

Consumer Guidelines to Selecting Curriculum For Use in Fatherhood Programs

NRFC: Guide to Selecting Fatherhood Curriculum

The selection and use of an effective and appropriate curriculum is essential in the development and implementation of a successful fatherhood program. The investment in time in identifying a core curriculum that has demonstrated effectiveness and meets the needs of fathers will reap long-term benefits for the program and the fathers' development.

A critical review of curricula requires objective and in-depth analysis. For these reasons, we offer the following guidelines to help you select and implement a curriculum for use in any fatherhood program. You should essentially follow the six (6) step process below which identifies critical tasks and considerations for making a wise and informed choice in the selection process. Most importantly, you will need to make sure the curriculum content does, in fact, address the cultural and social needs of your target population. Equally important, it is crucial that the curriculum resource contains the necessary support resources (i.e. facilitator guide, on-going facilitator training, evaluation tools) to aide the facilitator in his or her role and tools to document program and participant progress. Keep in mind that these are only guidelines that will help you select an effective curriculum. They are not requirements.

What is a core fatherhood curriculum?

A core curriculum for use in a fatherhood program is the primary instructional tool that program facilitators use to guide fathers through a learning process and ensure fathers develop the attitudes, knowledge and skills that lead to effective fathering and parenting. A fatherhood program should address the instructional needs of the majority of participants in a particular target community.

Fatherhood programs typically include instructional resources and activities that practitioners have referred to as fatherhood curricula. A variety of entities that include national and local fatherhood organizations, academic institutions and individual practitioners have designed fatherhood curricula. Each curriculum varies in the content they include and in the delivery methods used to communicate similar content (e.g. child development). They vary in the amount of training provided on how to implement the curriculum and in the level of technical assistance provided by the organization or individual that developed the curriculum. In addition to content, there is also the question of whether or not the program is researched based and has undergone a scientific evaluation to determine program effectiveness.

Consequently, choosing a fatherhood curriculum requires careful examination of content and context to match the needs of fathers as well as the availability and level of training and on-going technical assistance on the implementation of the curriculum. At a minimum you should

select a core curriculum that includes content that matches the needs of as many fathers as possible, training options and on-going technical assistance. You should also select a curriculum that has been evaluated at some level (i.e. process, outcome or both.)

What process should be used to select a fatherhood curriculum?

If you are part of an organization, you should involve key decision makers and staff who will be responsible for implementing a fatherhood program in the review and selection of a curriculum. Doing so will ensure broad-based ownership of the decision, which is vital for long-term commitment to the curriculum. Use the following steps as well as the criteria in the table below to assist you in selecting a fatherhood curriculum:

- Step 1: Identify the Target Population for the Curriculum (i.e. demographic characteristics, type of father, etc.)
- Step 2: Identify the Personal Development Needs (i.e. knowledge, skills and attitudes) of the Target Population.
- Step 3: Identify Curriculum Content Needs Based on Results of Step 1 and 2.
- Step 4: Research Available Curricula.
- Step 5: Assess Available Curricula via Criteria Identified in the Chart Below.
- Step 6: Select a Curriculum that Matches Program Goals and Needs Identified in Steps 1, 2 & 3.

Curriculum-Selection Guidelines	Yes/No
Is the curriculum designed specifically for fathers? (i.e. not for parents in general)	
Is the curriculum content culturally relevant to the target population?	
Is the curriculum designed by a team of experts and contain input from practitioners?	
Is the curriculum research or theory based?	
Has the curriculum been field tested and evaluated?	
Can the curriculum be implemented in a group setting?	
Can the curriculum be implemented in a one-on-one setting?	
Is the curriculum available in a multimedia format? (e.g. CD-ROM or Web-enabled)	
Does the material include sample/complimentary portions of the curriculum for review prior to purchase?	
Does the material include easily-accessible technical assistance on how to implement the curriculum?	
Does the material provide technical assistance throughout the year, such as notification when updates and or additions are added to the curriculum?	
Does the material provide the history and underlying theories behind the development of the curriculum?	
Does the material contain content that guides facilitators on how to implement the curriculum?	
Does the curriculum contain easy-to-follow procedures for conducting group sessions that includes how to prepare for and deliver the sessions?	

Curriculum-Selection Guidelines	Yes/No
Does the curriculum contain a handbook, workbook, or other tools that fathers can use during their participation and that they can keep and refer to after their participation?	
Does the material include evaluation tools specific to the curriculum? (i.e. for measuring change among fathers and facilitator feedback on effectiveness of the curriculum)	
Does the curriculum include content information on how to help recruit and retain fathers' participation in the program?	
Does the curriculum include an opportunity for the mothers of fathers' children to participate in the program?	
Does the curriculum offer a formal training opportunity (e.g. in person or via the Web) for facilitators on how to implement the curriculum?	
Is the curriculum written at a literacy level that can be understood by fathers with limited literacy skills?	
Does the curriculum include interactive exercises or tools that engage a variety of senses in the learning process?	
Does the curriculum include content that allows the father to explore his childhood and the impact it has on his fathering?	
Does the curriculum include content that helps the father to get in touch with and identify his emotions/feelings?	
Does the curriculum include content on developing and maintaining healthy relationships with children?	
Does the curriculum include content on developing and maintaining healthy relationships with mothers/women?	
Does the curriculum include content on the importance and value of a healthy marriage as the ideal context in which to raise children?	
Does the curriculum include content on effective discipline of children?	
Does the curriculum include content on child development and behavior?	
Does the curriculum include content that addresses the impact of culture on fathering?	
Does the curriculum include content on balancing work and family?	
Does the curriculum include content on domestic violence? (i.e. prevention or intervention)	
Does the curriculum include content that encourages and instructs the father in developing personal and family goals?	

The items in bold represent the priority selection criteria for all fatherhood curricula.

While the above selection criteria increase the likelihood of programs making an appropriate choice for program curricula, it is equally important to ensure that program staff is competent in their facilitator role. It is critically important that staff are both knowledgeable and able "to connect" with program participants. Experienced program practitioners continually emphasize this fact and strongly suggest that equal or more attention should be dedicated to identifying suitable facilitators. In sum, a successful program requires a careful choice of curriculum and facilitator(s).