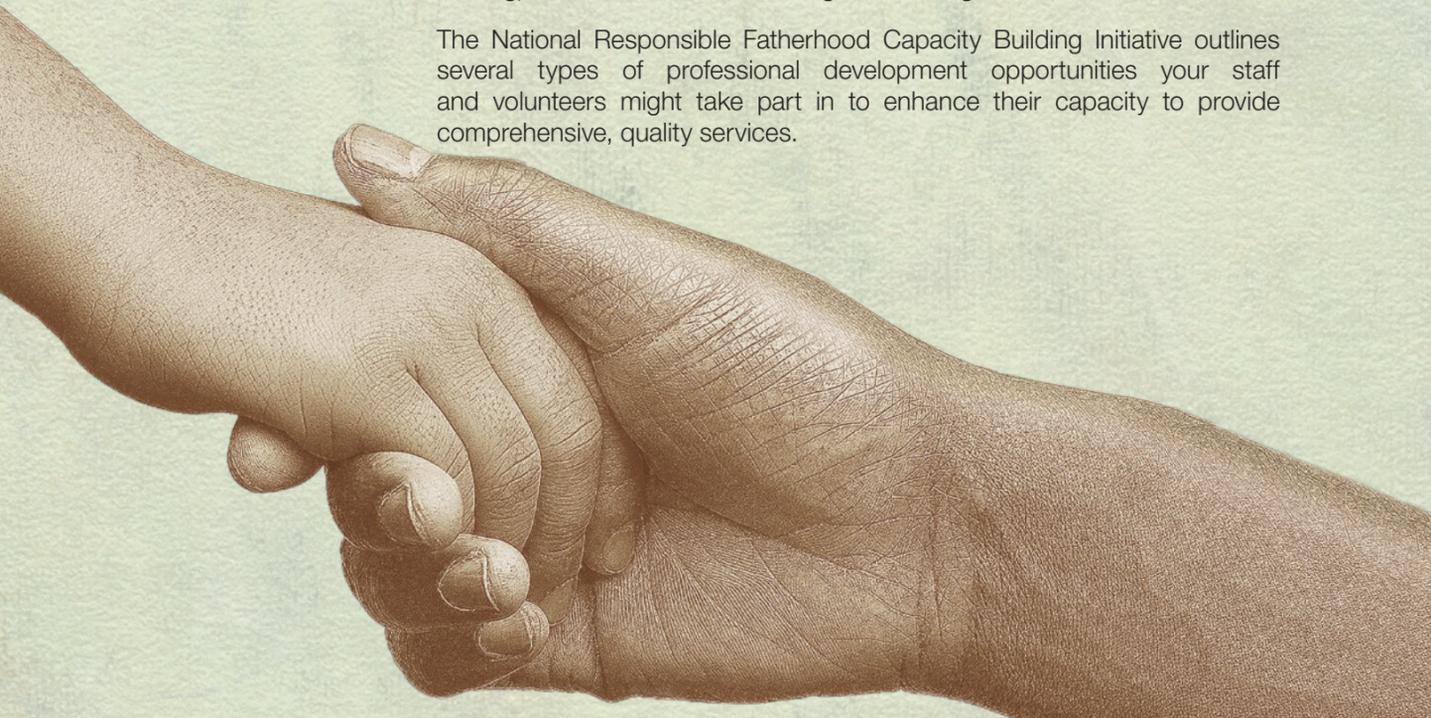


# 6

## Options for Developing Professional Skills

As your program evolves, staff and volunteers can face new challenges or responsibilities. Participating in professional development not only prepares program personnel to master new knowledge and skills, but also helps them respond productively to change. Professional development can take place in a formal classroom environment, in an informal setting (such as Web-based training), or in the course of working with colleagues.

The National Responsible Fatherhood Capacity Building Initiative outlines several types of professional development opportunities your staff and volunteers might take part in to enhance their capacity to provide comprehensive, quality services.



### Building Capacity for Programs that Promote Responsible Fatherhood...

Leadership Development

Organizational Improvement

Program Enhancement

Community Engagement



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

National Responsible Fatherhood Capacity Building Initiative  
101 Lake Forest Blvd., Suite 360  
Gaithersburg, MD 20877  
Phone: 301.948.0599  
Fax: 301.948.4325  
[www.fatherhood.org/capacitybuilding](http://www.fatherhood.org/capacitybuilding)

National Responsible Fatherhood Capacity Building Initiative subawardees are encouraged to request technical assistance for organizational capacity building by contacting the National Fatherhood Initiative.

This project is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Family Assistance to assist States and communities as they promote and support responsible fatherhood and healthy marriage. All opinions are those of the authors and do not reflect the opinion of the sponsoring agency.

# 6

## Ways

## to Enhance

## Staff and Volunteer Capabilities



NATIONAL RESPONSIBLE FATHERHOOD  
**CAPACITY BUILDING**  
I N I T I A T I V E

**1**

## Workshops and Training Programs

A well designed workshop or training program provides an interactive and collaborative environment in which personnel can improve existing skills or gain new ones. Your program can develop its own workshops or take advantage of those offered by other organizations, agencies, or associations. Workshops can take place on site or off site at a hotel, campus, or other training facility.

Look for workshops that follow principles of adult learning. Avoid training that is lecture-based. Because adults learn best in an interactive environment, workshops should feature group activities and peer learning exercises in which participants learn from each other.

Staff and volunteers from programs that promote responsible fatherhood can benefit from training in a variety of key areas: board management; finance and accounting; fundraising and resource development; human resources and personnel management; leadership and organizational development; legal issues; marketing, public relations, and media relations; office administration; planning and evaluation; proposal writing and research methods; technical/technology training; and volunteer management.

**2**

## Conferences

Time away from the program to attend a conference can revitalize staff and volunteers with new perspectives and information. Regional or national conferences often draw hundreds or thousands of participants eager to share their experiences in the field. Staff and volunteers can have access to funders and vendors all in one place. They can gather materials and new resources that can improve your program's operations and services. Networking with colleagues at a conference, your staff and volunteers will learn the practices that are working well for their peers. They can discover how to adapt and implement those practices to have a positive impact when they return.

Although some conferences are free, many have registration fees. Set aside some money in your annual budget for conference attendance.

**3**

## Professional Coaching

When an urgent, high-stakes issue or problem arises, a professional coach often can provide the customized guidance that program management, staff, or volunteers need. Professional coaching is a partnership between a specialized, expert coach and other professionals that inspires them to maximize their potential. Professional coaches listen, observe, and tailor an approach based on the skills and abilities of the people involved. Using a variety of solution-oriented techniques and tools, professional coaches help program personnel develop and carry out their own strategies.

**4**

## Peer-to-Peer Learning

No one knows the challenges and issues you face in your work better than your peers. Peer-to-peer learning is particularly suited to adults because it usually takes place in the context of day-to-day problems in the workplace. No need to explain the culture and features of your work setting—colleagues already understand.

You might organize a peer mentoring group with other professionals who serve fathers in your area. Peer-to-peer learning allows staff and volunteers from programs with restricted resources to enhance their skills at no cost and on a timetable that accommodates their schedules.

**5**

## Online Learning

When an appropriate workshop is not available, or when funding or staffing resources are limited, program personnel can build their skills through online learning. Web-based courses, conferences, and training can be accessed by staff and volunteers in the office, at their homes, or any place with an Internet connection, such as a public library. The 24/7 convenience of online learning lets participants attend training when their schedules permit and proceed at their own pace.

**6**

## Self-Directed Learning

Identify the skills and knowledge that management, staff, and volunteers should focus on to expand program capacity. Then, based on your own research and feedback from peers, mentors, and experts, compile a comprehensive reading list. The list should include books, journals, and articles that present tips and strategies for building program capacity. Give a deadline for the reading on each topic to be completed.

Web sites that offer guidance to nonprofit and community-based organizations are good sources for publications. Biographies and autobiographies of leaders in the nonprofit field or in business also can give useful information about the lessons they learned.