



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



NRFC Webinar Series

Working with Young Fathers: Tips from the Field Presenter Responses to Additional Questions

March 22, 2017

Moderator:

- Nigel Vann, National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse (NRFC).

Presenters:

- Haki Nkrumah, Founder and CEO, Young Fathers of Central Florida, Orlando, FL.
- Johnny Wilson, Executive Director, Young Fathers of Santa Fe, NM.

This document addresses questions presented, but not addressed, during this NRFC Webinar. For questions addressed during the webinar, please refer to the Webinar Transcript. For more information contact NRFC via email at info@fatherhood.gov.

Submitted Questions:

Do you have any specific advice for engaging young mothers and helping them see the value of fatherhood/co-parenting?

Johnny Wilson:

- Learn about how parenting styles of moms and dads may be different, and be prepared to explain this when talking with young mothers. Be careful not to infer that "moms do this, and dads do this," because there are degrees to which parents will conform to gender expectations. Talk with mothers about these differences and the values of each, while also illustrating your belief in the value of both moms and dads.
- Simply checking in with, sharing concern for, and offering support to young mothers will generate respect and help them feel freer to discuss their relationships. When responding to revelations, model respect for all perspectives in arguments/disagreements, avoid apportioning blame, and look to forge a path towards a solution that takes both parents' needs into consideration.
- Show young mothers how having someone to share responsibilities for child-rearing can make their life significantly less difficult, and not just because of child support payments.

Haki Nkrumah:

- Encourage young mothers to attend available Parent Training Classes.
- Explain how co-parenting is best for the child, short-term and long-term.
- Emphasize the importance of compromise, communication, and being civil with the child's father.

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Could you tell us a little about how you talk with young fathers and/or young mothers about co-parenting?

Johnny Wilson

- First, all parenting is co-parenting. Even if you are in a perfect marital relationship and sharing a home; even if one parent is entirely absent (because the remaining parent is going to be dealing with that absence).
- Illustrate the value of finding ways to resolve conflict between parents. Fighting, arguing, angry texts, name calling, etc., no one wants these things rolled up into the relationship they are having with their child.
 - So, an essential part of co-parenting is establishing communication methods that minimize conflict.
 - Email is often a good method. It allows time to reflect before sending a message and provides an easy way to maintain records of communication.
- Establish a regular arrangement for sharing responsibilities, a status quo. Details should include:
 - A schedule for when each parent has time with, and responsibility for, the child.
 - Any support payments.
 - Child's regular activities.
- Recognize that details of arrangements and schedules can be altered periodically, and establish means for changing the status quo. If this involves Family Court, seek ways to de-stigmatize that process.
 - Family Court provides a resource that gives a parenting plan the force of law and provides each parent with a solution if the parenting plan isn't being followed by the other.
 - Most participants in Family Court never see a judge or participate in any sort of court hearing. They go to a mediator, talk their stuff out, reach an agreement, sign it, and then they're done (the mediator sends it to a judge, who almost always signs off, and then it becomes the official plan).

Haki Nkrumah

- Encourage them to attend parenting classes together as much as possible.
- Emphasize that allowing outside influences to dictate their co-parenting decisions will generally not be helpful.
- Point out the importance of not allowing personal issues or attitudes to hinder their co-parenting relationship.

Do any of your programs include sessions that bring in other family members? If so, could you describe those briefly?

Johnny Wilson:

- We encourage involvement from extended family, while carefully inquiring about how healthy an extended family member might be, but we don't have specific programming that calls them in.
- I encourage my participants to let me meet them at their home and will often meet their parents there.

Haki Nkrumah

- We invite all family caregivers to attend Parent Training Program classes. When we first started the program, we invited only fathers, but quickly realized that mothers and other caregivers needed to be involved.
- Consistency in, and familiarity with, a child's life is needed for positive development.