

PROGRAM ATTENDANCE AND RETENTION



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




DID YOU KNOW?



Many fatherhood programs report difficulty keeping fathers engaged over time and convincing them to attend activities on a consistent basis.



Retention challenges are not unique to fatherhood programs; low attendance rates have also been reported for mothers enrolled in parenting programs.

Program attendance tends to improve if services are offered frequently over a short period of time, but positive outcomes are more likely when fathers participate for at least  MONTHS



Research suggests that key factors in continued attendance include:

- Hiring staff who can build rapport with fathers and develop ongoing relationships of trust and commitment.
- Offering peer support groups and other activities that create opportunities for fathers to share their stories and support each other.
- Identifying potential attendance challenges at the time of enrollment – and providing case management services to address these challenges.
- Offering services that appeal to fathers and address specific needs (e.g., improving education credentials, gaining new job skills, managing child support obligations).
- Providing food during class sessions.

REFERENCES

- *Fatherhood Research and Practice Network. Attendance in Community-Based Fatherhood Programs (2018)*
<https://bit.ly/2VBqycj>
- *Mathematica Policy Research. Participation in Responsible Fatherhood Programs in the PACT Evaluation (2018)*
<https://bit.ly/2EmkjlR>

WHAT YOU CAN DO

BEGIN RETENTION EFFORTS DURING RECRUITMENT AND INTAKE.



- Train staff to build rapport and trust with fathers.
- Ask about attendance challenges and develop plans to address.
- Build partnerships (e.g., with child support, mental health professionals, education/training providers, employers) to address fathers' needs.
- Share success stories (including testimony from recent graduates) with new participants.

EASE ATTENDANCE BARRIERS.



- Offer services at hours convenient for fathers.
- Provide program supports (e.g., transportation, meals, childcare).
- Consider increasing class frequency to reduce number of weeks required.
- Stay in touch (by phone, text, social media, home visit) to remind fathers of schedules or re-engage if they miss classes.
- Offer make-up sessions.
- Be willing to take participants back, even if they leave without notice.

ENCOURAGE PEER SUPPORT.



- Help fathers get to know and support each other.
- Pair new participants with more experienced participants for support and encouragement.
- Provide opportunities to participate in peer support groups and other group sessions.

PROVIDE INCENTIVES/RECOGNITION FOR PARTICIPATION.



- Offer gift cards for completing a set number of sessions.
- Arrange group activities for fathers and their children.
- Provide certificates of program completion and present them at recognition ceremonies with family and friends in attendance.
- Include fathers in community presentations/media interviews to showcase successes.

NRFC RESOURCES

- Outreach, Recruitment, and Retention for Responsible Fatherhood Programs (Webinar, September 2018)
<https://bit.ly/2ExCshu>
- Recruiting and Retaining Men in Responsible Fatherhood Programs (2012)
<https://bit.ly/2Tm4vIV>
- Elements of Promising Practices in Fatherhood Programs (2012)
<https://bit.ly/2tA4Wko>

OTHER RESOURCES

- Overview of PACT Evaluation (2011-19)
<https://bit.ly/1ORpPcH>
- Ten Key Findings from Responsible Fatherhood Initiatives (2008)
<https://bit.ly/2T45WfH>

