



KEEP Fathers Engaged Practice Brief

Centering Fathers in Human Services Programming to Increase Participation

Danielle DeLisle and Rebekah Selekman

Father recruitment and retention strategies to improve child and family outcomes

Fathers want to be involved in their children's lives, but many human services programs typically have not focused on supporting fathers. Moreover, positive father involvement is critical for child health and well-being, and it positively affects health and well-being for mothers and fathers. Research shows healthy father involvement positively relates to the well-being of children throughout their youth, beginning with infancy.^{1,2,3} Families with involved fathers have lower rates of births that are low weight and very low weight, preterm, and small for gestational age.⁴ Father involvement early in a child's life also positively affects cognitive and linguistic skills as well as school performance, which persist throughout childhood and into adolescence.⁵ In addition, father involvement has important implications for maternal and paternal health and well-being when both a father and mother are involved with parenting. When fathers are involved during pregnancy, mothers are more likely to receive prenatal care and less likely to smoke. After birth, mothers' satisfaction with father involvement reduces postpartum depression.⁶ Furthermore, when fathers are involved in their children's lives, their own well-being might improve. For example, father involvement with preschool-age children is associated with lower rates of depression.⁷

Key findings

How to **recruit fathers** for human services programs

- Encourage referrals through word of mouth
- Tailor recruitment materials to fathers
- Tap into social networks for additional support
- Engage fathers in the community
- Position staff to market the program
- Offer incentives and support

How to **keep fathers engaged** in programming

- Make the program office father-friendly
- Meet fathers where they are on their fatherhood journey
- Design flexible programs
- Incorporate fun activities into the program structure
- Create peer-learning opportunities
- Use technology to stay in touch
- Communicate the program's dedication to including fathers
- Hire and train staff to relate to fathers ▲

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) encourages state and local human services agencies to recognize fathers' contribution to and desire to be involved in their children's lives and promote ongoing economic contributions and family involvement. As family structures have become increasingly complex, there is growing interest in developing full-family service models and an increasing

need to identify and apply effective father engagement approaches across human services program areas. Programs focused on serving fathers, such as Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood programs administered by HHS, have extensive experience engaging fathers. Other programs areas that have historically served mothers are now focusing on father engagement, acknowledging that incorporating fathers into their services can improve program goals and outcomes for the families they serve.⁸

Human services programs can implement recruitment and retention strategies to increase father engagement and participation in services to promote child and family well-being. When included in programming, fathers can expand their valuable role in their families and help generate positive child and family outcomes. This guide offers strategies for a two-step process of increasing participation: (1) getting fathers into human services programs and (2) keeping them engaged in programming.

How to use this guide

This practice guide is a resource for human services programs striving to engage fathers. Building on literature from the field and interviews with human services programs that currently engage fathers in services, this guide outlines recruitment and retention strategies programs can use to increase father engagement in programming. The goal is to help programs engage fathers in services to build upon their intrinsic motivation to support their families and ensure fathers have access to programs and opportunities that can equip them with the skills they need. ▲



Step 1. Getting fathers in the door

To engage fathers in programming, program leaders and staff can use father-centered recruitment strategies to attract fathers from a variety of backgrounds. Programs can design services specifically for fathers or for the entire family. Getting fathers into programs is a necessary first step toward providing them the services that could enhance their involvement with their families.



Encourage referrals through word of mouth

Fathers who complete human services programs can be the best advertisement for those programs. Formerly and currently engaged fathers can share their experiences with other fathers in the community to highlight the benefits of the program. Programs might hire previous program participants to serve as recruitment specialists and provide personal testimonies of their positive experience with the program in the community and at other recruitment events. Several programs use satisfied participants to help recruit other fathers. For example, the TYRO Dads Program, which serves incarcerated fathers, relies on a community of fathers who have completed the program to share their positive experiences and attest to the value of the program. Alumni who complete the program and remain incarcerated encourage other incarcerated fathers to participate. The Goodwill-Easter Seals FATHER Project also hires program alumni to go into the community and distribute brochures and other printed materials to potential participants.

Reinforcing word-of-mouth referrals with more traditional print and digital advertising gives potential participants a reference point when they hear about the program from former participants and establishes the program as a legitimate and positive presence in the community. ForeverDads, for example, relies heavily on word-of-mouth referrals but also sends letters, emails, and fliers to participants and advertises on the radio and local billboards to increase the community's familiarity with the program. Similarly, People for People Inc.'s Project D.A.D. reported using multiple outreach and marketing materials, such as radio advertisements, flyers, and a one-minute video on social media, to have a broader reach and stay visible in the community.

Programs can also leverage word-of-mouth referrals in the professional community. When program staff interact with other agencies (such as, child support, child welfare, and family court) that serve shared participants, they develop relationships with staff in these organizations and demonstrate the value of participation for fathers. After partner agencies see the positive impact the program can have on a father's life, professionals in these agencies might share information about the program with others in their organization and with external colleagues. For example, Strong Fathers has found that word-of-mouth referrals within the professional community is the most effective outreach strategy; when an attorney, judge, or child welfare professional refers a client to the program and sees the positive impact it makes, they refer more fathers and tell their colleagues about the program.

Programs can use a combination of recruitment strategies

- Face-to-face interactions with participants at community events
 - Traditional advertising and distribution of program materials
 - Referrals from third parties such as staff at other programs that serve fathers ▲
-



Tailor recruitment materials and practices specifically to fathers to be most engaging

Program materials can spark participants' interest in learning about available programs. Materials should be simple, easy to understand, and tailored to those the program serves. Postcard- or pocket-sized printed materials can be particularly appealing to fathers.

Program materials should also be relatable. For example, programs can use brochures or flyers with images of fathers with their children, not just of mothers with their children. Materials can also use language inclusive of both mothers and fathers. Programs that have historically been geared toward mothers can update their recruitment materials to use the term "parent" instead of "mother." The California WIC (Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children) Association (CalWIC) developed a toolkit of resources to help local WIC agencies adjust the language of their program materials to include all parents and include photos of men with children in their program literature. Bright Beginnings Inc. also intentionally changed the logo for their Head Start program to include two parents (originally a female holding hands with a child) so that fathers would feel more included.

In addition, programs can adapt staff recruitment practices to the language and culture of fathers whenever possible. For example, when recruiting fathers from Native American populations, staff can demonstrate respect for the culture by building trust, listening more than they speak, and acknowledging the historical trauma this group has experienced. San Diego POPs embraces this strategy and approaches

communities with the belief that staff need to (1) understand and respect cultural practices, (2) observe and share experiences without trying to impose solutions on the culture, and (3) be mindful of the language they use to ensure they are conveying support for program participants.



Tap into family connections and personal networks

In programs that serve the entire family, family members and personal connections can be an access point for reaching fathers and an important support for strengthening fathers' participation in the program. Programs can leverage these connections in two ways.

First, staff can encourage program participants to bring fathers in for services. For example, they can encourage mothers who access human services programs to bring fathers to the office with them to learn about the father-specific services available. This strategy helps recruit more fathers and reinforces to the mother the importance of father involvement in the family. Fatherhood PRIDE regularly encourages mothers in their maternal and child health programs to bring fathers to program sessions. San Diego POPs reports that half of their referrals come from fathers who have completed the program; previous participants bring new fathers to the program's talk circles to engage them in services.

Second, when given permission, program staff can reach out to fathers' trusted family and friends to support fathers and encourage them to complete the program. Staff at Fatherhood PRIDE started identifying family and friends to support fathers. Intake workers ask fathers to identify important members of their support network—for example, family, friends, and neighbors—who could help the fathers achieve their goals in the program. With permission, staff contact these individuals and ask them to support the father with reminders of when classes are scheduled, providing transportation, and encouraging them to complete the program. Program staff believe that this strategy is related to their increasing program completion rates.



Physically meet fathers “where they’re at”

Programs can recruit from physical and virtual locations that fathers are known to frequent. This can include community recreation centers, churches, barbershops, basketball courts, and other community spaces. For example, maternal and child health programs can consider recruiting fathers from hospitals when their children are born to introduce services that can help on their fatherhood journeys. Programs might even be able to recruit fathers from their own parking lots. At Fatherhood PRIDE, staff found that fathers sometimes drove mothers to the agency for services but waited in the car. Fatherhood PRIDE staff started approaching fathers in the parking lot to describe and offer services.

Programs also reach fathers on digital platforms and social media to increase program visibility. The DAD Project at the Milwaukee Department of Health reports using social media as an effective outreach tool for all men's health-focused programming to connect with fathers virtually and introduce them to their services.



Ensure program staff and community partners understand opportunities for and benefits of father engagement

Program staff are important sources of information for fathers about how involvement in their children's lives can have a lasting, positive impact. Program leaders can ensure staff know the importance of father involvement and the range of programs available for fathers by discussing the topic at staff meetings and including information in staff onboarding processes. Staff that are well-equipped with this knowledge are better able to engage fathers in programming. To ensure staff are aware of resources for fathers, some local WIC agencies in California invite their service partners to attend staff meetings so staff are familiar with the community partners they can refer fathers to. People for People Inc. Project D.A.D. cross-trains staff, including facilitators, receptionists, and bus drivers, so all staff fully understand the program and can connect with participants.

Partner agencies and community organizations should also work with fathers to communicate how father involvement benefits the whole family and refer fathers to available services in the community. To increase awareness of the benefits of father involvement, the Ohio Fatherhood Commission conducts presentations across state systems to teach agencies why father involvement is important and illustrate how systems can be more inclusive of fathers.



Offer fathers incentives and supports

As with participants in many kinds of programs, fathers might be motivated to attend program events if there is an incentive for participation, such as a gift card. Additionally, incentives such as gas cards, food vouchers, or childcare can reduce barriers that prevent fathers from enrolling in services. By helping fathers overcome these barriers, programs can enhance fathers' ability to engage and persist in services.

Program staff can assess needs and barriers during initial conversations with fathers to identify challenges that prevent them from participating in programming. By identifying solutions to these barriers with staff, fathers might be more willing and able to enroll in services to build their fathering skills. Fatherhood PRIDE works with many incarcerated fathers, and the program noticed that fathers did not get many visitors because family and friends did not have transportation to the facility. As an incentive for participation, Fatherhood PRIDE offers a \$25 gift card to fathers who complete the program. For the incarcerated fathers they serve, gift cards are distributed to family and friends to help pay for gas which enables them to visit the father in the detention center.

Programs can also host events to engage and introduce fathers to potential services. Activities like picnics or father appreciation celebrations with games and prizes can provide fathers an opportunity to be involved with their children while starting to engage with program staff. For example, ForeverDads holds community events to introduce their program to the community, recruit fathers, and help fathers in the program connect with others in the community who can support them once they complete the program. ForeverDads holds an All Pro Dads Breakfast (story time breakfast at the local schools) and an Annual Golf Classic¹, which serve as community events and recruitment tools. Mecklenburg County, North

¹ In addition to being a community and recruitment event, the ForeverDads Annual Golf Classic is a fundraiser for the organization.

Carolina, Child Support Enforcement also conducts outreach events to fathers in the community to build recognition and trust in the program.



Step 2. Keeping fathers engaged in services

Initial engagement in programming is just the first step to engaging fathers. It can be equally as important to encourage fathers to complete services and realize the full benefits of programming. Once fathers enroll in services, program staff will want to ensure fathers remain in services to build skills to support their families.



Make the service environment inclusive of fathers

It is important to make fathers feel comfortable accessing services to increase their likelihood of participating and remaining engaged in programming. One way to do this is to feature fathers in posters or materials displayed in common areas, such as a lobby or waiting room. These areas can display father-friendly messages, photos, and reading materials. For example, the Fatherhood PRIDE office is decorated with images of fathers and posters with quotes from fathers to make fathers feel welcome. CalWIC's [toolkit](#)² also offers downloadable posters with images of fathers that local WIC offices can access and display.

Program leadership can train staff on how to engage with fathers when they enter the office. This includes greeting the father, making eye contact, and ensuring there is physical space and chairs for both parents at the table during program meetings and sessions. Programs can implement these low-cost strategies to set a positive tone for ongoing engagement without spending additional funds. Local WIC agencies in California shared that a welcoming environment, intentional eye contact, and conversation with fathers has been particularly helpful for sustained father engagement.



Meet fathers where they are on their fatherhood journey

Programs need to acknowledge that no two fathers are the same; fathers have different relationships with their families and are navigating varying individual circumstances. To support all fathers and interact with them in a nonjudgmental way, program staff can use intake assessments to learn more about the fathers, their needs, and their goals, allowing the fathers to be the expert in their own lives. Staff can then help the fathers develop skills and access services such as food assistance, housing assistance, job training, and legal assistance to help them succeed by their own standards.

For example, staff at Arapahoe County have an intentional focus on meeting fathers' individual needs with a range of services. They serve fathers using a one-stop shop approach, pooling resources from

² "CalWIC Engaging Men & Dads at WIC: A Toolkit." Available at <https://www.calwic.org/what-we-do/engage-wic-families/engaging-men-a-dads/>.

divisions and units so they are equipped to connect fathers to the services needed given their individual circumstances. Providing effective services that meet fathers' needs can also be a valuable recruitment tool when satisfied customers spread the word to others.

Sample intake topics to support father engagement

When working with the father:

- Relationship with children
- Family composition
- Financial responsibilities
- Work schedule and availability
- Barriers to participating in services
- Preferred communication method

When working with the mother:

- Father's relationship with children
 - Family composition or level of father involvement ▲
-



Design flexible programs to reduce barriers and meet fathers' needs

Fathers might face scheduling challenges that prevent them from engaging in programs and services. To address this, programs can offer flexible hours that accommodate fathers' work schedules (such as on evenings and weekends) and that might be less likely to interfere with other program requirements fathers are working to satisfy (such as workforce development activities, court hearings, and so on). By offering flexible hours, programs can help reduce barriers, which might enable fathers to engage in services more easily. Staff can verify fathers' work schedule during intake and try to arrange meetings and sessions during times that are convenient. If fathers still cannot participate in program sessions, staff can seek their input before the meeting and follow up after the session so he can remain informed.⁹

Programs also can be flexible with attendance requirements for fathers who have scheduling conflicts. For example, if a father is not able to participate in a particular session of an eight-week program, program staff might allow the father to complete that session in a different program cycle to ensure all program content is received.

Programs should assess how the service structure contributes to accessibility and father engagement

Some programs find that implementing a rigid program structure helps participants take the program more seriously, which increases buy-in and participation in services. For example, in People for People Inc.'s Project D.A.D. program, participants are not allowed to attend classes late and may not miss sessions. If a participant cannot attend a particular class, he is offered a specific makeup session. This strict structure conveys a sense of seriousness about the program, which staff report leads to sustained engagement. ▲

The COVID-19 pandemic additionally gave programs the opportunity to develop more flexible programs. For example, staff from Fatherhood PRIDE reported that program participation and retention increased when they shifted their program to a virtual format because fathers did not have to worry about transportation and could call into program sessions from wherever they were.



Incorporate activities fathers enjoy into the program structure

Some programs offer father-specific activities in addition to their primary curricula to engage fathers; they report having successful outings to sporting events, camping, and events that encourage father interaction with their children, like field days. During these activities, fathers build relationships with staff and other program participants, which can foster increased motivation to continue in the program. For example, respondents from local WIC agencies in California said their most successful engagement strategy has been holding father appreciation events during which they invite fathers to spend time with their children and celebrate their role in the family. Father to Father Inc. also shared that they host parent-child activities such as a drive-in movie theater night or picking up drive-through activity bags to encourage father-child interaction and further engagement in the program.



Create peer-learning opportunities for participants

Peer networks and support groups can provide support and accountability and serve as a resource for fathers. When managed effectively, group sessions can be the glue that keeps fathers involved in a program.¹⁰ Programs can incorporate activities such as support groups, peer mentoring, or group work to encourage peer learning and bonding between program participants. ForeverDads incorporates a peer mentoring component in all its program offerings. For example, their online curriculum includes a mentorship component to ensure that participants can bond with other fathers who can provide accountability and support when they cannot participate in their typical in-person group structures.



Use technology to stay in touch

Programs are more successful when they identify the best way to communicate with participants. For example, some programs have found that they are more successful at engaging fathers in ongoing services when they communicate by text message and social media instead of by phone calls. Programs can determine the best method of communication with fathers during intake so staff can use that method to continue to build one-on-one relationships with the father and send reminders about program sessions and events. Staff from Arapahoe County noted that fathers in their program were more likely to respond to a text message than a phone call, so they adjusted to make this their primary form of communication with participants.



Communicate the program's dedication to including fathers in programming

Programs can demonstrate that fathers are a priority, starting with their first interaction with the family. During the intake process, staff can discuss how and why fathers are important to the family and ensure that they collect information about the mother and father to show that fathers are equal partners as parents. For example, during the intake process, programs that serve child-support-involved fathers can affirm fathers are a valuable part of the family and provide more than just financial support. Arapahoe County particularly sees its work with child-support-involved fathers as an opportunity to provide wraparound services to ensure fathers can thrive and support their families in a variety of ways.

“...[seeing] other people who have went through similar things that I went through and they're still striving to do better, it kind of puts a battery on your back to be motivated to do the same. So, if you ever get deterred or you are feeling down about your situation and then you see somebody else going through something similar and they keep going, you're like, man I got to keep going too.... That interaction with other fathers is very helpful and very inspiring.”

– *Father to Father Inc. participant*

Programs also can emphasize the importance of involving fathers at specific touchpoints when working with a family. For example, it can be important to engage fathers early in the program's involvement with a family to establish a routine and expectation that staff will engage fathers. In the child welfare arena, for example, staff might do this during the development of a safety plan for a child to prevent entry into foster care. By involving fathers early, programs can more easily work with fathers later in the case.¹¹ Human services program staff can also ask for fathers' opinions throughout service provision to show that their perspective and feedback on services are important to the program.



Hire and train staff to relate to fathers' experiences

Programs can increase representation of men and fathers among their staff to connect with fathers in the program. Many programs note that fathers are more likely to continue in services when they are working with someone they can relate to; participants might be more likely to connect and engage with staff who are fathers because they believe those staff will better understand their circumstances. Local WIC agencies in California noted some men specifically request to work with a male staff member. Some Head Start and Early Head Start programs also made a concerted effort to increase representation of male staff to better relate to fathers with young children in educational programming.

Program staff might need to acknowledge and confront their own biases about fathers

Program leadership can help train staff to be aware of their potential biases against men and emphasize the value of father engagement in services to help staff positively interact with fathers to improve outcomes. The CalWIC Toolkit offers resources for programs to help staff consider their own biases toward men and fathers to promote healthy professional relationships between women and men in WIC programs. ▲

Programs might consider hiring a designated staff member to improve and foster father engagement throughout a father’s experience in the program. In addition to focusing on father enrollment, staff in this role can ensure that other staff incorporate father engagement strategies, such as asking for fathers’ opinions about services for the family. For example, designated fatherhood coordinators can design and implement recruitment strategies for fathers, tailor curricula for fathers during services, and design and implement activities outside of the program for fathers.¹² These staff can work alongside caseworkers and meet fathers at times and locations that are convenient to them to work on issues important to the father.¹³

Programs can train all staff within the organization on how to engage with fathers, regardless of their role in the program. This will help create a culture that supports fathers.

Additional resources for father engagement strategies

This practice guide is one of many resources that highlight father recruitment and retention strategies in human services programs. Many federal and nongovernmental agencies have compiled resources specific to certain fields that might be useful for programs to review and adapt. These resources include case studies of programs successfully engaging fathers; practice guides to learn how to implement engagement strategies in specific settings; and articles, webinars, and toolkits to help develop and operate a program inclusive of fathers.

FEDERAL AGENCY RESOURCES AND RESEARCH	Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, Key Programmatic Elements of Father Engagement to Promote Self-Sufficiency	▶ Three case studies of how programs operating in human services fields have successfully engaged fathers.
	Office of Head Start	▶ Practice guides and tip sheets to demonstrate how to build relationships with fathers in Head Start and Early Head Start programs.
	Children’s Bureau	▶ Articles, webinars, and toolkits for engaging fathers in the child welfare arena.
	Office of Child Support Enforcement	▶ Strategies to help child support staff serve fathers or refer them to responsible fatherhood programs that can meet fathers’ needs.
	National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse, Responsible Fatherhood Toolkit: Resources from the field	▶ Lessons learned and resources used by fatherhood programs in diverse locales throughout the nation.
	Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE) Approaches to Father Engagement and Fathers’ Experiences in Home Visiting project	▶ Reports and briefs that discuss the approaches home visiting programs use to engage fathers, the challenges they face, strategies used to overcome these challenges, and the benefits of father participation.
	OPRE Fatherhood, Relationships, and Marriage- Illuminating the Next Generation of Research project	▶ Research brief that discusses how responsible fatherhood programs can improve child well-being.

NONGOVERNMENTAL AGENCY RESOURCES	Ascend at the Aspen Institute	▶ List of resources for father involvement and two-generational approaches to support family well-being.
	Casey Family	▶ Resources and strategies for engaging fathers in prevention services to improve children’s safety, permanency, and well-being.
	The Fatherhood Project	▶ Videos, audio clips, articles, books, and research related to practical activities, useable knowledge, and powerful stories about modern fatherhood and family life.
	Center for Urban Fathers and Families Leadership Institute	▶ Empowers, educates, and strengthens fatherhood practitioners with experiences, skills and information that will strengthen their ability to improve outcomes for low-income fathers and families, impacting black male achievement.
	University of California, Berkeley, School of Social Work, Father Engagement and Father Involvement Toolkit	▶ Details the process of putting a new father engagement practice, program, or intervention into action. The toolkit can be used to help implementers systematically execute and evaluate the new practice, program, or intervention.
	CalWIC, Engaging Men and Dads at WIC: A Toolkit	▶ Tips, strategies, and resources that implementers can use to increase father engagement in WIC programs
	Promundo, CulturaSalud/EME, and Network of Men for Gender Equality (REDMAS): Program P Manual for Engaging Men in Fatherhood, Caregiving, and Maternal and Child Health	▶ The Program P Manual is a compilation of interconnected strategies and action steps designed to reshape how local communities and governments, particularly the public health system, engage men as caregivers.

Highlighted programs

Arapahoe County Community and Child Support Services Division	Works to increase child support payments by increasing employment among noncustodial parents using a two-generational approach.
Bright Beginnings Inc	Nonprofit in Washington, DC, that offers early childhood education services for children birth to 5 at no cost to their families.
The California WIC (Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children) Association (CaWIC)	Supports local WIC agencies throughout the state. Notably, they developed a toolkit of resources to help WIC agencies engage fathers in programming to improve child outcomes.
The DAD (Direct Assistance to Dads) Project	Through the Men's Health Center at the Milwaukee Department of Health in Wisconsin the free, voluntary program provides home visits to fathers, families, and children.
Father to Father Inc.	Operates in South Carolina to help fathers in the Lowcountry of South Carolina be a positive and consistent presence in their children's lives.
ForeverDads	Serves six rural counties in Ohio. Their mission is to encourage, educate, and equip men to develop positive relationships with their children, family, and community.
Goodwill-Easter Seals FATHER (Fostering Actions to Help Earning and Responsibility) Project	Serves families in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and its mission is to help fathers support their children economically and emotionally.
Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, Child Support Enforcement	The responsible fatherhood initiative's goal is to provide information about child support to fathers throughout the county.
Northeast Florida Healthy Start Coalition Fatherhood PRIDE (Parental Responsibility Inspiring Dads Everywhere)	The fatherhood program operates in five counties in Florida and aims to provide comprehensive fatherhood services to dads in northeast Florida.
The Office of Head Start and Early Head Start	Helps young children from families with low incomes prepare to succeed in school through local programs. Head Start and Early Head Start programs promote children's development through services that support early learning, health, and family well-being.
The Ohio Fatherhood Commission	Funds fatherhood program grantees in multiple counties across the state to enhance the well-being of Ohio's children by providing opportunities for fathers to become better parents, partners, and providers.
People for People Inc. Project D.A.D (Developing Active Dads)	Located in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Project D.A.D's mission is to help noncustodial fathers and families be responsible parents by providing programming that improves participants' relations with their children.
San Diego Paternal Opportunities Program (POPs)	Operates in Sacramento and San Diego, California, and its mission is to protect family unity through prevention, support, collaboration, and advocacy for paternal, parental, and tribal justice in all branches of the courts through active partnership and best practices.
Strong Fathers	Located in Durham, North Carolina, its mission is to help fathers with a history of domestic violence become strong fathers who can relate to and care for their families.
The Ridge Project's TYRO Dads Program	The program's mission is to empower generational responsibility, reduce recidivism, and improve the lives of families in Ohio.

About the study. The US Department of Health and Human Services' Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) contracted with Mathematica to conduct Key Programmatic Elements of Father Engagement to Promote Self-Sufficiency (KEEP Fathers Engaged), a project designed to begin to identify key approaches and strategies for engaging fathers across a variety of program areas and subpopulations. From Fall 2019 through Fall/Winter 2020, the key activities of the KEEP Fathers Engaged project included a program scan and targeted literature review to identify a cross-section of programs that actively work to engage fathers to improve children's well-being, strengthen families, and increase their economic mobility; key informant discussions with a subset of programs to learn about strategies to engage fathers in programming; and case studies with three programs to delve more deeply into father engagement approaches. All data collection activities were informed by a panel of researchers, practitioners, and federal program experts.

The approaches described in this Practice Guide reflect practices that selected programs reported to be effective at engaging fathers, and the lessons identified are informed by findings from the KEEP Fathers Engaged project. The impacts of these specific approaches on father and family outcomes were not formally evaluated as part of this study. The KEEP Father Engaged project findings are broadly applicable across human services programs; however, they do not fully address situations where programs determine additional intervention is needed to facilitate fathers' healthy involvement with their families, such as cases involving family violence. For more information about the study, visit <https://aspe.hhs.gov/father-engagement>.

¹ Padilla, Y.C., and N.E. Reichman. "Low Birthweight: Do Unwed Fathers Help?" *Children and Youth Services Review*, vol. 23, no. 4–5, 2001, pp. 427–452.

² Allen, S., and K.J. Daly. "The Effects of Father Involvement. An Updated Research Summary of the Evidence." Guelph, Ontario: Centre for Families, Work & Well-Being, University of Guelph, 2007.

³ Martin, L.T., M.J. McNamara, A.S. Milot, T. Halle, and E.C. Hair. "The Effects of Father Involvement During Pregnancy on Receipt of Prenatal Care and Maternal Smoking." *Maternal and Child Health Journal*, vol. 11, no. 6, 2007, pp. 595–602.

⁴ Alio, Amina P., Jennifer L. Kornosky, Alfred K. Mbah, Phillip J. Marty, and Hamisu M. Salihu. "The Impact of Paternal Involvement on Feto-Infant Morbidity Among Whites, Blacks and Hispanics." *Maternal and Child Health Journal*, vol. 14, no. 5, 2010, pp. 735–741.

⁵ Karberg, E., J. Finochiaro, and N. Vann. "Father and Child Well-Being: A Scan of Current Research." Washington, DC: National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse, 2019.

⁶ Fagan, Jay, and Yookyong Lee. "Perceptions and Satisfaction with Father Involvement and Adolescent Mothers' Postpartum Depressive Symptoms." *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, vol. 39, no. 9, 2010, pp. 1109–1121.

⁷ Karberg, E., J. Finochiaro, and N. Vann. "Father and Child Well-Being: A Scan of Current Research." Washington, DC: National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse, 2019.

⁸ Martinez, Ken, Frank Rider, Nadia Cayce, Steve Forssell, Jeffrey Poirier, Sharon Hunt, Gerard Crawford, and James Sawyer. "A Guide for Father Involvement in Systems of Care." Washington, DC: Technical Assistance Partnership for Child and Family Mental Health, 2013.

⁹ National Resource Center. "Engaging Fathers in Services." Research to Practice Brief. Berkeley, CA: National Abandoned Infants Assistance Resource Center, November 2015.

¹⁰ National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse. "Tip Card for Fatherhood Practitioners—Group Facilitation." Washington, DC: Office of Family Assistance, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2018.

¹¹ Bellamy, Jennifer L., and M.C. Bradley. "Opportunities to Engage Fathers and Paternal Relatives in Child Welfare." Washington, DC: Mathematica Policy Research, October 2018.

¹² Sandstrom, Heather, Maeve Gearing, H. Elizabeth Peters, Carrie Heller, Olivia Healy, and Eleanor Pratt. “Approaches to Father Engagement and Fathers’ Experiences in Home Visiting Programs.” OPRE Report #2015-103. Washington, DC: Urban Institute, November 2015.

¹³ Casey Family Programs. “How Can We Better Engage Fathers in Prevention?” Washington, DC: Casey Family Programs, February 2019. Available at <https://www.casey.org/engaging-fathers-prevention/>. Accessed July 23, 2021.