



Father Engagement Toolkit

Empowering Fathers: Strengthening Parent-Child Bonds through Equitable Parental Rights

Section 1: The Importance of Engaging Fathers

Children with involved fathers are more likely to:

- Perform well in school
- Build healthy relationships
- Have better emotional regulation
- Avoid high-risk behaviors

Section 2: Barriers Fathers Face

- Custody & child support systems that assume maternal primacy
- Lack of legal counsel for low-income fathers
- Stigmas: "deadbeat dad," "dangerous," "disengaged"
- Service providers unsure how to engage nonresident or young fathers

Section 3: Language Matters

Instead of... Say This...

"Single mother" "Solo parent" or "Primary caregiver"

"Absent father" "Nonresident father" or "Unengaged due to systemic barriers" "Mom and dad" "All parents and caregivers"

Tip: Use language that doesn't presume roles or diminish fathers' capacity to parent.

Section 4: Father Engagement Checklist

Is your program...

- Including fathers in outreach materials?
- Asking about both parents during intake?
- Offering flexible scheduling that accommodates working dads?
- Using trauma-informed approaches?
- Providing resources specifically for fathers?

Section 5: Tips to Build Trust with Fathers

- Use first contact as an opportunity to affirm their role
- Ask about their parenting goals, not just co-parenting conflicts
- Acknowledge historical/systemic mistrust
- Offer solutions, not surveillance
- Meet them where they are (physically and emotionally)

Section 6: Conversation Starters for Service Providers

1. "What's your favorite thing about being a dad?"
2. "What does being involved mean to you?"
3. "How can we support your role as a parent?"
4. "What are your goals for your relationship with your child?"

Section 7: Resources for Fathers

- Legal Aid & Custody Help: [Insert Local Org or Website]
- Fatherhood Support Groups: [Insert Local Program Name]
- Co-Parenting Apps: Coparently, OurFamilyWizard
- Financial & Employment Services: [Insert Workforce Partner]
- Mental Health Resources: [Insert Provider or Hotline]

Section 8: Reflection & Notes

What new practice will you try after today's session?

What support does your organization need to better engage fathers?
