relationship with the child. The father's extended family may also be more likely to participate in that child's life.

## **CUSTODY AND VISITATION**

If parents are unmarried at the time of a child's birth, the mother is presumed to have custody. A father cannot petition the court for custody and/or visitation until the child has been legitimized. If the father decides later to seek custody and/or visitation rights, the legitimation portion is complete and will save him both time and money in the judicial process.

## **FINANCIAL**

Acknowledging paternity potentially allows the child to qualify for important financial benefits from the father. Possibilities include social security, pension, retirement, and unemployment benefits; life insurance; veteran's benefits; and inheritance rights in the event that something happens to the father. Social Security serves as an insurance program for the children of workers who become seriously disabled or die. Social Security is, in fact, the government's largest children's program, paying out roughly \$16 billion annually to child beneficiaries under age 18. More children benefit from Social Security than from Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). About 3.1 million children under 18 receive benefits because a parent has died, retired, or can no longer work because of disability.

## **Support**

Both parents have a responsibility to support their child, both emotionally and financially. If the parents choose to separate and paternity is already decided, it is easier for the mother to obtain child support from the father.

Adapted from: Georgia DHR Paternity Program  
Two Peachtree St, NW; SU-425; Atlanta, GA 30303-3142  
Phone: 706-721-7001  
Toll Free: 866-296-8262 Fax: 706-721-6976  
Skills and Strategies for 17 April 2009  
Working with Fathers

## **Emotional Health**

According to a study conducted by The Bernard L. Pacella Parent Child Center, a "Father's responsiveness to his children and his emotional availability are key characteristics in a child's development. Children whose fathers are available and involved have higher self-esteem, are more autonomous and self-assertive. Paternal involvement seems to predict adult adjustment better than maternal involvement. Unquestioningly, fathers can help their children develop a sense of competence, security, and self-control." According to Ohio State University research, "Importance of Fathers in Children's Asset Development," infants whose fathers were closely involved with their care were found to be more cognitively developed at one year of age. Also, fathers' positive and sensitive attitude toward infants were related to their children's problem-solving competence later in life. Clearly, a father's involvement is important to his children's intellectual and emotional development.



# WORKING WITH MEN ON PATERNITY ISSUES

## Important questions to ask fathers:

- Were you married to the mother at the time of birth?
- Was the mother married to someone other than you?
- If unmarried, have you ever signed a paternity acknowledgment form?
- Have you had a blood test (DNA test) to establish paternity?
- Are you now or have you ever lived with the child, or let it be known that the child is yours?

## Other issues to address with fathers:

- Assess his willingness to go through the process of establishing paternity if he has not yet done so.
- Explain how this can be done and explain the difference between establishing paternity and legitimating—this is critical! Only legitimization will give him the opportunity to petition for custody or visitation. If the child is in foster care, he must legitimate in order to be considered as a placement resource or for his relatives to be considered as placement resources.
- Use available resources to assist the father in accomplishing this, including referring the father to legal services if necessary.
- Find out his willingness to assist with a search for paternal relatives.



# SELF-AWARENESS AND WORK WITH MEN

## EXERCISE

All of us have values, ethics, ideals, and principles that form the framework for our lives. The following seven questions will help you sort through these values in the context of your relationships with men.

1. A motto is a creed that summarizes our approach to life. It often has to do with work ethics, values about life, belief systems, or even a favorite saying. It could be positive or negative. If your father had a motto, what would it be?

---

---

---

2. Other than your biological father, who were important men in your life when you were growing up? What was your relationship with them like?

---

---

---

3. What did these important men teach you about what men are like?

---

---

---

4. If your father was active in your life as you were growing up, what did he teach you that you can embrace? What did he teach you that you want to discard?

---

---

---

5. If your father was not active in your life as you were growing up, how did his absence shape and form who you are today?

---

---

---

6. Think about the role your father played or is playing in your life in general. What impact does it have on your work?

---

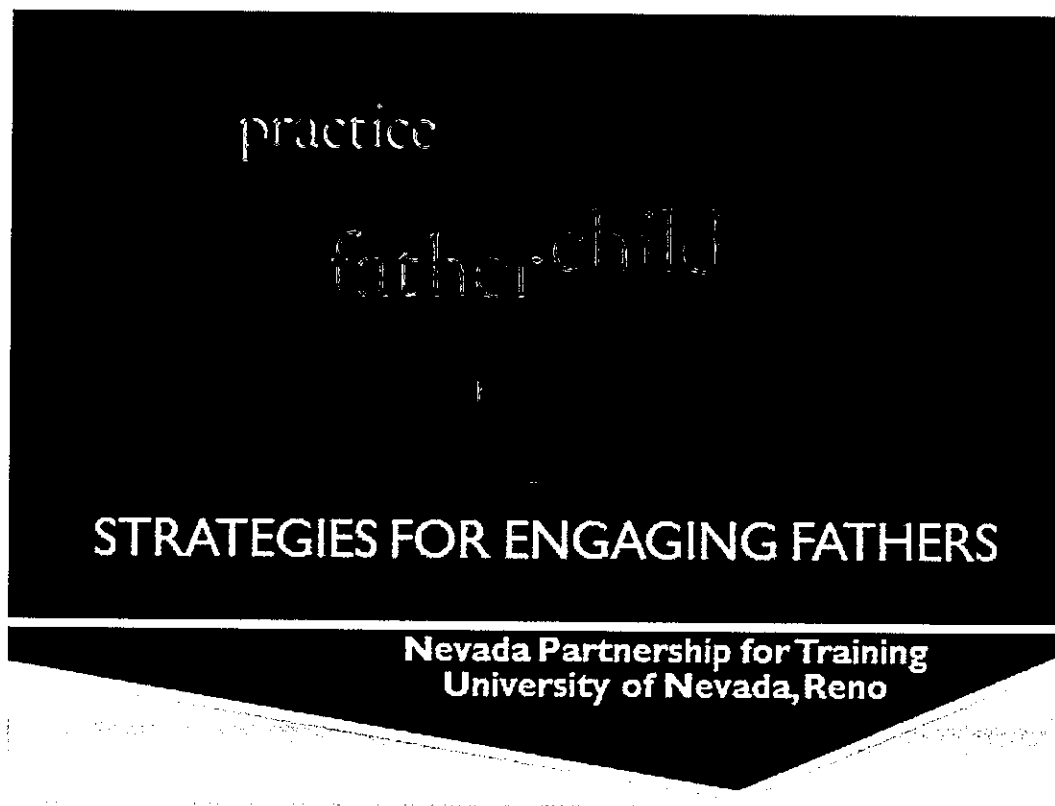
---

---

7. What has been the most surprising aspect of this exercise?

---

---



HANDOUTS  
SECTION 5  
STRATEGIES FOR ENGAGING FATHERS

# MALE HELP-SEEKING BEHAVIORS

The literature suggests that men are less likely to seek help than women are. This is strongly influenced by how men are socialized. The following identifies some common barriers some men may have in seeking help and some strategies useful to meeting the unique cultural needs of men that may ameliorate these barriers and increase the likelihood that men will seek help.

Barriers some men experience in seeking help include:

- **Difficulty admitting that there is a problem.** The stems form difficulty with accepting weakness.
- **Difficulty in asking for help and intolerance for depending on others.** This stems from the strong valuation of autonomy and independence.
- **Difficulty in accepting, identifying and processing the more tender or “soft” emotions.** In our culture, it’s not acceptable to be perceived as weak.
- **A fear of intimacy and vulnerability.** Displaying intimacy or vulnerability is also views as a weakness.
- **Sexualization of female helpers and homophobic feelings that block opening up to male helpers.** Often men feel that they have to be stronger than women and that they cannot demonstrate weakness in front of a woman.
- **A scarcity of treatment approached that are sensitive to men’s needs and dilemmas.**

The following strategies to promote help seeking behavior in men are based on what is known about men’s socialization, gender and cultural needs:

- **Normalize their experience.** Men do not want to be perceived as abnormal. This can best be done by another man, as other men may share a general understanding of what it is like to be a man in society. Many fatherhood groups help do this very well.
- **Minimize efforts to have men reflect on affect and emotions.** Instead of asking men “how do you feel?” ask, “What is it like for you?”
- **Provide direct feedback that will assist them in becoming better problem solvers and decision makers** while ensuring that the feedback provides action-oriented steps the father can take.
- **Use metaphors to help men visualize their situation in a concrete, relatable way.** Metaphors allow men to see problem solving as connected to an action and allow fathers to separate the problem from themselves and gain a sense of objectivity.
- **Use approaches that focus on logic and behavior,** such as cognitive behavioral therapies that seek to connect thoughts, feeling and behaviors and redirect them into actions the father can take.

# ENGAGING NON-RESIDENT FATHERS 2010 AMERICAN HUMANE

Engagement Strategy	This strategy might be useful when...
Start from the assumption that the non-resident father wants to be involved.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The father has been absent for a period of time but demonstrates interest in the child's well-being.</li> <li>• The father has not returned your calls; consider that there may be some underlying reasons that you are unaware of.</li> <li>• The mother or someone from the maternal family tells you that the father doesn't want to be involved; however, this has not been directly confirmed.</li> </ul>
Facilitate the restoration of the father in the life of the child by co-creating goals based on the father's strengths, not his deficits.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The father feels as though he doesn't have anything to offer his child.</li> <li>• The father has been absent for a period of time and doesn't know how to re-engage in a relationship with his child.</li> <li>• The father is struggling with joblessness, financial issues or multiple demands, or is caring for a new family.</li> </ul>
Treat each case on an individual basis, not based on experiences with other fathers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You have your own personal struggles with fathers or "father figures" in your life.</li> <li>• You have multiple cases in which the fathers are absent and refusing to engage. When this is true, it is important to take a step back and examined how other cases are influencing the decisions in the current case.</li> </ul>
Suspend judgments and listen to all sides. There are two sides to every story. Give the non-resident father an opportunity to give his side.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You have heard a lot of negative things about the father from the mother; maternal family members or even other workers the case was assigned to.</li> <li>• You have your own personal struggles with fathers or "father figures" in your life.</li> <li>• Allegations about the father have been made but not substantiated...weigh out all the information.</li> <li>• The father has been absent from the child's life.</li> </ul>
Make room for expressions of anger. This emotion in men is socialized as "acceptable." It may be the only one they are comfortable expressing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You detect hostility from the father; acknowledging it may help defuse it.</li> <li>• He father has not been kept informed about his child by the mother or others.</li> <li>• Anger is the only emotion the father feel secure expressing, as it keeps him from feeling vulnerable to other.</li> </ul>
Help the non-resident father identify his tangible and non-tangible assets.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It appears that the father is struggling with his identity as a father.</li> <li>• The father doesn't believe he has anything to offer his child.</li> <li>• The father is struggling with joblessness or financial issues,</li> </ul>

	and/or is juggling multiple demands.
Remind the father that he is a role model to his children. Boys learn about manhood from their fathers, and girls get a sense of what to expect from their fathers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The father isn't fully aware of how his presence in his child's life can benefit his child.</li> <li>• It would be helpful for the father to consider what type of messages he wants to send to his child through either his involvement or lack of involvement.</li> </ul>
Acknowledge your power as a caseworker but empower the father to use his assets and his often-hidden power to keep his child safe by remaining engaged and involved. Remember, some men struggle and "present" differently when feeling helpless and hopeless.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The father feels disempowered based on his previous and current life circumstances and the additional perceived "intrusion" of child welfare.</li> <li>• The father feels that the mother has all the power and he can't do anything to change that; encourage him to look at what he can offer that may be different from what the mother can offer.</li> <li>• The father needs to understand the importance of his involvement to help keep his child safe and promote his or her well-being; let the father know about the benefits of involvement.</li> </ul>
Recognize and acknowledge the previous experiences the father may have had with child welfare workers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The father was removed from his parents and placed in foster care.</li> <li>• The father had a bad experience with his caseworker, judge, probation officer, attorney etc.</li> <li>• The father has had indirect experience or knowledge of child welfare processes, fostering distrust of system personnel.</li> </ul>
Be clear and transparent about the reasons for the agency's involvement, the father's role throughout the process and agency expectations. Suspicion may be present and he may think he is being sought only to obtain child support.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The father doesn't trust the system or those who represent the system.</li> <li>• The father's experience has suggested that he is only needed for money he can provide.</li> <li>• The father fears he is unable to pay child support because of his own financial challenges.</li> <li>• The father feels shame for his inability to financially provide for the children.</li> </ul>
Remind the father of how important he is in the life of his children, how there are some things only he can provide and that his children will carry what he does with them forever.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is important for the father to hear specifics about how he can positively impact his child's life; it is not enough to talk in general terms; the father needs to hear how his presence can benefit the child. Share some of the benefits identified in this training.</li> <li>• The father needs to consider how he would like his child to remember him 10 to 15 years from now.</li> </ul>

# WORKING WITH DIFFERENT FATHERS IN DIFFERENT SITUATIONS

Case managers need to adapt their approaches to fit fathers in varying circumstances. There is no single model for fatherhood and no single model for being an involved father. While it is clear that a married father is more likely to be involved in his child's life, fathers in other situations can be and are good fathers as well. The following discussion highlights different father situations and explores relevant case manager issues for each situation while working with families in the child welfare system.

***Married Fathers.*** This is the model most often associated with positive outcomes for children. Child maltreatment may be a sign of a problem in the marriage. At the very least, it signals significant stress upon the marital unit. When working with a family headed by a married mother and father, the case manager must come to understand the status of the marriage. Is it strong and healthy? Is it troubled and, if so, why and how? The condition of the marriage directly influences the children. Furthermore, the child maltreatment may have occurred because of marital problems that caused misdirected anger, stress, and exhaustion.

***Cohabiting Parents.*** A man and a woman living together who have one or more children together display many of the same issues as a married couple. However, the research shows that cohabitation—even and especially when children are involved—is not the same as marriage. For example, one study reveals that when couples marry after cohabiting, they are nearly 50% more likely to divorce eventually as compared to couples that did not live together. Other research has shown that teenagers being raised by cohabiting parents have more emotional and behavioral problems than peers who are living with married parents. Why there is such a difference in outcomes for couples and children alike in a cohabiting arrangement? This can only be answered by theory and speculation. It may have to do with the view the couple has toward marriage, commitment, and their own relationship. It is theorized that perhaps cohabiting parents, especially men, view the union as more tenuous and perhaps temporary, which suggests that the case manager determine how the cohabiting mother and father view their own relationship, its strength, and its longevity.

***Incarcerated Fathers.*** More and more programs are working with men in prison not only to prepare them for returning to a productive role in society, but just as importantly to prepare them for being a good father upon their return. Many men who are in prison have never had an opportunity to learn how to be good fathers. These programs work with men around issues related to fatherhood not only out of a commitment to connecting men with their children, but also to ensure that men who leave prison are prepared to take an active role in their family. This may be one of the best ways to motivate men to avoid the behaviors that lead them into prison in the first place. A case manager working with a family who has a father currently in prison may find it valuable to determine where the father is incarcerated, and if one of these programs is currently operating at the facility.

***Multiple Fathers.*** A situation that can be extremely challenging occurs when there are multiple fathers involved in the family. In some families, children are living in the same household, yet have different fathers.



There may be different arrangements:

- The mother is living with children by herself, while the fathers of the children may or may not be involved.
- The mother may be living with the father of one or more of her children, while the father(s) of her other children may or may not be involved.
- The mother may be living with a man who is not the father of any of her children, and the father(s) of her children may or may not be involved.

Obviously, any one of these scenarios presents the potential for tension and confusion over roles. Concerns over who is responsible for the safety of the children, who plays the role of the psychological father—the man who acts, in the eyes of the child, as "dad"—and how other adults are portraying the father to his children will come into play. Financial issues are often a source of tension. Issues of trust between and among the adults are almost sure to arise. As one would expect, it is common for one father to be angry at another over who is responsible for a child being maltreated. When working with a family with multiple fathers involved, it is important for the case manager to understand the role each man plays in the family dynamic. It is also important to learn how each father views the maltreatment, what led up to it, and who, in his mind, is responsible for the maltreatment occurring. All men living in the household should be part of the process, including family meetings. Whether and when to involve other fathers of children in the household needs to be determined on a case-by-case basis and, like any challenging issue facing a case manager, the input of a supervisor can be a valuable tool. The goal of the entire process, of course, is to achieve safety and permanency for the child. One or all of the fathers who are connected to the family can prove to be a valuable ally in accomplishing this goal—determining which of the fathers and how he or they will be helpful, and how the case manager can support them in being helpful, is the task the case manager faces.

**Boyfriends.** While he is not the father, a boyfriend may fill the role of father to the child. He may contribute financially to rearing the child. He may be the father of other children in the house, but not of the child who was maltreated. If the father of the child who was maltreated is involved in any way, the father assuredly will have strong feelings about the boyfriend. Much has been written about boyfriends in the house and their role in child maltreatment. Because these men typically do not have the same history of care and nurturing with the child, the same emotional and normative commitment to the child's welfare, and the same institutionalized role as a father figure as do biological fathers in intact families, boyfriends pose a higher risk to children if they spend time alone with them. These factors help to explain why mothers' boyfriends are much more likely to be involved in physical or sexual abuse of children than a biological father. In one study of physical abuse, boyfriends accounted for 64% of non-parental abuse, even though boyfriends performed only 2% of non-parental care. Another study found that the odds of child maltreatment were 2.5 times higher in households with a boyfriend living in the home, compared to households with a biological father. The authors of this study concluded that CPS case managers should 'focus more of their attention on the high-risk relationship between a surrogate father and the children.'

**Stepfathers.** While research varies, some studies show that stepfathers are more likely to abuse their children physically and sexually. A 1997 study of more than 600 families in upstate New York found that children living with stepfathers were more than three times more likely to be sexually abused than children living in intact families. Another study found that the presence

of a stepfather doubles the risk of sexual abuse for girls—either from the stepfather or from another male figure. Analyzing reports of fatal child abuse in the United States, one study found that stepfathers were approximately 60 times more likely than biological fathers to kill their preschool children. While these studies find that stepfathers often invest less in caring for their stepchildren, others cite many examples of caring behaviors by and close relationships with stepparents, suggesting that paternal investment is not restricted only to biological offspring. This is not to suggest that the case manager should assume the boyfriend or stepfather is a dangerous member of the family. There are, of course, countless stepfathers who step into the role of dad with both competence and caring, and many live-in boyfriends provide both love and structure for the children in the household. It does mean that the case manager needs to recognize that there are unique issues at play when working with a live-in boyfriend or stepfather. It also may mean that, if the perpetrator is the live-in boyfriend or stepfather, there are additional challenges and issues to consider when assessing the safety of the child.

Adapted from: Rosenberg, J., & Wilcox, W. B. (2006). The Importance of Fathers in the Healthy Development of Children. U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. Office of Child Abuse and Neglect, User Manual Series.  
<http://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/usermanuals/fatherhood/fatherhood.pdf>  
Skills and Strategies for 21 April 2009  
Working with Fathers

# INTERVIEW OBSERVATION SHEET

## *Case Manager and Mr. Howard*

- ☐ Addressed Mr. Howard by name
- ☐ Communicated purpose of interview
- ☐ Made efforts to develop rapport (e.g. small talk, compliments, offering needed resources, etc.)
- ☐ Noticed Mr. Howard's communication style and adjust own style accordingly
- ☐ Acknowledged and responded to cultural differences
- ☐ Allowed Mr. Howard to tell the story in his or her own words, then asked clarifying questions
- ☐ Displayed non-judgmental attitude (reflected in both non-verbal and verbal communication)
- ☐ Used different types of questions appropriately (e.g. open, closed, coping, relationship, exception-finding, etc.)
- ☐ Used active listening skills such as: reflection, summarization, paraphrasing, minimal encouragers
- ☐ Responded appropriately to anger, hostility, "attitude"
- ☐ Gave specific messages related to the importance of Mr. Howard's involvement
- ☐ Attempted to gather information about the status and quality of relationships within the family
- ☐ Attempted to identify and address barriers to Mr. Howard's involvement



## ENGAGEMENT CHALLENGES & SOLUTIONS

Nevada Partnership for Training  
University of Nevada, Reno

HANDOUTS

SECTION 6

ENGAGEMENT CHALLENGES & SOLUTIONS

## STANDING UP FOR MY SON

**I had to fight to get my son out of the system.**

**BY CARLOS BOYET**

I was only 15 when my girlfriend of six months came out pregnant. Soon I found out that she was playing me. I was young and didn't know what to do, so I left her with the belly. When the baby was born, my mother took me to the hospital. We both took a good look at the baby and said the same thing, "That's not my kid!"

The baby's mother did not allow a blood test, nor did she let me be a part of Jeremy's life. It hurt me inside to think, "If he is mine, what type of example am I setting?" But she was picking fights with my new girl and acting crazy. It was like a reality show. Then she fled with the baby.

I had no contact with her for more than two years. Then I received a petition from the court stating that I had to appear for a child support hearing. The court date was for my son's third birthday.

**'You Are the Father'**

In court, I got to see them both, mother and son. I still didn't know if Jeremy was my son, but I was concerned when I saw him. He looked very small for his age and was not walking or talking at the right level.

The judge asked, "What brings you here today?" I asked for a blood test.

Three weeks later came the big day. The judge said, "Carlos R. Boyet, you are the father of Jeremy Rodriguez." I felt terrible that I had not made an effort to see him.

I realize now that I could have asked the judge for visits, but I was unaware of my rights. When we left court, I tried to talk with my son's mother. "No, stay away from us," she said. I thought there was nothing I could do.

**'Your Son Is in Care'**

One cold October night my cell phone rang with alarming news. A caseworker said, "I am calling you to inform you that your child, Jeremy, will be placed in foster care."

I took a deep breath in disbelief. Then I asked for my son to be placed in my care. With an attitude, she replied, "You would have to go to family court to be recognized as the child's father." When I hung up I was so upset that I took a long walk to calm down.

**Not Getting Anywhere**

I was determined to get my son out of foster care, but I did not know my rights. For two years I did not have contact with my son. His caseworker kept changing, and I wasn't getting anywhere. I was caught up in a world I did not understand.

Finally, I went to court. Instead of being given credit for my persistence in finding my son, or being seen as a potential resource for him, I was investigated.

I submitted to drug tests even though I was not using drugs. I took parenting classes that did nothing to educate me about the special needs of my son, who is developmentally disabled. I was compliant and polite. All through this, I did not have an attorney, because the case was not against me.

### Learning My Rights

Finally, I enrolled in a six-month training at the Child Welfare Organizing Project, where I learned my rights. At CWOP, parents learn how to advocate for themselves and for changes in the child welfare system.

I also made progress by working with Jeremy's foster parent. She gave me her phone number to call her any time. Eventually, I asked if Jeremy could visit me on weekends, because visits at the agency were not helping us bond. It was very difficult to get Jeremy engaged in playing games with me. He would just run around the whole place and pay me no mind.

### Challenging Visits

Without court approval, Jeremy began to stay with me each weekend. I'm not going to lie—at first, it was very difficult. Jeremy was bugged out. He would scratch himself, bite himself, scream at the top of his lungs. There was never a day that Jeremy was having a good day. If I got a peaceful couple of hours, I was grateful for it.

I tried taking Jeremy to the beach; he didn't like it. I tried Great Adventure; he didn't like it. I kept asking myself, "What would be nice for Jeremy?" I found out that Jeremy liked videogames, and we played together. He also liked to hang out on the block, listening to music. That's not my idea of fun, but I was good with it.

What got us through was my commitment. I said to myself, "This is my son. I care about him." And, "Carlos, this is your job. You have to do this, no matter what."

### Twist of Fate

Despite our growing bond—and the intrusive investigations and meaningless requirements imposed in court—I was no closer to getting my son home.

Then one summer day Jeremy's foster parent called to inform me that my son was in the hospital. Jeremy had taken Valium and was sick for a week. I was furious.

In court, I was told that the agency would conduct an investigation. I asked if Jeremy could come home with me. They said no, but five weeks later he was temporarily discharged to my care. I was relieved to have him home but felt like the system was saying, "Here, just take him and be quiet about this."

### **The Father He Needs**

Now I am a parent organizer at CWOP and I work in partnership with Children's Services to improve how the system treats parents in my community. However, I have to say that there was nothing good about my own experience.

I was stereotyped as a drug user, a deadbeat, a thug. I had to go through obstacles that had nothing to do with my skills as a parent. For instance, I was told to get a higher-paying job, but was not offered any kind of support in doing this. The caseworkers could have taken the time to understand me as an individual. They could have been more resourceful, worked with me and shown me some respect.

These days, Jeremy and I are doing well. At 11, Jeremy is still challenging and difficult. He has not had an easy life. He has behavior issues and learning problems. He struggles in school. But he's my son, and I'm committed to being the father he needs.

# STRATEGIES FOR ENLISTING MOTHERS' SUPPORT

Case managers can use these strategies to enlist mothers' support in locating and engaging fathers. These strategies apply to mothers as well as to maternal relatives.

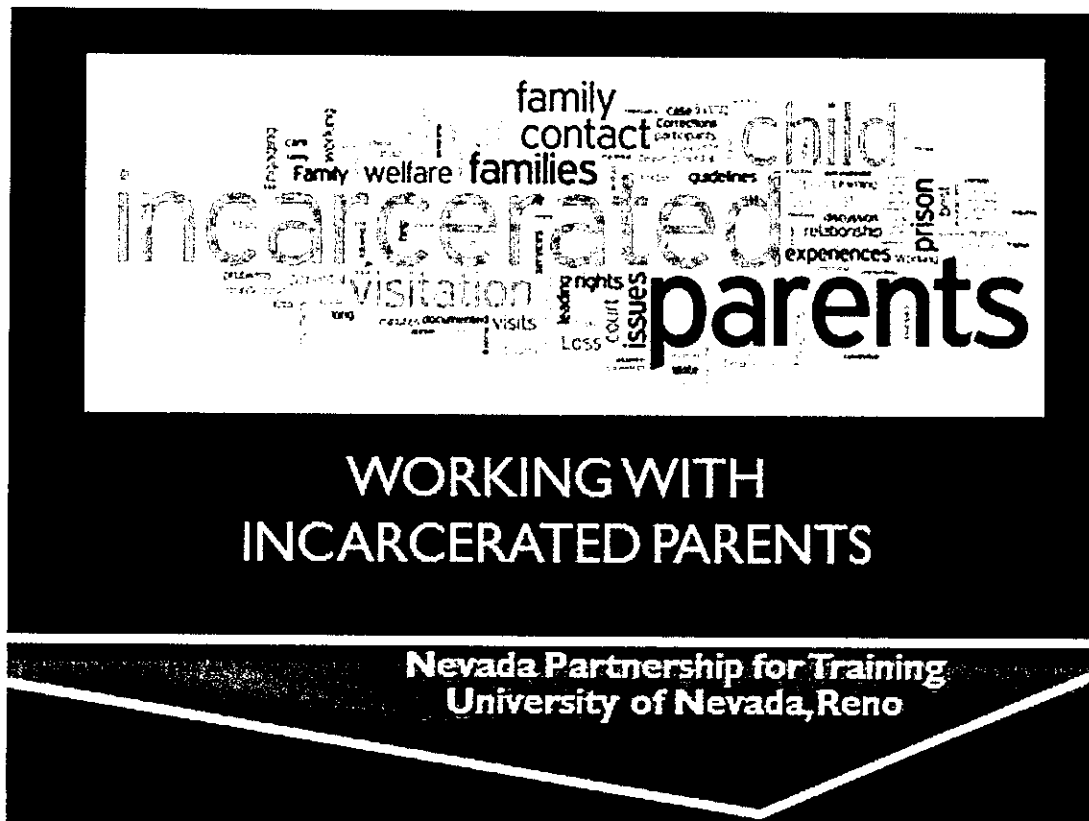
- Explain that the father has a legal right to see his children (legal fathers).
- Explain that children have a right to get to know their father.
- Encourage mothers to look beyond her personal issues with the father and consider the lifetime benefits to the child that might come out of the father's connection (e.g. survivors and disability benefits, inheritance, health history, emotional support, etc.).
- Provide mother with concrete examples of situations that might occur in the future, where both she and the child will need the father. For example, mothers may want fathers to re-enter the picture and share parenting when children become teens and are engaging in high-risk behavior.
- Listen to what the mother is saying (or not saying) about the father.
- Assure mother that safety is always the top priority.
- Remember there are two sides to every story.
- Do not expect things to be perfect.
- Use supervised contact as a strategy to ensure child safety.



# THE ABCS OF A FATHER-FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENT

- A**ssets of fathers are emphasized, not their deficits.
- B**udget indicates that fathers are a priority.
- C**urricula and educational materials respect the range of fathers being served.
- D**iverse staff reflects the population using your services.
- E**nvironment clearly states that dads and men in families are welcome here.
- F**ather-child bond is emphasized and encouraged.
- G**ender-neutral forms, policies, and procedures are employed.
- H**ands-on learning experiences are components of many activities.
- I**mportance of fathers is promoted but not at the expense of mothers.
- J**ournals, magazines, and reading materials reflect the interests of dads, too.
- K**nowledgeable men are recruited to address sensitive concerns of fathers.
- L**anguage is respectful and affirming of all parents and children.
- M**arketing plan invites many faces of fathers and promotes their full involvement.
- N**eeds of fathers influence the program's growth and development.
- O**utreach staff recruits in locations that all types of fathers frequent.
- P**aternal and maternal parenting styles are recognized and respected.
- Q**uality evaluation tools and procedures that respect fathers are in place.
- R**ecognize and reduce barriers that limit father involvement.
- S**taff receives periodic best practices training to better serve fathers.
- T**argeted services are offered specifically for fathers.
- U**nderstand wide range of fathers' physical and mental health concerns.
- V**alues are emphasized that promote gender reconciliation.
- W**omen's and men's rooms each have a diaper changing station.
- X**cellent advisory council and active speakers bureau are in place.
- Y**oung fathers are offered services.
- Z**ealous attitude prevails that we are all in this together.

Adapted from: Tift, N. (n.d.). *The ABCs of a father-friendly environment for maternal and child health agencies*. Washington, DC: National Practitioners Network for Fathers and Families.



HANDOUTS  
SECTION 7  
WORKING WITH INCARCERATED PARENTS

# THE EFFECTS OF INCARCERATION

## 1) Financial Loss and Added Expenses

Not only has the family possibly lost income from the incarcerated parent, they quite often take on additional expenses such as long distance phone calls, putting money in the incarcerated parent's account and paying for transportation to the prison for visits.

## 2) Stigma of Incarceration

Individuals can look down upon families and children causing a variety of problems. This is why many families attempt to keep the incarceration hidden from children, friends, and neighbors.

## 3) Loss of Parent/Child Bond

Incarceration affects both the parent and the child causing a variety of developmental issues and concerns.

## 4) Added Stress on Grandparents and Extended Family Members

There are financial stressors, lack of support and services, and issues of grief and loss that make caring for the children a challenge.

## 5) Costs to the Community, Its Systems, and Society

Many communities have very high rates of incarceration leading to the draining of community resources and its slow deterioration.

## 6) Potential Loss of Parental Rights

It is extremely difficult for the incarcerated parent to comply with ASFA guidelines, child welfare requirements, and participate in required programs.

## 7) Family Instability

Conditions in many of these families were already tenuous. The incarceration could lead to the complete collapse of the family.

## 8) Loss of Intimacy

If the mother and father were together prior to incarceration, it negatively affects their relationship possibly leading to a breakup.

## 9) Child-Related Concerns

A variety of problems can develop ranging from attachment issues, developmental delays, emotional and psychological problems, peer relationship issues, fears and phobias, school failure, delinquency, intergenerational incarceration, issues of grief and loss, and self-esteem concerns related to feelings of shame and guilt.

# BARRIERS TO ENGAGEMENT OF INCARCERATED PARENTS

## Non-Incarcerated Parent/Extended Family Members/Other Caregivers:

Success in maintaining ties often depends on the quality of the relationship between the caregiver and their children. Family members on the outside might not be supportive of visitation and contact by the child with the incarcerated parent. Resource parents, likewise, may not be supportive of visitation.

## Distance/Transportation:

It is common for an incarcerated parent to be institutionalized a hundred miles or further from their children. There are few programs assisting with transporting parents and children to correction facilities.

## Hostile Environment:

Correction facilities focus on security first. Prison staff often view visitation as an added burden. Visitation provides an opportunity for contraband to be smuggled into the prison. As a result, visitors are often treated poorly, forced to wait long periods, and often turned away for a small infraction such as some dress code violation.

## The System:

Individuals in the social services and related systems may not value or possess the knowledge and skills to work effectively with the incarcerated parents and their families. Agencies might not accept collect calls from incarcerated parents.

## Communication:

Loss of connection to one's family is identified as the leading cause of depression for the incarcerated parent. While there is some contact through letter writing and telephone contacts, most parents do not receive visits from their families. The longer the incarceration, the less frequently contacts occur.

## Finances:

Money is tight. Many families fall below poverty guidelines and are on fixed incomes. The cost of long distance phone calls and visitation takes a toll.

## Legal Timeframes:

Tightened guidelines for making permanency plans put added burdens on the incarcerated parent.

## Lack of Programs/Services:

Incarcerated parents might lack access to needed services during incarceration or not meet participation requirements.

## Personal Circumstances:

Many incarcerated parents suffer from mental health issues, learning disabilities, and other concerns affecting their ability to comply with the expectations of child welfare and the courts.

# WORKING COLLABORATIVELY TO OVERCOME THE BARRIERS

Barriers such as travel to and from visits, legal timeframes, do occur. It is important to be aware of some of the ways to overcome the barriers. To do so, it is important to know the roles of all involved and what actions they/you could take to help the child, the parent, and the family. Consider the following list and add to it based on your experiences and your county's policies and procedures:

## CHILD or YOUTH:

- Should let others (parents, guardians, caseworkers) know what their wishes/feelings are.
- Can talk to the judge, caseworker, Guardian Ad Litem or attorney, or the Court Appointed Special Advocate about their wishes as they pertain to visiting the parent in jail or prison.
- In order to maintain consistent contact with their parent, the child can write letters, send pictures, and talk on the telephone in his/her absence.

## CASEWORKER:

- Should help inform the child of their parent's whereabouts and facilitate contact quickly after the initial arrest.
- Should acknowledge the child's needs and refer them to services in their schools or communities that work with children with an incarcerated parent.
- Should ensure that the child is able to communicate with and visit his/her parent, and advocate for contact/visitation.
- If appropriate, could arrange for mentored or supported visits. If contact visitation is not available, advocate for frequent contact through telephone or video conferencing.
- Should work with the counselor in the correctional facility to arrange contacts/visits. This person is the link to the parent who is incarcerated.

## JUDGE:

- Could order child-parent visitation, providing that it is in the best interest of the child to have contact with his/her parent. If contact visitation is not available, the judge could inquire about the availability of visitation through telephone or video conferencing or some other means of preserving the connection to the parent.
- Could order them to take part in anger management and domestic abuse programs in addition to parenting classes as a part of the treatment plan.

## CORRECTIONAL FACILITY STAFF:

- Should support quality parenting education in prisons and help create a child-friendly visiting area where contact visits can take place.
- Must be respectful of children during visitation and encourage others to do the same.

#### CHILDREN'S COURT ATTORNEY:

- Present to the court a plan for parent-child visitation or other contact that is in the best interest of the child.

#### YOUTH ATTORNEY or GUARDIAN AD LITEM (GAL) or CASA:

- In accordance with the wishes of the client or the best interests of the child, should advocate for parent-child contact visitation.
- Could visit the child in his/her current placement and help ensure that he/she understands and is aware of the whereabouts of his/her parent.
- Must become familiar with the issues that children with incarcerated parents face and be prepared to educate others.
- Should help advocate for the child to be connected to other children with incarcerated parents, and help inform the child's school staff about the child's situation. Report observations and recommendations to the court.
- Should talk with the child about visitation issues, and whether or not he/she would like to have contact visitation with her parent.
- If contact visitation is not available, should advocate for visitation by telephone or video conferencing.

#### RESPONDENT ATTORNEY:

- Should advocate for visitation and other contact for the client with his/her child.

#### PARENT WHO IS INCARCERATED:

- Must be aware of what the child is going through because of the incarceration.
- Should express to the judge a desire to be connected to the child.
- Should ask for contact visitation with the children.
- If contact or other visitation is not available, could participate in telephone and video visits.

#### PARENT WHO IS NOT INCARCERATED:

- Should talk with the child about what he/she wants to do.
- Must remember that this is a difficult time not only for the parent but also for the child. Should work with everyone involved to get the help that the parent and the child needs.
- When appropriate, and despite strained relationships that might exist, could advocate for visitation or contact in a manner that is in the best interest of the child.

#### RESOURCE PARENT:

- Should help inform the child about his/her parent's whereabouts and current situation.
- If appropriate, should help facilitate communication and contact visitation by providing transportation and support.
- Must help advocate for needed services and support systems for the child.

Source: Adapted from PB&J Family Services, Inc. Child protection best practices bulletin: Innovative strategies to achieve safety, permanence, and well-being: Connecting children with incarcerated parents. Retrieved from the World Wide Web on September 26, 2008 @ [http://www.cyfd.org/bestpractices/Best\\_Practices\\_Bulletin-Connecting\\_Children\\_with\\_Incarcerated\\_Parents.pdf](http://www.cyfd.org/bestpractices/Best_Practices_Bulletin-Connecting_Children_with_Incarcerated_Parents.pdf).

## REASONS TO ENGAGE THE PARENT AND ADVOCATE FOR CONTACT/VISITATION

- 1) **Maintaining parental engagement and contact/visitation can help the child cope with the situation.**

Separation leads to immediate and long-term effects. Initially the child experiences guilt, shame, abandonment, and the loss of financial support. Long-term it can lead to developmental delays, an inability to cope, and future stress and trauma. Studies indicate that visitation can help the child cope with the situation and lessen the trauma that the child experiences – improving the child's overall well-being. Visitation helps normalize interactions and benefits children emotionally and behaviorally. It allows them to express and deal with their emotional reactions to the incarceration and separation from their parent. It also helps them develop a more realistic understanding of the circumstances and model appropriate interaction.

- 2) **Contact and visitation helps sustain the parent/child bond.**

Research proves that continued contact and visitation, when appropriate, is essential to healthy development, fosters a bond that is crucial to developing children, and serves as a protective factor for adolescents to lessen the chance of them committing crimes and becoming incarcerated.

- 3) **Maintaining connection during incarceration helps decrease the recidivism rate.**

Parents are less likely to re-offend. Repeated incarceration also increases the likelihood that their children will also commit crimes leading to incarceration.

- 4) **Maintaining contact with their children helps parents maintain their parental rights.**

The Adoptions and Safe Families Act of 1997 states that a child who has lived in foster care for 15 of the previous 22 months needs to be evaluated by child welfare for permanency. An average parent who is incarcerated is sentenced to terms longer than 22 months – increasing the probability that parental rights will be terminated. In order that their parental rights are not terminated, a strong and continued bond must be proven. Visitation and exploring other methods of maintaining contact helps maintain this parent/child bond.

- 5) **Regular contact and visitation helps family reunification upon reentry.**

Keeping the relationship current helps the reentry & reunification process upon release.

- 6) **When appropriate, it's best practice.**

In addition, the recent Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) indicated that Nevada's child welfare agencies need to improve their efforts in connecting with and involving non-custodial parents, which includes incarcerated parents. Engaging parents who are incarcerated and advocating for visits when appropriate might call for extra time up-front; however, the benefits, especially for the child, largely outweigh the costs.

7) Unless the court orders otherwise, it's the law.

Unless court-ordered not to and documented as to why (e.g. aggravated circumstances) incarcerated parents have the same rights as other parents.

Parental engagement and/or offering the opportunity for visitation is not a choice, unless aggravated circumstances have been found by the court to exist and/or the court determines that visitation would be detrimental to the child and/or is not in the child's best interest. Unless otherwise documented, incarcerated parents have the same rights as other parents, including regular contact with their children.

Source: Adapted from Brooks, S. (Spring 2008) *Reaching out: Current issues in child welfare practice in rural communities*. UC Davis, CA: Northern California Training Academy



# TIPS FOR WORKING WITH CHILDREN WHO HAVE INCARCERATED PARENTS

## Common Questions

To help children work through some of their feelings, including curiosity, we've repeated some common questions we hear from families and our suggestions for helping caregivers to respond.

### **Why did mom or dad go to jail or prison?**

People are sent to jail or prison because they did not obey the law. Laws are rules that tell us how people should and should not behave. Children have rules of behavior, too. When some children break the rules, they may get a time out or lose privileges. Prison and jail are like long time outs for adults. Sometimes even a child as young as 15 who breaks the law and commits a crime could go to jail or prison like some adults who break the law. They would have to commit a very bad crime such as seriously hurting another person. This does not happen very often. Teenagers who break the law usually go to special prisons for young people.

### **What will happen to me?**

Children may have a lot of change in their lives when a parent goes to jail or prison. No one likes to feel insecure. The following questions can guide discussion, and even answers, to provide reassurance:

- How long will my parent be in jail or prison?
- Will I live in the same place?
- Will I have to move?
- Who will I live with?
- Will I be able to live with my parent when he or she gets out of jail or prison?

### **Is it my fault?**

**NO!** Many children feel guilty when their parent goes to jail or prison. They may believe that they caused it to happen. It is very important to provide children with a non-judgmental, relaxed, unhurried, and safe place to express their feelings, thoughts, and beliefs about why their parent was incarcerated. It is important to help children realize:

- There are negative consequences when a parent breaks the law.
- They are not responsible for either the parent's behavior or the consequences of that behavior.

### **Will I go to jail or prison, too?**

Even if children are told they are the "spitting image" of the parent who went to jail or prison, this doesn't mean the child will travel down the same path. Children need to understand that each person is responsible for his or her own choices in life.

**Where do people in jail or prison live?**

Sometimes, people live in dorms, but most people share a room, called a cell, which has two bunks, a sink, a desk and a toilet. The cells are usually very small and look alike.

**What do people in jail or prison wear?**

Different facilities have different dress codes. In Nevada prisons most inmates wear jeans and a blue shirt or a white T-shirt. When they go out to appointments, they may have to wear brightly colored jumpsuits and cuffs around their wrists and ankles. In other places, such as jail, they wear clothes that look like a doctor's scrub suit. In some places, they wear their own clothes.

**Where do people in jail or prison eat, and what kind of food?**

Most people eat in a dining room that looks a lot like a school cafeteria. The food is served cafeteria-style, with inmates lining up with trays as they choose their food. In some prisons, food on trays is brought to the people. There are usually some choices for people with special needs such as vegetarian meals, pork-free diets, or low-salt diets.

**Do people in jail or prison have a TV, library, bathroom/shower, and can they go outside?**

In some prisons people can buy their own TV's, but usually there are special TV rooms. The programs may change as different groups of people take turns choosing the channels that they like. There are libraries in all facilities. Every jail and prison has a law library so that people can work on their own court cases. Showers are shared by inmates in each housing unit, and there may be assigned showering times. There is usually recreation time, or "yard time," when groups of people can go outside for an hour or two. People can walk or jog around the yard, play sports or talk to others.

**Do people in jail or prison work?**

In some places, most people in prison are required by law to work. Some also attend school or special classes.

**How do people in jail or prison spend their time?**

People in prison are required to spend their time productively. They work or go to school or attend special programs such as alcohol and drug treatment, parenting or anger management classes. Many also pursue hobbies, especially art, or they can read, write, watch TV, or exercise when they have spare time.

**Are people in jail or prison safe and healthy?**

Correctional officers work hard to keep the jail or prison safe. If people in jail or prison have a medical or dental problem, they may ask to be seen by a nurse, doctor, or dentist in the facility. Sometimes, people may need special health care outside of the prison or jail.

**Can I see or talk to Mom or Dad when they are in jail or prison? Do I have to?**

Many children can see or talk to their parent even while they are in jail or prison. Some children, however, may be so angry or hurt when a parent is incarcerated that they do not want anything to do with him or her; others may crave contact. Talking about and validating the child's feelings

can be helpful. Sometimes visiting may not be possible. For example, the child may prefer to avoid contact or distance may be a problem. Also, a restraining order or institution rule may prevent the parent from having any type of contact with the child.

Children who want to maintain close contact with their incarcerated parent should be encouraged to write, draw pictures (with markers or colored pencils, not crayons), talk on the telephone, and visit as much as possible. Studies show that maintaining contact and allowing children to visit, if possible, helps the children.

### **What do I tell other people?**

Many people are ashamed to talk about having someone close to them in jail or prison. It may reassure children to tell them that:

1. "Two of every 100 children have had a parent in jail or prison."
2. "You didn't do anything wrong. People should not try to make you feel guilty or ashamed."
3. "Sometimes, it is easier not to talk about a parent who is incarcerated, but you may never learn that there are plenty of other kids in the same situation. Talking about it with people you trust may help."
4. It's OK to love your Mom or Dad who is in jail or prison, even if some people don't think you should. In some communities there are groups of kids who have a parent in jail or prison, and they meet to talk about such issues. This is called a support group. It can be very helpful to have peers to share feelings and coping strategies. County community corrections and social services agencies should be able to help you find an appropriate support group.

### **How can I learn when my parent will come home?**

People in jail or prison usually know the approximate date they will be released. It is often best just to ask them.

### **Where can I get help?**

Sometimes adults don't talk about the incarcerated parent because they are afraid it will upset the child. However, when the child is upset or hurt or confused, it is better to express those feelings to others than to let the emotions stew inside. Children are likely to worry, and believe things are worse than they really are if a parent "disappears" and no one talks about it or lets them talk about it. Children should be encouraged to reach out to those they trust. They can be encouraged to make a list of people to talk to. Sometimes, children and families need more help than family and friends can provide. County information and referral staff can help to find further resources, and most libraries have internet access.

### **Notes for Caregivers**

Children may experience many mixed emotions from the time of the parent's arrest to well after his or her release. While these feelings may be expressed at any time, they are more likely to come to a head at certain stages including the time of arrest, trial, sentencing, incarceration (and often most strongly during and following visiting), and at the time of release. Often, the most stressful time is in the weeks and months following release. It can be difficult for an absent parent to reconnect with a child who has grown accustomed to living without him or her.

**In summary, children of incarcerated parents need:**

- To know that parent's incarceration is not their fault.
- To know what is happening to their parent.
- To know if they can have contact with their parent, and if so, when and how.
- To know where and with whom they will be living and going to school.
- To know what will stay the same and what will change while their parent is incarcerated.
- To know it is OK to still love their parent, and it is OK to be angry sometimes, too.
- To be encouraged to express, in safe and healthy ways, their feelings about their parent and their parent's incarceration.
- To visit and maintain contact with the incarcerated parent as much as possible, when permitted and appropriate.
- To have stability and consistency in their living situations and daily routines.
- To feel safe.
- To have fun.
- To realize that people make choices in life that lead to different consequences.
- Adapted from California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation And Friends Outside

## TRANSFER OF LEARNING

Transfer of learning is important in helping you to prepare to use the knowledge that you gained in this workshop in your efforts as a Child Welfare Professional. This activity will help you think about how to use the knowledge gained from training back at work. Please complete the following information. If you have any questions, please talk with your trainer.

- ❖ From this training I learned the following that I will use when working with the incarcerated parent and his/her family:

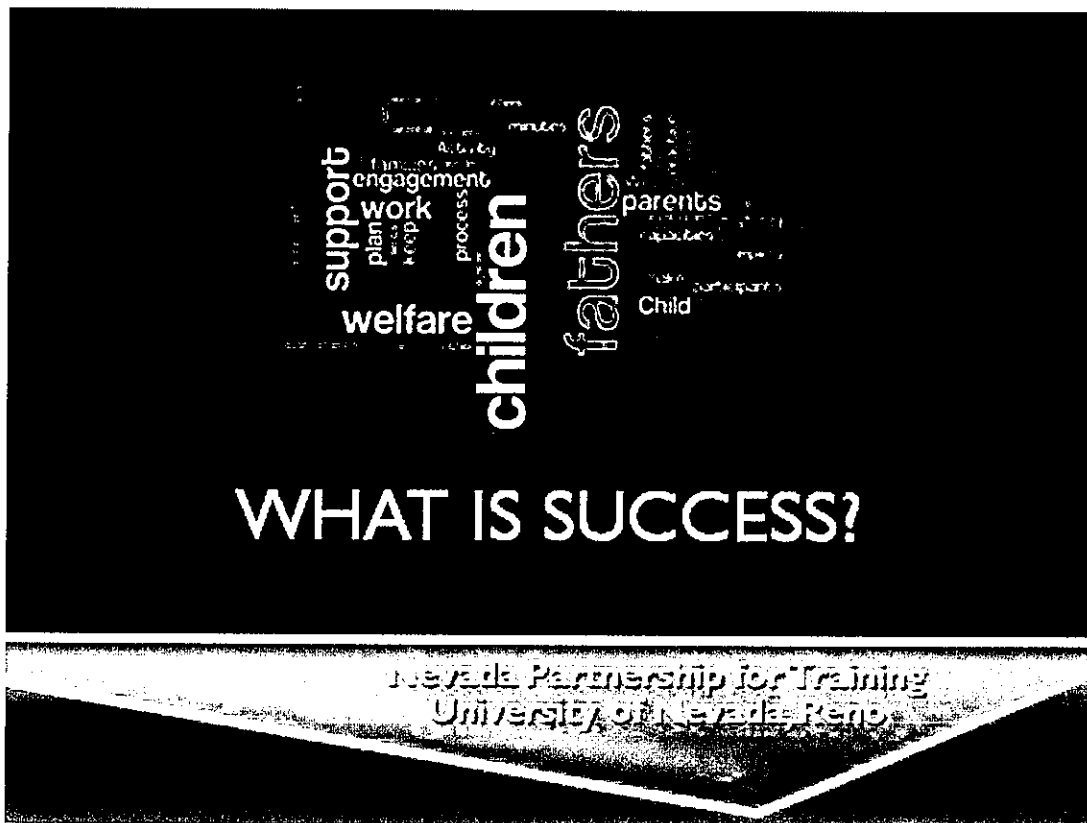
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

- ❖ The following programs and resources are available in my area's facilities (community and correction) that I can use when working with the incarcerated parent, the child, and the family:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

- ❖ One specific thing I will do with a family I am currently working with is...

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_



HANDOUTS  
SECTION 8  
WHAT IS SUCCESS?

## A SNAPSHOT: INCLUDING FATHERS IN FAMILY-CENTERED CHILD WELFARE SERVICES

**Engagement.** Caseworkers encourage mothers to identify fathers early in the case. If mothers fail to cooperate, caseworkers use alternative means to identify and locate fathers (interview relatives and family friends, access TANF and child support information, or use the court if necessary). Fathers are engaged in ways relevant to their situation and sensitive to their culture. Caseworkers make every effort to gain the support of mothers and reduce any barriers the mother has established that prevents a father's engagement, sometimes using mediation and negotiation. Establish trust and honesty by clearly explaining the current situation of the case, the father's role, the caseworker's role, agency expectations, and all policies that are relevant to his case. Continually state willingness and desire to establish and/or maintain the father-child relationship. .

**Assessment.** Comprehensive assessments include all family members; therefore, fathers and paternal family members are an active part in the ongoing assessment process. Initial assessments include the strengths, needs, resources/assets, and supports of the father and the paternal family. Services and/or supports needed by the father are also identified. Assessments explore fathers' and paternal family members' willingness and ability to ensure the safety, permanency, and well-being of the child. The assessment process is ongoing, and information is continually gathered and regularly updated.

**Safety planning.** Fathers and paternal family members are actively involved in the development of a safety plan based on information and support of team members. Fathers and paternal family members should be considered as informal service providers in the safety plan, for example, as relative (kinship) placement providers or to supervise visits between child and parent(s).

**Out-of-home placement.** Before placing a child in an unrelated home, fathers' and paternal family members' homes are assessed for placement. Fathers are included in the discussion and in determining the best placement for the child. Foster parents, group home staff, residential treatment staff, hospital staff, and adoptive parents are encouraged and supported to build and maintain partnerships with birth or adoptive fathers. The child welfare agency provides services and supports to establish and maintain father-child relations through telephone and mail contact, visitation, and case planning activities.

**Implementation of service plan.** Fathers are actively involved in setting goals, and they are encouraged to express their opinions, concerns, requests, or questions about the services needed. Services are created and provided to meet the individualized needs of the father and/or paternal family members. Services must be accessible to working fathers. Father support groups address issues related to fatherhood such as empowering men to take an active role in parenting, emotional issues, child development, and developing key skills such as active listening, anger management, positive discipline, and basic parenting techniques. Service providers emphasize the importance of child relationships with both mother and father.

**Permanency planning.** Fathers are involved in all reviews of the service plan and in the development of the child's permanency plan. Caseworkers ensure that fathers have a clear understanding of the permanency plan and emphasize the importance of their role in the development and implementation of the plan. Fathers not only receive court notices regarding permanency hearing, but are also contacted by their caseworker to discuss the hearing and the agency's recommendations to the court. During this discussion caseworkers encourage fathers to attend all hearings.

**Re-evaluation of service plan.** Fathers are included in the sharing of information between other family members, children, support teams, and service providers to ensure that intervention strategies can be modified as needed to support positive outcomes. Fathers help monitor service provision and provide continuous feedback to the team so progress and modification of services can be made.





# HANDOUT: SUCCESS STORIES



## Addressing Strengths and Building Resources

In November 2008, the first fathers' educational/support group in Indiana was launched using the new curriculum developed by American Humane Association. The educational/support groups were conducted outside the DCS offices at an agency called the Fathers and Families Center in Indianapolis, Indiana. This Center is a 501(c)(3) agency with a father focus. According to its website, the organization's goals are to "enhance the capacity of young fathers to become responsible and involved parents, wage earners, and providers of child support" (<http://www.fatherresource.org>).

### Robert's Story

Robert's son is now 13. When his son was 5 or 6, Robert decided it would be best for his family if he moved out. His intention was to share the responsibilities of raising his son with his wife, even though they would live apart. Over the years, Robert explained, arguments and disagreements led to resentment and, on occasion, his wife would not let him see his son. This led to court hearings to determine visitation rights. Eventually, the court ruled that it was in the best interest of his son that Robert no longer have contact with him. Robert had not seen his son for about 5 years when he learned through an acquaintance that his son was in foster care. Surprised, he decided to find out why. When he first contacted DCS to find out why his son was in foster care, Robert felt that the caseworker treated him as if he were the enemy. During this time, a suggestion was made that he contact the Fathers and Families Center and enroll in a program they were offering.

Robert described himself as being older than the fathers in his class, but he quickly realized that they all faced the same problems. "I felt, 'Why am I here with these younger people?' I've never had any felonies, nothing." Then he realized the issues they faced were all the same, even if their individual stories were different. "The stories may be different, but you get railroaded because you are a guy."

Robert attended 18 sessions. He reflected that the first three sessions offered information about the child welfare system, which helped him understand for the first time what was happening with his son. Previously, he said, his dealings with caseworkers left him in the dark. "They used words I didn't understand." Just knowing the terminology and knowing the steps, Robert felt, was invaluable. The class also provided support, something Robert said he had not received

before. There was a lot of camaraderie. "That's what I liked. You get to talk and you get to vent." The Fathers and Families Center was also a place where Robert could network. "Talk to people outside of there and the first thing they ask is, 'How could your son be in foster care?' They look at you like you are a bad parent." Without the Fathers and Families program, Robert said he never would have advanced as far and as fast as he has. He now hopes a decision will be made that will allow his son to live with him. "They were a good support system. They are professional. They came to you with open hearts. For some of the guys who didn't have a meal, that guy got a meal. You sure can't fight a war to get your child back if you are hungry." "Without them," Robert said, "I would have been lost. More so, my son would have been lost."

### James' Story

In April of 2010, James was still adjusting to life outside of prison, having been released only 2 months earlier. One day at work, he received a call saying his son had been taken by DCS and placed with a relative because of bizarre and threatening statements that his son's mother had made about his son and about another child who had a different father. James contacted DCS and said he was the boy's biological father, but had no legal documents establishing his paternity. James was told he would have to establish his legal standing with his son. He was then contacted by the Fathers and Families program, asking if he would participate in a 20-week class. At first, James said he was upset by the suggestion because he was not responsible for his son being removed. However, he decided to give it a try. "That's what got me to do everything they wanted, including drug and alcohol classes, home-based counseling. You got to do it. It's just that simple." James said he realized he had to go to the classes; otherwise, he would not have looked like someone who wanted to be in his child's life. As with Robert, James said he received the support he needed to become a better father from the Fathers and Families program. "They embraced me as a father. That made me want to come back and learn more about being a father." James attended 19 sessions. James said the key things he learned were how the child services system works, what the court hearings meant, and what was going to be said at the hearings. He also learned a lot about being a father, something he now realizes he didn't know much about. "As long as you can learn more about being a father, you can never learn too much. There is stuff you don't know about being a father they can show you."

Without the program, James said he likely would have become discouraged and given up. "Now, it's different. He is going to be coming with me. It's beautiful. I really appreciate the people who got me to that step." As James waited for a court decision that would allow his son to live with him, he said, "[Without the program,] I wouldn't be at the stage I am at now. I got to thinking, maybe you need to do that." Within 2 months after completing the curriculum, James obtained custody of his son.

Bringing Back the Dads: Changing Practices in Child Welfare Systems  
Protecting Children

A Professional Publication of American Humane Association

Volume 26, Number 2, 2011

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Administration for Children and Families Administration on Children, Youth and Families,

# SELF-CARE ASSESSMENT

Adapted from Saakvitne, Pearlman, & Staff of TSI/CAAP (1996). *Transforming the pain: A workbook on vicarious traumatization*. Norton.

The following worksheet for assessing self-care is not exhaustive, merely suggestive. Feel free to add areas of self-care that are relevant for you and rate yourself on how often and how well you are taking care of yourself these days.

When you are finished, look for patterns in your responses. Are you more active in some areas of self-care but ignore others? Are there items on the list that make you think, 'I would never do that'? Listen to your inner responses, your internal dialogue about self-care and making yourself a priority. Take particular note of anything you would like to include more in your life.

Rate the following areas according to how well you think you are doing:

- 3 = I do this well (e.g., frequently)
- 2 = I do this OK (e.g., occasionally)
- 1 = I barely or rarely do this
- 0 = I never do this
- ? = This never occurred to me

Physical Self-Care			
	Eat regularly		Get massages
	Eat healthily		Get regular medical care for prevention
	Exercise		Get enough sleep
	Dance, swim, walk, run, play sports, sing, or do some other fun physical activity		Wear clothes I like
	Get medical care when needed		Take vacations
	Take time off when sick		

Psychological Self-Care			
	Take day trips or mini-vacations		Read literature that is unrelated to work
	Have my own personal psychotherapy		Be curious
	Make time for self-reflection		Attend to minimizing stress in my life
	Write in a journal		Do something at which I am not expert or in charge
	Make time away from telephones, email, and the Internet		Engage my intelligence in a new area, e.g., go to art show, sports event, theatre
	Notice my inner experience - listen to my thoughts, beliefs, attitudes, feelings		Say no to extra responsibilities sometimes

Emotional Self-Care			
	Spend time with others whose company I enjoy		Allow myself to cry
	Stay in contact with important people in my life		Find things that make me laugh
	Give myself affirmations, praise myself		Love myself
	Re-read favorite books, re-view favorite movies		Express my outrage in social action, letters, donations, marches, protests
	Identify comforting activities, objects, people, places and seek them out		

Spiritual Self-Care			
	Make time for reflection		Have experiences of awe
	Spend time in nature		Be open to not knowing
	Find a spiritual connection or community		Contribute to causes in which I believe
	Be open to inspiration		Meditate
	Cherish my optimism and hope		Pray
	Be aware of non-material aspects of life		Sing
	Try at times not to be in charge or the expert		Identify what is meaningful to me and notice its place in my life
	Read inspirational literature or listen to inspirational talks, music		

Relationship Self-Care			
	Ask for help when I need it		Stay in contact with faraway friends
	Schedule regular activities with my children		Enlarge my social circle
	Make time to see friends		Allow others to do things for me
	Call, check on, or see my relatives		Spend time with my companion animals
	Share a fear, hope, or secret with someone I trust		Make time to reply to personal emails and letters; send holiday cards
	Schedule regular dates with my partner or spouse		

Workplace Self-Care			
	Take a break during the workday		Get regular supervision or consultation
	Take time to chat with co-workers		Negotiate for my needs (benefits, pay raise)
	Make quiet time to complete tasks		Have a peer support group
	Set limits with clients and colleagues		Arrange work space so it is comfortable and comforting
	Balance my caseload so that no one day or part of a day is "too much"		(If relevant) Develop a non-trauma area of professional interest
	Identify projects or tasks that are exciting and rewarding		

Overall Balance			
	Strive for balance within my work-life and work day		Strive for balance among work, family, relationships, play, and rest

Other Area of Self-Care that are Relevant to You			

Retrieved March 21, 2012 from [http://www.socialwork.buffalo.edu/students/self-care/documents/plan/Self-Care\\_Assessment.pdf](http://www.socialwork.buffalo.edu/students/self-care/documents/plan/Self-Care_Assessment.pdf)

# MY MAINTENANCE SELF-CARE PLAN

## WORKSHEET

Consider what you do now for self-care and list those activities within each dimension of self-care on this worksheet (or you can add new dimensions at the end that represent other aspects of your life). Identify new strategies that you will begin to incorporate as part of your ongoing maintenance self-care plan — pay particular attention to domains that you have not been addressing in the past. On the last page identify barriers that might interfere with ongoing self-care, how you will address them, and any negative coping strategies you would like to target for change.

<p><u>Body (Physical)</u></p> <p>Current Practice</p>    <p>New Practice</p>	<p><u>Mind (Psychological)</u></p> <p>Current Practice</p>    <p>New Practice</p>
<p><u>Emotional</u></p> <p>Current Practice</p>    <p>New Practice</p>	<p><u>Spiritual</u></p> <p>Current Practice</p>    <p>New Practice</p>
<p><u>Relationships</u></p> <p>Current Practice</p>    <p>New Practice</p>	<p><u>Workplace</u></p> <p>Current Practice</p>    <p>New Practice</p>

<p style="text-align: right;"><u>Other</u></p> <p>Current Practice</p>    <p>New Practice</p>	<p style="text-align: right;"><u>Other</u></p> <p>Current Practice</p>    <p>New Practice</p>
<p><u>Barriers to maintaining my self-care strategies</u></p>          	<p><u>How I will address these barriers and remind myself to practice self-care</u></p>          
<p><u>Negative coping strategies I would like to use less or not at all</u></p>          	<p><u>What I will do instead</u></p>          

Retrieved on March 21, 2012 from [http://www.socialwork.buffalo.edu/students/self-care/documents/plan/My\\_Maintenance\\_Self-Care\\_Worksheet.pdf](http://www.socialwork.buffalo.edu/students/self-care/documents/plan/My_Maintenance_Self-Care_Worksheet.pdf)

Adapted by Shirley Reiser, LCSW and Lisa D. Butler, PhD from materials provided by Sandra A. Lopez, LCSW, ACSW, University of Houston, Graduate School of Social Work.)

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR CASEWORKERS & PARENTS



# ADVICE TO NONRESIDENTIAL FATHERS

## 1. Respect the mother of your children.

Regardless of their feelings for the mother of their children, fathers need to treat her with respect—for the sake of their children. Children are happier and feel more secure when their parents get along. Fathers should ignore negative comments, compliment the mother when they can, and keep the lines of communication open. Fathers should try to seek common ground with mothers around common goals for their children, and they should never criticize their children's mother in front of their children.

## 2. Keep your promises.

Children who have endured divorce or the breakup of a parental relationship often feel abandoned and distrustful of the adults in their lives. Nonresidential fathers need to be careful to nurture or restore their children's faith in adults and in them, in particular. Hence, they need to keep the promises they make to their children. If this means promising their children less, fine, but fathers need to earn their children's trust by keeping their word.

## 3. Do not be a "Disneyland Dad."

Nonresidential fathers are often tempted to play "Disneyland Dad," that is, to spend virtually all the time they have with their children in fun activities. "Disneyland Dads" miss opportunities to help their children grow in virtue; they also miss chances to get to know their children in their ordinary lives. Nonresidential fathers need to challenge their children to grow in virtue and they also need to spend time doing ordinary things with them. They need to help their children with homework, to have them do chores around their home, and to tuck them into bed on a school night. Generally, they will discover much more about their children amidst the ordinary struggles of daily life than they will eating popcorn with their children in a darkened movie theater.

## 4. Stay in regular contact.

Nonresidential fathers should stay in regular contact with their children. If they live locally, they should be faithful about seeing their children on a given day. If they do not live close by or are incarcerated, they should be faithful about calling or sending a letter or email to their children on a weekly basis. Children thrive on maintaining regular contact with their fathers. This advice holds even for teenagers, who may have to be asked to make sacrifices in their social or sports schedules to keep up with their fathers. In the end, maintaining the father-child bond is more important than a missed game or movie with friends.

## 5. Do not be soft on your kids.

Nonresidential fathers often feel like they should go easy on their children when it comes to discipline. Given the brevity of father-child visits, many fathers do not want to alienate their children by disciplining them for misbehavior, but this is a big mistake. Children will take advantage of their fathers' laxity by pushing the behavioral envelope even more. Nonresidential fathers should be firm, consistent disciplinarians with their children, even if that means that one or two visits are spent largely on discipline. In the long-term, children who are disciplined well are better behaved and more respectful of their fathers than children who are given a free reign.

#### **6. Take care of your children financially.**

Nonresidential fathers need to take at least partial responsibility for the financial welfare of their children. Children who receive regular financial support from their fathers do better educationally and are more confident that their father is there for them and their family. They should pay child support on time and be flexible enough to help their children when unforeseen expenses come up. If possible, they should tell their adolescents that they will help pay for college or vocational training. If employment or child support is a problem, fathers should contact a local fatherhood program to get help with job-skills, job placement, and addressing any outstanding child support they may owe.

Note: This advice draws on educational material from The Children's Trust Fund of Massachusetts, The National Fatherhood Initiative, the National Practitioners Network for Fathers and Families, and the National Center for Fathering.

# TIPS FROM A FATHER IN PRISON

The following is a list of suggestions that you can use to maintain the attachment to your children from inside a prison.

1. Even if your relationship with the mother of your children is over, you need to establish and maintain a positive relationship with her. For the sake of your children, try to find ways to connect with her respectfully.
2. Do not expect big changes right away from your family members. Take your time.
3. Find out about policies regarding how you can connect with your child—visitation, letters, telephone calls, and audiotapes. Ask your prison chaplain, counselor, or other staff.
4. Develop a plan and follow it on how often you will connect with your child.
5. When explaining to your children why you are not living with them, be honest but respect their ability to understand it according to their age.
6. When telling your children how important they are to you, do not be surprised if they do not respond the way you want them to. Children are often angry that you did something wrong that prevents you from being with them.
7. To establish and maintain your family relationships, be ready to make amends and apologize to them.
8. Find ways to support your children emotionally, financially, and spiritually as much as possible.
9. Your family and children need to be able to rely on you if you say you will call or write regularly, so be consistent in your approach and contact schedule.
10. Be realistic about goals and expectations. Do not expect too much, too soon from them.
11. Remember family celebrations, special occasions, and cultural events. If you have a hobby or crafts at prison, make gifts or draw pictures and make them into a coloring book.
12. If at all possible, purchase small items for your children through the commissary or mail order catalogs.
13. Use your time constructively. Get your GED, or take parenting classes, anger management, adult continuing education classes, anything that betters yourself.

14. Some prisons allow you to purchase and make video or audiotapes. Use these to tell stories, share memories, and bedtime stories. Have your children listen to it when they miss you.
15. Before your release date, clear up any legal problems that may be pending such as your driving record, credit problems, or child support.
16. Your children might not know how to say exactly what they are feeling and thinking, so be patient with them.
17. Make a realistic plan and follow through, no matter how bad things get, when re-connecting with your children after you are released from jail.
18. While you are still in prison, research programs that might help you reach your goals once released. Seek out programs about parenting, housing, jobs, legal problems, or credit problems.
19. Work with other prison fathers trying to connect with their children from inside prison.
20. Get some counseling from the appropriate staff (psychologist, chaplain, case manager, correctional counselor).
21. Think about how you want to be a parent and your future as a dad and make decisions about that future. Look at your own relationship with your dad to see what was learned, good and bad.
22. Go to the prison library, take the time to read what you can to try to learn about being a better dad. Try to read as much as you can about father/child relationships.
23. Check out some of the other resources in the Incarcerated Fathers Library.

For more help for incarcerated parents and their families, please visit the *Family and Corrections Network* at <http://www.fcnetwork.org>. Carlin, M. (2002). *Tips from a father in prison* [On-line]. Available: <http://www.fcnetwork.org/library/p10TipsFromAFather.html>.

## ADVICE FOR FATHERS

Case managers should communicate the following to fathers, especially noncustodial fathers.

### **Respect the mother of your children.**

Regardless of your feelings for the mother of your children, you need to treat her with respect—for the sake of your children. Children are happier and feel more secure when their parents get along. You should ignore negative comments, compliment the mother when you can, and keep the lines of communication open. Try to seek common ground with mothers around common goals for your children, and never criticize your children's mother in front of the children.

### **Something is better than nothing.**

If you have provided no emotional or financial support to the child in the past, anything you can offer is better than nothing. For example, providing care for an active toddler even for a few hours gives the mother time to rest. Or, buying a child a pair of shoes indicates that you understand you have financial responsibilities. Time is the most important gift to your child. Spending time with a child communicates to the child your love and concern in a way that nothing else (presents, money, promises) can.

### **Keep your promises.**

Children who have endured divorce or the breakup of a parental relationship often feel abandoned and distrustful of the adults in their lives. You need to be careful to nurture or restore your children's faith in adults and you, in particular. Therefore, keep the promises you make to their children. You have to earn your children's trust by keeping your word.

### **Don't be a "Disneyland Dad."**

Nonresidential fathers are often tempted to play "Disneyland Dad," that is, to spend virtually all the time they have with their children in fun activities. You need to challenge your children to grow in virtue and spend time doing ordinary things with them. Help your children with homework, have them do chores around their home, and tuck them into bed on a school night. You will discover more about your children amidst the ordinary struggles of daily life than you will eating popcorn with them in a darkened movie theater. In addition, the father who never moves into the fathering relationship is creating problems for the children and their mother. The mother does not want to be the only disciplinarian or the only one saying "no". When you remain the "weekend warrior" who is there only for the good times, the mother may become resentful and less inclined to allow visits. Take on responsibilities of a father if you want your children and their mother to accept you as one.

### **Stay in regular contact.**

Nonresidential fathers should stay in regular contact with their children. If you live locally, you should be faithful about seeing your children on a given day. If you do not live close by you should be faithful about calling or sending a letter or email to your children on a weekly basis. Children thrive on maintaining regular contact with their fathers. This advice holds even for teenagers, who may have to be asked to make sacrifices in their social or sports schedules to spend time with you. In the end, maintaining the father-child bond is more important than a missed game or movie with friends.

### **Don't be too soft on your kids.**

Nonresidential fathers often feel like they should go easy on their children when it comes to discipline. Given the shortness of father-child visits, many fathers do not want to alienate their children by disciplining them for misbehavior, but this is a big mistake. Children will take advantage of your laxity by pushing the behavioral envelope even more. Be a firm, consistent disciplinarian with your children, even if that means that one or two visits are spent largely on discipline. In the long-term, children who are disciplined well are better behaved and more respectful of their fathers than children who are given a free reign.

### **Take care of your children financially.**

Nonresidential fathers need to take at least partial responsibility for the financial welfare of their children. Children who receive regular financial support from their fathers do better educationally and are more confident that their father is there for them and their family. You should pay child support on time and be flexible enough to help your children when unforeseen expenses come up. If possible, you should tell your teens that you will help pay for college or vocational training. If employment or child support is a problem, ask for help. Ask for assistance in locating and accessing programs that will help with job-skills and job placement.

Note: This advice draws on educational material from The Children's Trust Fund of Massachusetts, The National Fatherhood Initiative, the National Practitioners Network for Fathers and Families, and the National Center for Fathering.

Adapted from: Rosenberg, J., & Wilcox, W. B. (2006). *The Importance of Fathers in the Healthy Development of Children*. U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. Office of Child Abuse and Neglect, User Manual Series.  
<http://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/usermanuals/fatherhood/fatherhood.pdf>

## TIPS FOR FATHERS

- Take it slow – Get to know your children and don't expect everything to be perfect immediately. It may take some time to mend this relationship, but don't give up.
- Be consistent – Follow the rules that the children are familiar with. Find out what time they go to bed, what they eat for breakfast, any fears they have, and other crucial details about their lives. Maintain these routines when the children are with you.
- Get support – Everyone is overwhelmed with the changes in their family – you, your children, your extended family, your partner. Get support to deal with the stress you are under. Reach out to a clergy member, neighbor, or friend, when you need to talk about the stress you are experiencing. Seek professional counseling before things begin to spiral out of control.
- Learn as much as you can about child development, communication skills, and discipline techniques. Your child may have entered a new stage while you were away from him/her, and you need to know how to deal with him/her effectively. If you took parenting classes, review the materials you received, or take another class.
- Libraries have many books on parenting that you can borrow.
- Listen to your children – Make time to give each child attention every day. Resist the urge to substitute giving “things” for giving “time.”
- Start with today – You cannot change the past, so start today as the new and better parent you are NOW.
- Take care of yourself. Pay attention to your own needs for rest, proper nutrition, adult relationships, and respite from your children.
- Give yourself and your children time to adjust. You are forming a new family, with healthier lives than you had before your children were placed in foster care. It takes time, love, and patience to put all the pieces together.
- It is important that you remain involved in parenting through visits with your children.
- Be on time and consistently attend your visits. If your child is in foster care placement, ask if you can write or call your child, speak to his foster parents, or have other types of interactions with your child.
- Reassure your child but be honest about what the future may hold. Don't make promises you are unable to keep.
- Show your child he is important to you. Listen to what your children are telling you during the visits – take an interest in their school, friends, and activities.
- Be positive. Visits with your children are not a time to talk to case managers, criticize services, your child's mother, or foster parents, or react negatively to the situation. Use the time to talk with, read to, and play with your children.
- A father can be psychologically available to his child, whether or not they live in the same household.
- Fathers are important in providing children with a sense of their culture and history – with their genealogical connectedness.
- Be a good role model for your child.
- It is the quality of the relationship you have with your child, whether you physically live with your child or not, that is important to them. They want to be loved and valued by you.
- Take the opportunity to hug your children.

# FATHER CHILD REUNION TIPS

In his book, *The Prodigal Father*, Mark Bryan, himself a once absent dad, shares suggestions that fathers can use in reconnecting with their children.

These include:

- ❖ Stay relaxed. Your child will be curious and most likely will want to get to know you.
- ❖ Choose a comfortable setting for your first contact (when possible).
- ❖ Keep the meeting simple. Have minimal expectations. First meetings should not be too long.
- ❖ Listen. Be open to what your child has to say. Avoid getting defensive.
- ❖ Think ahead. What do you want to say to your child?
- ❖ Plan a next visit. This will be reassuring to the child.
- ❖ Don't bad mouth your children's mother. Avoid this at all costs.
- ❖ Move Slowly! Don't rush the relationship.
- ❖ Don't expect to be treated like a returning hero. Your child needs time to deal with the situation and feelings.
- ❖ Be careful what you promise. The relationship needs to be rebuilt. It takes time to establish trust.
- ❖ If the child is old enough to understand, address your absence but avoid attempting to justify it. Do not blame others for not being there. Reassure your child that you will be there for him or her.

Adapted from: Bryan, Mark. *Prodigal Fathers: Reuniting Fathers and Their Children*. New York, NY: Three Rivers Press,



# KEYS TO GOOD DISCIPLINE

- ➔ Set clear rules and enforce them.
- ➔ Be consistent.
- ➔ Never give into a tantrum. This will only teach children that tantrums work and will encourage more and louder tantrums in the future.
- ➔ Keep anger out of discipline. This also helps the parent refrain from either inappropriate or excessive discipline.
- ➔ Do not confuse bad behavior with a bad child. Parents need to verbalize to children that it's the bad behavior they don't like, not the child.
- ➔ Use time-outs and other appropriate consequences.
- ➔ Praise good behavior.
- ➔ Combine rules and limit setting with explanations.
- ➔ Telling children why rules are what they are, and why they are being punished helps them learn what is and is not acceptable behavior.
- ➔ Four questions to ask yourself .....
- Did I teach or did I express anger?
  - Was my response consistent with our family rules?
  - Did the consequence suit the misbehavior?
  - Was there any possibility my response could have hurt my child?

Adapted from: Rosenberg, J., & Wilcox, W. B. (2006). *The Importance of Fathers in the Healthy Development of Children*. U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. Office of Child Abuse and Neglect, User Manual Series.  
<http://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/usermanuals/fatherhood/fatherhood.pdf>

## CHILD DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY

Print and cut out the cards below. Lay out the seven age-range cards in chronological order. Mix up the seven description cards and work with the father to match the descriptions to the correct age group.

Newborn	1 to 4 months
4 to 8 months	8 to 12 months

12 to 18 months	18 to 24 months
2 to 3 years old	<p><b>Heads-Up.</b> I'm new to the world and need time to adjust. I sleep a lot. I need love and care. I need to be held, fed, and comforted when I cry so that I can learn to trust that people will take care of me.</p>
<p><b>The Looker.</b> I'm beginning to look around and explore with my eyes in a new way. I move my body from stomach to back. I'm beginning to put objects in my mouth.</p>	<p><b>The Creeper-Crawler.</b> I'm sitting up with little or no support. I'm beginning to creep and crawl. I crawl to objects and explore them by putting them in my mouth or shaking them.</p>

<p><b>The Cruiser.</b> I pull myself up to a standing position and use furniture to support myself while I walk around the room. I may begin to walk during this time. I like to try new things like turning the knobs on the TV, stereo, or pulling on the handles of the cabinets.</p>	<p><b>The Walker.</b> I can walk and spend most of the time trying to push and pull things around the room. I can reach for an object that is in a high place by pushing a chair close to the object, then I climb on the chair, and then reach what I want.</p>
<p><b>The Doer.</b> I am exploring everything. I'm getting into cabinets and drawers. I am dumping containers. Sometimes I put things I dump back into the containers. I like playing in water and being messy. I sometimes play in the toilet bowl.</p>	<p><b>The Tester.</b> I like to ask questions that start with how come, why, and what for. I like to do things for myself. I repeat everything I hear.</p>

# FATHERS AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Certain behaviors are normal for children at certain ages. The following are activities a father can do with his child to promote healthy developmental growth.

## *Birth to 3 Months*

- Offer me a finger to hold. Listen to me and learn my responses. Smile and touch me when you talk to me. Tell me I am wonderful.
- Develop trust. Gently hold me while talking in sweet encouraging tones. Call me by name and make eye contact.
- Pick me up when I cry and reassure me. Do not leave me alone crying and give me the impression that no one cares for me.
- Learn how to soothe me and meet my needs before I cry.
- Gently rub my back, sing to me, play music for me, or bounce me gently to music. I am sensitive to sound, so keep music low.
- Hold me securely in new places and protect me.
- Keep me clean, well fed, and clothed appropriately for temperature.
- Give me colorful toys that make interesting sounds.
- Sucking calms me, so let me suck my fingers or a pacifier. Be gentle and do not interrupt my sucking by pulling or jiggling something I am sucking on.

## *3 to 6 Months*

- During bath time, try washing me in a sitting position; help me sit up for 5-10 minutes. I may also want to sit up and play. Help me keep my back straight while I sit for 5-10 minutes.
- Give me safe healthy finger foods at 5-6 months (e.g., crackers).
- Lay me on a blanket on the floor and let me roll and reach.
- Spend time with me (toy play, smile, nod, talk, and laugh).
- Give me toys or attention when I need a distraction.
- Respond to my fears and cries by holding, talking to, and reassuring me. Tell me what I'm feeling, and that it's okay.
- Talk to me, sing to me, or give me my favorite toy at diaper changing time.
- Don't scold, make loud noises, or frowning faces.
- Keep me in the back seat in my car seat, even if I complain. Distract me with some toys and reassure me. Put my seat where I can see outside.
- Avoid separating me from you for days. I need consistent, reliable relationships, so if you leave me for long periods, expect me to be more attached to you for a while and to need more reassurance.

## *6 to 12 Months*

- Play peek-a-boo, puppets, wave bye-bye; teach me words and colors, even if I can't repeat the words right now.
- Have a regular bedtime routine. Slow my activity an hour before bedtime; rock me, pat my back, and bring my favorite blanket. Once dry, fed, and well prepared for bed, leave me with a kiss. Ignore my cries for a few minutes until I am asleep.
- Encourage physical exploration within your eyesight.

- Keep dangerous objects away from me and baby-proof my environment.
- Be there to comfort me when I get hurt.
- Help me stand by holding my hands. Make sure my heels are flat.
- I may purposefully drop and throw things as an experiment. Give me safe things to drop and throw.
- Open a cupboard in the kitchen kept safe for my exploration. Keep only non-breakable objects that are baby-friendly.
- Give me something interesting on my tray to explore at mealtime (e.g., cooked spaghetti, spoons.)
- Do not force me to eat, and understand that I am learning and will be messy with my food

### *12 to 24 Months*

- Learning to walk takes time. Hold my hand and encourage me to take steps when I am ready—do not rush me.
- If I grab, hit, or bite when I am mad, do not scold me or hit me. Teach me words to use instead of hurting others.
- It will take time before I am able to do many things. Set limits because I will break rules many times before I learn. “No!” is not enough; please explain why (e.g., “The stove is too HOT!” Move me and show me a safe place to play).
- Give me choices whenever possible. Do not say “no” too often, and distract me if I am refusing some thing. Reward me for good behavior. Ignore my “no” if I do not get a choice.
- Let me scribble with thick washable crayons or felt markers; tape a paper to the table so it does not slip.
- Compare colors and sizes with me (big spoon, red balloon).
- Read to me. Tell me about the story; let me pat the pages and make noises; help me learn to turn pages by half lifting one.
- Building blocks, sandboxes, ride and pull toys, jack-in-the-boxes, music toys, and balls are very important learning tools.
- Understand that “me” and “mine” are important before I can learn about “you” and “yours.” Set up a box that is mine.
- Teach me about not hurting others and about sharing, but do not shame me. Be patient, and encourage my empathy for others.

### *24-36 Months*

- Let me do it myself when possible. Let me feed myself, even if I am messy.
- Give me two choices when you can.
- Let me make choices about the food I eat, and let me refuse food. Reduce in between snacks so I will be hungry at mealtimes. Do not use food as a reward or punishment.
- Teach me about dangerous things (matches, knives, strangers, stray animals, cars, etc.) There should be significant consequences for dangerous behavior after giving warnings.
- Naps are still important to reduce cranky and moody behavior.
- Give me a warning that it will soon be time to move along.
- Do not hurry me too much; I need patience and time to learn.
- Read to me, color with me, and teach me games.

- If there is a new baby, remember I will be jealous. Assure me of your love, give me special time, and let me help with the baby.
- Tell me what I am feeling, comfort me, and don't scold me.
- Offer a hand when I am in a new situation. (This substitutes for picking me up.) Do not insist I have to grow up.
- Blow bubbles for me. Teach me to catch and throw a ball.
- Respect my fears and do not force me into fearful situations. Comfort me and encourage me that there is nothing to fear.

### **Potty Training Tips**

- No age is exact for toilet training. Watch for me to grimace at dirty diapers, show you my wet pants, and stay dry for up to two hours. I need to be verbal enough to understand toilet training
- Change me as soon as possible; tell me it is nice to be clean.
- Let me have a toy to keep me happy and busy on the potty chair.
- Put me on the potty briefly at first (up to 5 minutes).
- Praise my efforts and encourage me to let you know when I need to go potty.
- Teach me the family words for toilet training.
- Dress me in ways to remove clothing; be patient, never scold me; visit the potty before going somewhere; help me wipe, teach me to wash my hands, and show me how to flush.

### **Tantrum Tips**

- Learn warning signs and distract me. Don't expect too much.
- Since tantrums are a release of frustrated feelings and a way to get attention, ignore me if I am in a safe place. Do not reward tantrums.
- Stay calm and leave me, reassuring me you will be back when I am quiet. When I stop, talk to me; tell me what I am feeling. Help me express my frustration in words.

### ***3-5 Years***

- Discuss physical gender differences with me. Teach me the proper names for body parts without shame. If I am old enough to ask the question, I am old enough to understand the answer. Do not give me more information than I ask for.
- Create a home library with interesting books about heroines and heroes, fables, and fun stories. Read to me every day, and let me point to pictures, fill in missing words, predict what happens next, and discuss the ideas in the book. Understand when I want my favorites repeatedly.
- Remember, rewards works better than punishment. Have a sticker chart, give balloons, pennies for the bank, etc.
- Play children's music; sing, clap, and dance with me.
- Encourage physical involvement and imaginative expression (e.g., "Itsy-Bitsy Spider" and "I'm a Little Teapot").
- Teach me to count, sing my ABCs, and write my name with lots of patience. This will take time and repetition.
- I need a bike or tricycle, balls, clay, and play space with toys.
- Plant a garden or a pot from seed. Help me water it and watch it grow. Pick flowers for my table and let me eat the vegetables.
- Follow a routine at bedtime. Show me the clock and tell me it is time for bed.

- Let me pick out my bath toys, choose my pajamas, read me a story, etc.
- Spend time with me. Sing me a song; rub my back. Kiss me, say goodnight, and I love you.
- Give me permission to say “no” to adults that make me feel uncomfortable. Talk with me and get to know how I am feeling.

### ***5 to 8 Years***

- Discuss physical gender differences with me. If I am old enough to ask the question, I am old enough to understand the answer. Do not give me more information than I ask for.
- Create a home library with interesting books about heroines and heroes, fables, and fun stories. Read to me every day, and let me read a part of each book; discuss the ideas in the book.
- Remember, rewards works better than punishment. Have a sticker chart, give balloons, pennies for the bank, etc.
- Play board games with me.
- Sing, draw, and cook with me.
- Teach me new things with lots of patience. This will take time and repetition. I need a bike or tricycle, balls, clay, and play space with toys.
- Plant a garden or a pot from seed. Help me water it and watch it grow. Pick flowers for my table and let me eat the vegetables.
- Let me help with chores around the house.

### ***8 to 12 Years***

- Allow lights on after bedtime if I am reading a book. Check out a new library book each time a book is read. Used bookstores are also economical resources. Let me choose.
- Turn off the TV and play a game with me or talk things over. Do not let me watch PG-13 or R rated movies.
- Bake cookies with me; we can wear aprons, and do not get too upset about how messy the kitchen becomes.
- Provide an allowance contingent on performing household chores. Encourage saving money in a piggy bank, and give me bonuses for a good attitude and/or an exceptional job done.
- Teach me cards and board games I can play with my friend
- Encourage outside play (e.g., jump rope, skates, balls, etc.) Draw a hopscotch grid on the sidewalk with chalk.
- Teach me about nurturing by giving me responsibility for a family pet. Understand I may forget and remind me.
- I need to know how to swim to stay safe in water.
- Teach me about nature through camping, hiking, and going to the zoo.
- Let me organize a water fight with the hose and balloons.
- Establish family traditions. Remind me about what we did last year. Tell me why it is important.

### **Strategies for Child Safety**

- Know where I am at all times. Teach me to check in and give me timelines.
- Provide clear instructions to me about what you believe is safe, and supervise my activities.



- Make my house safe, friendly, and child centered. Children can visit under your watchful eye.
- Get to know the parents in my neighborhood and my friends' parents.
- Teach me to keep away from places that are unsafe.
- Give me permission to say, "My mom or dad wants me home," or "My mom will not let me," if I need to make an excuse to get out of an uncomfortable or pressure situation.
- Teach me about drugs, alcohol, smoking, and teen pregnancy. Let me tell you how I feel about these things.
- Teach me how to value myself and care for myself. Value me.
- Teach me to be cautious of overly friendly adults or strangers.
- Ask me how I am feeling. Listen. Keep communication open.
- Be reliable and predictable, and create a safe place for me to put my trust.
- Forgive me when I fail, and apologize when you have let me down. Teach me about respect by modeling it.
- Teach me about my bright future and celebrate each accomplishment along the way.
- Give me vision.

### *12 to 18 Years*

- Be clear about what you expect of me.
- Set curfews and know where I am at all times. Make sure I check-in frequently.
- Start with small freedoms, assuring me that larger freedoms will be allowed once I've proven myself capable of the smaller ones.
- Allow me to have privacy by giving me a lock on my door, a journal, and by knocking before entering my room. My lock is a privilege, as long as I open the door when you knock.
- Allow me to have my own music in my room.
- Encourage me to express my feelings in writing and verbally. It is okay to be angry, but not mean.
- When I speak, listen to the feeling underneath, along with the words. Am I scared? Or hurting?
- Peers are very important for me. Allow me to talk on the phone and have friends over. Let me organize a slumber party, pool party, or homework session. Allow my friends and me to take over the living room for an evening.
- Let me wear what I like as part of self-expression. Go shopping with me to buy clothes we both like.
- Encourage volunteer or paid work. I need to build a resume. Instill responsibility and polite public behaviors.
- Support and encourage me to gain a special talent early in my teen years (dance, music, drama, sports, art, etc.)

### *Strategies for Dealing with Conflict*

- Understand my need for developing a separate self, and do not take my struggles to gain independence personally.
- Understand that I still need supervision, guidance, and protection, even if I push you away or am critical of you. Troubled children often report a parent does not "love them enough" to wonder where they are or what they do.

- Acknowledge my feelings and maintain consistent consequences for my disobedience of clear limits you set.
- Always relate consequences to my disobedience (e.g., if an hour late, set the next curfew time an hour earlier.)
- When I make mistakes, disobey, or lose my temper when you set limits, know that this is normal. Do not give up. Reassure me that you still care and will not give up on me.
- Give me another chance. I want your love and approval and I will keep trying.
- Reassure me that you are still proud of me.
- Give me a vision for who I can become. Give me a reason why I should make healthy positive choices.
- Maintain communication and physical affection.

Adapted from: National Fatherhood Initiative. (n.d.). *10 ways to be a better dad* [On-line].  
Available: <https://www.fatherhood.org/10ways.asp>

## ONLINE WEB SITES FOR FATHERS

The following are some of the thousands of electronic sites available that contain information fathers may find beneficial:

- ❖ Sesame Street Magazine provides a variety of information and activities. Dads can also type in parenting concerns and areas of interest and receive tips and suggestions.  
<http://www.ctw.org/parents/advice>
- ❖ Provides a wealth of activities dads can do with their children. <http://www.childfun.com>
- ❖ Dads can access a variety of information on the stages of development. Developmental checklists are available from birth through six.  
<http://www.growingchild.com/milestones.html>
- ❖ This is the web site for the National Fatherhood Initiative. Information is provided on a wealth of father-related topics and the importance of fathers. Information can be obtained and special fathering populations such as incarcerated fathers, single fathers, etc. Fathers can sign up for emails on parenting tips and updates on issues of importance to dads. <http://www.fatherhood.org>
- ❖ Similar to the National Fatherhood Initiative, this web site provides information of interest to fathers. <http://www.fathers.com>
- ❖ A wide variety of fatherhood articles are available for fathers to read.  
<http://www.fathermag.com/news>

# FATHERHOOD RESOURCES ON WEB

## **Center for Urban Fathers**

The Center for Urban Families (CFUF) is a nationally recognized organization with a mission to assist individuals in regaining the personal power needed to benefit their families and communities. CFUF's integrated programs target four specific areas: family services, workforce development, responsible fatherhood, and program planning and evaluation.

<http://www.cfuf.org/>

## **The Center for Family Policy and Practice**

The Center for Family Policy and Practice (CFFPP) is a nationally-focused public policy organization conducting policy research, technical assistance, training, litigation, and public education in order to focus attention on the barriers faced by never-married, low-income fathers and their families.

<http://www.cffpp.org/>

## **Child Trends**

Child Trends is a nonprofit, nonpartisan research organization providing social science research to those who serve children and youth. To advance its mission, Child Trends collects and analyzes data; conducts, synthesizes, and disseminates research; designs and evaluates programs; and develops and tests promising approaches to research in the field.

<http://www.childtrends.org/>

## **Child Welfare League of America**

The Child Welfare League of America (CWLA), the nation's oldest and largest membership-based child welfare organization, has been known and respected as a champion for children since 1920. The primary objective of CWLA, is Making Children a National Priority.

<http://www.cwla.org>

## **Family and Corrections Network**

Family and Corrections Network is a national network devoted to families of prisoners. The Network has published information on children of prisoners, parenting programs for prisoners, prison visiting, incarcerated fathers, hospitality programs, and a variety of other topics.

<http://www.fcnetwork.org/>

Resources for Case Managers B6 April 2009

## **The Fathers Network**

The Fathers Network is a program based in the state of Washington whose mission it is to celebrate and support fathers and families raising children with special health care needs and developmental disabilities.

<http://www.fathersnetwork.org/>

## **Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study**

The Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study is an initiative of The

Bendheim Thoman Center for Research on Child Wellbeing (CRCW) at the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University. The Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study is following a longitudinal birth cohort of nearly 5,000 children born in the U.S. at the end of the 20th century. The study provides new information on the capabilities and relationships of parents, particularly unwed parents, as well as the effects of parental resources and public policies on children's wellbeing.  
<http://www.fragilefamilies.princeton.edu/>

#### **National Center for Fathering**

The National Center for Fathering was founded in 1990 by Dr. Ken Canfield to conduct research on fathers and fathering and to develop practical resources to prepare dads for nearly every fathering situation.  
<http://www.fathers.com/>

#### **National Fatherhood Initiative**

National Fatherhood Initiative's mission is to improve the well being of children by increasing the proportion of children growing up with involved, responsible, and committed fathers.  
<http://www.fatherhood.org/>

#### **National Practitioners Network for Fathers and Families**

The National Practitioners Network for Fathers and Families, Inc. (NPNFF) is a national individual membership organization whose mission is to build the profession of practitioners working to increase the responsible involvement of fathers in the lives of their children.  
<http://www.npnff.org/>

#### **United States Department of Health and Human Services**

The United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) web site is devoted to promoting responsible fatherhood. It is a rich source of programs and studies.  
<http://fatherhood.hhs.gov>

#### **Zero to Three**

Zero to Three's mission is to support the healthy development and well-being of infants, toddlers, and their families.  
<http://www.zerotothree.org/>

Resources for Case Managers B8 April 2009