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**National Fatherhood Initiative™**

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***Why Fathers Matter***

*Ron J. Clark, MPP*  
*National Director of National Programming*

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**Mark Twain**

“When I was a boy of fourteen, my father was so ignorant I could hardly stand to have the old man around. But when I got to be twenty-one, I was astonished at how much he had learned in seven years.”

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**Who We Are:**

- Non-profit, non-partisan, non-sectarian organization
- Founded in 1994 to combat the most consequential social trend of our time:

**Widespread Fatherlessness in the Lives of Our Nation’s Children**

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**NFI’s mission:**

To improve the well-being of children by increasing the proportion of children growing up with involved, responsible, and committed fathers in their lives.

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## Educate - The Facts of Father Absence

- In 1960, 8 million children lived in father-absent homes
- Today, over 24 million children live in homes without their fathers
- 1 out of 3 children nationally live in father-absent homes
- 2 out of 3 African American children live in father-absent homes

Year	Proportion (%)
1960	12
1970	15
1980	22
1990	25
1995	28
2000	27
2004	28

All data is from "The Living Arrangements of Children," U.S. Census Bureau, 2005.  
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## Educate - The Effects of Father Absence

**COSTS**  
Children of father-absent homes are:

- Five times more likely to live in **poverty**
- Three times more likely to **fail in school**
- Two times more likely to develop **emotional or behavioral problems**
- Two times more likely to abuse **drugs**
- Two times more likely to be **abused and neglected**
- Two times more likely to become involved in **crime**
- Three times more likely to commit **suicide**

**BENEFITS**  
Studies show that children with involved fathers display:

- **better cognitive outcomes**, even as infants
- **higher self-esteem** and less depression as teenagers
- **higher grades**, test scores, and overall academic achievement
- lower levels of **drug and alcohol use**
- higher levels of **empathy** and other **pro-social behavior**

All data is from *Father Facts, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition*, 2007.  
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## Good News!

- Decrease in father absence in past 4 years (2004-2008)
- 34.5 percent of children (2004) to 32.6 (2008)
- 2 million more children live in homes with their biological fathers

2008 U.S. Census Bureau  
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## Resources

- National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse  
[www.fatherhood.gov](http://www.fatherhood.gov)
- National Responsible Fatherhood Capacity Building Initiative  
[www.fatherhood.org/grant/](http://www.fatherhood.org/grant/)

www.fatherhood.org

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## Father-Friendly Check-Up

- Tool to help agencies create an environment that involves non-resident fathers and foster the healthy development of children
- Seven Assessment Areas
  1. Leadership & Organization Philosophy
  2. Program Management Policies & Procedures
  3. Parent Involvement Program
  4. Program Physical Environment
  5. Staff Training & Professional Development
  6. Collaboration & Organizational Networking
  7. Community Outreach

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## Educate - Outdoor PSAs

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## Promising Practices: Recruitment

- Why Do Men Get Involved In Fatherhood Programs?
  - Talk with other dads
  - Child support
  - Help with locating resources
  - Parenting tips

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## Promising Practices: Recruitment

- Key Recruiter Characteristics
  - “Firmth” (Firm plus warmth)
  - Keep your word
  - Persistence
  - No limit – “Outside the box mentality”
  - Good listener
  - Offers real solutions
  - No fear of fathers and/or their environment

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**Mahatma Gandhi...*Moving People***

Strangers → Admirers → Users → Followers

“Freedom is not worth having if it does not include the freedom to make mistakes”

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**Dr. Martin Luther King Jr...*Moving People***

Strangers → Admirers → Users → Followers

“A man who won't die for something is not fit to live”

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**Mother Teresa...*Moving People***

Strangers → Admirers → Users → Followers

“Be faithful in small things because it is in them that your strength lies”

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**Father Engagement & Child Welfare**

Identify → Locate → Contact → Engage

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## *Moving Fathers*

Effective leaders know how to move and inspire people to greater action & commitment.

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## *Moving Fathers*

Fear (Stick) vs. Inspiration (Carrot)

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## Where are the fathers?

- Fishing Locations
- Hunting Locations
- Sporting Events
- “Bass Pro” type venues
- Barbershops
- Fire Stations
- Correction Facilities
- Healthcare Facilities
- Educational Facilities
- Entertainment Facilities
- Restrooms
- Businesses
- Religious Institutions
- Military
- Airports
- Racing Facilities

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## Societal Factors That Influence the Development of Manhood & Fatherhood

- > Discouraging the expression of emotions -- “Real men don’t cry”
- > Anger is an acceptable male emotion
- > Dominant, disconnected and dangerous
- > Being physically strong
- > Ambition and competition
- > Good occupational functioning
- > Athletic ability
- > Economic success
- > Sexual conquests

[www.fatherhood.org](http://www.fatherhood.org)

### What Fathers Say...

- Many men are dealing with depression and other mental health challenges.
- Program staff/facilitator/recruiter may need to deal with other major issues before addressing the fatherhood/child welfare issue (i.e., homelessness, substance abuse, transportation, mental health).

### What Fathers Say...


- Fathers feel like no one is hearing them or advocating for them.
- Recruiter/Facilitator needs to listen to the father's needs before "pushing the paperwork or program".
- Facilitator will initially serve as fathers' source of courage and self-esteem.

### What Fathers Say...

- Many men lack confidence in government programs because of past unfulfilled commitments from government programs...ex., completed job training program but never received job.
- Men feel inadequate to face court system alone. "Me vs. The World" mentality.
- Self support is critical..."If you can't take care of yourself, it's hard to focus on your child or the program."

### What Fathers Say...


- Due to personal father-absence, many men do not have any idea how to be a father...They learn parenting in the process..."Our kids are teaching us how to be parents."

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### What Fathers Say...

- Show successful stories of fathers via video who have regained custody of their children.
- Facilitator needs to consistently and continually acknowledge minor and major progress steps by the father

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### What Children Say...

**If your father wasn't involved in your life, did you want to know him better or see him more?**

- Yes-- He's in my life but I would love to be able to see him more."
- "Yes – Because I still love him."
- "No – I turned out fine without him."
- "Yes – I wanted to see him and know him better."
- "Yes – The system continued to schedule visits with my mom but would not let us have visits with my dad."
- "Yes – I would love it if my dad was there my whole life."
- "Yes – Because it's kinda hard being without a dad and so many things are going wrong
- "Yes – I want to feel like I have an actual father. I want to feel like he cares. I want to know my father. I want to feel like I actually have a father."


[www.fatherhood.org](http://www.fatherhood.org)

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### Margaret Mead

“The primary task of every civilization is to teach the young men to be fathers.”

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### Thank You!

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## ***Bring Back Dads!***

### ***Effective Practice for Engaging Fathers in the Child Welfare System***

**Paul Frankel, Ph.D.**  
 Psychologist & Consultant  
 (Formerly) Project Manager  
 National Quality Improvement Center on Non-Resident Fathers 29  
 2006-2011

## **Knowledge Development & Resources**

<b>Quality Improvement Center</b> <a href="http://www.fatherhoodqic.org">www.fatherhoodqic.org</a>	<b>Men Behaving Dadly</b> <a href="http://menbehavingdadly.org">menbehavingdadly.org</a>
<b>National Fatherhood Initiative</b> <a href="http://www.fatherhood.org">www.fatherhood.org</a>	<b>National Center for Fathering</b> <a href="http://www.fathers.com">www.fathers.com</a>
<b>National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse</b> <a href="http://www.fatherhood.gov">www.fatherhood.gov</a>	<b>Responsible Fatherhood &amp; Marriage (AECF)</b> <a href="http://www.aecf.org/">http://www.aecf.org/</a>
<b>Promoting Responsible Fatherhood</b> <a href="http://fatherhood.hhs.gov">fatherhood.hhs.gov</a>	<b>Be There For Your Kids</b> <a href="http://www.coloradodads.com">www.coloradodads.com</a>
<b>Fathers &amp; Families Coalition</b> <a href="http://www.azffc.org/">http://www.azffc.org/</a>	<b>Michigan Fatherhood</b> <a href="http://michiganfatherhood.org/">http://michiganfatherhood.org/</a>

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## **The State of the Nation** (Findings from the NCANDS FFY2009)

- The National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System is a federally sponsored effort. The 1988 CAPTA directed the U.S. DHHS to establish a national data collection program.
- An estimated 3.3 million referrals, involving the alleged maltreatment of approximately 6.0 million children.
- Number of nationally estimated unique victims was 702,000.
- The age group of birth to 1 had the highest rate of victimization.
- More than 75 percent (78.3%) suffered neglect; More than 15 percent (17.8%) suffered physical abuse.
- An estimated 1,770 children died from abuse and neglect.  
[http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/stats\\_research/](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/stats_research/)

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## **The State of the State** (Findings from the NCANDS FFY2009)

	Child Pop	Screened-In Reports	Screened-Out Reports
MI	2,349,892	75,441 (62.4%)	45,536 (37.6%)
OH	2,714,341	78,098 (58.5%)	55,456 (41.5%)

	Michigan	Ohio
<b>Substantiated</b>	10,601	14,595
<b>Response time</b>	No Data	34 Hrs.
<b>Intake, Screening, Invest. Workers</b>	907	799 (IL)
<b>First Time Victims</b>	74%	89%
<b>Black Victims</b>	28%	19%
<b>White Victims</b>	59%	53%
<b>Maltreat. Type</b>	90% Neglect	48% Neglect
<b>Fatalities</b>	58 (59 in FFY08)	79 (74 in FFY08)

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## Fathers and the Child Welfare System

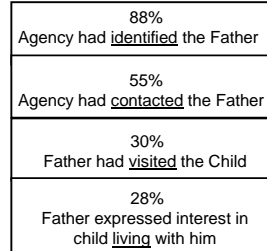
“Is there a difference in child and family outcomes based on father involvement?”

“Are kids better off?”

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## Bring Back Dads! Is there a child welfare system bias?

1,958 children removed from homes where the Father did not reside



70% of caseworkers had received training on engaging fathers

Based on interviews with 1,222 caseworkers

<http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/06/cw-involve-dads/report.pdf>

Malm, Murray, & Geen (2006). *What About the Dads?* Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau

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## What about Dads? The Child Welfare System

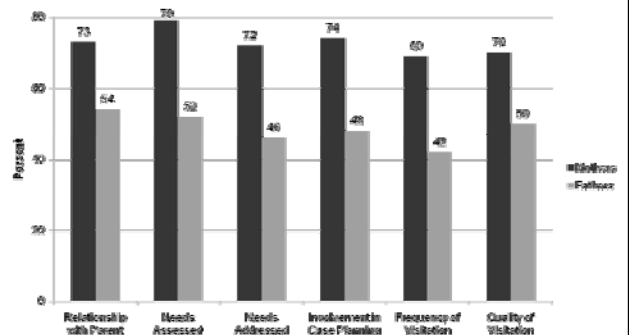
- Workers do not exhaust all identifying and locating resources (e.g., Family Finding).
- Workers consistently ask mothers, but mothers often do not provide helpful information.
- Multiple barriers make it difficult to locate and contact fathers. (“Barriers” such as...)
- Differing opinions on whether nonresident fathers are “Clients.” (Are they Clients?)
- Differing policies on assessing fathers for placement purposes.
- Small percentage of fathers comply with offered services.

Malm, Murray, & Geen (2006). *What About the Dads?* Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau

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## CFSR Case-Level Data: 32 States Differences In Serving Mothers and Fathers

Average Across States: Percent of Cases Rated as Strength



<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwmonitoring/>  
<http://courts.michigan.gov/scao/services/CWS/CFSR-ExecSummary2009.pdf>

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## Child and Family Service Reviews (CFSR) Rounds 1 and 2

- Mothers are more likely than fathers to receive services.
- Inconsistency in involving fathers in case planning.
- Fathers had fewer visitations with children in foster care.
- The needs of fathers were assessed and met inconsistently.
- Efforts to locate, contact, and/or engage fathers were insufficient or inconsistent.

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## Common Barriers to Involving Fathers

- Mothers' reluctance to reveal name or location of father. ("Gatekeeper!")
  - \* violent or unhealthy episodes with the father.
  - \* a new romantic relationship and want to forget about their child's biological father.
  - \* protect father from further involvement with the court.
  - \* reluctant to bring the current abuse or neglect incident to the attention of the father fearing he might take custody.

"Mama Says": <http://www.fatherhood.org/mamasays/>

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## Caseworker Ambivalence

- Caseworkers' ambivalence about finding fathers due to:
  - \* negative experiences with fathers.
  - \* suspect that the father is not interested in the child. (Is this true?)
  - \* fear that bringing the father into the child welfare case may increase conflict between the parents.
  - \* the belief that involving fathers is more work and expense for the agency.

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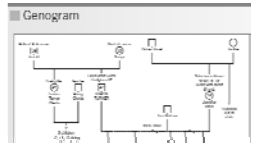
## Frontline Engagement Barriers

- Other barriers caseworkers face:
    - Don't understand importance of identifying father(s) for each child.
    - Many CPS workers simply accept the mother saying he's not involved or "whereabouts unknown."
    - High caseloads and competing demands diminish the ability to do "real work."
    - Agency "culture" is often more supportive of mothers.
- What is YOUR agency culture like?

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## Benefits of Engaging Fathers

- Giving a voice to a father to express his wishes.
- Having a family connection for the child.
- Bringing the father's culture and history to the child.
- Connecting multiple families together along with the support each may provide.



[http://www.americanbar.org/groups/child\\_law.html](http://www.americanbar.org/groups/child_law.html)

Can **YOU** think of any other benefits?

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“We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.”

--Albert Einstein (1879-1955)

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## Effective Father Engagement Strategies

### Check your attitude at the door!

- Address your personal biases about men and fathers.
- Resist stereotyping non-resident fathers.
- Provide a welcoming physical environment.
- First contact by a male (if possible). Is it possible? (80% vs. 20%) - <http://www.naswdc.org/>
- Avoiding “system” jargon!

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## Effective Father Engagement Strategies

- What does “HELP!” look like for these fathers?
  - Strongly influenced by gender roles.
  - No “Sissy Stuff!”
  - Admitting to a problem is not easy.
  - Difficulty in asking for help and depending on others.
  - Being perceived as “weak.”

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## Effective Father Engagement Strategies

- Some effective approaches:
  - Don't talk too much about emotions.
  - "Normalize" experiences.
  - Be action-oriented.
  - Do not dwell on father's past.
  - Help to identify assets and strengths.
  - Fathers are sensitive to power, respect and control.

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**"I cannot think of any need in childhood as strong as the need for a father's protection."**

--Sigmund Freud (1856-1939)

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## Why Engage Fathers? Because The Law Requires It!

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## The Law Requires Engaging Fathers

- Case studies (Mitchell, Mays)
- Constitution
- Statutes/Court Rules
- DHS Policies

## What Rights Does The Constitution Afford Parents?

The Fourteenth Amendment of the United States Constitution gives parents the right to direct the care, custody and control of their children.

## What Does The Right Mean?

- Presumption of fitness: don't need to be model a parent
- State bears the burden of proving unfitness prior to depriving parent of custody
- Clear and convincing evidence before termination of parental rights

## These rights extend to legal, non-custodial, fathers

- In re Rood; 483 Mich 73 (2009)
- In re Mason; 486 Mich 142 (2010)
- In re Mitchell; 485 Mich 922 (2009)
- Cases build upon United States Supreme Court precedent
  - Stanley v. Illinois, 405 US 645 (1972)
  - Quilloin v. Walcott, 434 US 246 (1978)
  - Caban v. Mohammed, 441 US 380 (1979)
  - Lehr v. Robertson, 463 US 248 (1983)

## Why You Should Care About This

- It's the law!
- Fathers may present real placement options. There is a reason behind the constitutional presumption
- Involving fathers can lead to relative placements. Child support payments.
- Don't want decision in child protection case to get reversed on appeal – (e.g. In Re Rood)

## Statutory/Court Rule Mandates

- “Care as nearly as possible equivalent to the care that should have been given to the juvenile by his or her parents.” MCL 712A.1(3)
- Notified and permitted to participate in each hearing. E.g. MCL 712A.19(5)(c); MCL 712A.19a(4)(c); MCL 712A.19b(2)(c)
- If respondent, right to an attorney. MCL 712A.17c.
- “Most family-like setting” MCL 712A.13a(10)
- Parenting time MCL 712A.13a(11); MCR 3.965(C)(6)(A)
  - Even extends to incarcerated parents

## Statutes/Court Rules

- Obligation to identify and consult with relatives. MCL 3.965(B)(13); MCL 722.954a(2).
  - Federal law requests that courts consider giving preference to placements with relatives.
- Develop ISP w/i 30 days of removal. MCL 712A.13a(8)(a).
  - DHS policies mandate that both parents be involved in the development of the plan

## DHS Policies: CFF 722-6

- DHS “requires the engagement of the family in development of the service plan,” including “all parents/guardians.”
- “Parents must be encouraged to actively participate,” and the foster care worker must make “an attempt or efforts to identify and locate absent parents(s)/legal guardian or putative father.”
- If a parent is “absent,” the DHS must consult the Absent Parent Protocol (APP) “to ensure DHS workers . . . and the courts address the absent parent issue as early as possible in child protection proceedings.” APP available at <http://courts.michigan.gov/scao/resources/standards/APP.pdf>.

## 722-6

- “The participation of parents and members of the extended family/relative network is viewed as essential to achieving permanency and is to be actively sought.” The service plan must address “[w]hat the parent(s) . . . must do to achieve reunification” and “[w]hat the supervising agency must do to support parental objectives.” The foster care worker must meet with “each parent” face-to-face in the parent’s home and by phone at specified intervals during the pendency of the child’s placement in foster care. The agency also “must use parenting time to maintain and strengthen the relationship between parent and child.” “Parenting time must be provided for every parent with a legal right to the child, regardless of prior custody.”
- In all cases, the supervising agency’s service planning must include the parent(s) (except when parental rights have been terminated) . . .”

## Questions to think about in each case

- Does the child have a legal father?
- Did the legal father receive proper notice?
- Can the child be placed with the legal father immediately? Why not?
- Was the legal father engaged in the development of the service plan?
- What are the “real” barriers to reunification? What services are needed to address them? How can we measure when the father is ready for reunification?
- If the father wants to remain a non-custodial father, are we ok with that? What should we be thinking about in making this determination?