



Welcome to the NRFC Webinar

Working With Young Fathers: Tips from the Field

12:30 – 2:00 p.m. EDT | March 22, 2017

All **audio** from today's session will be broadcast through the computer. Make sure your computer volume and Adobe Connect audio () are turned **on**.

National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse



- National resource to support fathers and families.
- Funded by U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Family Assistance.
- Resources are available for fatherhood practitioners, dads, researchers, and policy makers.





National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse

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Today's webinar will provide

- Overview of ***Working with Young Fathers***, the latest addition to the NRFC's ***Responsible Fatherhood Toolkit***.
- Tips from two experienced practitioners:
 - Haki Nkrumah, Founder and CEO, Young Fathers of Central Florida, Orlando, FL.
 - Johnny Wilson, Executive Director, Young Fathers of Santa Fe, Santa Fe, NM.
- List of helpful resources available for download during the webinar.
- “Question and Answer” session with the presenters at the end of the webinar.





Questions for the Presenters

Working with Young Fathers: Tips from the Field (Lobby) - Adobe Connect

Meeting Layouts Pods Audio

Chat (Everyone)

Working With Young Fathers Tips from the Field.pptx

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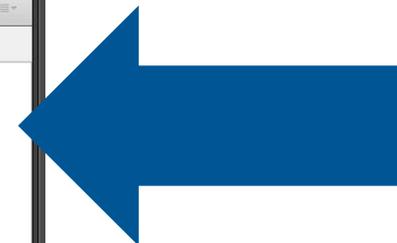
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Overview of new toolkit section



Home / For Programs / Responsible Fatherhood Toolkit / Work With Dads / Working with Young Fathers

Responsible Fatherhood Toolkit: Resources from the Field



- Home
- About
- Start
- Build
- Work
- Activities
- References
- Printer Friendly Version

Work With Dads

- One-to-One Work
- Group Work
- Addressing Domestic Violence
- Dads of Children with Special Needs
- Working with the Child Welfare System
- Enhancing Cultural Competence to Engage Fathers
- Working with Fathers to Enhance Relationship Skills
- Working with Non-Residential Fathers
- Working with Young Fathers
- Challenges Young Fathers Face

Working with Young Fathers

*"Adolescent fathers must reconcile the contradictory roles of both adolescence and fatherhood."*¹

*"Contrary to the stereotype that unwed teenage fathers disappear at the first mention of pregnancy ... we now know that the fathers will become deeply involved when permitted, and that it is the exclusion from the fathering and decision-making process that causes stress among these young men."*²

*"Today's young adults often become parents before they have finished their education, gotten a stable job, and married. As a result, many American children are born into families headed by young, unmarried, and underemployed parents who often go on to have children with other partners"*³

A central focus of fatherhood programs during the 1980s and 1990s was helping young fathers (ages 16–25) deal with the challenges of parenthood. This work, which built on efforts to assist teenage mothers, demonstrated that contrary to stereotypes, many young fathers are involved in the lives of their families and will participate in fatherhood programs if the services are designed to meet their needs. Assisting young fathers remains a key, even primary, component of many fatherhood programs.





Contents of new toolkit section

Working with Young Fathers www.fatherhood.gov/toolkit

- Challenges young fathers face
- Reaching out to young fathers
- Co-parenting and relationship skills
- Grouping participants
- Child support issues
- Promoting education and training
- Using social media
- Delaying subsequent pregnancies
- Tips from veteran practitioners
- Program spotlights
- Top takeaways
- Helpful resources



“Tips from Veteran Practitioners”

- Recognize that many young, low-income men have been let down by adults in their lives.
 - They may test staff to see if they’re “for real” - so staff must be sincere, approachable, nonjudgmental.
- Look for staff who can be strong role models displaying attributes the young men are trying to achieve.
 - Young fathers often get “hooked” because a certain staff member provides support and encouragement.
- Connect with young fathers as early as possible, preferably before child’s birth.
 - Prenatal education classes (with the mother or other expectant fathers) can provide information/skills to help young dads support the mother and child.
 - Encourage them to be present & actively support mother during the birth.

More “Tips from Veteran Practitioners”



- Connect with young fathers by going where they are—both physically and virtually.
 - Beyond community outreach, stay connected through social media and other electronic communication.
- Challenge young fathers to share their new knowledge and skills through peer education or a speakers’ bureau.
 - Participants can be empowered by sharing information about their experiences and the lessons they have learned in the program.

“Top Toolkit Takeaways”

- Active community outreach by understanding, caring staff is needed to reach young fathers.
- Young fathers often need help with education, employment, parenting, and relationships.
 - They may also need assistance with child support, paternity establishment, housing, substance abuse, and legal issues.
 - Programs should develop relationships with community agencies that can help with these issues.
- Teenage fathers may benefit from participation in activities that are held separate from older fathers and designed for their developmental needs.





A few more “Top Takeaways”

- Work with other family members.
 - Without the support of family on both sides, young fathers may have trouble getting and staying involved.
 - Help fathers understand and appreciate the feelings of others.
 - Advise them to be patient and show the grandparents their commitment to being an involved father.
- Help young men and couples gain the motivation and capacity to plan and space any additional pregnancies.
- Reach out to local reproductive health centers and use online resources to design and deliver appropriate information for young men and couples.



Working With Young Fathers: Tips from the Field

Johnny Wilson

**Executive Director
Young Fathers of Santa Fe**



Young Fathers of Santa Fe

- New Mexico Young Fathers Project 1999-2008.
 - Funding provided by the state Teen Pregnancy Coalition.
 - Santa Fe was one of several sites around the state.
- Young Fathers of Santa Fe 2009 – 2017.
 - In process of changing name to “Fathers New Mexico” with expanded service area.
 - Four staff – one full-time, three part-time.
 - Main services: group support and individual case management + training and support to help other organizations engage with dads.
 - Meet and enroll most participants through high-school based programs.
 - Program is 100% voluntary.



Young Fathers of Santa Fe - the dads we serve

- More than 75% are Hispanic.
- Often come from families who are current or previous recipients of family assistance.
- Many did not have a positive father in their life.
- Most are under 25 years old (approximately 60% are under 18).
- Many have had poor school attendance records
- A small number are married or living together, some are living with their partner and their parents.



Things to keep in mind

- Most young dads genuinely want to be involved in their children's lives
- Some obstacles that prevent or limit their involvement:
 - Generational fatherlessness
 - Lack of good male role models
 - Social/institutional communication about children and family
 - Other social discouragements (e.g., mother as gatekeeper, attitude of staff at daycare centers, health facilities, schools)
- Absent fathers often:
 - Experience deep and punishing longing for their children and diminished self esteem
 - Are generally not as healthy or successful as fathers who live with their children



Things to know about working with young fathers

- Abstract thinking is often harder for younger guys
 - You may see a lack of empathy for partners
- Approach things differently with younger dads
 - Revisit topics to reinforce key points/ideas
 - Be sensitive/aware of language
- Establish an understanding of paternity establishment and child support
 - Translate legal language to language they understand
 - Help them see clearly how the system works and dispel myths
 - Revisit key points to cement understanding



Baseline Program Needs

- Welcome dads overtly
 - This includes displaying male images, hiring male employees, emphasizing positive attitudes towards young fathers
- Meet dads “where they are at”
- Coordinate with services that support mothers
- Prepare staff to help families with conflict
- Support mothers to encourage father involvement
 - Be aware of gatekeeping
- Provide supportive tools for improvement:
 - Parenting classes, mediation, educational guidance, vocational services, employment assistance



Baseline Program Needs (continued)

- Recognize the fragility of fatherhood
 - Young, non-residential fathers - high risk of non-involvement
 - Keep other males involved, especially paternal grandfather
- Allow for the differences:
 - Men have often been trained and shown how not to express emotion
 - The subtle emotions are not identified or named
 - The emotion that is allowed to be shown is ANGER
 - Men are action and solution oriented
 - Men bring unique gifts to their children



Tips for Recruitment

- Expect to be ignored.
- Persist - with respect, and acknowledging their innate desire to parent.
- Try multiple means of communication.
- Connect with moms.
- Look for issues dads may be struggling with and tactfully offer support where you can provide it.
- Reach out as early as possible.



Tips for Engagement

- Give young fathers a safe, confidential place to express their wants, concerns and frustrations.
 - Safe means they feel welcome and free from judgments.
- Offer fathers' groups for peer support and a sense of community.
- Avoid criticisms that undermine male/father tendencies.
- Respond to the needs that fathers express.
- Ask for their program input, ideas, and help.



Tips for Retention

- Help young fathers understand their parental rights.
- Learn the “Family Court” process and be prepared to help fathers engage with this system.
- Offer conflict mitigation and resolution strategies.
 - Communication skills, mediation services.
 - Help parents develop a co-parenting plan.
- Welcome fathers when they show up.
 - Even if they have left the program and been away for a while.
- Continue acknowledging and responding to the needs they express.



Touchstones (opportunities to connect and reconnect with young fathers)

- Pregnancy period
- Birth
- Illness
- Child starting school
- Loss of child care
- Developmental Milestones (weening, walking, talking, adolescence)
- Identification of special needs of children (e.g., developmental delays, dyslexia, autism)
- Change in circumstances (e.g., employment or housing situation)



Respect

- Expect involvement.
- Approach dads without blaming or shaming.
- View young fathers as essential, not a risk factor.
- Invite them in - that may be all they are waiting for.
- Understand fathers' motivation: provider and protector.



Thank you

Johnny Wilson

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Working With Young Fathers: Tips from the Field

Haki Nkrumah

**Founder/CEO
Young Fathers of Central Florida**



Young Fathers of Central Florida

Our goals are to:

- IMPROVE the parenting skills of young fathers;
- IMPROVE the physical, emotional and spiritual well-being of young fathers;
- PREVENT adolescent males from becoming parents until they are ready;
- INCREASE educational and vocational opportunities available; and
- INCREASE community awareness on the importance of fatherhood and the social problems of fatherless families.



Our Programs

- Dad to Dad Mentoring.
 - 10-hour training for mentors, monthly group sessions with mentors and mentees.
- Parent Training and Development.
 - Biweekly workshops on topics such as changing diapers, nutrition, shaken baby syndrome, SIDS, child proofing your home, discipline.
- Fathers' Support Groups.
 - Once each month in Orange, Seminole, and Osceola counties.
- Teen Fathers Academy.
 - 6-month training and development program – application process to participate.
- Gents to Gentlemen.
 - 6-month character development program for 10-13 year old boys.



Programs (continued)

- Young Fatherhood Institute.
 - Evidence-based program designed for colleges and universities.
- Young Fathers' Initiative, County Jails.
 - Parent education and training for juveniles (18 years and under) and adults (19 - 24 years) who are inmates at county jail facilities.
- Citywide Young Fathers' Initiative.
 - Parent education and training for young fathers through city recreation centers.
- **National Teen and Young Fathers Conference.**
 - Building a coalition of programs that serve teen and young fathers.
 - Attendees include educators, counselors, and workers in fields of social services, healthcare, and law enforcement.



Tips: Meeting Service Needs of Young Fathers

Provide wraparound services and direct engagement (no incentives) to help young fathers:

- Overcome unique obstacles in areas such as education, legal issues, mental health, identifying employment resources.
- Understand the role of a responsible father.
- Talk about future pregnancy prevention.



Outreach and Recruitment Tips

Outreach and recruitment techniques to connect with young fathers:

- Conduct community assessments to identify needs.
- Canvass community to identify pockets of engagement.
- Go where young dads are (e.g., Midnight Basketball, barbershops, job centers).



Service Delivery Tips

Help young fathers deal with immediate issues before focusing on educational and training objectives to enhance their employment opportunities.

- Start with priority planning.
- Develop action plans with timelines.



Navigating Key Issues

- Establishing paternity
- Understanding and handling child support
- Co-parenting
- Engaging with mothers and other family members:
 - Parent training
 - Group chat
 - Group counseling with all family members involved with childcare





Family Planning Tips

Help young fathers talk about family planning and decisions about future pregnancies by focusing on:

- Personal goals and development.
- Fatherhood and parenting responsibilities.
- Financial literacy and employment.
- Health services and pregnancy prevention.

“Responsible fatherhood is the best form of pregnancy prevention.”



Contact

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Q&A

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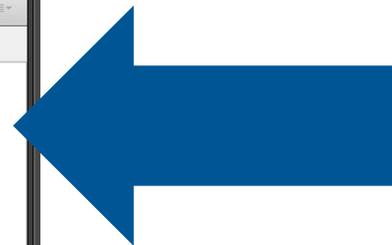
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- NRFC: info@fatherhood.gov
 - Comments, questions, suggestions for future webinar topics, information, or resources that you recommend.
- Today's presenters:
 - Haki Nkrumah: umoja12@aol.com
 - Johnny Wilson: tokaproduct@gmail.com



**NRFC Webinar
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Thank You!

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