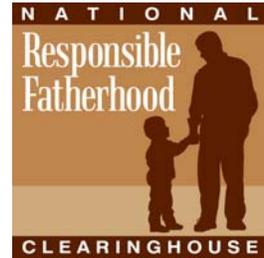




U.S. Department of Health  
and Human Services  
Administration for Children  
and Families  
Office of Family Assistance

# NRFC Tips for Fatherhood Professionals

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## TRAINING PROGRAM STAFF FIVE TIPS FOR FATHERHOOD PROGRAMS

### Background

Effective implementation of fatherhood programs requires staff who are knowledgeable about the program and its participants.<sup>i</sup> Training can provide program staff with the knowledge to become competent in program content, sensitive to participants' cultural backgrounds, and aware of fathers' instructional preferences. This brief provides five tips for training fatherhood program staff successfully.

### Tips for Training the Staff of Fatherhood Programs

Research shows that well-trained parenting program staff can positively influence parent outcomes.<sup>ii</sup> On the basis of both research and the successful practices of several parenting programs, the following strategies have been found to be useful in training program staff:

#### What is staff training?

**Staff training** refers to the methods used to provide program staff members with the knowledge and skills necessary for them to effectively work with fathers and to implement aspects of the program.<sup>1</sup> Training methods may include formal in-service training, professional development, staff coaching, and/or staff support groups.

#### Remember These Tips for Training Fatherhood Program Staff

- Tip 1:** Explain the theory behind, and practice of, program implementation.
- Tip 2:** Make training interactive.
- Tip 3:** Provide staff with training support, technical assistance, and follow-up.
- Tip 4:** Consider collaborations with other community organizations.
- Tip 5:** Assess the needs of staff and the participant population.

*Take Time to Be a Dad Today*

## **Tip 1: Explain the theory behind, and the practice of, program implementation.**

When training does not cover both the underlying theory and the methods of program implementation, staff members are less likely to incorporate what they learn in training into their everyday practices.<sup>iii</sup> However, research also suggests that when the rationale behind new program procedures and activities is explained to staff members, they are better able to understand the importance of new methods and are more likely to use them.<sup>iv, v</sup>

***Example 1:*** In a study of Head Start's fatherhood initiative, the *Men as Teachers* program, one group of program facilitators received training that included both a discussion of the program mission and instruction in the program's six-part curriculum, whereas another group watched a videotape about the curriculum without discussion. Facilitators who received both discussion and curriculum instruction reported that they felt better able to implement the presented strategies.<sup>vi</sup>

## **Tip 2: Make training interactive.**

Studies show that training that includes interactive components, such as role-playing opportunities, produces more positive program outcomes than does training that only uses written materials (such as tests or manuals) and discussions.<sup>vii, viii</sup> Training that includes interactive components also has been shown to produce more lasting changes among participants<sup>ix</sup> and to help keep participants interested and involved during training activities.<sup>x</sup> In addition, giving staff members the opportunity to practice instruction and troubleshoot potential situations during training can allow them to improve their program delivery and instruction, which can influence participant outcomes.<sup>xi</sup>

***Example 1:*** The *Strengthening Families Program's* two-day session included role-playing as a way to teach program facilitators program procedures, curricula, group facilitation techniques, and recruitment and retention strategies. The program achieved positive results, such as decreases in parents' substance abuse and young people's behavior problems, and has been replicated in several communities.<sup>xii</sup> The interactive staff training opportunities, which allowed facilitators to practice potential program situations, most likely contributed to such positive results.

***Example 2:*** During the *Preparing for the Drug Free Years* parenting program's three-day leaders' training workshop, staff members received instruction in the program curriculum and had the opportunity to practice each of the five leadership training sessions that they would later implement. Program outcomes

were positive at both the Iowa and Seattle program sites, including significant improvements in parenting behaviors and children's behavior and academic achievement.<sup>xiii</sup> The opportunity to act out the leadership training sessions allowed staff to rehearse the timing and flow of presenting the program curriculum and to receive input on how to address specific implementation concerns.<sup>xiv</sup> The interactive staff training components were a likely contributor to the *Preparing for the Drug Free Years*' positive program outcomes.

### **Tip 3: Provide staff with training support, technical assistance, and follow-up.**

Training support is essential to the successful implementation of new training knowledge. Providing technical assistance and consultation after training has been conducted can enable staff members to keep their skills current and identify solutions to any developing implementation problems.<sup>xv</sup> Different strategies have been used to offer training support, including routine (whether weekly or monthly) staff meetings, technical assistance consultations, or coaching.<sup>xvi, xvii, xviii</sup> Research has found that staff commitment and level of positive interaction with program participants can influence participants' program involvement.<sup>xix</sup> Research also suggests that the use of videotapes, audiotapes, and staff reflection on past implementation can help ensure that program knowledge acquired in training is implemented correctly.<sup>xx</sup> Correct implementation increases the likelihood that a program will produce its desired outcomes.<sup>xxi</sup>

*Example 1:* The *Parent Effectiveness Training (P.E.T.)* program provided its leaders with weekly one-on-one meetings. During these meetings, leaders were able to receive direction and support in their program implementation. Parents involved in *P.E.T.* showed improvements in their parenting behaviors following participation in the program.<sup>xxii</sup> Such routine training support enabled staff to resolve implementation problems and brainstorm methods for strengthening staff support of fathers.

*Example 2:* Head Start's *Men as Teachers* fatherhood program videotaped its staff trainees' program implementation. At the start of each subsequent training session, the videos were reviewed and methods for improvement were discussed.<sup>xxiii</sup>

#### **Tip 4: Consider collaborations with other community organizations.**

Fatherhood programs can benefit from collaborating with other community organizations to conduct staff training, professional development workshops, or to establish valuable partnerships. Such collaborations with community partnerships have several benefits:

- *Collaborations maximize the information shared with staff members and fathers.* Collaborations can make the most of the knowledge staff gain during professional development workshops.

*Example 1:* The collaboration of *Head Start* fatherhood programs with their local Office of Child Support Enforcement organizations provided staff (and fathers) with child support information through workshops and publications.<sup>xxiv</sup>

*Example 2:* The *Young Males Pilot Project* found it helpful to invite a local physician and a local lawyer to its staff training sessions to educate its counselors about medical and legal issues relevant to teenage parenting.<sup>xxv</sup>

- *Collaborations ease the financial costs of staff training.* Community collaborations may also lighten the financial burden of staff training by sharing that burden or offering alternative training opportunities.

*Example 1:* *Man2Man*, a reproductive health program for young men in Philadelphia, initially used a representative of its Fatherhood Development curriculum to train the program's facilitators. However, the program later found it more cost-effective to rely on community members who had already received training in the curriculum to teach facilitators.<sup>xxvi</sup>

#### **Tip 5: Assess the needs of staff and the participant population.**

Effective staff training includes content that is responsive to staff needs and specific to program experiences.<sup>xxvii</sup> To identify relevant staff training, it is important to assess the needs of staff members and fathers. This may be done in the following ways:

- *Obtaining input from fathers.* Fathers are a great source for suggestions on program improvement, including ways that program staff can best support participants and promote program goals. Fathers in some programs reported that their program staff surveyed fathers' needs at the start of the program to be sure that the program would provide appropriate activities and services to address those needs.<sup>xxviii</sup> In identifying and meeting fathers' needs, program staff must be

trained and program activities must be tailored to meet those needs.<sup>xxix</sup> Individualized and relevant activities can provide an incentive for fathers to continue to be involved in the program.<sup>xxx</sup> Input from fathers may be obtained by:

- *Inviting fathers to share their views during staff training.* The *Family Star Head Start* fatherhood program, for example, included a panel of fathers who shared their parenting experiences during the program's staff training session. *Family Star* staff members reported that the fathers' insights provided an invaluable perspective on program participants and enabled the staff to better serve fathers.<sup>xxxi</sup>
- *Holding a focus group.* The *Man2Man* fatherhood program tapped fathers' views by holding focus groups, or by enabling fathers to share with staff their program experiences. Following the focus group, *Man2Man* staff reviewed the discussion transcripts, identified reoccurring themes, and used fathers' insights to guide their future program planning.<sup>xxxii</sup>
- *Surveying fathers.* Soliciting feedback from fathers through surveys or questionnaires can also provide valuable information about how staff members (and other program components) can better support fathers. *Dare to Be You*, a community intervention initiative that includes a parenting program, provided participants with a questionnaire to discern which aspects of the program fathers appreciated and which aspects they thought could be improved.<sup>xxxiii</sup> Similarly, the *Incredible Years* parenting program asked parents to rate their satisfaction with the program, as well as the helpfulness of the program.<sup>xxxiv</sup> Such information can be used to inform training sessions to ensure that program staff members are adequately prepared to carry out identified improvements.
- *Observing staff.* To assess staff needs, it may be helpful to observe staff members in action. Research suggests that observing, evaluating, and offering feedback on staff members' use of the knowledge that they acquired in training can help them successfully apply what they have learned.<sup>xxxv</sup> In fact, in the *Elements of Promising Practice for Fatherhood Programs*, a detailed report for program grantees about evidence-based practices, coaching and other staff training techniques are included among the 10 characteristics of effective fatherhood programs.<sup>xxxvi</sup> Program administrators or staff trainers may observe staff implementation in-person or by video.
- *Collecting and using program data to guide staff training and program improvement.* Gathering information about fathers' qualities, needs, and program involvement can help ensure that training content and related follow-up activities foster staff improvement and, ultimately, benefit program participants. For

example, evaluation data from *Brief Strategic Family Therapy*, a program that includes the whole family, revealed that fathers' program participation improved the operation of low-functioning families, but only maintained the existing operation of high-functioning families.<sup>xxxvii</sup> Such information can be useful in developing training curricula that are relevant to the needs of program participants and that equip staff with the most effective approaches for working with fathers from both low-functioning and high-functioning families.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR YOUR PROGRAMS

The following resources can be helpful in planning and/or providing staff training:

- **WestEd.** (2007). *Engaging parents in education: Lessons from five parental information and resource centers: Innovations in education*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved April 23, 2008, from: <http://www.ed.gov/admins/comm/parents/parentinvolve/engagingparents.pdf>.
- **RuralFathers.com** shares training topics, facilitator objectives, and suggests methods for designing staff training programs. Available at: <http://ruralfathers.com/stafftraining.php>.
- **National Fatherhood Initiative** offers a variety of reference books that may be useful in supporting the topics covered in staff training. Available at: [http://www.fatherhood.org/iwwida.pvx?;products\\_no\\_tree?cat=ALL%20DADS?comp=NFI](http://www.fatherhood.org/iwwida.pvx?;products_no_tree?cat=ALL%20DADS?comp=NFI).
- **RMC Research Corporation.** (1996). *Partners in decision making. Training guides for the Head Start learning community*. Washington, DC: Administration for Children, Youth, and Families, Head Start Bureau. Retrieved April 23, 2008, from:
  - [http://eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content\\_storage\\_01/0000019b/80/16/86/0e.pdf](http://eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content_storage_01/0000019b/80/16/86/0e.pdf).
  - [http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content\\_storage\\_01/0000019b/80/16/f2/71.pdf](http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content_storage_01/0000019b/80/16/f2/71.pdf).
  - [http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content\\_storage\\_01/0000019b/80/16/f2/aa.pdf](http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content_storage_01/0000019b/80/16/f2/aa.pdf)

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- <sup>ii</sup> Gardner, F., Burton, J., & Klimes, I. (2006). Randomized controlled trial of a parenting intervention in the voluntary sector for reducing child conduct problems: Outcomes and mechanisms of change. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 47(11), 1123-1132.
- <sup>iii</sup> Costley, J. (1998). Building a professional development system that works for the field of out-of-school time: Making the most of out-of-school time. Wellesley, MA: National Institute on Out-of-School Time.
- <sup>iv</sup> Deci, E., Ryan, R. (2000). The "what" and "why" of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behavior. *Psychological Inquiry*, 11(4), 227-268.
- <sup>v</sup> Matthews, J., & Hudson, A. (2001). Guidelines for evaluating parent training programs. *Family Relations*, 50(1), 77-86.
- <sup>vi</sup> Fagan, J., & Stevenson, H. (2002). An experimental study of an empowerment-based intervention for African-American Head Start fathers. *Family Relations*, 51(3), 191-198.
- <sup>vii</sup> Knapp, P., & Deluty, R. (1989). Relative effectiveness of two behavioral parent training programs. *Journal of Clinical Child Psychology*, 18, 314-322.
- <sup>viii</sup> Matthews, J., & Hudson, A. (2001).
- <sup>ix</sup> Hills, M., & Knowles, D. (1987). Providing for personal meaning in parent education programs. *Family Relations*, 36(2), 158-162.
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- <sup>xi</sup> Miller, W., & Rollnick, S. (2002). *Motivational interviewing: second edition: Preparing people for change*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.
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- <sup>xiv</sup> Bronte-Tinkew, J., et al. (2007). *Elements of promising practice for fatherhood programs: evidence-based research findings on programs for fathers*. Washington, DC: Child Trends. Retrieved May 27, 2008, from: <http://basis.caliber.com/cwig/ws/library/docs/fatherhd/Record?rpp=-10&upp=0&m=3&w=NATIVE%28%27AUTHORS+ph+like+%27%27bronte-tinkew%27%27%27%29&r=1&order=native%28%27year%2FDescend%27%29>.
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- <sup>xx</sup> Matthews, J. and Hudson, A. (2001).
- <sup>xxi</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>xxii</sup> Hills, M., & Knowles, D. (1987).
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- <sup>xxix</sup> Bronte-Tinkew, et al. (2007).
- <sup>xxx</sup> Anderson, E., Kohler, J., & Letiecq, B. (2002).
- <sup>xxxi</sup> Head Start Bulletin staff, Hart, C., & Castellano, L. (2004). Family Star Montessori-Where the fathers build it and the fathers come. *Head Start Bulletin*, 77. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration for Children, Youth, and Families, and Head Start Bureau. Retrieved April 22, 2008, at: [http://www.headstartinfo.org/publications/hsbulletin77/hsb77\\_18.htm](http://www.headstartinfo.org/publications/hsbulletin77/hsb77_18.htm).
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<sup>xxxiii</sup> Caspe, M., & Lopez, M. (2006). *Lessons from family-strengthening interventions: Learning from evidence-based practice*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Family Research Project. Retrieved April 23, 2008, from:

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<sup>xxxiv</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xxxv</sup> Fixsen, D., Naoom, S., Blase, K., Friedman, F., & Wallace, F. (2005). Research on facilitative administration. *Core Implementation Components: Facilitative Administration*. Retrieved March 17, 2008, from:

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<sup>xxxvi</sup> Bronte-Tinkew, et al. (2007).

<sup>xxxvii</sup> Caspe, M., & Lopez, M. (2006).