

Strengthening Families Through Fathers

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Introduction

Whether a father is involved or uninvolved in his child's life makes a significant difference in later developmental and behavioral issues of the child. In this presentation we will take a look at effects. We will also look at what we as professionals can do to encourage fatherhood involvement

What is a Father?

The act of being a father, as opposed to merely "fathering" a child

- Bread-winning
- Nurturing
- Modeling
- Socialization of children
- Involvement in their children's lives
- Moral and spiritual development
- Providing a sense of stability
- Other dimensions

What is a Father?

- Fathers are diverse
- There is no universal definition of roles



Father Absence - a critical problem

- More than 27 million children - 39% of all US children - now live apart from their father. In a typical year, well over one-third of these children won't even see their dad
- More than half of all European-American children and three-quarters of all African-American children born since 1975 will live some portion of their formative years with only one parent, and in the vast majority of these cases, it's the father who is absent

Children whose biological fathers are absent are 2-3 times more likely:

- To be poor
- To use drugs
- To experience educational problems
- To have health problems
- To have behavioral problems
- To be victims of child abuse
- To engage in criminal behavior

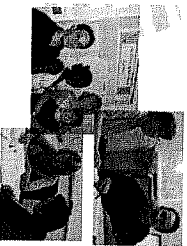
Father Absence - - the costs are high

- Father-absence is a contributing factor to these kinds of social problems
- Unsuccessful socialization of children.
- Emotional absence

Father Absence - - the costs are high

Areas of impact on children:

- Academic achievement
- Gender-specific development
- General behavioral adjustment
- Aggression in male children



Father Present



- The involved father's role
- Fathers are also nurturing

Why Are Fathers So Important?

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The potential role of the father at each developmental stage that children pass through.

- During pregnancy and birth
- In the toddler years
- In the preschool years
- For school-aged children
- For adolescents
- Young adult children

What Can We Do?

Treat Him Like a Man

- Fathers are men. Men are Fathers
- Men will attend programs and interact, and men will return if a program is put together for him as a masculine parent
- Not all men like sports, cars, or the same thing
- The attempt to make things “manly” instead of masculine leads some attempts that are stereotypical and fail to reach most men

Make it Interactive

- They want to MOVE and they want to DO something
- When fathers talk to their children, they typically do so while playing or doing something

Make it Relational

- It is all about the language
- Ask what he thinks or what his concerns are on a certain topic
- Don't ask them to talk or share

Make it Relevant

- Fathers tend to be pragmatic and want just the facts
- Men need to know what to do with the facts
- What is the deal and What do you want him to do

DO's

- Invite fathers
- Give plenty of notice
- Make it about the kids
- Include the kids
- Focus on Child Outcomes

DONT'S

- Don't apologize for including fathers
- Don't sweat the details
- Don't neglect the mothers
- Don't set the bar to low
- Don't try and define or determine who the fathers are
