



Fathers and Continuous Learning in Child Welfare

Toolkit for Building System Capacity to Engage Fathers and Paternal Relatives in Child Welfare: LADDERS Framework Worksheet

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LADDERS Framework Worksheet¹

Purpose

The LADDERS Framework prompts teams to review and discuss questions about spreading and sustaining changes your improvement team has tested using the Plan-Do-Study-Act process. It lays out considerations for sustainability to ensure successful changes will continue.

Instructions

Review the questions as a team and document them in the worksheet. Figure 1 shows questions to ask for each component of LADDERS. After answering the questions, these questions feed into the [Sustainability Planning Worksheet](#).

Figure 1. The LADDERS Framework for Spread and Sustainability

Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who has the top-level commitment for this change? What is their role on (or connection to) our team?
Agency Fit and Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How is this aligned with other priorities and plans for our team? Agency? Community? What is the timing for implementing and spreading this work? What resources and infrastructure do we need?
Documentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How will this practice be documented, managed, and monitored to ensure it is used consistently and with the desired intent?
Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What do our metrics show in terms of improvements? What other quantitative or qualitative data do we have? How can we use stories to make the case for spreading this?
Expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who will have primary ownership and responsibility for managing the implementation and spread of this practice or process?
Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who are the key champions and messengers in implementing and spreading this work? Who are the audiences we will need to reach? What messages will we use to reach them? How will we reach
Replacement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How is this new way of doing work (the process) better or easier than the old or usual way? What will be eliminated to avoid duplication?
Staffing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What staff do we need to do this work? How will we prepare them to do this work? Training? Coaching? Supervising? Supporting?

¹ The LADDERS Framework Worksheet was developed by JRA Consulting, Ltd. For the full toolkit, please visit <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/toolkit/toolkit-building-system-capacity-engage-fathers-and-paternal-relatives-child-welfare>.

LADDERS Framework Worksheet

Applying LADDERS to father engagement and racial justice planning	
Sustainability strategies	For each strategy, please indicate how you will hold yourselves accountable for executing the strategies.
<p>Leadership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who are the leaders that need to support this work? • What do we need them to do? • How can we help them do it? 	
<p>Agency fit and capacity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is this work consistent with the overall direction of the agency? • How does the agency's overall strategic plan support this work? • What resources (for example, technology, documentation, and internal infrastructure) are needed to do this work? • How will these resources be developed, provided, and supported? 	
<p>Documentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will this work (and the associated practices) be documented to ensure it occurs consistently across the agency and conforms with the desired intent? • How will leadership and others in the agency know that this work is being sustained over time? • How will progress be monitored and reported? 	
<p>Data</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What data will be collected to monitor the fidelity of this work? How do we know it is being done as planned? • How will these data be used? By whom? 	
<p>Expectations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will new challenges or barriers be anticipated and addressed? What will happen as leadership changes, staff turns over, technology changes, or funding is reallocated? 	

Applying LADDERS to father engagement and racial justice planning	
<p>Replacement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What existing practices or processes are these practices or processes replacing? • How is this new work being integrated with existing agency practice to ensure it is not just layering something new on top of what is already being done? • In what way is this new way of doing work better or easier than the old or usual way? 	
<p>Staffing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What staff, including caseworkers, parent partners, supervisors, managers, executive staff, etc. are needed to do this work? • What changes are being made to job descriptions to ensure staff can continue to do this work? • How will new staff be trained and supported to do work in this way? • How will ongoing needs for training and professional development be assessed and met? • How will supervision and coaching be done? 	

LADDERS Framework Worksheet (Example)

Applying LADDERS to father engagement and racial justice planning	
Sustainability strategies	For each strategy, please indicate how you will hold yourselves accountable for executing the strategies.
<p>Leadership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who are the leaders that need to support this work? • What do we need them to do? • How can we help them do it? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Involve leadership, regional partner improvement teams, father engagement action improvement teams, members of the racial justice action committee, and the department data work group. – We need their help ensuring the new practices are sustained and visible in practice, policy, and training. For example, all offices should have family-improvement team coordinators that plan and support fathers during family-team meetings. – We can help them do this by joining their leadership meetings and creating action steps as a group. We could develop a father engagement committee that leadership can attend. – Our Action Planning Form details who will do what, and by when.
<p>Agency fit and capacity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is this work consistent with the overall direction of the agency? • How does the agency’s overall strategic plan support this work? • What resources (for example, technology, documentation, and internal infrastructure) are needed to do this work? • How will these resources be developed, provided, and supported? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The agency overall has started a racial justice action committee. We would like to support this work and help delineate the connection with father engagement work. Ideally, everyone will see the overlap in father engagement work and our efforts to promote racial justice. Both groups should have an action plan that speaks to the others, and they should discuss the possibility of combining the action plans. – The agency overall has stated a commitment to improving racial equity. – Our team has ideas for how to achieve racial justice for men of color who interact with child welfare, including metrics to collect to better understand how to support fathers of color. – We will draft a racial justice action plan as part of our father engagement sustainability plan. We will share it with other committees and ask for their help with specific pieces to move the work forward. For example, we will ask for help providing support to fathers so they can attend family-team meetings. – Our Action Planning Form details who will do what, and by when.
<p>Documentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will this work (and the associated practices) be documented to ensure it occurs consistently across the agency and conforms with the desired intent? • How will leadership and others in the agency know that this work is being sustained over time? • How will progress be monitored and reported? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Our agency has a practice guidance document. We have several father engagement practices (see PDSA tracker) we would like to add to the next version of the practice guidance document. – We will add data fields for caseworkers to enter information about father engagement. – Leadership and others in the agency will look at the metrics for father engagement in an ongoing way to help improve numbers related to father engagement. – Progress will be reported at quarterly leadership meetings. Data will support practice improvements. – We will review and revise policy that is not clear about father engagement and supporting better outcomes for fathers of color. – Our Action Planning Form details who will do what, and by when.

Applying LADDERS to father engagement and racial justice planning	
<p>Data</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What data will be collected to monitor the fidelity of this work? How do we know it is being done as planned? • How will these data be used? By whom? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – We will disaggregate the following metrics to understand differences by race: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Number of fathers contacted when children enter the child welfare system ○ Number of children placed with paternal relatives as their foster caregivers ○ Caseworker contact with fathers and paternal relatives ○ Invitations and attendance for fathers at family-team meetings ○ Number of children who achieve permanency with a father or paternal relative – Our Action Planning Form details who will do what, and by when.
<p>Expectations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will new challenges or barriers be anticipated and addressed? What will happen as leadership changes, staff turns over, technology changes, or funding is reallocated? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – As an agenda item at regular meetings with the groups named above, we will ask about anticipated challenges and plans to mitigate risk. – Our Action Planning Form details who will do what, and by when.
<p>Replacement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What existing practices or processes are these practices or processes replacing? • How is this new work being integrated with existing agency practice to ensure it is not just layering something new on top of what is already being done? • In what way is this new way of doing work better or easier than the old or usual way? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – We will meet monthly as a team to understand how to streamline father engagement processes. – We will test PDSAs of new practices and assess whether they duplicate work or create undue burden on staff. – We will continue practices that staff find beneficial for engaging fathers and paternal relatives, and reduce burden when staff notify us if new practices are an inefficient use of resources. – Our Action Planning Form details who will do what, and by when.
<p>Staffing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What staff, including caseworkers, parent partners, supervisors, managers, executive staff, etc. are needed to do this work? • What changes are being made to job descriptions to ensure staff can continue to do this work? • How will new staff be trained and supported to do work in this way? • How will ongoing needs for training and professional development be assessed and met? • How will supervision and coaching be done? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – We will continue to engage community partners who have been instrumental in providing additional support to fathers. They have also helped with staff training. – We will intentionally hire men of color. We will ask for their help leading father engagement work. – Supervisors will be supported as coaches after their staff attend trainings on racial justice and father engagement. We will work with the training division to incorporate this into regular training. – We will work with the training division to hold quarterly trainings for staff and plan for training based on input from staff on what they would like to know about support racial justice and father engagement. – Our Action Planning Form details who will do what, and by when.