

FATHERS

New Mexico



**The Importance of Dads:
Home Visiting and Fathers**

A Program that Focuses on Dads

FATHERS
New Mexico



We recognize:

- the fragility of fatherhood
- that men (in general) approach parenting differently
- that there are unique challenges for fathers
- that many family-centered services are not adept at serving dads

So we:

- meet them where they are at and address their concerns
- Create a safe environment for the men to talk openly (Dads Groups, one-on-one meetings)
- develop opportunities for dads to share with communities, policy makers and professionals

Why?



- ◆ 90% of all homeless and runaway children
- ◆ 63% of youth suicides
- ◆ 85% of children with behavioral disorders
- ◆ 71% of all high school dropouts
- ◆ 5 times more likely to commit suicide
- ◆ 32 x more likely to run away

Why Dads? involved dads
result in children who;



- have less contact with juvenile justice system
- delay sexual activity
- rely less on aggressive conflict resolution
- have higher grades
- enjoy greater problem solving skills and stress tolerance

Why Dads?



“The most important task of any civilization is to teach its young men how to be fathers”

Margaret Mead

Creating a Supportive Environment for Fathers



You are the exception. We believe that dads participating in parenting and family supports would make a big difference in the lives of children.

Dads don't need the help more than moms. All parents benefit from help with this very difficult (and wonderful) role and if more dads had the support, more dads would feel increasingly comfortable and empowered. That will result in improved care, guidance, nurturing, love, support, etc, etc... for children.

We want all Family Services personnel to recognize that engaged dads are an inherently valuable part of family life and raising children.

This will often require some the exploration of biases and unconscious behaviors

Institutional Changes



We want to help create systems to be supportive environments for fathers.

And, we think that dads are the best people to advise and direct the needed changes.

You are starting that now, but participating.

We hope that some of you will be interested in additional opportunities for impacting how system view dads, and how they work with dads.



Some of what we believe agencies should do;



- ◆ Expect father involvement
- ◆ Plan/Design for it
- ◆ Change schedule to accommodate
- ◆ View males as essential, not a risk factor
- ◆ Invite men in, actively and consistently



Challenges Dads Face



- Men don't gestate, give birth or breast feed.
- Social/institutional communication about children and family.
- Child Support infrastructure.
- Family services don't have experience with men and dads.
- Apparent biases in family courts.
- Generational fatherlessness.
- Other discouraging social phenomenon (mother as gatekeeper, etc...)

How do we engage dads in programs and services?



- ALL services directed towards healthy children and/or families MUST have a fatherhood component.
- Our systems need to be responsive and respectful to all parents and treat them as equal partners in raising children.
- We must get better at helping families with conflict resolution and demand new and better research regarding what helps children to thrive.
- What else???

SOME OF THE REASONS

WHY DADS ROCK...



- Dads spend more time in play
- Dads stress risk taking
- Dads offers less immediate support in face of frustration which promotes better anger management
- Dads teach through example, learning from experience
- Dads promote exploratory freedom
- Dads promote independence outside the home



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