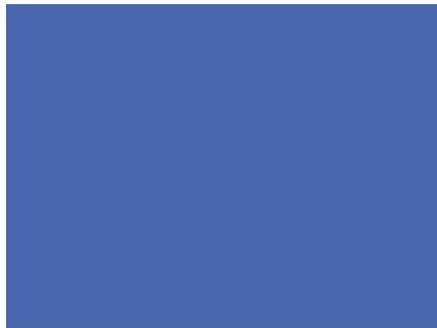




Paving the Road:

Helping Young Fathers Match Intentions with Outcomes



Office of Adolescent Health (OAH)
Pregnancy Assistance Fund (PAF)
Grantee Conference

Opening Doors: Engaging and Embracing
Young Fathers
July 13-14, 2015
Washington, DC

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Disclaimer

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+ FI Mission

- Fathers Incorporated, a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization, serves as a leader in the promotion of Responsible Fatherhood with a mission to raise awareness about, and combat the negative consequences of father absence. We do this through the use of innovative social marketing tools, multi-media platforms, traditional communications, product development, and event planning.
- Our goal is to expand the range of work in the fields of traditional and non-traditional family service models. FI seeks to ensure that the current societal and cultural definition of family includes fathers.
- FI is also the Project Director for the National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse (NRFC). Office of Family Assistance (OFA) funds this national resource for fathers, practitioners, federal grantees, states, and the public at-large who are serving or interested in supporting strong fathers and families.



Fatherhood

Education

Change



National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse

- Visit the NRFC: www.fatherhood.gov
- Responsible Fatherhood Toolkit: www.fatherhood.gov/toolkit
- Encourage fathers or practitioners to contact our national call center toll-free at **1-877-4DAD411** (877-432-3411).
- Engage with us via social media:
Facebook: Fatherhoodgov **Twitter:** @Fatherhoodgov
- Look for examples of our *Annual Media Campaign* designed to promote the Responsible Fatherhood field.





Assumptions

“FOR EVERY COMPLEX PROBLEM
THERE IS AN ANSWER THAT IS
CLEAR, SIMPLE, AND WRONG.”

~H. L. MENCKEN

- Everyone here is invested in working with young parents more effectively to improve family outcomes.
- We will not always agree, and that's okay!
- Any question/comment is relevant.
- I'm not an encyclopedia.
- We all see people & the world through our own lens.



Why Fathers Matter

Children with involved, loving, “responsible” fathers are significantly more likely to:

- Do well in school;
- Have healthy self-esteem;
- Exhibit empathy and pro-social behavior;
- Avoid high-risk behaviors such as drug use, truancy and delinquent activity compared to children who have uninvolved fathers; and
- Have fewer externalizing and internalizing problems during adolescence.

<https://www.fatherhood.gov/for-programs/for-your-fathers/father-presence>



What is Responsible Fatherhood?

Responsible fatherhood in the United States is traditionally defined as a man who:

1. Waits to make a baby until he is prepared emotionally and financially to support his child.
2. Establishes his legal paternity
3. Actively shares with the child's mother in the continuing emotional and physical care of the child, from pregnancy onward.
4. Shares with the child's mother in the continuing financial support of their child, from pregnancy onward. (Levine & Pitt, 1995, pp. 5-6)



Definitions Vary

Recent research suggests that low-income fathers define responsible fatherhood with six dimensions, some of which resemble a “Big Brother:”

1. Spending time in non-caregiving activities;
2. Avoiding harm by voluntarily distancing from the child when it is in the child’s best interest;
3. Acknowledging paternity in non-legal forums;
4. Spending money on gifts, joint activities, and special needs;
5. Monitoring the child’s home for trouble; and
6. Minimizing absences in the child’s life (Myers, 2013).



Why Focus on Young Fathers?

- Poorer health, educational, and behavioral outcomes among children born to young fathers.
- Infants born to young teens **are** 2 times more likely to be born premature and with low birth-weight, and 3 times **more** likely to die in the first month of life. (Feinstein & Fisher, 1998 – risks decrease with age).
- Young fathers are seen as “hit and run” men and among the least supported
- Often, young dads want to be there for their child, but they do not have the personal resources or the social support to live up their own expectations (Robinson, 1988).



Understanding Young Fathers

Context is Key

- Unrealistic ideas of commitment, marriage, child rearing skills, and their future.
 - “Magic Moment”
- Inability to combine the developmental tasks of adolescence and emerging adulthood with the responsibilities of fatherhood.
- However, unplanned pregnancy, young motherhood, and young fatherhood are not universally negative experiences.
 - Typically unplanned, but this does not mean that it is always unwanted.
 - In the absence of educational and work prospects the desire to construct a meaningful life, to see oneself as a worthwhile person and make a tangible contribution through fatherhood.



Understanding Young Fathers

- Young men's reaction to the news of a pregnancy is often happiness.
 - Typically happier than the mothers are.
 - "Thank you, Jesus!"
- Context is key:
 - Living in violent and poverty stricken neighborhoods
 - Lives marked by trauma
 - Many men described their lives up to that moment with a single word: "Negativity."
 - A new baby is pure potential, a chance to move away from the mistakes of the past and turn to activities that are wholly good.
 - Young men know that the right time to have a child is when you are economically ready, but many are afraid that the right time may never arrive.
 - They want to heal their own fatherless childhoods by embracing their father role.



Understanding Young Fathers

- A common set of stressors across different ethnic groups of teenage fathers including occupational, financial tensions, school problems, interpersonal problems with both their relatives and their partners, concern about their children's health and future.
- Hispanic/Latino men are often stereotyped as being authoritarian and distant with an exaggerated sense of masculinity or machismo and a belief in rigid gender roles.
- Hispanics ages 16 to 24 are three times more likely than whites to have dropped out of school. Language and literacy barriers – coupled with poverty and immigration concerns – can leave many Hispanic fathers with multifaceted challenges.



Understanding Young Fathers

- Native American fathers face challenges in meeting their obligations: High poverty levels, the lingering effects of boarding schools that robbed many boys of the experience of being parented by their own fathers, and other historically traumatic events have contributed to a sense of economic and emotional powerlessness that may compromise their ability to parent well.
- Housing, homelessness, legal issues, unemployment, substance abuse, and parenting are among the major issues that fathers in confront.
- The greatest need may be to build their self-esteem. Practitioners note that Native American fathers are reluctant seek services because they've been labeled as alcoholics, gang members, etc., so it is important to approach them as fathers.
- Vulnerable to becoming teen parents for the same reasons as other groups: chaotic childhoods marked by neglect, substance abuse and violence, along with the need to take on adult responsibilities and “grow up fast.”
- “They believed that becoming a father would allow them to enact some control over their lives,” (Palacios, 2010).



Characteristics of Young Fathers

Age

Race

Union Status

Personal

Barriers

Systemic Barrier

Case Study

Group Exercise

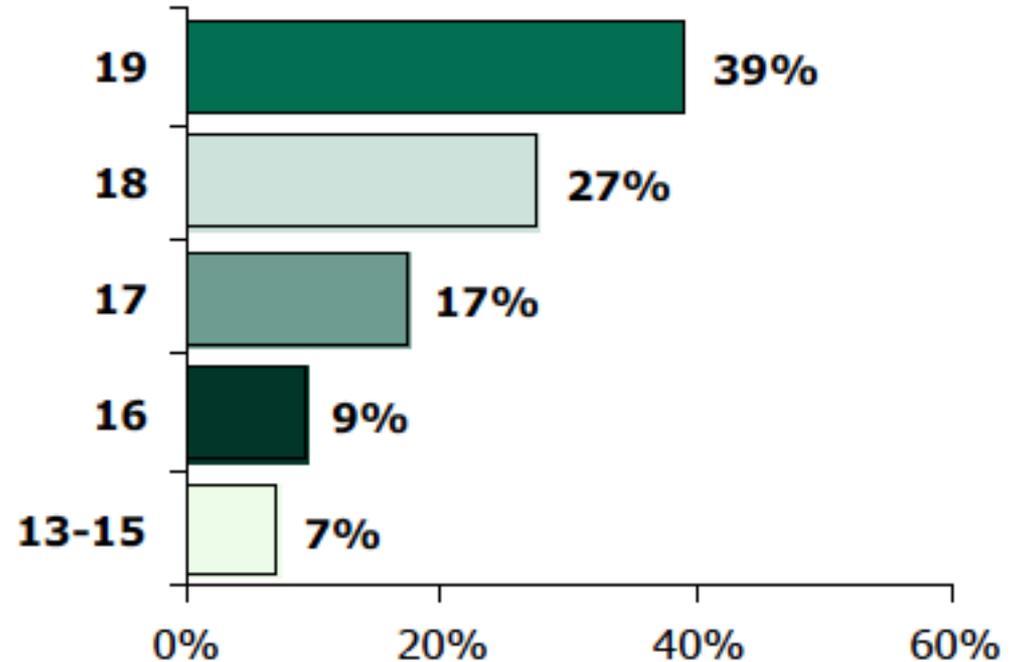




AGE

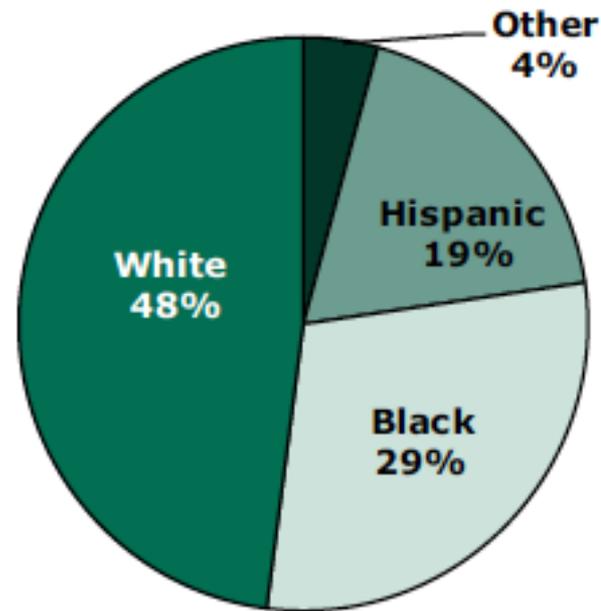
- Most young men who father a child during their teens are 18 or 19 years old
- According to CDC, 15% of men 20-24 years old at birth of child
- Almost half of men who fathered children as a teen had at least one additional child by the time they were ages 22-24

Distribution of Age of Father at Birth of First Child



Child Trends (2012). The Characteristics and Circumstances of Teen Fathers: At the Birth of Their First Child and Beyond.

Distribution of Young Fathers by Race/Ethnicity



Child Trends (2012). *The Characteristics and Circumstances of Teen Fathers: At the Birth of Their First Child and Beyond.*



RACE & ETHNICITY

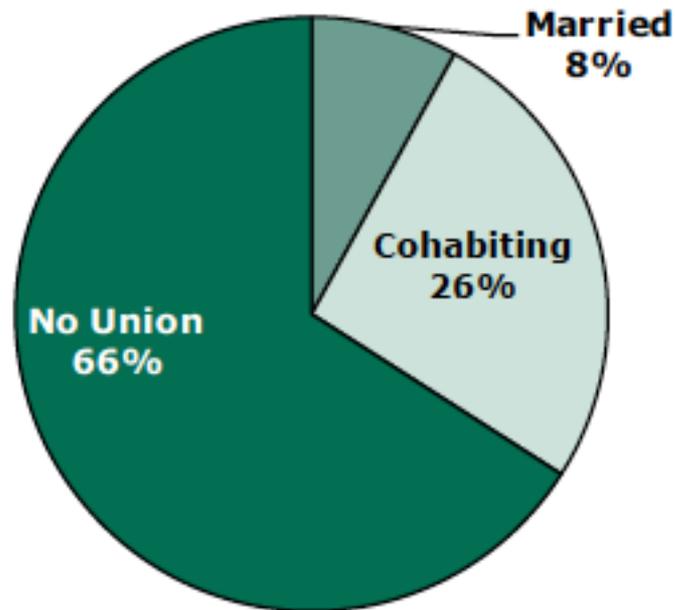
- Approximately one-half of teen fathers are members of racial/ethnic minority groups.
- Can vary greatly by location - Texas Fragile Families Initiative:
 - Served fathers 16-24
 - 55% Hispanic/ Latino, 35% Black, 8% White

Union Status at Birth of First Child, Among All Teen Fathers



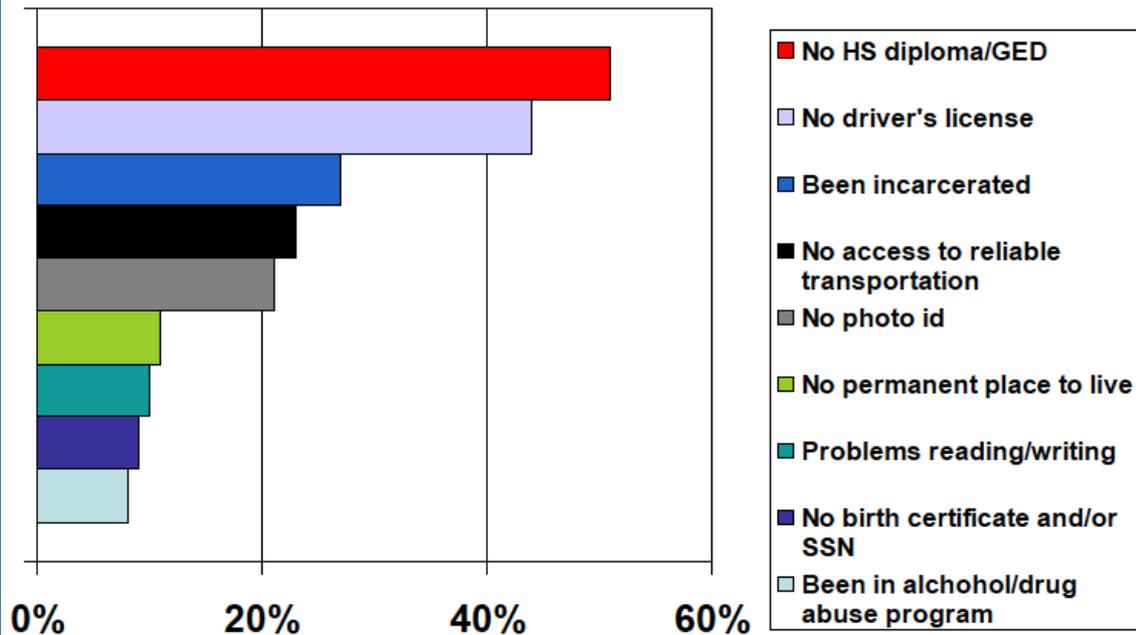
UNION STATUS

- Most teen fathers are not living with a partner at the time their first child is born.
- Teen fathers living with their child were more likely to be living with them when they were 20.



Child Trends (2012). The Characteristics and Circumstances of Teen Fathers: At the Birth of Their First Child and Beyond.

Personal Barriers Faced by Young Fathers



Texas Fragile Families Initiative



PERSONAL BARRIERS

- Reduced educational attainment
- Employment challenges
- Financial hardship/Poverty
- Less stable unions
- Incarceration
- Permanent Housing
- Literacy
- Drug and Alcohol Abuse
- Violence



PERSONAL BARRIERS

- Complex identity changes
- Legal advice to maintain contact with their child
- Relationship support to maintain contact with the mother
- Need parenting advice as much as mothers, but tailored to a male audience from males.
- Hope

- He will experience triple developmental role crises that include:
 - The stress of normal adolescence
 - The pregnancy and birth
 - A premature embracing of adult developmental issues



SYSTEMIC BARRIERS

Systemic Barriers Faced by Young Fathers

- Maternal grandmother may limit the father's access if he cannot help support the child.
- Paternal grandmother also can play a role in encouraging or discouraging the young man's involvement.
- Social service and hospital programs for young, unmarried mothers tend to reinforce the mothers' autonomy from the fathers and provide little or no information to fathers (Wattenberg 1987).
- Workplace policies frequently do not allow them the flexibility to spend more time with their children.



Case Study of a Young Father

John

- Little support from family, friends, or the community
- His initial response was happiness, fear, frustration, confusion, anticipation, doubt and high stress
- He developmentally looks and acts no different than peers his age and background
- He is not married to or living with the mother of his child.
- He was expelled from school for fighting.



Case Study of a Young Father

John and Brenda

- He dropped out of HS and does not have his GED
- He was placed in foster care for neglect
- He was arrested for selling marijuana and spent a year in juvenile justice.
- Now lives in a one room efficiency with his mother and step-father. Brenda and baby stay there 2 weeks a month.
- Brenda lives with her grandmother the other 2 weeks and he is not allowed to visit.
- He does not have his driver's license or a car.



Case Study of a Young Father

John and Brenda

- He experiences high levels of emotional rejection, personal anxiety and guilt as well as self blame.
- He wants to **be** a better father than he had, who abandoned him.
- When asked what he needs, he says, “A job.” He doesn’t want “help or a handouts.”
- He smokes marijuana daily for “anxiety” so cannot pass a drug test.
- Doesn’t want Brenda to apply for TANF because of child support enforcement.
- Has physical altercations with step-dad and fears what will happen if his mother kicks him out.



Group Activity

- What does your organization do now that could help John?
- What could your organization or program do to increase or diversify your efforts to strengthen your ability to help John?



Before You Begin: Agency Considerations

There is no point attracting young fathers to your service if the service is not ready to receive them (and will possibly alienate them).





BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Agency Considerations

- Determine needs of local teen fathers through a survey of service providers, asking teen mothers, conducting a needs. Document your findings.
- Begin with a theoretical program model and use logic models, See http://www.healthyteennetwork.org/sites/default/files/BDI_Logic_Model.PDF for guidance.
- Recognize and address personal biases of staff.
- Create a program environment that is appealing to adolescent males **in-house and online**--and that portrays positive role models and messages about young dads.



BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Agency Considerations

- Build partnerships with other agencies that will help you recruit and that can fill in service gaps you can't provide (schools, hospitals, courts, clinics, co-parenting mediation, head start, Job Corps, etc.).
- Partnerships that led to successful recruitment and referrals:
 - Young Fathers of Santa Fe began at school health clinics.
 - Dads Make a Difference program of Healthy Families San Angelo partnered with WIC Centers.
 - Make presentations before local groups of OB/GYNs or midwives.



BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Agency Considerations

- Let other agencies **KNOW YOU EXIST**: Consider developing a Fatherhood Local Leadership Roundtable to help you enlist local support for your work. Make sure young fathers are represented.
- Set up evaluation systems from the start – you may need to demonstrate outcomes to achieve further funding; and evaluation can teach you a lot
- Make sure you are educating moms about the benefits of father involvement. Moms may not know dads are important for the child's development.



Recruitment

“The best thing I can say to help a young man is for him to know that we do not come here knowing anything, all things have to be learned, life is a learning experience from the beginning to the end ... you can learn from the experiences of others .. A man who can learn from his mistakes is a smart man; a man who can learn from the mistakes of others is a wise man.”

~67 year old father, Advice for Young Fathers video
at newyoungfathers.com





Recruiting Young Fathers

- Targeted Outreach
- Other Services
- Create Ambassadors

- Have outreach workers go to places like sporting events, basketball courts, pool halls, barber shops, schools, and local hangouts where young men congregate.
- Offer services that bring men in, such as sports physicals and testing for sexually transmitted infections. Help dads file taxes, search for employment and training opportunities, or address other practical needs before encouraging them to participate in a broad fatherhood program.
- Let the young fathers you are working with be your project's ambassadors:
 - Recruit high-achieving program participants to deliver presentations at radio stations, schools, social service organizations, health fairs, and jails. These dads have the opportunity to help others based on what they have learned.

+ Strategies for Initial Engagement





Recruiting Young Fathers

- Collect info from moms
 - Use trusted, competent recruiters
 - Be ready to respond to some of their immediate needs
- When interviewing or conducting an intake with teen mothers or pregnant females, seek specific information about the baby's father (unless it jeopardizes her safety).
 - Use skilled male recruiters who are empathetic, enthusiastic, well connected in the community and understand the language and interests of young dads.
 - Help the fathers get over suspicions that the program focus is primarily paternity establishment or enforcement of child support.
 - Avoid making them wait. Dads will engage in a program that responds to them and their needs immediately.



Recruiting Young Fathers

- Build program credibility
- Market effectively

- Work with recognized names or “celebrities” in the community to build program credibility, particularly for new programs.
- Publicize your services in arenas that local adolescent males frequent.
 - “Brand” your program through sweatshirts, etc. to boost your “social proof” or “Me Too Effect.”
- Make good use of headlines on flyers and webpages
 - People spend less than 15 seconds reading print and web copy.



Retention: Keeping Them Coming Back

Recognize that many young or low-income men have been let down by many adults in their lives. Often they test staff to determine if they are "for real" or if they are doing this work for their own egos. It's important for staff to pass the test and to come across as approachable and nonjudgmental.





Keep Them Coming Back

- Use technology they are using
- Use a strengths-based approach during assessment
- Allow time to build trust and rapport

- Don't make young fathers services an "add-on."
- Deliver services in engaging and interactive ways that appeal to male learning styles.
 - Employ technology like texting. E.g. crisitext.org
 - Don't leave messages at home
- Utilize an asset approach when working with fathers, focusing on his strengths, not his deficits.
- Don't ask too much too soon – Don't be Jerry McGuire



Keep Them Coming Back

- Follow-up with intention
- Provide opportunities for them to share their voice

- Host special events – and then follow up with another activity/invitation shortly afterwards, approaching each young dad individually, and persisting if he doesn't engage right away.
 - Text them reminders!
- Provide young fathers with opportunities to share their needs, grievances, and aspirations – give them a “voice.”
 - Make a video with the young men
 - Brainstorm with the young fathers



Keep Them Coming Back

- Develop one-on-one relationships
- Use incentives
- Make it fun and down-to-earth
- Be GENUINE and HOPEFUL

- Develop one-on-one relationships
- Create a mentoring option to pair experienced young fathers with inexperienced young fathers.
- Employ incentives attractive to teen and young fathers and their families (Field trips, guest speakers, gas cards, coupons, bus tokens and good food, child care.
- Use humor, fun, and activity
- Genuinely believe in their potential.
 - Listen and validate the dads' feelings and help them believe they can become great fathers.
- Work with parents (grandparents).



Programmatic Considerations

- Type
- Content
- Special Topics:
 - Domestic Violence
 - Culturally Appropriate/Adaptations





Programmatic Considerations

- Consider what type of program you can best implement in your org.
 - Time them appropriately
 - Use male staff
- Programs for young fathers vary:
 - Facilitated peer support groups
 - One-on-one mentoring programs
 - Teen-tot clinics open to male and female patients
 - Community-based organizations
 - School-based programs
 - Fatherhood and Healthy Relationship Curricula
 - Intensive Case Management
 - Offer specific hours dedicated to young men that don't interfere with sports or work hours.
 - Use male staff to work with the men, particularly in all male group settings.

Strengthening Individual Knowledge, Skills, Healing, and Leadership Capacity

- Cultural and holistic approaches
- Focus on the value of fatherhood
- Reflect on masculinity and gender norms and transforming them
- Examining men's own childhood experiences w/their fathers (or lack thereof)
- Healing activities that are trauma informed – safe space
- What they want for their children



Programmatic Considerations

- Content

Male Violence is an Epidemic



Programmatic Considerations

- Domestic Violence





Programmatic Considerations

- Domestic Violence
 - Teen mothers are at increased risk intimate partner violence (Klein, 2005)
- Find a local trusted DV partner. See <http://www.fathersincorporated.com/dvguide.pdf>
 - Need a “DV-101”
 - Awareness and education on the dynamics of domestic violence.
 - Provide resources for victims and perpetrators of domestic violence.
 - Topics to Cover
 - What is Domestic Violence?
 - What is coercive control?
 - What is the impact of Domestic Violence?
 - What are equal and respectful relationships?



Programmatic Considerations

- Domestic Violence

- In the class room or group setting
 - Effects on kids can be strong motivator for change.
 - Revisiting the lessons from our male elders.
 - Increases awareness of girls and women's lives + skills to ally (with respect to sexual/relationship violence).
 - Can build a culture of fatherhood/masculinity that builds empathy for women's realities and allies for women's safety and equality.
 - Respectful and non-abusive behavior toward children's mother. Cooperative coparenting
 - Highlight "what's in it for men" to be nonviolent.
 - Approach DV as a human rights issue involving men and women of all ages and backgrounds.
 - Support men to be empowered bystanders.



1. Strengthening individual knowledge and skills that enhance fathers' capabilities of preventing injury or harm.



2. Promoting community education by reaching groups of people with information and resources to promote health and safety and reduce violence.



3. Educating community providers with information and knowledge that will enhance the way they serve men and boys.



4. Fostering coalitions and networks that bring together groups and individuals for broader goals and greater impact.



5. Changing organizational practices that condone, ignore, and/or foster male aggression and, thus, creating new models.



6. Developing strategies to change laws and policies to influence outcomes in male employment, health, human services, education, and justice.



Programmatic Considerations

- Cultural Humility and Adaptations

- Cultural humility is the ability to maintain an interpersonal stance that is other-oriented (or open to the other) in relation to aspects of cultural identity that are most important to the person (Hook, 2013).
 - In part **this** means talk less, listen more. Be open about our own ignorance and ask questions respectfully.
- Use curricula and resource materials that include culturally relevant language, pictures and examples, **and is evidence-based or evidence-informed.**
- Use cultural techniques and traditions such as storytelling to help fathers reflect on their cultural and personal histories.
- A multi-generational approach that encourages reflection on the lives and customs of ancestors can enhance personal growth as fathers learn or remember positive cultural values, principles, and traditions.



Programmatic Considerations

- Cultural Adaptations

Native American Fathers

- Often, first contact is when they come to a family fun activity with their partner or another family member that is enrolled in the program.
- Native American men may show up with extended family members for the initial intake session.
- The best interviewing skill is remaining quiet. Sitting back, listening, allowing clients to tell their story, and then engaging in concrete (**help not helping**) helping.
- Use of “familiar” stories to create dialogue
- Out-takes for local cultural activities and additional resources
- There is no one uniform parenting style used by all Native Americans, but universal cultural values that permeate much of Native culture and influence parenting behavior.
 - harmony with nature, creation stories, focus on humility, respect for elders and cultural customs, centrality of family and tribal life, and sharing of wealth and resources
- Becoming a father is often a great impetus for change.



Programmatic Considerations

- Cultural Adaptations

Hispanic Fathers

- Have an organizational presence at Hispanic community events and festivals.
- Tweet bilingually.
- Develop trust and relationships with individual community members before making any attempt to recruit Hispanic men and women. It's not about reaching a lot of people; it's about reaching the right people.
- Translate program materials into Spanish, accounting for country of origin, regional, and local variations in Spanish.
- Incorporated dichos (sayings) and other colloquial expressions—with attention to sub-group differences (e.g., Mexican vs. Puerto Rican participants) into recruitment and program activities.
- Skillfully navigate potential “hot button” topics like gender roles or domestic violence. Sometimes this may necessitate breaking the group into smaller groups by acculturation level or gender.



Programmatic Considerations

- Cultural Adaptations

Hispanic/Latino Fathers

- Try not to “overwhelm” participants with too many forms during the first class, especially if sensitive information is being asked. A “pre-program fiesta” where initial information is gathered in a festive environment might just do the trick.
- Include content and role plays on the role of extended family and ways to balance parents’ authority with feedback from extended family members.

Brief Definitions of Hispanic Cultural Values

Cultural Value	Definition
<i>Familismo</i>	Family-centeredness
<i>Personalismo</i>	Preference for warm, personal interactions
<i>Respeto</i>	Encourages deferential behavior towards people with higher social rank as designated by age, gender, authority or position
<i>Machismo and Marianismo</i>	Traditional, often stereotypical, gender roles that guide behaviors
<i>Confianza</i>	Confidence, trust and intimacy in a relationship

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Questions?