

# RECRUITING YOUNG FATHERS

## Five Things to Know



1

### Be visible

Hold regular, fun events for dads and kids, and partner with other local businesses to promote the events in the places where young fathers hang out. Young fathers might still be standoffish about fully embracing a fatherhood program, so frequent and varied promotion is important. Spread the word and stay connected through texting, social media, online videos, and personal outreach.

2

### Let young fathers lead the way

Research shows that young fathers are likely to trust the views of fellow dads when it comes to joining a community program. So let participants advocate on your behalf. Encourage them to invite friends to events and hire young fathers, particularly graduates of your program, as staff. Make sure that participants are involved in planning and promoting new initiatives—the more valued they feel, the more likely they'll continue to stay involved.

3

### Be flexible and make it worth their while

Be accessible. Make sure to schedule activities at convenient times for young fathers, particularly evenings and weekends, and find out where participants prefer to meet. Some young fathers may find it intimidating or uncomfortable to spend extra time at a school or clinic, so invite them to meet somewhere they would go on their own time, such as a skateboard park or community center. Also, incentives such as gift cards, transportation, and meals can be a big help in motivating young fathers to give your program a try.

**4**

### Show young fathers ways to improve their lives now

Being a young father can be stressful. They might ask questions about how your program will actually help meet their needs, so make sure you provide examples. Familiarize yourself with relevant local resources, especially those that can help young fathers find employment. Complete a needs assessment for the young fathers in your community so you know their biggest obstacles. And partner with other service providers to make it easier for young people to find the help they need.

**5**

### Stay positive

Successful early fatherhood programs train their staff to make all participants feel welcome, regardless of their situation. Celebrate the importance of fathers' roles in families and don't dwell on the challenges. Smile and stay positive and respectful in all your interactions. Ask young fathers about their lives and respond with genuine interest. Professional boundaries are of course essential, but all young fathers who enter your program should feel that they're entering a safe place that empowers them to be better fathers.

## Resources

- Collaboration Toolkit (Office of Adolescent Health) – <http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/resources-and-publications/learning/coll-tk/index.html>
- Connecting with Dads (National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse) – <https://www.fatherhood.gov/toolkit/build/recruitment/connecting-with-dads>
- Responsible Fatherhood Toolkit (National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse) – <https://www.fatherhood.gov/toolkit/home>
- The Importance of Fathers in the Healthy Development of Children (Child Welfare Information Gateway) – <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/fatherhood.pdf>
- The Unique Needs of Teen Fathers (Healthy Teen Network) – <http://www.healthyteennetwork.org/sites/default/files/Fast%20Facts%20Unique%20Needs%20of%20Young%20Fathers.pdf>

This tip sheet is part of an OAH technical assistance series on working with young fathers that includes the products listed below. To access the resources in this series, visit OAH's "Serving and Engaging Young Males and Fathers" training topic: [http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/oah-initiatives/paf\\_rc/training/young-fathers.html](http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/oah-initiatives/paf_rc/training/young-fathers.html)

- Retaining Young Fathers: Five Things to Know
- Serving Young Fathers: A Workbook of Program Activities
- Serving Young Fathers: An Assessment and Checklist for Organizations
- Serving Young Fathers: Important Things to Know and How They Make a Difference