

# Best Practice Guide for Engaging Fathers and Non-Residential Parents



*This guide was developed with the assistance of several partners including but not limited to members of the NC Fatherhood Development Advisory Council, the NC Supervisory Best Practice Workgroup, Prevent Child Abuse of NC, and the NC State University Center for Child and Family Engagement. Thank you for contributing your time, information, and guidance.*

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

Mothers and fathers who are out of the home of where the children and primary caretaker reside are often engaged by a child welfare worker at a minimum or not engaged at all during the provision of child welfare services unless that parent is the direct subject of the CPS assessment and ongoing service provision. These parents are often called absent, non-custodial or non-residential but more importantly are often an underutilized resource of additional support for the wellbeing of children. Particularly, fathers are frequently overlooked not only within NC but throughout the country and across multiple child-serving systems including child welfare services. This can have the effect of depriving children of a source of ongoing support for their well-being. Because this is an issue that is not exclusive to child welfare, the NC Division of Social Services is working to implement strategies for improving the engagement of these parents within child welfare and other child serving systems.

In June 2011, Prevent Child Abuse North Carolina (PCANC) concluded a year long research and assessment project to identify key strategies for building the capacity and strength of NC's fatherhood movement. The project involved the completion of a literature review on best practices and evidenced-based programs, an environmental scan of key national and local resources, and interviews with key stakeholders. Simultaneously, PCANC convened the Fatherhood Policy Committee, consisting of key stakeholders within state and community agencies that have been active in fatherhood activities, to assess, discuss and translate the information and data collected, and make recommendations for advancing North Carolina's fatherhood efforts. One of the recommendations that came as a result of the project is the development of this best practice guide on engaging fathers for child welfare workers.

### **A. HEALTHY FATHER INVOLVMENT AS A PROTECTIVE FACTOR FOR CHILD WELL-BEING AND HEALTHY DEVELOPMENT**

There is little doubt that the nurturing attachment mothers develop with their child affect their child's development. Fatherhood is just as essential to healthy child development as motherhood. Also, the way mothers and fathers parent is different and unique. Though, it is important to note that not all mothers and fathers fit into the majority of norms listed below.

Mothers and fathers play with their children differently. Fathers tickle more, they wrestle, and they throw their children in the air (while the mother says "not so high"). Fathers chase their children, sometimes as playful, scary "monsters." Fathers are louder at play, while mothers are quieter. Mothers cuddle babies, and fathers bounce them. Fathers roughhouse, while mothers are gentle. Fathers encourage competition; mothers encourage equity. Fathers encourage independence while mothers encourage security. Children learn self-control by being told when "enough is enough" and when to "settle down." Fathers help girls and boys learn a healthy balance between timidity and aggression. Children need mom's softness, as well as dad's roughhousing. Both provide security and confidence in their own ways by communicating love and physical intimacy.

Mothers and fathers communicate differently with their children. Mothers typically simplify their words and speak on the child's level. Fathers are not as inclined to modify their language for the child. Mother's way facilitates immediate

communication. Father's way challenges the child to expand his or her vocabulary and linguistic skills—an important building block of academic success. Father's talk tends to be more brief, directive, and to the point. They also make greater use of facial expressions and subtle body language. Mothers tend to be more descriptive, personal, and verbally encouraging. Children who do not learn how to understand and use both styles of conversation will be at a disadvantage, because they will experience both of these styles as they enter the adult world.

Also, mothers and fathers discipline differently. Fathers stress justice, fairness, and duty (based on rules) while mothers stress sympathy, care and help (based on relationships). Fathers tend to observe and enforce rules systematically and sternly, which teach children the objectivity and consequences of right and wrong. Mothers tend toward grace and sympathy in the midst of disobedience, which provide a sense of hopefulness. Again, either of these by themselves is not good, but, together, they create a healthy, proper balance.<sup>1</sup>

There is much research reporting on the beneficial child well-being outcomes of involved fathers demonstrating healthy involvement with their child. Here are some examples of studies:

- Fathers who nurture and take significant responsibility for basic childcare for their children (e.g., feeding, changing diapers) from an early age are significantly less likely to sexually abuse their children. These fathers typically develop such a strong connection with their children that it decreases the likelihood of any maltreatment. Pruett, K. (2000).
- The involvement of a father in the life of a family is associated with lower levels of child neglect, even in families that may be facing other factors, such as unemployment and poverty, which could place the family at risk for maltreatment. Such involvement reduces the parenting and housework load a mother has to bear and increases the overall parental investments in family life, thereby minimizing the chances that either parent will neglect to care for or to supervise their children.<sup>2</sup>
- Children with involved, loving fathers are significantly more likely to do well in school, have healthy self-esteem, exhibit empathy and pro-social behavior, and avoid high risk behaviors such as drug use, truancy, and criminal activity compared to children who have uninvolved fathers. Children whose biological fathers are absent, are on average 2-3 times more likely to be poor, to use drugs, to experience educational, health, emotional and behavioral problems, to be victims of child abuse, and to engage in criminal behavior than their peers who live with their married, biological (or adoptive) parents.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Kyle D. Pruett, *Fatherneed: Why Father Care is as Essential as Mother Care for Your Child*, (New York: The Free Press, 2000).

<sup>2</sup> Gaudin, J. M., & Dubowitz, H. (1997). Family functioning in neglectful families: Recent research. In J. D. Berrick, R. P. Barth, & N. Gilbert (Eds.), *Child welfare research review, Vol. 2* (pp. 28–62). New York, NY: Columbia University Press; Marshall, D. B., English, D.J., & Stewart, A. J. (2001). The effect of fathers or father figures on child behavioral problems in families referred to child protective services. *Child Maltreatment, 6*(4), 290–299.

<sup>3</sup> Horn, W., & Sylvester, T. (2002). *Father Facts* (4th ed.). Gaithersburg, MD: National Fatherhood Initiative.

Research also shows that there are certain characteristics of fathers that can make them more likely to mistreat a child. Poverty, underemployment, or unemployment can increase a father's stress level, which may make him more likely to abuse his children physically.<sup>4</sup> The NC Family Risk Assessment also assesses issues such as substance abuse, mental health and domestic violence that have strong correlations to child maltreatment in NC.

Because it is realistic to expect that the families that child welfare workers are serving may be dealing with multiple needs to be addressed during child welfare service provision, it is important to identify the protective factors that can be built or strengthened to help ameliorate future risk of child maltreatment and encourage healthy development of children.

Protective factors are conditions in families and communities that, when present, increase the health and well-being of children and families. They are attributes that serve as buffers, helping parents who might otherwise be at risk of abusing their children to find resources, supports, or coping strategies that allow them to parent effectively, even under stress.

Research has shown that the following protective factors are linked to a lower incidence of child abuse and neglect:

- **Social and Emotional Competence of Children:** A child or youth's ability to interact positively with others, self-regulate their behavior and effectively communicate their feelings has a positive impact on their relationships with their family, other adults, and peers. Challenging behaviors or delayed development creates extra stress for families, so early identification and assistance for both parents and children can head off negative results and keep development on track. Parents should talk with their children about how important feelings are and encourage them to solve problems in age appropriate ways.
- **Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development:** Discipline is both more effective and more nurturing when parents know how to set and enforce limits and encourage appropriate behaviors based on the child's age and level of development. Parents who understand how children grow and develop can provide an environment where children can live up to their potential. Child abuse and neglect are often associated with a lack of understanding of basic child development or an inability to put that knowledge into action. Timely mentoring, coaching, advice, and practice may be more useful to parents than information alone. A parent can explore parenting questions about child development with the family doctor, child's teacher, family, friends, online resources, and through local community based, parenting education.
- **Parental Resilience:** Resilience is the ability to handle everyday stressors and recover from occasional crises. Parents who are emotionally resilient have a positive attitude, creatively solve problems, effectively address challenges, and are less likely to direct anger and frustration at their children. In addition, these parents are aware of their own challenges—for example, those arising from inappropriate parenting they received as children—and

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<sup>4</sup> Buchanan, A. (1996); Goldman, J., & Salus, M. K. (2003); Kruttschnitt, C., McLeod, J. D., & Dornfield, M. (1994). The economic environment of child abuse. *Social Problems*, 41(2), 299–315.

accept help and/or counseling when needed. It is important for a parent to take time for themselves to reenergize by doing things such as exercising, talking with someone they trust or just relaxing.

- **Social Connections:** Evidence links social isolation and perceived lack of support to child maltreatment. Trusted and caring family and friends provide emotional support to parents by offering encouragement and assistance in facing the daily challenges of raising a family. Supportive adults in the family and the community can model alternative parenting styles and can serve as resources for parents when they need help. Parents can participate in church groups, neighborhood activities or meet up with other moms and dads of children of similar ages.
- **Concrete Supports for Parents:** Many factors beyond the parent-child relationship affect a family's ability to care for their children. Parents need basic resources such as food, clothing, housing, transportation, and access to essential services that address family-specific needs (such as child care and health care) to ensure the health and well-being of their children. Some families may also need support connecting to social services such as alcohol and drug treatment, domestic violence counseling, or public benefits. Providing or connecting families to the concrete supports that families need is critical. These combined efforts help families cope with stress and prevent situations where maltreatment could occur.
- **Nurturing and Attachment:** A child's early experience of being nurtured and developing a bond with a caring adult affects all aspects of behavior and development. When parents and children have strong, warm feelings for one another, children develop trust that their parents will provide what they need to thrive, including love, acceptance, positive guidance, and protection. Finding ways a parent can engage their child can be as easy as talking with them while driving in the car, eating meals together, playing games, giving a hug and just taking a few minutes each day to listen and talk.<sup>5</sup>

Engaging both parents may not only support their individual needs to reinforce positive guidance, age appropriate behaviors, promoting resiliency and connectivity to concrete supports, but also is an opportunity to encourage parents to see how a whole side of paternal relatives, maternal relatives and or fictive kin can provide a tremendous protective foundation for their child's wellbeing.

## **B. ENGAGING BOTH PARENTS IS IMPORTANT THROUGHOUT AN AGENCY**

Being in the position to effectively engage both parents begins with everything from if the physical environment at the office appears gender neutral to if the messaging that employee hears, reads and writes stresses the importance of both parents in the lives of their children. The ability to identify many of these within an agency is a good indication that the agency is trying to be mother and father friendly:

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<sup>5</sup> Horton, C. Center for the Study of Social Policy. (2003). *Protective factors literature review: Early care and education programs and the prevention of child abuse and neglect*. Washington, DC.

<http://www.cssp.org/reform/strengthening-families>

<http://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/guide2012/guide.pdf#page=9>

- Images of mothers and fathers in waiting rooms/offices
- Gender neutral colors and decorating
- Reading materials (books/magazines/agency pamphlets) are directed to mothers and fathers
- Has family restrooms and or diaper changing stations in both men and women restrooms
- Encourages staff to communicate to families that fathers are just as important as mothers in raising healthy children.
- Includes a clear expectation that caseworkers and other staff will identify, locate and contact non-residential parents early in child welfare cases and continue to attempt to identify them throughout the life of the case.
- Ensure that non-residential parents are consistently treated in a gender-responsive, non-accusatory, non-blaming manner.
- Hires service delivery staff that mirrors (proportionate to) the gender of clients served in culture, race, language, age, etc.
- Maintains lists of recommended mother/father-oriented resources (for example, fatherhood/motherhood classes and support groups)
- Seeking continuing education on parent engagement is encouraged and sought out
- Encourages unit case staffing to promote peer-to-peer learning on examples of successful outcomes through non-resident parent engagement
- Works to educate courts, agency attorneys, parent attorneys, GALs, child support enforcement staff, internal DSS staff, and other external partners about the importance of both parents in raising healthy children.
- Agency values parent leadership from mothers and fathers (family/parent partners that have successfully navigated the child welfare system) by encouraging them to provide feedback for agency continuous quality improvement as well as may look for opportunities for peer-to-peer assistance/navigation with other parents new to child welfare services
- Agency is seen as a family-centered contributor toward a larger community response of non-resident parent engagement
- Agency is encouraged and seeks out opportunities to promote peer-to-peer learning on the strengths/challenges of non-residential parent engagement with other county DSS

## II. CHILD WELFARE SERVICES

Contrary to the expressed fears of some caseworkers and child welfare administrators, nonresident fathers' contact with the child welfare agency and involvement with their children is *not*, in the aggregate, associated with subsequent maltreatment allegations. In fact, among children whose case outcome is reunification, usually with their mothers, higher levels of nonresident father involvement (they had visited their child at least once and provided financial and nonfinancial support) are associated with a substantially lower likelihood of subsequent maltreatment allegations.<sup>6</sup>

Fathers have, traditionally, not been as involved in child welfare service agreement planning as mothers. Worker bias regarding father involvement appears to be the most widely researched barrier to fathers' participation in child welfare service agreement

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<sup>6</sup> [More about the Dads](#): Exploring Associations between Non-resident Father Involvement and Child Welfare Case Outcomes. 2008. USDHHS, Administration for Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau.

planning. One study found that caseworkers did not pay attention to birth fathers to the degree that they did to birth mothers. At the same time, the fathers did not respond to outreach efforts as well as mothers, which testifies to the need to approach fathers with an understanding of their unique needs and feelings.<sup>7</sup>

Everyone's views regarding fatherhood are likely to be colored by their own experience with their fathers. It is impossible to be without biases and preconceptions about fathers. To successfully work with fathers, workers must know what their own biases and preconceptions are about fatherhood and fathers. Once workers understand these, they can more readily do a self-check throughout the case to ensure that these biases are not affecting their view of the families with whom they work.

For further exploration on the cultural aspects of engaging fathers as well as groups that have traditionally been underrepresented, it would be beneficial to attend the *Building Awareness and Cultural Competency* course. The course is mandatory for all social workers and supervisors providing child welfare services. Registration for upcoming events is listed at [www.ncswlearn.org](http://www.ncswlearn.org).

## **A. INTAKE**

Capturing information for both parents begins at intake. Often times a reporter may be focused on an event that led them to calling the county DSS. It is important that while the Intake worker is completing the structured intake form ([DSS-1402](#)), they ask the reporter for any information they have about both parents. Also, [Chapter VIII, Section 1407](#) policy as well as the intake form emphasizes collecting information on maternal and paternal relatives that may have a significant relationship with the child.

## **B. THE CPS ASSESSMENT PROCESS, INITIAL AND ONGOING THROUGHOUT THE CONTINUUM OF CHILD WELFARE SERVICES**

Mothers and fathers, whether or not they are the alleged/confirmed perpetrator of the child maltreatment, play an important part in the initial assessment and ongoing child welfare service provision. This includes parents who do not live with their children. If a parent of the child does not live in the home, the worker should:

- Understand what type of relationship the parent has with their child and the family.
- Learn about how the parent of the child fits into the current family dynamics.
- Understand what role the parent plays either in contributing to the circumstances that led to maltreatment or in helping to protect the child from further maltreatment.
- Determine what involvement the parent would like to have with their child if they have not been involved.

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<sup>7</sup> Sonenstien, F., Malm, K., & Billing, A. (2002). *Study of fathers' involvement in permanency planning and child welfare casework* [On-line]. Available: [aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/CW-dads02](http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/CW-dads02); Greif, G. L., & Zuravin, S. J. (1989). Fathers: A placement resource for abused and neglected children? *Child Welfare*, 68(5), 479–490; Franck, E. J. (2001). Outreach to birthfathers of children in out-of-home-care. *Child Welfare*, 80(3), 381–399.

The reasons why it is important to interview parents who live outside the home include:

- The parent is significant to the child, whether the parent is actively involved in the child's life or not.
- The nonresidential parent has an important impact on the dynamics of the family.
- If placement outside of the home should be necessary, the biological parent or their extended family may prove to be a suitable placement.
- The nonresidential parent may play a role in ameliorating the circumstances that led to the neglect/abuse.

It should be noted that there are situations in which contacting the non-residential parent may aggravate the risk of harm to the child or to the custodial parent. If this is the case, there shall be specific information about the risk of harm documented in the case record to state the reasons why it was not in the best interest of the child's and/or custodial parent's safety to contact the non-residential parent [Chapter VIII, Section 1408](#).

### 1. [Fatherhood Definitions](#)

A worker may hear or see many terms to describe a father. Though the primary focus of child welfare services may be in supporting the biological or legal father of the child, often times there are other persons that have been instrumental in a child's life. For example, the family may want a natural support such as a social father, fictive kin, and or father figure to be a continued part of the child and family team meetings. These natural supports can be instrumental in building protective factors in families through social connections and concrete supports.

- a. Biological Father: the natural or birth father of a child.
- b. Legal Father: one recognized as the legal father due to marriage to the mother at the time the child was born, by voluntary acknowledgment through an affidavit of parentage or by court order
- c. Putative/Alleged Father: a man who has been named as the father of a child born out of wedlock, but has not been established as the legal father
- d. Social Father: A man that is married to or cohabitating with the child's mother and takes de facto responsibility for a child (step-father, live in boyfriend, involved neighbor) but he is not the biological father
- e. Fictive Kin Father: an individual that is unrelated by either birth or marriage but have an emotionally significant relationship with a child and someone uses a family title (I.E. dad) to refer to him
- f. Father Figure: a person of a particular power or influence who serves as an emotional substitute for a father (I.E. coach)
- g. Kin Father: an individual who is a male biological relative with a significant parenting role with the child (I.E. Grandfather, Uncle, older Brother)
- h. Foster Father: an individual currently licensed by the state to provide foster care.
- i. Adoptive Father: the creation by law of the relationship of parent (father) and child.

## 2. Diligent Efforts to Contact

Policy within [Chapter VIII, Section 1408](#) of the Children's Services Manual states the agency must make diligent efforts to contact that non-custodial/non-residential parent and get their input on the allegations as well as the overall safety and risk in the home. Document all efforts to contact a parent. Here are some recommended searches if locating a parent is a challenge:

- Interviewing the custodial/residential parent to determine not only contact information for the non-residential parent but also to understand the parent's relationship with each other, information about their last contact with the child and what the quality of the contacts has been.
- Interviewing the child so that they may discuss their relationship with the parent, any contact they have had and possible contact information for the parent
- Interviewing the child's relatives and friends of the family
- Internet I.E. Google, [US Search](#), [pipl](#), <http://www.zabasearch.com/>
- Internet Networking Sites I.E. Facebook and Myspace
- County DSS service record
- NC Vital Records
- In and out of state criminal record checks
- Department of Public Safety (formerly Corrections)
- Division of Motor Vehicles
- Employment Security
- Tax record
- Voter registration
- Veteran/military
- Child Support – Parent Locator Service
- Coordination with Family Finding locally and or through [Children's Home Society](#)

## 3. Interview Suggestions Specific to Custodial Mothers

Engaging both parents can be a delicate balance, especially if they do not have a good relationship. It is important to listen to the parents, explain the worker's role and maintain focus on how the child can best be supported. Here are some suggested approaches to custodial mothers:

- Communicate in a way to help alleviate fears.
- Starting with "I need to know" causes anxiety.
- If a worker hears, "I don't know where he is" on their first request, rethink the approach just in case.
- Focus on the children's safety.
- Tell why the information being sought is important.
- Be culturally competent and respectful.
- Ask if the father needs help as well.
- Ask, "tell me about the child's dad."
- Ask about the father's family.
- Ask if there has been any past or possibly current domestic violence.
- Mothers may be concerned that the children will automatically go be placed with their father if they were reported as the alleged perpetrators.

Explain that workers are required to search for fathers and ask about any concerns they have.

- Give examples of why it's important that workers be able to reach the father in case of emergency (e.g., the child needs medical treatment).
- Explain that the information she provides helps determine what's best for their children.
- Understand what kind of relationship mothers have with the fathers and adjust your approach accordingly.
- Reassure the mother that CPS will investigate safety concerns provided about the father.<sup>8</sup>

#### 4. Interview Suggestions Specific to Non-Residential Fathers

While conducting interviews with fathers, the worker should be aware of some unique issues relevant to fathers. Traditional roles of fathers as a provider, protector and teacher still have great meaning for men today. Whether or not the father is the perpetrator, a man very often views the maltreatment of his child as a failure on his part to protect his child. It is equally important to recognize that the entire self-perception of "manliness" and "fatherhood" are deeply intertwined. In every culture, "being a man" is loaded with deep meaning and these meanings vary across cultures.<sup>9</sup>

The first contact with a non-residential father is perhaps the most important. It is an opportunity to establish a basis for a positive, strengths-based relationship, free from judgments or assumptions. Approach fathers in a strength based way by reminding them of how important they are to their children, and how there are some things that only they can do for their kids.

- "Your kids will carry what you do forever."
- If he has been neglectful, "you can change things for them by changing your behavior."
- Ask a father how he wants his children to remember him 10-15 years from now. Even fathers who have been toxic to their families have positive visions about what they would like to mean to their kids. It's a good opening for non-defensive, self reflection. Ask "what can you do to make that happen?" Also, ask "how can I help you with that?"

At times, a social worker may contact a non-residential parent that has expressed a desire not to be involved in the child's life, refuses any contact with the child, provides no possible relative supports and refuses to cooperate with the social worker in the development of an agreement. If this happens, document all efforts to involve that parent in the planning for their child as well as the parent's responses.

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<sup>8</sup> Information gathered from Parent Collaboration Group, February 2009. National Quality Improvement Center on Non-Resident Fathers and the Child Welfare System.

<sup>9</sup> Rosenberg, J. and Wilcox, W. (2006) The Importance of Fathers in the Healthy Development of Children. US DHHS, ACF, Children's Bureau, Office of Child Abuse and Neglect. Washington, D.C.

## C. CPS IN-HOME SERVICES

Before convening a child and family team meeting to develop the [In-Home Family Services Agreement](#) with the family, the worker should complete a [Family Assessment of Strengths and Needs](#) with the non-residential parent to identify any areas of strength that can be built upon as well as any areas that the parent may need more support. Those identified strengths and needs should be discussed during the child and family team meeting and documented on the family services agreement.

Child and Family Team (CFT) meeting policy within [Chapter VII](#) of the Children's Services Manual states that a non-residential parent should be given the opportunity to be involved in the planning for their child and should be encouraged to do so throughout the life of the case. The CFT can be an excellent way to increase the involvement of the non-residential parent. It also can maintain family continuity and connection through identifying additional kin the parent would like involved in assisting for the planning of their child. Workers should schedule CFTs around the parents work schedules. The policy provides guidance on alternate methods to involve a non-residential parent in the CFT meeting if there is valid conflict with them attending a meeting. Ideas include:

- The parent can participate over the phone
- The parent can send written concerns and ideas for case planning
- The parent can choose a proxy who will represent his/her concerns and wishes
- A separate family services agreement can be completed with the parent
- In cases where there are volatile relationships among family members, one strategy that has been successful in some cases is the use of meetings done in "stages". This involves having one group of family and supports meet to discuss their ideas for addressing safety and risk. They would then be excused and the other family group would discuss their ideas. If possible, both groups are then brought together to look at the common areas and finalize the plan. Unless unsafe to do so, also consider having extended family from both parents present throughout the meeting while having the parents staggered in their attendance.

Parents who have a history of domestic violence will be explored in more depth later within this document but it is important to note that [Chapter VIII, Section 1409](#) of the Children's Services Manual provides guidance from Intake through CPS In-Home Services on the child welfare response to domestic violence. Policy states that at no time is the non-offending parent/adult victim to be placed in danger by having to develop service agreements together with the perpetrator of violence against them. CFT meetings can be used to engage the perpetrator of domestic violence and hold them accountable for their behavior. In some cases, the non-offending parent/adult victim may want the perpetrator of domestic violence to participate in the CFT meeting together. The non-offending parent/adult victim may see this as a safer opportunity to negotiate agreements in regards to the care of the children as well as a way to bring community pressure on the perpetrator to change their behaviors and stop the violence. Though, ultimately, if the county DSS and/or facilitator believe it is too dangerous to conduct the CFT meeting with the perpetrator of domestic violence present, complete separate meetings. A CFT can encourage the adult victim/non-

offending parent and perpetrator of domestic violence to seek appropriate support services.

Creating services to meet each parent's unique needs may be required for any family situation. For example, do not assume that a mother or a father knows how to be parent. Many may not have had a positive role model in their life and the idea of being a parent may be foreign to them. Assess if they are able to communicate with their child. If available, offer mother or father specific community based programs. It may be a challenge for a father to relate in attending parenting support if it is attended by mostly females. There may be a community based program that emphasizes family centered services and not just mother/female centered services to which the father can be referred. Don't assume that initial reluctance or involvement is indicative of their desire to be a part of the child's life. Any services should focus on developing skills and building social support around parenting that can provide a foundation of confidence for continued parent involvement. Collaborate with your local community based Family Resource Center/Family Support agency to see what services might be available, express any gaps in community service needs identified and discuss if together a service might be developed to meet the need.

As a non-residential/non-custodial parent is involved during the provision of child welfare services, they may want to seek resources in order to secure sustainable access and visitation with their child during the provision of and after child welfare services. Some counties/court districts have *pro se* or self represented child custody/visitation filing clinics. Here is the website for Legal Aid of NC for more information <http://www.legalaidnc.org/> about clinics, self filing packets, and seeking attorney assistance.

Also, there are Access and Visitation Coordinators employed by the NC [Administrative Office of the Courts](#) in six specific court districts. The coordinators work directly with non-custodial parents who want to have visitation with their children but have limited or no contact with them. The majority of the clients served in the Access and Visitation Program are fathers and the program emphasizes that fathers are important and should have an important and active role in their children's lives.

The program serves non-custodial parents (both married and unmarried parents) with existing visitation and custody court orders, both child support orders established from the Department of Social Services and private child support orders, as well as parents who do not have existing court orders for visitation or custody. The goal of the Access and Visitation Program is to identify the underlying issues creating barriers and provide support to remove those barriers so non-custodial parents may gain access to their children. The coordinators accomplish this by making referrals, offering assistance with mediation services (may be private or through the court via the Child Custody and Visitation Mediation Program), counseling, supervised visitation, parent education, and the development of parenting plans. They are located in:

- Durham (District 14) 919-808-3225
- Halifax (6A) 252-593-3081
- Buncombe (28) 828-259-6507
- Cumberland (12) 910-475-3245
- Anson 704-994-3859, Richmond 704-419-7564, Stanly 704-986-7086 and Union 704-698-3230 (Districts 20A & 20B) share a Coordinator

## **D. CPS OUT-OF-HOME PLACEMENT SERVICES**

Nonresident fathers' involvement with their children is associated with a higher likelihood of a reunification outcome and a lower likelihood of an adoption outcome. Children with highly involved nonresident fathers (they had visited their child at least once and provided financial and nonfinancial support) are also discharged from foster care more quickly than those with less or no involvement.<sup>10</sup>

[Chapter VII](#) of the Children's Services Manual states that a CFT meeting shall be held at any point during the life of the case when it appears that the child/ren and youth may need to be removed. A CFT meeting shall be held to explore other safety arrangements and possible placements if the child/ren and youth must be removed. If holding a CFT meeting would compromise the safety of the child, then the child shall be made safe through the filing of a non-secure petition and a CFT shall be held as soon as possible after the removal to begin planning for permanency. Having a CFT before placing the child in foster care is an excellent opportunity to engage not only both parents in planning but both parents' relatives as potential placements.

Mirroring service agreement planning of in-home services, the [Out-of-Home Family Services Agreement](#) also requires doing an assessment of non-residential parent's [strengths and needs](#) and ongoing involvement of that parent in the CFT planning and development of the services agreements. [Section 1201, V. of the Child Placement Services Manual](#), states that the agency shall develop a Visitation and Contact Plan ([DSS-5242](#)) as part of the Family Services Agreement with each parent specifying at least the frequency and location of visits. Visitation plans are required until the court orders termination of visitation or termination of parental rights.

[The American Humane Association](#) (National Quality Improvement Center on Non-Resident Fathers and the Child Welfare System information) developed several great resources for fathers involved in child welfare services and navigating court involvement, attorneys, Guardians ad Litem, and judges.

## **III. WORKING WITH UNIQUE OPPORTUNITIES IN PARENTING**

There is no single model for parenthood or being an involved parent. While there is evidence, for example, that a married father is more likely to be involved in his child's life, fathers in other situations can be and are good fathers as well. Social workers are presented with many relevant issues while working with families in the child welfare system and are challenged to adapt their approach to fit families in varying circumstances.

### **A. INCARCERATED PARENTS**

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<sup>10</sup> [More about the Dads](#): Exploring Associations between Non-resident Father Involvement and Child Welfare Case Outcomes. 2008. USDHHS, Administration for Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau.

There are approximately 2 million children in America with at least one parent incarcerated. There are certainly examples of safety concerns where a parent may have been incarcerated for violent acts on a child or child's family and documentation should reflect recommendations that contact would be contrary to the best interest of the child. However, for many other parents, being incarcerated does not always mean they should be excluded from their child's life. Preserving the child's connection to their parent as well as that parent's whole extended family may be a central role in the child's world that could influence their development and the decisions they make.

[Chapter VIII, Section 1412](#) as well as [Chapter IV, Section 1201](#), Out of Home Family Services Agreement of the Children's Services Manual states that even if a parent is incarcerated (in-state or out-of-state), they should be contacted to determine if they can assist in identifying any strengths or needs of the family, receive their input on the Family Services Agreement, determine if there are any possible relatives that may be a resource in supporting the child, and determine what level of involvement they can maintain particularly around the planning for and contact with their child.

To locate a parent that is in a NC Department of Public Safety (DPS formerly Department of Corrections) prison, call 800-368-1985 or use the online offender search through <http://www.doc.state.nc.us/>. Contact numbers and addresses for specific prisons can also be found on the NC Division of Adult Corrections website <http://www.doc.state.nc.us/dop/index.htm>. The locator for the Federal Bureau of Prisons is <http://www.bop.gov/iloc2/Locatelnmate.jsp>.

Whether in Federal or State prison, inmates have a correctional case manager assigned to them soon after entering a facility. The case manager can be of assistance in contacting a prisoner. A child welfare worker may contact a correctional case manager by phone and they will suggest contact by letter (using agency letterhead) which includes a name, title, work information, and purpose of the request/contact. It can be challenging to call an inmate directly unless the contact is coordinated/approved by the facility they are housed. Contact the correctional case manager to request a scheduled call. An inmate may be able to make collect telephone calls to family and friends.

Within the NC Division of Adult Correction, Prison Section all inmates have a correctional plan that is developed within 30 days after assignment to their initial case manager. It is reviewed and updated as needed. The plans consist of programs, services and activities that provide the inmate opportunities for improvement and change. Some services may have been ordered/recommended by the court or other government agencies. An inmate's participation is voluntary but they are encouraged to work through their correctional plan for successful reentry into the community. If a correctional case manager knows a child welfare worker is working with an inmate, they will try to help in coordinating specific requested services that may be helpful in meeting any needs identified consistent with the family services agreement.

There are programs that work with men and women in prison to not only prepare them for returning to a productive role in society but also prepare them for being a good parent upon their return. The NC state prison system offers an array of programs, services, and activities that may be available based on the inmate's custody level and where they are housed. They include but are not limited to: life

skills, cognitive behavioral programs, parenting education, educational and vocational training, substance abuse treatment, mental health services, domestic violence programs, community based work, health education, and religious programs/services. Some of the information within the correctional plan such as program placement and progress can be provided to the child welfare worker as it is included in matters of public information. Services such as substance abuse treatment, mental health, medical, and sex offender treatment would require a signed consent for release of information from the inmate. Written communication will be required on county DSS letterhead documenting the service needs of an incarcerated parent is the possibility of moving that parent to another facility that has specific services available to meet the need.

Child welfare workers, group home employees, and foster parents may be allowed to bring approved children to visit inmates. A written request is required for approval by the facility before a visit. Here is a link to the Handbook for Family and Friends of Inmates developed by the NC DPS <http://www.doc.state.nc.us/Publications/2010Handbook.pdf> . It may be helpful in describing communications, visitation and services. Though, communication with specific facilities is encouraged as they may have their own policies such as requiring professionals to dress in professional/business casual attire when visiting with an inmate. Also, this is a link to some questions and answers about the visitation policy <http://www.doc.state.nc.us/dop/visitation/>.

Here are some suggestions from the [National Resource Center on Children and Families of the Incarcerated](#) that a worker could consider sharing with an incarcerated father (but certainly could be applicable to an incarcerated mother) that can be used to maintain an attachment to their children.

- Even if your relationship with the mother of your children is over, you need to establish and maintain a positive relationship with her. For the sake of your children, try to find ways to connect with her respectfully.
- Do not expect big changes right away from your family members.
- Find out about policies regarding how you can connect with your child visitation, letters, telephone calls, and audio. Ask your prison chaplain, counselor, or other staff.
- Develop a plan and follow it on how often you will connect with your child.
- When explaining to your children why you are not living with them, be honest but respect their ability to understand it according to their age.
- When telling your children how important they are to you, do not be surprised if they do not respond the way you want them to. Children are often angry that you did something wrong that prevents you from being with them.
- To establish and maintain your family relationships, be ready to make amends and apologize to them.
- Find ways to support your children emotionally, financially, and spiritually as much as possible.
- Your family and children need to be able to rely on you if you say you will call or write regularly, so be consistent in your approach and contact schedule.
- Be realistic about goals and expectations. Do not expect too much, too soon from them.
- Remember family celebrations, special occasions, and cultural events. If you have a hobby or crafts at prison, make gifts or draw pictures and make them into a coloring book.

- If at all possible, purchase small items for your children through the commissary or mail order catalogs.
- Use your time constructively. Get your GED, take parenting classes, continuing education classes, anything that betters you.
- Some prisons allow you to purchase and make video or audiotapes. Use these to tell stories, share memories, and bedtime stories. Have your children listen to it when they miss you.
- Before your release date, clear up any legal problems that may be pending such as your driving record, credit problems, or child support.
- Your children might not know how to say exactly what they are feeling and thinking, so be patient with them.
- Make a realistic plan and follow through, no matter how bad things get, when re-connecting with your children after you are released from jail.
- While you are still in prison, research programs that might help you reach your goals once released. Seek out programs about parenting, housing, jobs, legal problems, or credit problems.
- Work with other prison fathers trying to connect with their children from inside prison.
- Get some counseling from the appropriate staff (psychologist, chaplain, case manager, or correctional counselor)
- Think about how you want to be a parent and your future as a dad and make decisions about that future. Look at your own relationship with your dad to see what was learned, good and bad.
- Go to the prison library. Take the time to read what you can to try to learn about being a better dad. Try to read as much as you can about father/child relationships.

## **B. MULTIPLE FATHERS**

In some families, children are living in the same household, yet have different fathers. Current living situations may seem complex as arrangements could include a number of examples. Children may be living with a step father or boyfriend instead of their biological father. There is potential for tension and confusion over roles. Who is responsible for the safety of the children, who plays the role of the father in the eyes of the child, and how are other adults portraying the father to his children may all be real challenges to assess and navigate. When working with a family with multiple fathers, it is important for the worker to understand the role each man plays in the family dynamic. Mapping a genogram with the family may be helpful to see and discuss the family connections for each child.

[Chapter VIII, Section 1408](#) of the Children's Services Manual provides guidance that all individuals in the home whether they are a primary caretaker or not should be contacted face to face as part of the assessment. A boyfriend or stepfather can step into the role of dad with both competence and caring. They may provide both love and structure for the children in the home and should continue to be a part of the planning process if the case continues with child protective services beyond assessment.

## **C. PARENTS IN THE ARMED FORCES**

Many civilians are unfamiliar with the unique nature and challenges of the military. The history and tradition of the military, their dress, language, rank structure and mobile lifestyle may seem foreign to those who have not experienced military service.

When working with military families it is important to understand the culture of the military community and the military response to the needs of the service member and family. The culture of military communities is often determined by the current installation commander. Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) exist between each installation and county department of social services. Frequently, when a change in command takes place the MOU is re-negotiated. Therefore, an important step when working with the military is to know what is in the MOU.

Recently, risk factors have increased and expanded as a result of current conflicts that the U.S. is involved in and the tempo of deployments. Mental and physical distancing between parents occurs often and is associated with guilt. A constant state of deployment and re-deployment leaves a feeling of insecurity and a heightened awareness of surroundings; for example mom hears noises at night and is unable to sleep. Parents experience a power shift in the parental relationship and the parent child relationship; this can be seen when the oldest child takes on responsibility for tasks that were previously the service member's. Money management and other moral and ethical hurdles face the military family and are exacerbated when families are displaced from their home of origin.

### **1. Deployments**

Deployment is defined as the movement of the service member to a location within the United States or overseas to accomplish a task or mission. Tasks and missions may include routine trainings or combat situations. The duration of deployments can last for just a few weeks to many months. When the potential for a deployment becomes a reality everyone in the family is impacted. When working with military families, a working knowledge of the 5 phases of deployment becomes necessary.

- Pre-deployment involves feelings of shock as the knowledge that their daily routine is going to change. Distancing between the service member and the family begins as training hours increase. Service members are required during this time to update their power of attorney and wills. Also there may be an increase of arguments leading up to and during the deployment. This is not an indicator that family violence is imminent.
- Deployment at first is associated with mixed emotions, from distress to relief. Initially, the military command and the community will offer support; however, as time passes this support fades but the issues remain increasing the potential for emotional distress. Discussing difficult and hot topics over long distances can set the stage for stress upon the service member's return. When additional deployments take place, all phases of deployment are re-visited. During this time, the family may become maladjusted to the service member's absence such as a child's poor school performance, behavior problems and or the residential parent may be challenged to fulfill the role of a single parent. Challenges in communication may also complicate the family's adjustment to the

parent's absence particularly as it pertains to issues related to the children. There is also a sense that the residential parent has to protect the service member from being made aware of problems that have developed as this could be a distraction and impact their ability to be safe.

- Sustainment begins when the family begins to establish a new routine. During this time the family may establish new sources of support and a sense of independence and confidence develops.
- Re-deployment involves the pending return of the service member. Families are excited and decision making becomes slightly difficult. Often there is apprehension that the service member has changed as a result of their experiences and apprehension that they will not accept some of the changes that have taken place within the family. There also may be changes in the date of return that further increase anxiety.
- Post-deployment is often characterized as a reunion with a honeymoon period (physical but not necessarily emotional reunion). During this time reintegration of the service member into the family requires a renegotiation of roles and responsibilities that could create distress.

## 2. Engagement, Risk and Protective Factors

Because of the transient nature of military family life, it is important to be aware that the identification of risk and strategies to engage service members may be different from non-military parents. Recognizing that socio-economic factors are a key indicator of stress within the military family, lower ranking families may be at a greater risk of child maltreatment. Overall, engagement hinges on being flexible and creative.

- **Social and Emotional Competence of Children:** It can be difficult to stick to routines that provide the child feelings of security when there may be frequent moves or deployments. Children of military families may exhibit challenging behaviors creating extra stress for families. Early assistance and support can head off negative results and keep development on track.

Strategy:

Encourage parents to talk with their child as well as encourage the child to talk with family, close adults and peers about stress the child may be feeling from events such as frequent moves or deployments. When deployed, reassure them by keeping connected by email, phone, photos, and drawings. If you have more than one child, try to make a little time for each.

- **Nurturing and Attachment:** The demands of the military may prevent the development of strong bonds as obligations and deployments involve distancing. There is often an interruption of nurturing and attachment with their children. This is not necessarily an indication of a parent's lack of interest but is a symptom of a naturally occurring defense mechanism.

Strategy:

When engaging service members, recognize and normalize the disconnection. Support them by verbalizing an understanding that often their time is not always under their control. It is important to recognize that

missed appointments may be a result of the needs of the military and not that the parent is not engaging. So being flexible and creative is essential.

- **Knowledge of Parenting and of Child and Youth Development:** Service members do not have the advantage of understanding parenting and youth development when they are not around. It is important to recognize this as a normal response to military life as opposed to a lack of interest or ability to understand child development. A parent may leave when their child is a new born and when they come back their child is a toddler or their child has made the transition from home to kindergarten. It may be difficult to understand their child's development when other matters may be more pressing.

Strategy:

Affirm that they are good parents and provide a non-judgmental environment for learning. Taking the time to speak their language while verbalizing an understanding of the unique position they are in will help pave the way to successful engagement. Allow the parent time to internalize the information being provided and offer opportunities for the parent to demonstrate what they have learned. For example: touching or holding their child, walking, arranging, wiping, dressing and rocking are actions that may be more effective and retained.

- **Parental Resilience:** Resiliency to effectively parent their children may not be a skill a parent has developed as their ability to handle everyday stressors and recover competes with the complex and dangerous situations the parent may have experienced during deployment. This, in conjunction with potential emotional disturbances such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) or Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) may impair the ability of the parent to be resilient.

Strategy:

Ask questions about the parent's past experiences as a child and give the parent an opportunity to share and be heard. Taking time to point out positive attributes will help validate they do possess the skills to be a good parent. Helping parents recognize that within this framework there are certain situations that are outside of their control will empower them to recognize the skills they possess while minimizing areas of challenge. This may increase the parent's willingness to accept services. Being prepared to bring resources, either on-line or in the community, will demonstrate that they are not alone and that there is a genuine interest in the parent's role as a successful parent.

- **Social Connections:** Social isolation is also a function of the transient military life style. There is often a removal of trusted family and friends who provide support. Re-locating every few years can hinder the development of current location support systems. This does not necessarily indicate that the family is refusing to engage with the community.

Strategy:

Parents may find social support connections through church, neighborhood activities or meet up with other moms and dads of similar military experiences.

- **Concrete Supports for Parents:** Connecting parents with concrete supports or resources offered in the community may also face similar challenges. Parents are often concerned that problems in the family will be seen as a sign of weakness or lack of preparedness; ultimately threatening their ability to be deployed.

Strategy:

Resources available for military families may be in the community or offered on the military installation, often at no cost. However, an awareness of military protocol is essential as the appropriate chain of command will need to be followed. Being familiar with the services that are offered through the military and assuring the service member that utilization of these resources should not negatively impact their careers will encourage their participation.

### 3. Family Advocacy Program

Each branch of the military has established a [Family Advocacy Program \(FAP\)](#). FAPs provide services to military families when they are experiencing family violence or child abuse and neglect issues through the use of prevention efforts. These services are designed to work in collaboration with the specific needs of military families, the military command, other military professionals as well as civilian organizations and agencies. Having a working knowledge of the FAP is essential when working with military families. FAPs provide these basic services:

- **Prevention:** activities are coordinated through family centers, chaplains, medical clinics and civilian providers to prevent family violence which includes child abuse and neglect. Public awareness, leadership training and education programs that support healthy parenting, couple communication, stress and anger management are also provided. Voluntary home visiting programs are also being established. Each installation will have location specific programs that address these prevention activities.
- **Identification:** education and information on recognizing and reporting suspected family violence and child abuse and neglect.
- **Assessment:** when reports of violence or child abuse and neglect are reported to the FAP, social workers will meet with the family. These meetings determine whether or not violence or child abuse and neglect have occurred and will develop a recommended treatment plan that will help both the abuser and the victim. FAP staff is unique in that they have access to resources that local departments of social services do not. They also have the authority to compel participation by working with the service member's command.
- **Support for victims:** for victims the focus is on providing services to help overcome their exposure to violence or abuse and neglect. Services may be money for rent, shelters, advocates, support groups or other services that may be necessary.

- **Treatment for abusers:** the primary goal is to help the abuser recognize their unacceptable behavior and to stop it.

#### 4. National Guard and Reserve

Guard and Reserve families typically do not live in proximity to military installations and are not fully supported by their local communities. When a deployment is experienced for an extended period, families are faced with the additional challenge of accessing services.

For that reason North Carolina through the Family Readiness Office provides some programs and services to Guard and Reserve families at Family Assistance Centers. There are 5 of these centers in North Carolina and the typical services that they offer, regardless of active duty status are: crisis interventions, financial management, and employment assistance, parenting education and support programs.

#### 5. Resources

Army: <http://www.goarmy.com/>

Air Force: [www.afcrossroads.com](http://www.afcrossroads.com)

Marine Corps: [www.usmc-mccs.org](http://www.usmc-mccs.org)

Navy: [www.lifelines2000.org](http://www.lifelines2000.org)

National Guard Family Programs: [www.guardfamily.org](http://www.guardfamily.org)

National Military Families Association: [www.nmfa.org](http://www.nmfa.org)

N.C. National Guard Family Readiness: [www.nc.ngb.army.mil/family](http://www.nc.ngb.army.mil/family)

Military One Source: [www.militaryonesource.com](http://www.militaryonesource.com)

Parents as Teachers: [www.parentsasteachers.org](http://www.parentsasteachers.org)

#### D. PARENTS WHO HAVE A HISTORY OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

It is inevitable, that as a social worker is performing a thorough assessment to obtain information about both parents and their children, there are families that will have a history of domestic violence. Further assessing the safety, risk, strengths, and needs of families that report a history of domestic violence can be complex. There is no decision making tool that can provide **certainty** when assessing the lethality/risk of the perpetrator of violence and formulate recommendations for safety and or service planning as to the type of contact that parent may have with their children. Each family is unique. Social workers are encouraged to use existing tools as resources as well as supervision to inform and document their professional judgment.

[Chapter VIII, Section 1409](#) of the Children's Services Manual provides guidance from Intake through CPS In-Home Services on the child welfare response to domestic violence and the Domestic Violence Perpetrator Assessment Tool ([DSS-5234](#)) can be helpful resources in understanding what domestic violence is. The safety of the child remains paramount and their safety is closely linked to the safety of the non-offending parent. Assessing the non-offending parent's perception of safety is important in assessing the child's safety.

## 1. Assessing Levels Of Lethality

Fatherhood engagement may not involve access to the children. If the abusive man is moderately violent and has some strengths, services should be considered to help him address domestic violence and to support his parenting. If he is an ongoing assaulter or is highly dangerous, access to children should be restricted and supervised and there should be more narrowly focused services to address domestic violence. If he is exceptionally dangerous such that he poses a grave and acute risk to the mother and/or the children, no contact with the children should be considered.

- a. **Moderately violent** men make up approximately half of all men who batter. These men have lower levels of violence and are more likely to change. Characteristics of moderately violent abusers:
  - Violence may be frequent—more than once a month
  - Usually does not cause injury, but may include slapping and pushing
  - Coercive control (psychological abuse and controlling behaviors) is present but is not severe or highly intrusive
  - Usually lacks criminal record
  - Violence usually remains within the family
  - No indication of current substance abuse
  - One (or two at most) Restraining or Protective Orders with same partner
- b. **Indicators of strength/lower risk:**
  - Partner reports that she is not frightened; open to visitation
  - Children report history of positive relationship and there are no indications of fear of father
  - Children do not act out after visits
  - Low level violence took place years ago; has been in other relationship(s) and current partner reports no physical abuse
  - Violence only within the family; no indicators of violence toward others
  - Has attended a batterer intervention program (BIP) and has remained nonviolent afterward
  - Controlling and abusive behaviors have stopped or decreased significantly
- c. **Ongoing assaulters** are men whose violence is not severe, but who may continue assaulting (and thereby traumatizing) their partners and/or children. These men typically continue physical abuse despite treatment; episodic substance abuse is fairly common.
- d. **Potentially lethal or highly dangerous** men are a fraction of all men who batter. These men may end up making a lethal or near lethal assault. Some have a history of high levels of violence; others have no history of violence but have intense controlling behaviors manifested in jealousy, stalking and severe control of their partners. Through consideration of signs of higher risk, please note that highly intrusive control and/or extreme jealousy are indicators of serious risk *even in the absence of violent behavior*. Some of the most dangerous men have not been violent prior to a lethal or near lethal assault.

Here are some indicators of ongoing assaulters and for highly dangerous men. The most severe items are numbers 5-18. Inquiries should be comprehensive and consistent.

- 1) Abuse and/or violence accompanied by episodic or binge use of alcohol or drugs
- 2) More than one restraining order (R/O); R/Os with different partners.
- 3) Signs of increasing instability: recent unemployment, signs of depression or trauma
- 4) Violence is not of the most intense variety (no severe bruises, broken bones or serious injury) *but it does not stop*
- 5) Higher levels of violence: punching, kicking; bruises, cuts, and/or continuing pain; beatings w/severe bruises, burns, broken bones; head injury, internal injury, permanent injury; wounds from weapon
- 6) Has forced her to have sex when she did not want to do so
- 7) He owns a gun
- 8) She has left him. She is in a battered women's shelter or is looking for a shelter
- 9) He has used a weapon against her or has threatened to use a lethal weapon
- 10) He has avoided arrest for domestic violence
- 11) He is not the father of the children
- 12) Intrusive control: controls car, money, who she can see, when she can go out
- 13) Acute jealousy coupled with violence: irrational accusations of infidelity, spying; leaves notes, monitors her, and repeatedly destroys property. Says, "If I can't have you, no one will"
- 14) Behaviors continue after separation or divorce
- 15) Violence is increasing in frequency or severity
- 16) Escalating response to trigger events: partner separating, leaving him, becoming more independent
- 17) Threats to kill or hurt children
- 18) Threats to kill or hurt partner<sup>11</sup>

## 2. Levels of Involvement

Some batterers avoid involvement in their children's lives post-separation, either to escape responsibility for spending time with them or to avoid paying child support. Based on reports from mothers, the effects on the children of these disappearances vary depending largely on how afraid the children were of their father and how much interest he had previously taken in them. Some children reportedly show only brief sadness or concern about the father, while others remain distressed by his absence for an extended period of time. Some ex-partners state that the batterer's disappearance has been an important source of emotional re-injury to the children.

A second group of batterers conduct themselves either fairly responsibly or quite responsibly with the children post-separation. Former partners who have been separated for five years or more report that they have not had major post-separation problems with the batterer as a parent, and children

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<sup>11</sup> Mederos, F. Developed for the Fatherhood Initiative at the MA Department for Children and Families, January, 2009.

are primarily positive about their relationship with him. Some of the characteristics observed in these batterers include: a) They generally do not have histories of having chronically or deliberately undermined the mother's authority, or used the children as weapons against her, while the couple was still together; b) They used somewhat lower levels of psychological abuse towards the mother while the couple was together than other batterers, though their levels of physical violence vary; c) They were more accepting than other batterers of the end of the relationship; and, d) They show stronger abilities than most other batterers to focus on the children's needs, rather than perceiving the children as extensions of themselves.

A third category of batterers, which is the largest group, remain involved with their children post-separation and continue or worsen patterns of inappropriate parenting behavior that they exhibited while the family was still together. These behaviors can be intensified by the batterer's desire to curry favor with the children in order to be the preferred parent and in order to overcome any resistance the children have to spending extensive time with him. Concerns about psychological manipulation of the children by the batterer are raised by the mother in a majority of cases where the couple is divorced or separated.<sup>12</sup>

### 3. Capacity for Parenting

Here are three areas that should be assessed regarding the abuser's capacity for parenting and questions about custody or visitation:

- a. **Concern about Dangerousness:** Does the offender pose a threat to the child? To the mother? Insuring that there is safety for all parties is a precondition to ongoing contact. Signs of continued dangerousness are:
  - A history of very violent behavior toward his partner, his children or others
  - A history of highly obsessive and threatening conduct
  - Lack of a demonstrated commitment to non-violence, evidenced, for example, by a refusal to participate consistently and productively in a batterer intervention program, or by the presence of ongoing violence and intimidation toward partners or CPS personnel
- b. **Parenting Style:**
  - What is the nature of an abuser's attachment to child(ren)? Is there a pattern of being manipulative? Of using children to meet his own needs? Is there evidence of using his children to punish his partner or obtain access to her? Is there evidence of age appropriate caretaking and boundaries? Is there appropriate giving and limit-setting? How does he cope with conflict and frustration with his child(ren)? If any of these patterns of behavior are evident, either from information provided by the mother and other caretakers or from observations of supervised visits, can he acknowledge and change such patterns of behavior?

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<sup>12</sup> Bancroft & Silverman (2002). *The Batterer as Parent: Addressing the Impact of Domestic Violence on Family Dynamics*.

- Does he acknowledge the effect of violence on the child(ren)? Can he understand that being the victim of violence and/or that witnessing violence has traumatic impact on children? What remedial steps has abuser taken to undo past damage? What remedial steps has he planned? Does he have a credible capacity to move toward a responsible reengagement with the child(ren)? If he is unaware of the impact of violence on children, is he receptive to this information?

**c. Psychological Function And Implications For Parenting:**

Closely related to parenting style but of broader scope is the question of understanding the implication of the abuser's personality structure on his capacity for parenting. A capacity to have stable attachments, empathy, a defensive structure that is not overly rigid and the ability to tolerate a child's progress through developmental stages are important foundations of parenting that should be assessed. In questioning the abuser during the assessment and using collateral sources, the assessor can look at the following areas:

- What is the abuser's capacity to have relationships (what type of relationships can he tolerate)?
- What is his capacity to have empathy? Is he emotionally restricted? Rigid?
- What is his defensive structure? What situations or affects trigger his defenses?
- Does he have restricted development in some area(s) of psychological function such that severe conflict will arise with children as they develop and challenge parents more?<sup>13</sup>

Here are some suggestions that a worker can say to promote self reflection on the impact of abusive behaviors on the children:

- Many men don't realize it, but knowing that your dad has hurt your mom can scar children. You can change that.
- When you hurt your partner, you hurt your children. It doesn't matter what triggered you.
- (After he's been violent.) What you do now will be very important to them... If you don't change, they will feel you turned your back on them. It's not just about your partner.
- They will carry this forever: They always know. You can change things for the better.
- It's not about being a bad person. It's about changing behaviors that are harmful.
- You are very important to your children. Boys will get their sense of manhood and fatherhood from you. Girls will develop a sense of what to expect from men. Both of them will get a sense of how to resolve conflict from your example. You matter a great deal. If you can change your behavior, it will make a big difference to them.

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<sup>13</sup> Mederos, Fernando (2004). Accountability and Connection with Abusive Men. A New Child Protection Response to Increasing Family Safety. Family Violence Prevention Fund (now Futures Without Violence). <http://www.thegreenbook.info/documents/Accountability.pdf>

- You are an example for them in all that you do. I know you love your children (say this only if true). Please go to this program (local batterer intervention program).
- If you do not show respect for their mother, you hurt them and weaken your family. (Talk about how to show respect even when you disagree.) If you disrespect her or undermine her discipline, you destroy the kids' capacity to respect adults.
- Earning respect is core. You don't get respect just because you're a man. If you can give a good example by holding your temper, being patient and listening, it helps.<sup>14</sup>

#### 4. Services

The most widely available service in NC that addresses the domestic violence behaviors is abuser treatment programs/batterer intervention programs (ATP/BIP). The NC Council for Women approves all NC abuser treatment programs utilized by the NC court system. Here is a link to the directory of programs <http://www.nccfwdvc.com/programs.htm>. Anger management programs are not appropriate services for someone with a history of domestic violence. Anger management provides a service to individuals that may have engaged in non-intimate partner violence. The violence is often defined as a lack of control or momentary outburst of anger. Individuals may be taught techniques such as taking a time out. An ATP/BIP provides services to perpetrators of domestic violence. A perpetrator of domestic violence exerts coercive control over their intimate partners including physical, sexual, verbal, emotional, and economic abuse. ATP/BIP hold abusers accountable for the violent and abusive choices they make. They teach abusers to recognize how their abuse affects their partners and children and to practice alternatives to abusive behaviors.

The [Strong Fathers Program](#) was designed specifically for fathers with a history of domestic violence. Currently, it is only available in a limited number of counties as evaluation data is being gathered and program capacity and implementation ability are developed. The program is based on the Fathering after Violence framework that aims to help end violence against women by motivating men to renounce their abuse and become better fathers (or father figures) and more supportive parenting partners using fatherhood as a leading approach. The work is grounded on two key premises: Men who use violence can be held accountable for their behavior and simultaneously be encouraged to change it; and women and children can benefit from this approach. <http://www.futureswithoutviolence.org/content/features/detail/803/>

#### E. SAME SEX PARENTS

The family has been traditionally understood as comprised of a father, mother, at least two children of their own and a pet. The American family today does not look the same as it did 30 or so years ago when same sex couples had little hope of raising their own children, surrogacy was uncommon and “test tube” babies were just coming into vogue.

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<sup>14</sup> Mederos, F. Developed for the Fatherhood Initiative at the MA Department of Children and Families, September 2008.

According to a [2011 article](#) available through the [U.S. Census Bureau](#), approximately 594,000 same-sex couple households lived in the United States in 2010. Couple households are defined by the householder having a spouse or unmarried partner in the household. This includes same-sex married and unmarried couples. Out of the 594,000 same-sex couple households, 115,000 reported having children. Eighty-four percent of these households contained own children of the householder. In comparison, 94% of opposite-sex married couple households with children reported living with their own children. Same-sex couple households may have reported higher proportions of nonrelated children because they may have been children of the partner of the householder. According to the Child Welfare League of America, the number of children in America currently being raised by gay, lesbian, or bisexual parents is unknown.

Some parents in same sex relationships have sought second parent adoptions of their children with their partners. Second parent adoptions occur when one partner in an unmarried couple adopts the other partner's biological or adopted children so as to be able to access the legal recognition of parenthood. In 2010, the North Carolina Supreme Court ruled that second parent adoptions involving same-sex couples is not legal in the state because the only adoptions that can occur without terminating the rights of both parents are stepparent adoptions. Because same-sex couples cannot marry in North Carolina, stepparent adoptions do not apply to them. This means that even though the second parent may have raised the family's children as his or her own for a number of years, a second parent would have no parental claim should the relationship dissolve or something happen to the designated parent.<sup>15</sup>

When same sex parents separate, engaging the non-residential parent facilitates the continuation of important parent-child relationships. Some birth or adoptive parents terminate contact between the child and the other parent; others encourage and/or maintain the status quo in the parent-child relationship for a period of time until they find their continued involvement too inconvenient or form a new relationship. Of course, some parents work hard to maintain their children's relationship with a parent or other significant adult.

In same sex relationships, because the non-biological or non-adoptive parent may not have any formal legal ties to the child, it may be difficult to engage the non-residential parent especially if the child's legal parent blocks such a plan. Separating parents experiencing conflict should consider the best interest of the child(ren) involved to be paramount including the child(ren)'s needs, perspective and emotional bond. Continuity of their relationships with significant adults is vital to child well-being. The child welfare agency should discuss with both parents the importance of involving the non-residential parent in the planning efforts of the child(ren).

The lack of legal recognition and status for the non-biological or non-adoptive parent may require additional resources for a gay or lesbian person who has acted as a parent to a child but has no legal parental rights.

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<sup>15</sup> [Boseman v. Jarrell](#), 364 N.C. 537, 704 S.E.2d 494 (2010).

## **Resources:**

### **North Carolina Gay Advocacy Legal Alliance**

Voluntary state-wide non-profit attorneys' organization, providing visibility, support, and advocacy for LGBT communities.

NC GALA

P.O. Box 13152

Research Triangle Park, NC 27709-3152

Phone: 919 680-6758

<http://www.ncgala.org/>

### **Equality NC**

Equality NC is a statewide group dedicated to securing equal rights and justice for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people.

ENC

P.O. Box 28768

Raleigh, NC 27611

Physical address: 126 E Hargett St, Ste 200,

Raleigh, NC 27601

Phone: 919 829-0343

Fax: 919 827-4573

<http://equalitync.org/>

### **Project Rainbow Net**

Domestic Violence Resources for the GLBT Community

North Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence

123 W. Main Street, Suite 700

Durham, NC 27701

Phone: 919.956.9124

Fax: 919.682.1449

Toll Free:

1-888-232-9124

<http://www.projectrainbownet.org/>

### **Gay & Lesbian National Hotline**

(888) THE-GLNH

### **Lesbian & Gay Parenting: American Psychological Association**

<http://www.apa.org/pi/lgbt/resources/parenting-full.pdf>

### **Child Welfare League of America**

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

## **IV. ADDITIONAL FATHERING RESOURCES**

Here are some additional online resources specific to fathering:

- American Humane Association (National Quality Improvement Center on Non-Resident Fathers and the Child Welfare System information)  
<http://www.americanhumane.org/children/programs/fatherhood-initiative/qic-fatherhood-toolkit/>

- National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse <http://www.fatherhood.gov/>
- National Center for Fathering <http://fathers.com/>
- National Fatherhood Initiative <http://www.fatherhood.org/>
- National Family Preservation Network <http://www.nfpn.org/>
- The National Latino Fatherhood and Family Institute <http://www.nlffi.org/index.html>
- Native American Fatherhood and Families Association <http://aznaffa.org/>
- Prevent Child Abuse North Carolina <http://www.preventchildabusenc.org/>
- NC Cooperative Extension <http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/categories/home-family/>

# APPENDIX

## ***Father Friendly Check-Up***

The National Quality Improvement Center on Non-Resident Fathers and the Child Welfare System, National Fatherhood Initiative (NFI), [American Humane Association](#), and American Bar Association Center on Children and the Law welcome you to the *Father Friendly Check-Up*<sup>TM</sup> for Child Welfare Agencies and Organizations<sup>16</sup>. This tool will help you assess the degree to which your organization's operations encourage father involvement in the activities and programs you offer.

### **The Assessment**

You will apply the assessment categories identified below to your organization.

- Leadership and organizational philosophy
- Program management policies and procedures
- Parent-involvement program
- Program physical environment
- Staff training and professional development
- Collaboration and organizational networking
- Community outreach

This assessment will encourage staff to examine their organization as well as their own attitudes about fathers.

### ***Assessment Checklists***

You will complete a series of assessment checklists designed specifically for Child Welfare Agencies and Organizations. There is one checklist for each assessment category.

The checklists consist of statements that might or might not be true about your organization. Quite simply, you will assess whether the statements are true of your organization. Complete the checklists by placing a checkmark in the boxes next to the statements that are true of your organization. If a statement on a checklist is not true of your organization, do not check the box.

Use your gut reaction to assess your organization on each statement. You might discover that you can check only a few boxes in each category. If that's the case, don't worry: a low score is not an indictment of your organization as being unfriendly toward dads. You might find that your organization includes fathers to a high degree in certain areas, but not in others. Use this assessment to identify areas for improvement, no matter what you discover.

### **Your Father-Friendly Score**

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<sup>16</sup> For the purposes of this document, the term "Child Welfare Agencies and Organizations" includes all government entities or private entities that contract with the government to investigate and handle allegations of child abuse, abandonment and/or neglect.

After completing the assessment, you will receive a score for each category together with suggestions that the Quality Improvement Center on Non-Resident Fathers and the Child Welfare System has identified as best practices to increase the father friendliness of your Child Welfare organization. You will then have the opportunity to use the score from the *Father Friendly Check-Up™* to set goals and identify priorities that are unique to your organization's way of serving children and families.

## ***ASSESSMENT CATEGORY ANALYSIS WORKSHEET***

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How to use this worksheet:

1. Transfer your scores from each checklist to the corresponding row on this worksheet.
2. Don't combine the scores from all categories to arrive at a total score, because that score can mislead you.
3. Focus on the scores within each category, because the goal is to make your organization father friendly holistically. Determine whether your score in each category rates low, medium or high on father friendliness.
4. You should first target categories in which your score is low or medium on father friendliness. Then, revisit the statements that were not true of your organization within those categories and use them as specific target areas to work on.

Checklist	Score	Legend
Leadership and Organizational Philosophy		Low (0-8); Med. (9-16); High (17-24)
Program Management Policies and Procedures		Low (0-7); Med. (8-14); High (15-21)
Parent-involvement Program		Low (0-7); Med. (8-15); High (16-22)
Program Physical Environment		Low (0-3); Med. (4-6); High (7-8)
Staff Training and Professional Development		Low (0-9); Med. (10-18); High (19-27)
Collaboration and Organizational Networking		Low (0-3); Med. (4-6); High (7-9)
Community Outreach		Low (0-3); Med. (4-6); High (7-10)

## ***Leadership and Organizational Philosophy***

Check the box only if the statement is true of your organization.

The leadership/administration of my organization:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Communicates to caseworkers, attorneys and other staff that non-resident fathers (those who do not live in the home where a child has been abused or neglected) and paternal family members are a resource for the child (as a potential placement option or other care provider).
<input type="checkbox"/>	Expects caseworkers, attorneys and other staff to engage and work with both non-resident and resident fathers proactively.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Expects all staff to interact with fathers in a gender-responsive, non-accusatory, and non-blaming manner.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Expects staff doing hiring for the organization to include fathers as participants/consultants in the new staff hiring process and in interviews.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Encourages the healthy development of the <i>father-child</i> relationship.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Encourages the healthy development of the <i>father-mother</i> relationship, whether or not the father and mother are together, except in cases where there is a history of domestic violence or other circumstances making such a relationship not in the child's best interests.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Expects staff providing orientation and training for newly hired personnel to emphasize the importance of involving non-resident fathers in cases and to do so during the earliest days of employment.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Expects staff doing hiring for the organization to emphasize through interview questioning the importance of involving non-resident fathers in cases and to determine whether candidates for employment personally support and value an aggressive approach to involving non-resident fathers in cases.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Encourages couples who are considering marriage to access pre-marital education including information on parenting issues.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Supports fathers on the organization's staff in balancing work and family life.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Provides adequate funding and staff to effectively serve fathers.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Provides families with balanced information on father involvement by discussing the negative impact of father absence and the positive impact of involved fathers.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Believes that a child welfare organization's services should be provided as much to fathers as they are to mothers.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Expects caseworkers, agency attorneys and other staff to use fathers as a resource for the child (for example, for information such as health histories, to identify potential assistance to the child from paternal relatives, and to identify potential kinship foster placements).
<input type="checkbox"/>	Has developed a vision or mission statement that includes serving fathers.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Encourages staff to communicate to families that fathers are just as important as mothers in raising healthy children.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Helps families understand father involvement from a holistic perspective (i.e., physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual involvement).
<input type="checkbox"/>	Expects staff to include a father component in new staff orientation and training activities.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Encourages staff to connect fathers with individuals and community-based organizations that can provide them with the resources needed to become involved, responsible, committed dads.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Works with mothers to involve fathers in the lives of children.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Examines and expresses their own attitudes and beliefs about supporting fathers.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Supports fathers with tools, information, policies, and programs that help them in their fathering roles.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Experiments and remains flexible in creating, promoting, delivering, and evaluating family-directed services.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Displays a positive attitude about fathers and men when interacting with families.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Supports fathers in their cases in balancing work and family life.

**Total Score for Leadership and Organizational Philosophy**

## ***PROGRAM MANAGEMENT POLICIES & PROCEDURES***

Check the box only if the statement is true of your organization.

The policies and procedures of my organization:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Include a clear expectation that caseworkers and other staff will identify fathers early in child welfare cases and continue to attempt to identify them throughout the life of the case.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Include a clear expectation that caseworkers and other staff will locate fathers early in child welfare cases and continue to search for them throughout the life of the case.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Include a clear expectation that caseworkers and other staff will contact fathers early in child welfare cases and continue to contact them throughout the life of the case.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Provide clear case documentation methods to include specific identifying information about fathers.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Include a clear expectation that caseworkers and other staff will utilize child support enforcement staff to identify and locate fathers.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Include a clear expectation that caseworkers and other staff will utilize parent locator services and locator technologies including the use of public assistance records, motor vehicle records, hospital records, and other public records to identify and locate fathers.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Encourage fathers/men in their cases to balance work and family life.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ensure that a father who has not abused/neglected his child and who acts to gain custody is always subject to the same procedures and requirements that would be applied to a child's mother in the same situation.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Include a clear expectation that caseworkers, agency attorneys and other agency staff will make all relevant and appropriate case information available to fathers (for example, case plans, changes in placements, court dates).
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ensure that fathers are included in, and know and understand what is expected of them under case plans, and are provided with resources to meet those expectations.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ensure that fathers are consistently treated in a gender-responsive, non-accusatory, non-blaming manner.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Include a clear expectation that all policies and procedures will promote involvement of non-custodial parents and their kin in the life of the child.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Include a clear expectation that caseworkers, agency attorneys and other agency staff will proactively engage and work effectively with fathers in conducting the work of the organization.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ensure that forms for families and staff (for example, intake forms, applications and questionnaires) are gender neutral except where gender-specific information is vital to the case.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Ensure that caseworkers, agency attorneys and other agency staff explain to fathers their rights and responsibilities while also emphasizing the importance of their involvement in child welfare and court processes.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Include referrals to resources that help dads with personal development, parenting, and family life in general.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Use measurement tools and methodologies for evaluating the effectiveness of services provided to fathers.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Evaluate the effectiveness of staff in working with fathers when reviewing staff performance.
<input type="checkbox"/>	In situations where the mother does not want the non-resident father involved with the child, include procedures for caseworkers to assess promptly and fairly whether the father's involvement would create a risk of physical or emotional harm to the child.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Help both the mother and the father resolve differences among them, with the goal of the best interest of the child in mind.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Provide a system and tools to hire casework staff with the knowledge, skills, and sensitivity to interact productively with fathers, as well as with mothers, and children.

**Total Score for Program Management Policies & Procedures**

## ***PARENT-INVOLVEMENT PROGRAM***

Check the box only if the statement is true of your organization.

My Organization:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Uses approaches and programs with fathers that are intended to promote meaningful and sustained father engagement in the life of his child.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Includes a strengths-based approach to working with fathers that begins with where the father is in his development, not with where staff thinks he should be.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Provides services that have equal regard and respect for parenting approaches typical of fathers and mothers.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Offers services specifically directed at fathers.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Provides families with balanced information on father involvement discussing the negative impact of father absence and the positive impact of involved fathers, as well as information on father involvement when there is a history of domestic violence.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Periodically surveys fathers to determine their needs, concerns and interests related to the organization's child welfare work.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Provides fatherhood resources in the form of materials and information emphasizing the importance of responsible fathering and fathering skills.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Uses fatherhood resources, parenting curricula and educational materials that reflect the diversity of fathers served by the agency/organization.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Provides effective measurement tools and methodologies for evaluating efforts directed at fathers.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Expects staff to support the belief that fathers can be excellent parents.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Expects staff to make every effort to interact with fathers.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Promotes father engagement by involving fathers and the father's extended family in case planning early in a case.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Provides information for fathers that includes the benefits of a healthy marriage on child development and men's well-being.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Provides information for fathers that helps prepare men for marriage or helps fathers strengthen their marriage.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Refers fathers to community-based father support groups when such groups are available and when referral is appropriate.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Presents information to fathers in ways that match men's typical learning styles (i.e., hands on, interactive, visually engaging, opportunities for discussion and debate, etc.)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Hires male staff to deliver child welfare services with the specific goal of enabling the agency/organization to interact more effectively with fathers.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Hires service delivery staff, of either gender, that mirrors the fathers served in culture, race, language, age, etc.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Refers fathers to peer-led programs for parents in the child welfare system when such programs are available and when referral is appropriate.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Expects staff to avoid using language that is divisive and that stereotypes men/fathers and women/mothers.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Maintains lists of recommended father-oriented and male-oriented resources (for example, fatherhood classes and support groups, employment services, educational services, legal services) and expects staff to promote the use of these resources with fathers when appropriate.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Expects staff to be aware of and refer fathers to special community-based events that celebrate fatherhood and fathers.

**Total Score for Parent Involvement Program**

## ***Program Physical Environment***

**Remember: Think about your organization’s overall physical environment that surrounds families being served (for example, waiting areas). Also, think about the ways in which your organization’s physical environment reflects/reinforces the values held by staff members. Is the environment clearly more “female oriented” than “gender neutral”?**

Check the box only if the statement is true of your organization.

The environment/atmosphere of my organization:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Says, through visible father-related images in the waiting room and in caseworkers’ offices that “Fathers are expected and welcome here.”
<input type="checkbox"/>	Has gender-neutral colors and decorating scheme.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Offers reading materials (i.e., books, magazines and other literature) directed toward fathers/men as well as mothers/women.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Has a staff listing containing photos of both male and female staff.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Has male staff in positions where visitors are likely to have initial visual or telephone contact with the agency/organization (for example, receptionist, security guard).
<input type="checkbox"/>	Has family restrooms or a diaper deck in the men’s restroom.
<input type="checkbox"/>	If a TV or video plays in waiting areas, some of the programs or videos appeal to men.
<input type="checkbox"/>	If a library is available to families, it includes parenting and other information directed toward fathers.

**Total Score for Program Physical Environment**

## ***STAFF TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL***

Check the box only if the statement is true of your organization.

The staff in my agency/organization:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Have been trained in how to ensure that a father/man who is contacted by the organization for the first time in connection with a case knows that he and his case participation are welcome.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Are open to constructive criticism regarding personal biases, including biases against men/fathers.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Are comfortable with differences in parenting styles typical of fathers and mothers.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Believe that fathers are important to the healthy development of children.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Believe that fathers can be excellent parents.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Have been trained on the importance of identifying, locating, and contacting fathers early in child welfare cases and continuing these efforts throughout the life of the case.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Have been trained in the use of parent locator services and other locator technologies in order to more effectively identify and locate fathers.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Have been trained on how to work with fathers in a gender-responsive, non-accusatory, non-blaming manner.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Have been made aware of community resources that offer services specific to fathers, including those involved in the child welfare system.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Have been trained on how to work effectively with both mothers and fathers when the relationships are contentious, including identifying when domestic violence is a factor in the relationship.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Have been trained on how to work effectively with fathers who may express their opinions strongly and loudly, but who pose no physical danger to staff.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Perceive my organization's programs and services to be as much for fathers as for mothers.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Avoid using language that is divisive and that stereotypes men/fathers and women/mothers.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Make every attempt to interact with mothers and fathers equally when they come in together to receive services.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Seek fathers' input in decision-making situations involving important aspects of children's day-to-day lives.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Have participated in training that includes explicit discussion of the importance of fathers to the healthy development of children.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Encourage mothers to cooperate with fathers in raising children and vice versa.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Have been trained in gender differences in communication styles.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Have been trained in including a father component in new staff orientation and training.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Have been trained on the best practices of father involvement used by other child welfare organizations.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Have been trained in including questions related to father involvement in new staff hiring practices such as interviews.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Have been trained to recognize and appreciate father's typical parenting styles, and how they differ from mothers' styles. This includes why responsible, committed fathering is important to children's well-being.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Have been trained in cultural and familial barriers to father involvement in the lives of children.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Have been trained to examine their own attitudes, beliefs and behavior toward accepting and including fathers.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Have been trained in helping fathers balance work and family life.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Have been trained in hiring casework staff with the knowledge, skills, and sensitivity to interact productively with fathers, mothers and children.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Have been trained to recognize and know male cultural patterns and the ways they become evident when males/fathers interact with others.

**Total Score for Staff Training and Professional**

<b><i>COLLABORATION AND ORGANIZATIONAL NETWORKING</i></b>
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Check the box only if the statement is true of your organization.

**My organization:**

<input type="checkbox"/>	Works to promote the education of juvenile and family court judges and court employees (in the various types of courts) about the ways in which children benefit when fathers are responsibly involved in the lives of their children.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Develops a good relationship with local child support enforcement offices and staff members in order to be of mutual assistance in helping obtain appropriate financial support of children, learning more about individual family situations and in better promoting the welfare of children in the families served by the child welfare agency.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Promotes coordination and collaboration with the larger father-engagement community, such as fatherhood programs and organizations that regularly work with fathers and families.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Works to promote education for attorneys (especially those who represent fathers and children as well as those who represent the state or county in child welfare court proceedings) about the importance to children of having involved, responsible, committed fathers in their lives, as well as how to use the legal system to better engage fathers.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Works to educate courts, parent attorneys, child support enforcement staff, and social service caseworkers about the importance of explaining to fathers their rights and responsibilities, while also emphasizing the importance of their involvement in child welfare and court processes.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Actively works in partnership with one or more other public or private agencies to <b>identify</b> fathers of children the child welfare organization serves.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Actively works in partnership with one or more other public or private agencies to <b>locate</b> fathers of children served by the child welfare organization.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Actively works in partnership with one or more other public or private agencies to <b>contact</b> fathers of children served by the child welfare organization.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Actively works in partnership with one or more other public or private agencies to <b>engage</b> fathers of children served by the child welfare organization.

**Total Score for Collaboration and Organizational Networking**

## ***Community Outreach***

Check the box only if the statement is true of your organization.

My organization:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Is perceived by the <i>community at large</i> as “father-friendly”.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Is perceived by <i>fathers and men</i> as “father-friendly”.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Encourages other organizations within the broader child welfare field (including court related organizations and child support enforcement) to work with fathers on enhancing positive relationships with their children.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Encourages organizations in other professional fields (such as healthcare, business, faith-based, law enforcement) to work with fathers.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Makes presentations, holds workshops, or presents papers at conferences on the organization’s work with fathers.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Participates in a network or coalition of organizations and leaders that promotes responsible fatherhood community-wide.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Submits articles or article ideas on the organization’s work with fathers for publication in print media (e.g., journals, magazines, newsletters, newspapers).
<input type="checkbox"/>	Periodically issues press releases on the organization’s success in working with fathers.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Promotes responsible fatherhood in the community as a preventive measure in the fight to reduce the incidence of negative outcomes for children, such as poverty, out-of-wedlock pregnancy, alcohol and drug abuse and suicide.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Is willing to share best practices in working with fathers with other organizations.

**Total Score**