

# DADICATION



## Discussion Guide to Foster Community Engagement



This discussion guide is designed to foster community engagement with current and prospective partner agencies and other stakeholders in your community.

# Overview of Dadication

Involved fathers make essential contributions to their children’s well-being, even when parenting during tough times and circumstances. That’s what we at the National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse (NRFC) call Dadication. We applaud and support all dads who show up for their kids, especially when parenting isn’t easy.

The DADication documentary features fathers who appeared in our [Dadication PSAs](#) and includes additional testimony from fathers and fatherhood practitioners. The short documentary emphasizes how essential fathers are to the lives of their children, illustrates the impact of growing up without a father, provides examples of fathers overcoming numerous barriers to be present for their kids, and demonstrates how fathers and their children are flourishing as a result. Be ready to shed a tear as you hear their stories.

The documentary was produced by the Ad Council and Campbell Ewald in partnership with the NRFC and the Administration for Children and Families, Office of Family Assistance. You can download the video and other companion documents from the DADication documentary page at [Fatherhood.gov](#).

## **NOTE TO PROGRAM LEADERS AND DISCUSSION FACILITATORS:**

We recommend that programs invite community stakeholders to a viewing and discussion party. Invitees could include current and prospective partners, current and prospective funders, board members, local employers, child support representatives, child welfare agency representatives, community members, and any other potential supporters of your program.

Choose one or two people to facilitate a group discussion using the following discussion questions. The questions are arranged in the order in which the topic or quote comes up in the video. We provide specific time marks so you can either watch the whole movie before beginning your discussion, or you can choose to stop the video at specific points in order to cover a question immediately.

You can also switch up the order in which you cover the questions, based on the direction in which the conversation of your group flows, and choose whether to cover all or some of the questions depending on the time available and your program needs. And, of course, feel free to pose other discussion questions to focus on different clips based on the interests and needs of your group.

We include a section at the end of this document with links to NRFC resources that provide additional information and may be helpful in following up on specific issues or questions.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. [3:04] Armon Perry talks about how dads face many barriers and obstacles.

**DISCUSS:** What kinds of barriers is he talking about?

**DISCUSS:** What challenges do dads in our community face?

**DISCUSS:** How can we do more to help dads overcome these challenges?

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2. [3:20] Kenneth Braswell (voiceover) talks about how incarceration, addiction, and/or having custodial parents who limit the time fathers spend with their children can make it difficult for fathers to re-engage with their children after a period of separation.

**DISCUSS:** How often do you see these kinds of barriers preventing fathers from re-engaging with their children?

**DISCUSS:** How could we do more as a community to help fathers?

**DISCUSS:** Are there agencies/organizations that might be interested in working with us and our fatherhood program?

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3. [4:01] Joseph Stiltner says:

*"I missed so much with my first child because of addiction and the situation with his mother. It doesn't get easier to stay away, but it really feels like it gets harder to come back ... it's a guilt that I kinda live with every day."*

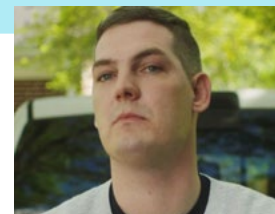
**DISCUSS:** Are there organizations in our community that can help fathers deal with addiction issues?

**DISCUSS:** Are there organizations that can help estranged parents work together to help their children?

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4. **[6:30] During the group discussion, Durrell Lyons says:**

*"I know men who are paying child support for their children, but don't necessarily have visitation rights. There's no system there to help keep the family together. There's a lot of systems in place to pull money from dad's pocket, but not necessarily to put dad back in the house."*

**DISCUSS:** What systems is he referring to?

**DISCUSS:** Are there systems that our fatherhood program should be working more closely with? Which ones?

**DISCUSS:** Do we need to create new partnerships? If so, with whom?

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5. **[7:11] Armon Perry describes his earlier role as a social worker when he had to file termination petitions to sever parental rights for some parents. He says:**

*"Doing my job and following policy, I was complicit in the system of oppression."*

**DISCUSS:** How does the child welfare system work in our community? Do the staff there recognize the important role that fathers can play in their children's lives?

**DISCUSS:** If a report of child abuse or neglect is filed, are child protection workers able to engage with both the mother and the father? If not, why not?

**DISCUSS:** Would Armon think our community is doing a good job to engage fathers and help them strengthen their parenting skills, or might he see some of the fathers in our community as victims of a "system of oppression?"

**DISCUSS:** How could our community be more father-friendly?

**DISCUSS:** How could our fatherhood program do a better job of working with the child welfare agency and other organizations that work with dads?

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6. **[7:40] Tina Naidoo works with fathers who have been incarcerated. She talks about the difficulties formerly incarcerated fathers have experienced with finding housing, getting a job, and reconnecting with their children. She says [8:22]:**

*"Nobody rents to them. There is nobody to give them a job because of their background. So how do you create a healthy stable living environment, how do you get your kids back? We spend a lot of time motivating our dads to stay in the game, to keep fighting, not to give up."*

**DISCUSS:** What kinds of barriers do returning fathers face in our community?

**DISCUSS:** How does our community help alleviate these barriers?

**DISCUSS:** How could we do more?

**DISCUSS:** How could our community provide more community support for kids with incarcerated dads?

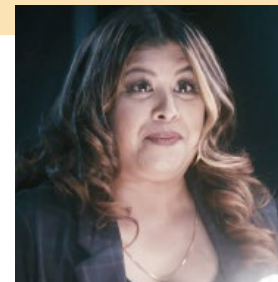
**DISCUSS:** Could our local correctional facilities do more to support father-child visits and communication?

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7. **[10:38] Durrell Lyons talks about a time when he wasn't taking care of himself:**

*"That depression ended up rolling downhill. My wife was critically depressed, and it emptied into my daughter ... [I was] coming down on her hard for stuff that's really not her fault."*

**[11:20] He goes on to explain that he finally figured out he was the one with the problem and realized:**

*"It's not about me. Whatever happens to me and affects me mentally and physically, it's gonna run downhill. And my children are part of that hill."*

**DISCUSS:** What's your reaction to that clip?

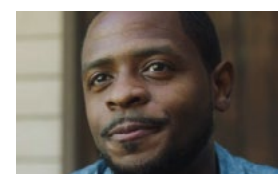
**DISCUSS:** How does our community help fathers who are depressed or grappling with more serious mental health issues? Where are those kinds of services available?

**DISCUSS:** What could we do as a community to help fathers recognize when they need help so their struggles don't adversely affect their parenting?

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**[NOTE TO FACILITATORS: To continue this discussion about depression, you could go from here to questions 10–12.]**

**8. [11:41] Kenneth Braswell says:**

*"Everything we do is about the well-being of children."*

**DISCUSS:** How does our community work together to improve child well-being?

**DISCUSS:** Which local organizations are doing the best work to help children?

**DISCUSS:** Which individuals, colleges, or researchers could help our community—and specifically our fatherhood program—capture data that show the impact of our local programs on child well-being?

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**9. [11:48] Cosette Bowles describes how disputes between parents (e.g., about custody of their children or payment of child support) can have a negative impact on child well-being.**

*"I think that's really important. This is not a fight, it's not a contest where somebody wins and somebody loses, except your children."*

**DISCUSS:** What do you think about this statement?

**DISCUSS:** What kinds of challenges do couples face in their coparenting relationships, particularly if they are no longer living together or romantically involved?

**DISCUSS:** How do we help parents in our community understand the negative impacts of parental disputes?

**DISCUSS:** Are there organizations that can help estranged parents work together to improve their coparenting relationship and help their children?

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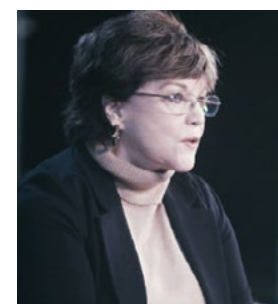
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**10. [12:31] Kenneth Braswell asks:**

*"Where do we [men] go for help? Who do we ask when we're feeling vulnerable?"*

**DISCUSS:** How do dads ask for help?

**DISCUSS:** Where can dads in our community go if they're feeling vulnerable or alone and need to ask for help?

**DISCUSS:** What can we do to help more dads access these services?

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**11. [13:07] Cosette Bowles talks about how women tend to be better at connecting with each other, but men don't seem to have the same kind of supportive relationships with other men.**

**DISCUSS:** Do you think it's true that men are not as good at asking each other for help?

**DISCUSS:** Do you know men who have good supportive relationships with other men? If so, can you tell us a little about that?

**DISCUSS:** Where can fathers go in our community to find supportive relationships with other men?

**DISCUSS:** Are there men in our community who might be interested in serving as mentors for fathers in our program? If so, how could we get them involved?

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**12. [13:36] Juan Scalone says:**

*"As a dad, as a male, sometimes you feel alone"*

**DISCUSS:** What does Juan mean by feeling alone?

**DISCUSS:** How do we help fathers express these kinds of feelings?

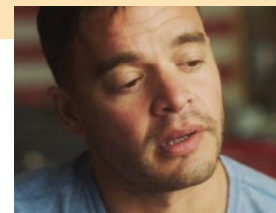
**[Prompt: Could feelings like these be connected to deeper feelings of depression?]**

**DISCUSS:** How can our community do more to support fathers?

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**13. [14:14] In the closing scenes, Kenneth Braswell (voiceover) says:**

*"I believe that everybody, on some level, understands that fathers matter. If we can get past the emotion of how we've been hurt by a dad, or by a man in our life who serves as a dad, I think we can find a way to create a bridge back to the heart of our fathers."*

**DISCUSS:** Do you think most people in our community understand the message that fathers matter?

**DISCUSS:** Do you think agencies that work primarily to support mothers and young children understand this?

**DISCUSS:** What can we do, as a group of interested partner agencies and individuals, to ensure that more people understand the importance of fathers in the lives of their children—and to make sure that more fathers in our community can get the help and support they need?



## NRFC Resources

Check out these resources to find additional information or answer questions that may arise during your discussions.

### **For Programs and Organizations**

- [Connected to Others is a Good Place to Be: Helping Fathers Build their Social Capital](#)
- [Spotlight on Building Social Capital: Tips for Fatherhood Practitioners](#)
- [SIMPLER Solutions for Fatherhood Programs](#)
- [Engaging Fathers: Tools and Tips to Assess the Father-Friendliness of your Organization](#)
- [Spotlight on Research: Strengthening Coparenting Relationships Among Low-Income, Unmarried Parents](#)
- [Parenting Time and Child Support: Information for Fatherhood Programs and Fathers](#)
- [Working with Child Welfare Agencies to Improve Outcomes for Families \[Webinar\]](#)
- [Working with the Child Welfare System](#)

### **For Dads**

- [Coparenting Tips for Dads](#)
- [Safety Tips for Dads to Keep Babies Safe \(infants under 1 year\)](#)
- [Safety Tips for Dads to Keep Young Kids Safe \(ages 1 to 4 years\)](#)
- [Safety Tips for Dads to Keep School-Age Kids Safe \(ages 5 to 14 years\)](#)
- [Safety Tips for Dads to Keep Teens Safe \(ages 15 to 19 years\)](#)
- [Tips for Dads: Cook with your Kids!](#)
- [Helping Fathers Manage their Children's Screen Time](#)

This discussion guide was developed by Nigel Vann at Fathers Incorporated and Diego Quezada at MDRC, with assistance from Dina Israel (MDRC) and Dzu Bui (The Ad Council), on behalf of the National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse under contract to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Family Assistance.

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