

BRINGING BACK THE DADS:

A MODEL PROGRAM CURRICULUM FOR
NON-RESIDENT FATHER ENGAGEMENT



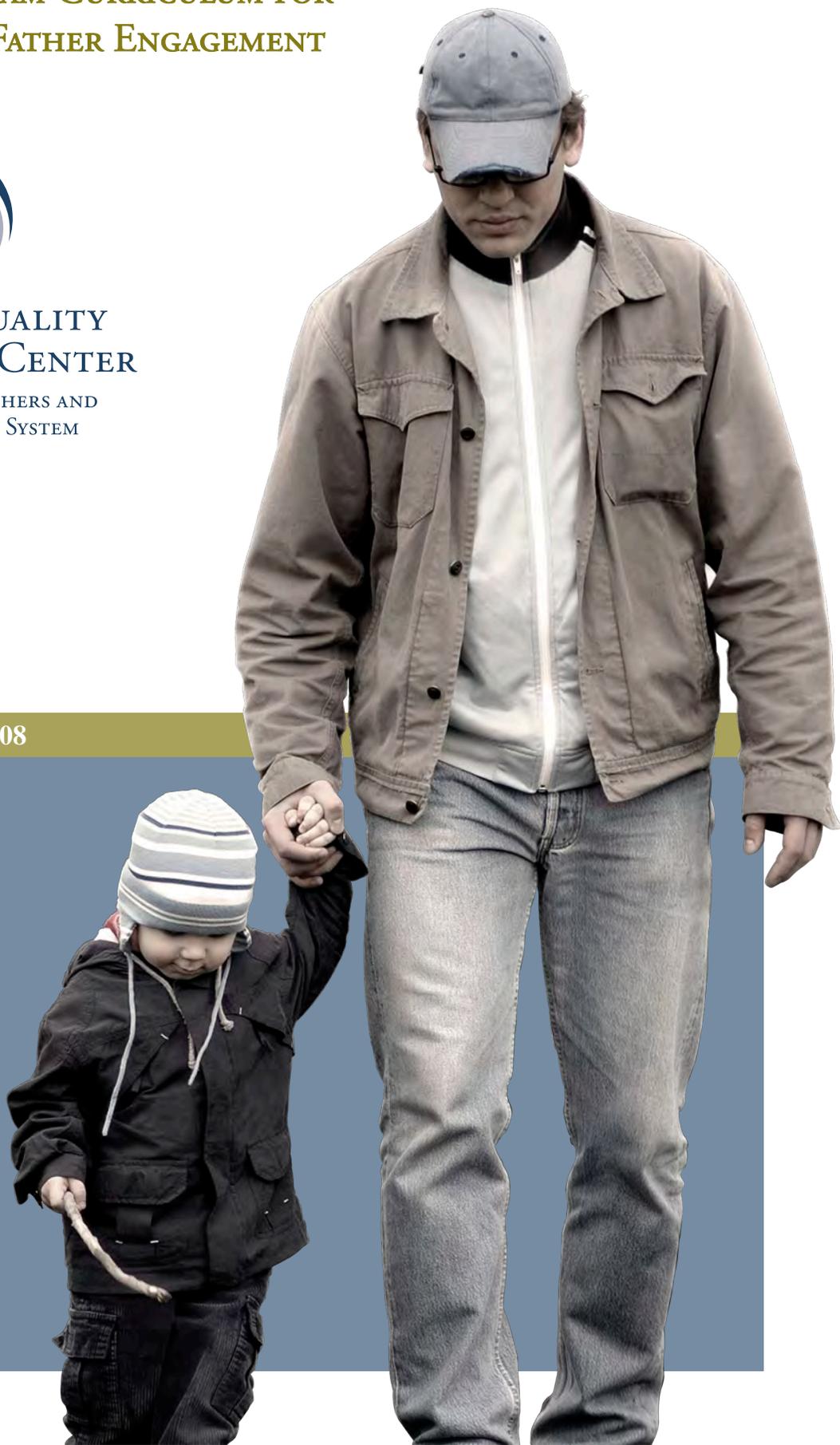
NATIONAL QUALITY
IMPROVEMENT CENTER

ON NON-RESIDENT FATHERS AND
THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM

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A note about the April 2008 Edition. Revisions to the model program curriculum for fathers will be based upon information learned during project implementation. A revised Final version will be available in early 2012.



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IMPROVEMENT CENTER
ON NON-RESIDENT FATHERS AND
THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM

BRINGING BACK THE DADS: A MODEL PROGRAM CURRICULUM FOR NON-RESIDENT FATHER ENGAGEMENT

**A Product of the Quality Improvement Center on
Non-Resident Fathers and the Child Welfare System**

**A Project of the US DHHS, ACF, ACYF
90-CA-1025**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The National Quality Improvement Center on Non-Resident Fathers and the Child Welfare System (QIC-NRF) is a collaborative effort between the American Humane Association, the American Bar Association Center on Children and the Law and the National Fatherhood Initiative, and funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau.

The focus of this project is a result of the federal Child and Family Services Reviews and the "What About the Dads?" report, which indicated that there is very little meaningful engagement occurring between the child welfare system and fathers. The QIC-NRF promotes the importance of gaining more knowledge regarding the engagement of non-resident fathers with their children who are involved in the child welfare system.

The purpose of this project is to determine, through a research design, the impact of non-resident father involvement on child welfare outcomes. Child welfare outcomes include child safety, permanence and well-being. Included in this design is the examination of the relationship between children and non-resident fathers or paternal relatives.

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QIC-NRF Fathers Advisory Council (FAC) members: The most important contributions to *Bringing Back the Dads: A Model Program Curriculum for Non-Resident Father Engagement* and to this project were made by members of the Fathers Advisory Council. This council is composed of Dads who have been previously connected to the child welfare system through their children. They willingly shared their stories and ideas about how to engage and help other Dads connect to or strengthen their relationships with their children, as well as succeed in their relationships with the child welfare system and courts. It was their hope that other Dads could learn and benefit from their wisdom — and not feel alone in the experience. FAC members who gave input to the curriculum include LaRon Burris, John Carter, Gregory Cox, Randy Harrison, and Randy Kilbury.

QIC-NRF Research Sites

- The Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS), a division of the Department of Social and Health Services for the state of Washington, Region IV (King County)
- El Paso County Department of Human Services (Colorado)
- Fathers and Families Center and Indiana Department of Child Services (Marion County)
- Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) (Tarrant County)

Curriculum Input by Research Site Participants: Natasha Grossman, Carol Harper, John Manning, Marvin Charles, and Jonah Idczak, King County, Washington; Ken Saunders, Roni Spaulding, and Nancy Thoennes, El Paso County, Colorado; Tiffany Mitchell and Robert Ripperger, Marion County, Indiana; Donald Baumann, Judy Henry, Mervil Johnson, and Tommy Jordan, Tarrant County, Texas

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Thank you,
American Humane Association

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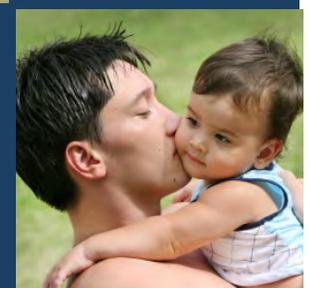
Morley, L., Wilmot, L., Bruce, L., Frankel, P., & Berdie, J. (2008, April). *Bringing back the dads: A model program curriculum for non-resident father engagement*. Englewood, CO: American Humane Association.

Note: After a period of experimentation with this version of the curriculum by the research sites, feedback will be obtained and modifications may be made.



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THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM

INTRODUCTION





Introduction



PURPOSE OF SESSION

Dads will learn about the primary goals of the non-resident father program, the expectations and commitments related to the group, and the group guidelines. Dads will get to know one another's "stories" and be able to identify their individual needs and interests in the group content. Finally, Dads will provide feedback and help identify the order in which topics should be presented, based on their personal needs.

FACILITATOR PREPARATION

- Review all the Facilitator Resources listed below.
- Ensure that there are enough copies of all handouts for each Dad.
- Make copies of all **Food for Thought** handouts (from each session) to distribute the appropriate handout at the end of the corresponding session.
- Write the first three questions in Activity 3 on large notepaper to refer to during this activity.
- Write the remaining session titles, except Dad as Part of the Solution and Dad as Planner, (see handout entitled **Group Session Topics**) on large notepaper, leaving space between each title, and tape them to the wall to refer to in Activity 5.
- Post a large piece of paper marked "Parking Lot" on the wall.
- Set up the room so that the chairs are arranged in a circle, with a break in the circle for an easel stand with large notepaper visible to all.

FACILITATOR RESOURCES

- National Quality Improvement Center on Non-Resident Fathers and the Child Welfare System. (n.d.). *Bringing back the dads*. Retrieved February 26, 2008, from <http://www.abanet.org/child/fathers/dads-info.pdf>
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation. (2006, December). *Child welfare casework with nonresident fathers of children in foster care. ASPE Issue Brief*. Retrieved February 26, 2008, from <http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/06/CW-involve-dads/ib.pdf>
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation. (2006). *What about the dads? Child welfare agencies' efforts to identify, locate and involve nonresident fathers*. Retrieved February 26, 2008, from <http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/06/CW-involve-dads/report.pdf> [Recommended reading: pp. vii-20]



MATERIALS FOR GROUP SESSION

- Easel stand with large notepad
- Permanent markers
- Tape to hang large notepaper on wall
- Colored “dot” stickers
- Lipshutz, M., & Rosenblatt, R. (Producers/Directors). (1998). *Fatherhood USA: Dedicated not deadbeat*. [Video recording]. (Available from The Fatherhood Project at The Families and Work Institute, 267 Fifth Ave., Floor 2, New York, NY 10016)



HANDOUTS

- Handout: **Group Session Topics** (for Activity 5)
- Handout: **Food for Thought** that corresponds with next week’s session (for Activity 7)

1

Introduction WELCOME



TIME

5 minutes

Running Time: 0 hr 5 m

PURPOSE

To recognize the Dads' commitment to their children and to improving their roles as Dads. To define your role as facilitator.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Welcome the Dads to the group and praise them for showing the commitment to and interest in being part of their children's lives. Introduce yourself as the facilitator and share your background as it relates to facilitating the group. Share your motivation for wanting to be a part of this program for non-resident fathers, what you as the facilitator hope you can bring to this group process and what the Dads can expect from you as the facilitator/case manager.



FACILITATOR TIP

As you introduce the purpose of the group throughout this introductory session, keep in mind that "fathers first must understand the irreplaceable role they can play in the lives of their children and how they, as men, contribute good things to their children simply by virtue of being male parents."¹ The Dads in the group must believe that they can have an impact on the lives of their children and that what they do as Dads matters in their children's lives. In addition, as you progress through this first session, make every effort to normalize the experiences of a non-resident father. By believing they are not the only Dads going through this experience, they will hopefully become more open-minded to the group process and what they can learn.

¹U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES, ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES. (2004, JUNE). *BUILDING BLOCKS FOR FATHER INVOLVEMENT: BUILDING BLOCK 5: BRINGING A FATHERHOOD PLAN TO LIFE*. RETRIEVED MARCH 10, 2008, FROM [HTTP://WWW.HEADSTARTINFO.ORG/PDF/BUILDING_BLOCKS5.PDF](http://www.headstartinfo.org/pdf/building_blocks5.pdf) (P. 3)

2

Introduction ACTIVITY: INTRODUCTIONS



TIME

20 minutes

Running Time: 0 hr 25 m

PURPOSE

To learn about the members of the group.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Explain that you want to take some time for everyone to get to know one another. Have each Dad introduce himself by sharing the following information:

1. **Name you prefer to be called**
2. **Some information about yourself (e.g., age, where you are from, interests, work, relationships)**
3. **Names, ages and some information about your children**
4. **Name two things that are important to you about being a Dad.**

Write the responses to question 4 on a piece of large notepaper for validation and to refer to later in Activity 5.



FACILITATOR TIP

Encourage the Dads to ask follow-up questions they have for one another as each introduces himself. Also, make note on the large notepaper of all the themes that come out regarding what Dads identify as being important to them to let them know from the beginning that their comments are wanted and valuable. These points will be used later in the session as you transition into introducing the topic areas and working with the Dads to determine the most appropriate order of the sessions. Finally, wait patiently for the Dads' responses in this activity. Though it may seem uncomfortable, momentary silence will result in greater responses and participation.

3

Introduction

FACILITATED DISCUSSION: GROUP EXPECTATIONS



TIME

25 minutes

Running Time: 0 hr 50 m

PURPOSE

To develop group expectations.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Share with the Dads that group success is built on attendance, trust, commitment to learning and peer support. To ensure that the Dads involved feel that this is a process that “works for them” and fulfills their needs, have them brainstorm, as a group, answers to the following questions. Post the questions around the room on large notepaper and have the group walk around to each paper to record their responses. Give them ten minutes to record their responses to all of the questions.

- 1. What do you want to learn?**
- 2. What strengths can you bring to the group each week? (e.g., humor, listening skills, insight, life experience, etc.)**
- 3. How can we make the group a worthwhile experience?**

Ask the following questions about the responses on each large notepaper to recognize themes which ground rules and expectations can be built on:

- 1. What common thoughts or ideas do you see from the responses to this question? (Write the themes on each large notepaper as they are identified.)**
- 2. For us to have a group which meets our individual interests, what should we expect from each other as a group? (Write their expectations on a separate piece of large notepaper to be kept posted in the group room.)**



FACILITATOR TIP

It is important to follow the outlined procedures. With this process of questioning, cooperative grouping and debriefing, you are creating an environment in which the Dads feel ownership in the content. The process is a great method to bring out their concerns, strengths and ideas for implementing their strengths. Be mindful that you are facilitating the group of Dads to recognize their own assets and strengths.

4

Introduction

FACILITATED DISCUSSION: OVERVIEW OF COMMITMENTS FOR GROUP INVOLVEMENT



TIME

15 minutes

Running Time: 1 hr 05 m

PURPOSE

To inform the Dads what is expected of them and what will impact their involvement in the group.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Share that while the Dads have just established their own expectations for themselves, one another and the group process, there are some guidelines they need to follow in order to be able to participate in the group. As you discuss each area, ask them first what they think is a reasonable commitment or guideline. For instance, with regards to attendance, ask the group what the facilitator and group members should expect to happen when someone is unable to attend.

1. Attendance is expected and is the key to the group's success. Your commitment to the group process and to one another will greatly impact the value of the group to each Dad.
 - a. Explain how they should notify the facilitator or a group member if they are going to have to miss a group session.
 - b. As applicable to your program, explain the procedure for making up a missed session.
 - c. As applicable to your program, explain what happens if there are excessive absences.
2. Active participation by all group members is encouraged. This participation includes openly sharing thoughts and ideas; participating in and contributing to activities; and providing and accepting honest feedback.
3. Participant confidentiality is required. What is shared by fellow Dads within the group setting should not be shared outside of the group setting.
4. The group facilitator is a mandated reporter. If anything is disclosed during the group session about harm to a child or adult or threat of harm to a child or adult, the facilitator must report it to the proper authority (police or child protective services).
5. Be respectful of one another and of the experiences and personal information shared by each Dad.
6. Turn all cell phones and pagers to silent mode when you arrive to the group session.
7. Surveys will be given out several times throughout the course of the 12 weeks of the group. Your opinion about the group sessions is important and you will be expected to complete these surveys.



FACILITATOR TIP

While it is important to make clear the commitments and guidelines for group involvement, make sure that you are building upon the group dynamics to encourage the Dads to develop their own ideas on how to hold one another accountable. Answer any questions they might have regarding what is expected and their commitment.

In addition to the topics or guidelines listed above, please also consider and discuss with the Dads how the following types of situations would be handled. It is suggested that you respond to these situations consistent with your program's own policies for handling such situations.

- At the end of every session, you will distribute to the Dads a Food for Thought activity, which will ask them to think about some questions or scenarios related to their role as a Dad. While these activities are the only “homework” required of the group, they are important activities because they serve as a way to stimulate conversation at the beginning of each session. How will it be handled if Dads are not completing these activities and are not prepared to discuss them at the group sessions?
- A Dad engages in criminal or violent activity during his time in the group. How will this activity impact his participation?
- A Dad shows up to the group session under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Will the Dad be asked to leave? What type of response by the agency will be given at the time?



BREAK

TIME

10 minutes

Running Time: 1 hr 15 m

5

Introduction

FACILITATED DISCUSSION: IDENTIFYING THEMES FOR MODULE PLANNING



TIME

15 minutes

Running Time: 1 hr 30 m

PURPOSE

To assist the Dads in identifying what their personal needs are as related to group content. To develop an order for session planning based on identified interests or concerns. To introduce and explain the “Parking Lot” tool.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Using the group responses on the large pieces of notepaper from Activity 2, question 4 (Name two things that are important to you about being a Dad) and Activity 3, question 1 (What do you want to learn?), facilitate a discussion with the Dads to identify the key areas of interest or concern expressed so far in order to determine what the Dads hope to learn.

Referring to Activity 2, question 4 (Name two things that are important to you about being a Dad), ask the group **“What have you noticed about this group of Dads?”**

Referring to Activity 3, question 1 (What do you want to learn?), ask the group **“What else would we like to know in order to deal with the challenges we have as Dads?”**



Write these key areas of interest or concern on a large piece of notepaper. Then, distribute the handout entitled **Group Session Topics** and provide a brief overview of the content for each of the 11 remaining group sessions. Explain that the next two sessions will be Dad as Part of the Solution: Overview of the Child Welfare System and Dad as Planner: Service Planning in the Child Welfare System. But, after those two sessions, the order of the remaining nine sessions will be based on their key areas of interest or concern. Give each Dad three colored “dot” stickers to represent their three votes and let them know that you would like them to vote on the topics for sessions four through six. Explain that you want them to put their three stickers next to the title of the sessions on the large notepaper on the wall that are of greatest interest to them. Share that they can put one, two or all three stickers next to one session title if that is the session that would be of greatest interest to them. After all Dads have voted with their stickers, identify what the top three choices are and record their preferred order for sessions four through six. Then, have a discussion to determine what order they would like the session topics in for the remaining five sessions (sessions seven through twelve).

Introduce the “Parking Lot” tool to the group at this time. Explain that the “Parking Lot” will be a piece of paper posted on the wall during each session. Any group member or the facilitator can write questions, inquiries for information, reminders, etc. that cannot be answered in that session (due to needed information or in the interest of time). Explain that at the beginning of each session, the items from the previous week’s “Parking Lot” will be addressed.



FACILITATOR TIP

In regards to the “Parking Lot” tool, help the Dads understand that if they have questions that can wait until a certain topic is addressed, that you will write that question on the “Parking Lot” and it will get answered in that session. But, they should be reassured that if it is a question which needs an immediate answer, you will make the determination as to whether this should be addressed during the group session or with that Dad individually.

6

Introduction

VIDEO AND FACILITATED DISCUSSION: BEING A NON-RESIDENT FATHER



TIME

20 minutes

Running Time: 1 hr 50 m

PURPOSE

To normalize the experience of non-resident fathers. To provide an opportunity for self-exploration, continued sharing and learning about each other.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Introduce the Fatherhood USA video, *Dedicated Not Deadbeat*, by explaining to the Dads that they will see an 11-minute clip of two young non-resident fathers, Paul and Chris, who are part of a fatherhood program in Baltimore. Start the video at 02:02 and play it through 13:45 (running time: 11:43). Following the clip, invite the Dads to share their responses to the video. Use the following questions to facilitate the discussion:

- 1. What about Paul or Chris's lives as non-resident fathers feels true for your life as well?**
- 2. What did you admire about Paul or Chris?**
- 3. Where do you feel that you differ from Paul or Chris as a Dad?**

7

Introduction

THIS WEEK'S FOOD FOR THOUGHT



TIME

8 minutes

Running Time: 1 hr 58 m

PURPOSE

To introduce the topic for the next session. To provide an explanation of what is expected of them between sessions.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Provide a brief description of the topic for next week's session, Dad as Part of the Solution, and identify several of the main areas of discussion for that session. Have the Dads briefly share what they hope to gain from this session, in order to ensure that their needs are met by the information and content of the session.

Next, share with the Dads that each week you will provide them with an activity to do throughout the course of the week until the next group session. Explain that sometimes this activity will be something to do with or for their children, sometimes it will be something to think about or observe and sometimes it might be both. Ask them to please come prepared to discuss the activity at the next group session.



Introduce the Food for Thought activity for the upcoming week and distribute the appropriate **Food for Thought** handout.

8

Introduction

CLOSING REMARKS



TIME

2 minutes

Running Time: 2 hr 00 m

PURPOSE

To provide continued encouragement for their commitment.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Thank the Dads for coming and for committing to participating in the group process. Briefly reinforce what you heard or saw throughout the session that you thought was positive. Remind the Dads that you will be following up with them throughout the week and that you are available for them to contact with any questions.



Introduction

GROUP SESSION TOPICS

Dad as Part of the Solution: Overview of the Child Welfare System

How does the child welfare system work? What part of the system are my children and I in now and what does that mean? A child welfare representative will join us to answer specific questions.

Dad as Planner: Service Planning in the Child Welfare System

How does the child welfare system give help to families? How can I help the system understand what my family needs? A child welfare representative will join us to answer specific questions.

Dad as a Healthy Parent: Taking Care of You

What choices do I need to make in my own life to be a better Dad for my children? What will it mean for my children if I am healthy? What kinds of things make it hard for me to make good life choices?

Dad as Community Member: Identifying and Accessing Resources

What kinds of help or services are available to me and my children in my community? How do I find out about them? What kinds of things can I do with my children that are free or reduced cost?

Dad as Cultural Guide: The Role of Culture in Parenting

What cultures am I a part of? How does my culture influence how I parent my children? What parts of my culture do I want my children to know about and how do I share these things with them?

Dad as Parent: Understanding Your Children

What do children need at all ages to grow up in a healthy way? What can I do to meet the needs of my children?

Dad as Part of Children's Placement: Visiting with Your Children

How does the child welfare visitation process work? What can I do as a Dad to have successful visits with my children?

Dad as Part of the Juvenile Court Process: Legal Advocacy and Court Etiquette

How does the juvenile court/legal process work? What part of the court process are my children and I in now and what does that mean? An attorney for parents will join us to answer specific questions.

Dad as Provider: Supporting Your Children

What is "child support" and what is expected of me as a Dad who does not live with my children? What will it mean for my children if I provide financial support? What other types of support do children need? A child support enforcement office representative will join us to answer specific questions.

Dad as Team Player: Shared Parenting

How do I get along better with my children's mother, our extended families and the foster parents or other involved caregivers in order to parent my child?

Dad as Worker: Workforce Readiness

Why is it important for my children and for myself that I have a job? What skills do I have to offer to an employer?



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DAD AS COMMUNITY MEMBER: IDENTIFYING AND ACCESSING RESOURCES





Dad as Community Member: Identifying and Accessing Resources



PURPOSE OF SESSION

Dads will be able to identify and prioritize age-appropriate resources and activities for themselves and their children. Dads will be able to locate supportive resources available throughout their local community that are free of cost or available at a reduced cost, and will learn to feel more comfortable in making inquiries for assistance.

FACILITATOR PREPARATION

- Assemble a **Local Resource Folder** for each Dad with a local resource directory (see Mayer et al., *Where to Seek Help* in the Facilitator Resources) and materials or brochures describing local resources (information about food banks, food stamps, libraries, faith-based organizations, cultural events, playground locations, legal advice, tax information, public transportation schedules, hospitals, etc.). The resource folder could also include family-friendly calendars of events, parks and recreation or YMCA information and other informative brochures and marketing materials that will help Dads find needed resources for self-care and family assistance. Ensure that there are enough copies of the resource folder for each Dad.
- Review all the Facilitator Resources listed below.
- Post a large piece of paper marked “Parking Lot” on the wall.
- Review “Parking Lot” questions presented at the previous session and prepare answers.
- Post the group guidelines developed in the Introduction session on the wall.
- Ensure that there are enough copies of all handouts for each Dad.
- Affix a local map to the wall that is large enough to display and be seen by all Dads.
- Write the statements for the Food for Thought activity (#2) on an easel notepad.
- Set up the room so that the chairs are arranged in a circle, with a break in the circle for an easel stand with large notepaper visible to all.

FACILITATOR RESOURCES

- Mayer, R., Anastasi, J., Clark, E. M., Lorenzo, S., & Richards, J. (2006). *Where to seek help: A bright futures referral tool for providers*. Bright Futures at Georgetown University. Retrieved March 14, 2008, from <http://www.brightfutures.org/tools/BFtoolsWhere.pdf>
- Wilkenfeld, B., Moore, K. A., & Lippman, L. (2008, February). *Neighborhood support and children's connectedness*. Child Trends Fact Sheet. (Publication 2008-05). Retrieved March 14, 2008, from http://www.childtrends.org/Files//Child_Trends-2008_02_05_ConnectednessFS.pdf



- Search Institute. (2006). *The 40 developmental assets for adolescents*. Retrieved March 14, 2008, from <http://search-institute.org/assets/assetlists.html>
- Search Institute. (2005). *40 developmental assets for early childhood*. Retrieved March 14, 2008, from <http://search-institute.org/assets/assetlists.html>
- Search Institute. (2006). *40 Developmental assets for middle childhood*. Retrieved March 14, 2008, from <http://search-institute.org/assets/assetlists.html>
- United Way. (n.d.). *Find your local 2-1-1/I&R call center*. Retrieved March 14, 2008, from <http://www.211.org/>
 - Colorado: Pikes Peak United Way 2-1-1: <http://www.ppunitedway.org/page.asp?id=6&name=Get%20Help%20With%20211>
 - Indiana: Connect2Help: <http://www.connect2help.org/>
 - Texas: 211 Texas — North Central Region: <https://www.211texas.org/211/search/aicDetails.do?aic=FW>
 - Washington: King County 2-1-1: <http://www.crisisclinic.org/211KC.html>

MATERIALS FOR GROUP SESSION

- Easel stand with large notepad
- Permanent markers
- Tape to hang large notepaper on wall
- Large local map to display on wall
- Small box of colored pins (or stickers) for designating specific locations on the map
- Five copies of the local phone book (e.g., Yellow Pages)

HANDOUTS



- Handout: **Local Resource Folder** (for Activity 4) – See Facilitator Preparation for instructions on preparing these.
- Handout: **Engaging With Your Children** (for Activity 5)
- Handout: **Food for Thought** that corresponds with next week's session (for Activity 6)

1

Dad as Community Member: Identifying and Accessing Resources WELCOME AND “DAD MOMENT OF THE WEEK”



TIME

10 minutes

Running Time: 0 hr 10 m

PURPOSE

To identify positive parenting activities. To follow up on “Parking Lot” questions.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Welcome each Dad to the group. Begin the session by asking each Dad to share aloud his “Dad Moment of the Week” (any interaction, thought, action, etc. that he is proud of as it relates to his children or his role as a Dad). Answer the “Parking Lot” questions relevant to the previous session.



FACILITATOR TIP

The goal of having the Dads identify their “Dad Moment of the Week” is to help them build on their successes throughout their time in the program. This regular activity will encourage them to recognize and continue their “smaller” interactions with their children (e.g., phone calls, praising, saying “I love you”).

Throughout this session, look for ways to normalize the experience of non-resident fathers. Remind Dads that their challenges and successes, while unique, may be shared in general with other Dads from all walks of life (e.g., all Dads must address challenges related to discipline of their children, shared parenting, extended families and job-related stressors).

It is also important to acknowledge listed “Parking Lot” items, even if you cannot answer them at this time. It will help the Dads feel that their questions are being heard, that you take them seriously and that you are working to address them.

2

Dad as Community Member: Identifying and Accessing Resources DISCUSSION OF LAST WEEK'S FOOD FOR THOUGHT



TIME

15 minutes

Running Time: 0 hr 25 m

PURPOSE

To help Dads think about the availability and location of local community resources.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

At the end of the previous session, each Dad received the following sentences to think about in the week prior to this session. Ask each Dad to share his thoughts aloud with the group about one of the following sentences.

Please complete the following sentences:

- **If I needed help finding a job, I would...**
- **If I needed help with legal advice, I would...**
- **If I needed help with providing enough food for my children, I would...**
- **If I needed help with transportation to the grocery store, doctor's office, to visit friends, etc., I would...**
- **The closest playground to my home is located...**
- **The closest library to my home is located...**
- **The closest hospital to my home is located...**



FACILITATOR TIP

Do not spend too much time on this activity, as it will be followed up in detail in the next activity. In addition, keep in mind that it is sometimes very difficult for men socialized in our country to ask for or seek out help. It is important that empathy, trust and respect are practiced in every session. Gender role norms associated with traditional masculinity (e.g., “no sissy stuff”) and the fact that men tend to be “competency-based” (meaning they base their value on what they already know or can figure out on their own) often makes it difficult for men to ask for help, which is why it is especially important for facilitators to create an environment of safety, fun, active learning and unconditional regard.

3

Dad as Community Member: Identifying and Accessing Resources ACTIVITY: LOCATING RESOURCES



TIME

30 minutes

Running Time: 0 hr 55 m

PURPOSE

To encourage Dads to work in small groups and to become more comfortable in helping one another. To help Dads become better acquainted with the availability and location of local community resources.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

For this activity, ask the Dads to form small groups of two to four. Distribute a copy of the local Yellow Pages phone book to each of the small groups.

Return to the Food For Thought that you reviewed in the last activity. Assign each group of Dads to answer a question (or two) by looking for specific organizations whose purpose or services would relate to the question asked. Ask each group to write down the names, phone numbers and addresses of the resources they find. Have each small group identify one Dad to serve as his group's speaker and then go around the room and have each speaker share his group's answers with the larger group. Have the speakers place a small colored pin (or sticker) on the map to show where each identified organization is located.



FACILITATOR TIP

Encourage the Dads to form small groups in order to get better acquainted with the other Dads in the group. Group work might be a bit new or slightly awkward for some Dads at first, but being united in a common activity may alleviate some of the awkwardness. As the activity progresses, monitor all groups and help them stay on task. As the Dads go to the map to place the pin or sticker where the resource is located, be ready to assist them in finding the correct location on the map.

Introduce each group speaker as he comes forward ("Dave, thanks for volunteering!") and thank him aloud as he finishes ("Thanks, Dave. Everybody give him a round of applause for his bravery!"). These acknowledgements are effective ways of showing appreciation for those who volunteer and will spur participation and encourage camaraderie among the Dads.

4

Dad as Community Member: Identifying and Accessing Resources FACILITATED DISCUSSION: RESOURCE MATERIALS AND SERVICES



TIME

18 minutes

Running Time: 1 hr 13 m

PURPOSE

To help Dads understand and identify the available resources in the community that can help them raise healthy, caring and responsible children.

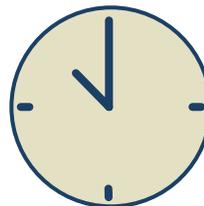
DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Share with the Dads that there are several important “building blocks” for raising healthy, caring and responsible children, including an involved neighborhood and school climate; participation in creative activities (e.g., music, cultural events), youth programs (e.g., sports, clubs), and an active religious community. (These are “external assets” from the Search Institute’s 40 Developmental Assets lists.)



Distribute the **Local Resource Folders**. Explain that in order to learn about these types of activities or resources for children, the Dads should begin by making use of the resources in the resource folder. Emphasize the availability of free or reduced-cost local community resources to which Dads are fully entitled (as these resources are paid for through taxes and other fees that they pay). Explain the resources and information in the folder to the Dads and answer any questions they have about the materials. Also, encourage them to add to this folder as they find information in the community or in the group.

Share with the Dads that another resource available to them in the community is the “2-1-1 system,” which can be accessed by dialing “2-1-1” from a local phone. Explain that when someone calls “2-1-1,” he is connected to a person who can provide him with information on any type of service or help in the community. Encourage the Dads to use this as a resource when they are looking for a specific type of social or community service for themselves or their children.



BREAK

TIME

10 minutes

Running Time: 1 hr 23 m

5

Dad as Community Member: Identifying and Accessing Resources ACTIVITY: THINGS TO DO



TIME

30 minutes

Running Time: 1 hr 53 m

PURPOSE

To create an atmosphere of free expression and group rapport for the Dads. To encourage the Dads to identify what activities they think are fun and interesting for themselves and for their children.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Begin this activity by asking each Dad to state:

- His name;
- The names and ages of his children; and
- One or two activities that he likes to do when he has free time and is not with his children.

Record all the responses to the third question on a piece of large notepaper on the easel stand. Then, ask each Dad to share aloud one or two activities that he likes to do with his children. Record all the responses to this question on another piece of large notepaper on the easel stand. Invite the Dads to identify similarities and differences between the two sets of activities and to find where there might be some overlap. (For example, Dads who like to watch sports can watch a game with their children or even take their children to a sporting event.)



Distribute the handout **Engaging With Your Children** and explain that it is a list of suggested activities for Dads to do with their children of different ages. Encourage them to read through it outside of the group and to circle the ones they plan to try with their children.



FACILITATOR TIP

Remind the Dads that as they share their personal experiences with one another, what is shared in the group stays in the group.

Encourage the free expression of ideas, but encourage the Dads to elaborate if they share that they like to “just hang out” as an activity. Invite them to share the challenges Dads face in doing the things they would ideally like to do when they are spending time with or not spending time with their children.



Do not forget to emphasize the importance of “self-care” for the Dads. Dads need to be healthy and happy in mind, body and spirit before they can attempt to be good parents. Self-care includes exercising to maintain physical fitness, eating well, proper medication (if necessary), taking care of one’s emotions and feelings and practicing good hygiene. Dads should not feel guilty about pursuing their own interests and hobbies, reducing personal stress through healthy means or simply having time to relax alone.

6

Dad as Community Member: Identifying and Accessing Resources THIS WEEK'S FOOD FOR THOUGHT



TIME

5 minutes

Running Time: 1 hr 58 m

PURPOSE

To introduce the activity for the upcoming week and to encourage the application of what is learned in group sessions.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Provide a brief description of the topic for the next week's session and identify several of the main areas of discussion for that session. Have the Dads briefly share what they hope to gain from the session, in order to ensure that their needs are met by the information and content of the session. Remind the Dads that you will be following up with them throughout the week and that you are available for them to contact with any questions.



Introduce the Food for Thought activity for the upcoming week and distribute the appropriate **Food for Thought** handout. Ask them to please come prepared to discuss the activity at the next group session.



FACILITATOR TIP

It is very important that you follow up with the Dads throughout the week (by telephone or in person). It is extremely important that you have contact with Dads between sessions. Encourage Dads to contact you for assistance.

7

Dad as Community Member: Identifying and Accessing Resources CLOSING REMARKS



TIME

2 minutes

Running Time: 2 hr 00 m

PURPOSE

To encourage Dads to use the information obtained on community resources to create action steps for change.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Thank the Dads for their thoughtful questions and continued commitment to the learning and group process. Briefly reinforce what you heard or saw throughout the session that you thought was positive. Encourage the Dads to contact at least two resources contained in the Local Resource Folder prior to the next weekly session.



Dad as Community Member: Identifying and Accessing Resources ENGAGING WITH YOUR CHILDREN

WHAT DADS CAN DO WITH BABIES



- Hold babies close to you and rock them to help them feel loved and secure. Let an infant fall asleep on your chest.
- Babies love to be lifted and gently tickled. It is fun for them and they learn that Daddy is there to take care of them.
- Get down on the ground! One of the best places to play with a child is on the floor at their level. Read to the child, play a game or just look up at the ceiling or sky.
- Talk to your baby. Name objects and things that you and your child see.
- Dad's voice is different from Mom's voice and babies can tell the difference at even a few weeks old. They learn to trust you by hearing your voice. A child is never too young to be talked to.
- Talk to your baby as you go outside for walks. Point to things and name them. Talk about what you see outside.
- Sing songs to your child. Your baby loves to hear familiar songs over and over again. Or, make up your own special songs. Young children enjoy songs with motions and hand movements. You can also find child-appropriate tapes, CDs or videos at the public library (free to check out) that have songs or dances on them which young children enjoy watching.
- Babies like faces that show lots of expression. Let them touch your face as you make funny faces. Create activities that involve real "face-to-face" interaction.
- Say "I love you" often! Let your child, from the earliest days, know why she or he is special to you. You can never say "I love you" too much.
- Babies love to watch you and mimic what you are doing. Get down on the floor with them and do some funny movements. Encourage them to copy you.
- Let your child see you interacting with other children and adults. This builds confidence in interacting with others.
- Invite family or friends who also have young children to spend time with you and your child. This will help your child learn how to play with other children.
- Read to your child! One of the most important things you can do with your children, even the day you bring them home from the hospital, is to read to them. Put your children in your lap and cuddle them. Choose simple hardboard books with bright pictures. Point out objects and name them. Tell a story from the pictures. As your child gets closer to one year old, she or he will start developing language skills, and reading is one of the best ways to promote this. Even Dads who are not strong readers can make up stories to go along with pictures in a book. The public libraries have lots of books for young children that can be checked out for free.

ADAPTED FROM *BUILDING BLOCKS FOR FATHER INVOLVEMENT: BUILDING BLOCK 5: BRINGING A FATHERHOOD PLAN TO LIFE* AND *BUILDING BLOCKS FOR FATHER INVOLVEMENT: FATHER AND CHILD ACTIVITY BOOK*, DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES, ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES, HEAD START BUREAU, JUNE 2004, [HTTP://WWW.BRIGHTFUTURES.ORG/TOOLS/](http://www.brightfutures.org/tools/)



WHAT DADS CAN DO WITH TODDLERS (2 TO 3-YEAR-OLDS)

- Have a safe place where your child can play and run — in the home and outside. Take your child outside as much as possible to run in the yard or a park.
- Give your child a “ride” on your shoulders. Almost all children love “shoulder riding” as it gives them a chance to be bigger than grown-ups, at least for a little while.
- Read to your child every day. Read books, magazines and signs you see on the street. Even fathers who are not strong readers can make up stories to go along with the pictures. It is important for them to be close to you, listen to you speak and see that words go with pictures and make a story.
- Play ball with your child. Teach him or her to catch, throw and kick a ball in age-appropriate ways. This teaches coordination.
- Help your children learn to use the toilet. Help them understand that all boys and girls make mistakes when they are potty-training. Never punish a child for an accident — it is part of learning!
- Continue saying “I love you.” It can never be said too many times.
- Encourage your child to ask questions. Answer them with short, simple answers using words they can understand.
- Teach your child what words are okay to use and which are not.
- Teach your child that being kind, polite and honest are some of the most important things in the world.
- Let children know what you expect and why — this can be the “rules” at your house or how you want them to act at the store or how they talk to or treat their siblings. Be consistent in what you tell them.
- Let children explore! Explore with them by talking to them about what you see, but also letting them try things on their own first.
- Invite family or friends who also have young children to spend time with you and your child. This will help your child learn how to play with other children.
- Learn the child’s favorite things to do and do those activities with them. It could be drawing with crayons, playing dress-up or looking at bugs.





Dad as Community Member: Identifying and Accessing Resources ENGAGING WITH YOUR CHILDREN



- Take your child with you when you run an errand. Go to the store, the post office or any other safe activity that you need to do. Let the child help you as much as he can and in ways that are safe for him. Most children can put letters or bills in a mail slot or mailbox. Or maybe they can help place groceries on the checkout counter. Be sure to let the child know how much they are helping.
- Make a special routine with your child, perhaps at bedtime or whenever you see the child. This routine could be a question, a handshake or something else that you come up with together. The routine becomes a fun and healthy way for you and your child to connect.
- Arrange to have lunch with your child at preschool or child care if your schedule allows. Most places are very happy to have you there as long as they know ahead of time that you are staying for lunch.
- If your schedule allows, talk with your child's preschool teacher or child care provider about how parents can participate in activities with their children during the school day (e.g., going on a class field trip, being a guest reader, participating in show and tell, etc.).





WHAT DADS CAN DO WITH 4 TO 6-YEAR-OLDS

- During meals, ask your child the best thing about their day. Answer the question yourself in return.
- Play ball with your children. Teach them how to catch, throw and kick a ball.
- Meet and be interested in your children's friends. Watch your children as they play and tell them how well the child plays with their friends.
- Ask your child about things they would like to learn and then make plans to learn them together. Ask the child's child care provider, teacher or case worker about activities in the community that might relate to your child's interests.
- Make regular visits to the library and discuss their favorite books. Library cards are free and allow you access to a lot of different resources (books, CDs, movies, etc.).
- Read to your child every day. Read books, magazines and signs you see on the street. Help your child learn that reading is a normal and natural part of life. Even fathers who are not strong readers can make up stories to go along with pictures.
- Talk to your child about his or her dreams and share with your child your own dreams. Children also like to hear about what dreams their parents had when they were children ("I wanted to grow up and become a . . .").
- Tell your children stories about when you were little. Let children know about mistakes you made and things you did right!
- Talk to children about what they want to do when they grow up and visit workplaces where they can learn about different jobs. For example, many local fire stations have days where they allow children to visit and learn about the job of a firefighter.
- Let children know what you expect and why — this can be the "rules" at your house or how you want them to act at the store or how they talk to or treat their siblings. Be consistent in what you tell them.
- Listen to your child's favorite music and watch their favorite television shows. Many communities offer free outdoor concerts for families.
- Do activities in which you can laugh together.
- Take your child to meet any neighbors you have (who also have children), so that you can find children for them to play with and so you can get to know the other parents in your neighborhood.





Dad as Community Member: Identifying and Accessing Resources ENGAGING WITH YOUR CHILDREN



- Play board games with your child and help them understand how rules for each game work.
- Help build your child's imagination by making up creative stories with them. Start a story and let children add in key parts: "Once upon a time. . . ."
- Make a meal with your children. Make something simple and easy like sandwiches or toast, or anything that the children can help with. Just have fun together and help them learn about the kinds of foods that are good for their bodies.
- Make up loving and special nicknames for each other. Make sure it is a name that is not mean in any way and that they like.
- Make a special routine with your child, perhaps at bedtime or whenever you see the child. This routine could be a question, a handshake or something else that you come up with together. The routine becomes a fun and healthy way for you and your child to connect.
- Mail a surprise card to your children that says that you love them or that tells them what a great job they have done on something.





WHAT DADS CAN DO WITH 7 TO 12-YEAR-OLDS

- Make your child's favorite meal with him or her — something that he or she can help you prepare. Just have fun together and help him or her learn about the kinds of foods that are good for his or her body. Help him or her develop different tastes for food.
- Plan a picnic with your child. Have him or her help you pack a lunch and find a local park or outdoor spot to go for the picnic. It can even be fun for children to picnic in their own yard or near where you live!
- Listen to your child's favorite music and watch his or her favorite television shows and movies. Many communities offer free outdoor concerts for families when the weather is warmer.
- Do activities in which you can laugh together.
- Encourage or support your children's interests and schoolwork by having them show you their homework. Spend time with your children as they complete their homework and have them share with you what they are learning.
- Encourage your children to read in their free time. Take them to the library and let them get their own library card to check out books.
- Play board games with your children and help them understand how rules for each game work.
- Be physically active with your child. Go for a walk together or play basketball or catch. Find out where the local parks and recreational centers are and see if they offer activities you could do together.
- Tell your children stories about when you were little. Let children know about mistakes you made and things you did right!
- Talk to children about what they want to do when they grow up and visit workplaces where they can learn about different jobs. For example, many local fire stations have days where they allow children to visit and learn about the job of a firefighter.
- Meet and be interested in your child's friends. For your own benefit and the safety of your child and his or her friends, talk to your child's friends' parents by phone or in person if your child will be spending time at their home.
- Let children know what you expect and why — this can be the "rules" at your house or how you want them to act at the store or how they talk to or treat their siblings. Be consistent in what you tell them.



Adapted from *Building Blocks for Father Involvement: Building Block 5: Bringing a Fatherhood Plan to Life* and *Building Blocks for Father Involvement: Father and Child Activity Book*, Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Head Start Bureau, June 2004, <http://www.brightfutures.org/tools/>



WHAT DADS CAN DO WITH TEENAGERS (13 TO 18-YEARS-OLDS)

- Don't assume your teenagers do not want to be hugged. Ask them what would make them feel comfortable and continue to express your love, through your words, tone of voice and body language. Continue to tell your children how much you love them!
- Ask your teenager what he or she enjoys doing for fun and then set a time to do these activities together. It could be going to see movies, exercising, playing a sport, shopping, going to watch high school sporting events, etc. These could be things that can take the whole day or just ten minutes. If your teenager's schedule doesn't fit yours, try to find even a small amount of time to spend with him or her. Your teenager will appreciate knowing that he or she is important enough for you to spend time with him or her.
- Attend your teenager's extracurricular activities (sports, plays, club activities, etc.). If you can't be physically present at the event, give your teenager a call before or after the event to show your support.
- Take advantage of car rides and other opportunities to "touch base" with your teenager about what is going on in his or her life.
- Listen to your teenager. Many times teenagers want their voices to be heard or just want to have someone to talk to. Be respectful of the thoughts or feelings they share with you.
- Talk with your teenagers about sexual activity and the use of drugs and alcohol. Make sure they are very aware of your feelings on these issues. Do not assume that they know how you feel! Make sure that you continue to talk about these subjects with them. Neither of these subjects are one-time-only conversations.
- At this time in a child's life their friendships become very important to them. In order to get to know their friends and who they spend time with, create opportunities or make suggestions for your child's friends to spend time at your house.





Food for Thought

Dad as Community Member: Identifying and Accessing Resources

Please complete the following sentences.

1. If I needed help finding a job, I would...
2. If I needed help with legal advice, I would...
3. If I needed help with providing enough food for my children, I would...
4. If I needed help with transportation to the grocery store, to the doctor's office, to visit friends, etc., I would...
5. The closest playground to my home is located...
6. The closest library to my home is located...
7. The closest hospital to my home is located...



NATIONAL QUALITY
IMPROVEMENT CENTER
ON NON-RESIDENT FATHERS AND
THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM

DAD AS CULTURAL GUIDE: THE ROLE OF CULTURE IN PARENTING





Dad as Cultural Guide: The Role of Culture in Parenting



PURPOSE OF SESSION

Dads will learn about the importance of using their culture as a foundation for parenting. Dads will explore what cultures they identify with, how their cultures influence how they act as Dads, what parts of their cultures they want to share with their children and ways in which they can share their cultures with their children.

FACILITATOR PREPARATION

- Review all the Facilitator Resources listed below.
- Ensure that there are enough copies of all handouts for each Dad.
- Post the group guidelines developed in the Introduction session on the wall.
- Post a large piece of paper marked “Parking Lot” on the wall.
- Review “Parking Lot” questions presented at the previous session and prepare answers.
- Write the Food for Thought questions to be discussed in Activity 2 on the easel notepad.
- Prepare your own cultural coat of arms for Activity 3 (optional).
- Set up the room so that the chairs are arranged in a circle, with a break in the circle for an easel stand with large notepaper visible to all.

FACILITATOR RESOURCES

- Bavolek, S. J. (1997). *Multicultural parenting educational guide: Understanding cultural parenting values, traditions and practices*. Family Development Resources, Inc.
- Kiselica, M. S. (1995). *Multicultural counseling with teenage fathers: A practical guide*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage
- Merz, H. (Producer), & Hightower, M. (Producer). (2005). *Knowing who you are: Helping youth in care develop their racial and ethnic identity*. [Motion picture]. United States: Casey Family Programs.

MATERIALS FOR GROUP SESSION

- Easel stand with large notepad
- Permanent markers — lots and many colors (for Activity 3)
- Tape to hang large notepaper on wall
- DVD: *Knowing Who You Are: Helping Youth in Care Develop Their Racial and Ethnic Identity* (see Facilitator Resources)
- DVD player and TV



HANDOUTS

- Handout: **My Cultural Coat of Arms** (for Activity 3; two copies)
- Handout: **Food for Thought** that corresponds with next week's session (for Activity 5)

1

Dad as Cultural Guide: The Role of Culture in Parenting WELCOME AND “DAD MOMENT OF THE WEEK”



TIME

10 minutes

Running Time: 0 hr 10 m

PURPOSE

To identify positive parenting activities. To follow up on “Parking Lot” questions.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Welcome each Dad to the group. Begin the session by asking each Dad to share aloud his “Dad Moment of the Week” (any interaction, thought, action, etc. that he is proud of as it relates to his children or his role as a Dad). Answer the “Parking Lot” questions relevant to the previous session.



FACILITATOR TIP

The goal of having the Dads identify their “Dad Moment of the Week” is to help them build on their successes throughout their time in the program. This regular activity will encourage them to recognize and continue their “smaller” interactions with their children (e.g., phone calls, praising, saying “I love you”).

Throughout this session, look for ways to normalize the experience of non-resident fathers. Remind Dads that their challenges and successes, while unique, may be shared in general with other Dads from all walks of life (e.g., all Dads must address challenges related to discipline of their children, shared parenting, extended families and job-related stressors).

It is also important to acknowledge listed “Parking Lot” items, even if you cannot answer them at this time. It will help the Dads feel that their questions are being heard, that you take them seriously and that you are working to address them.

2

Dad as Cultural Guide: The Role of Culture in Parenting DISCUSSION OF LAST WEEK'S FOOD FOR THOUGHT



TIME

40 minutes

Running Time: 0 hr 50 m

PURPOSE

To identify the Dads' cultures and several aspects of those cultures.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

At the end of the previous session, the Dads were read the following statement and given a handout with the following questions to think about in the week leading up to this session. Turn the easel notepad to display the page that lists the questions. Ask the Dads to share their thoughts on these questions aloud with the group. (You may need to define ethnicity; the term usually refers to the country one's ancestors came from, but it might also mean religious background for some.)

We all belong to several cultures. For example, our cultures might include the racial or ethnic groups we belong to (like African-American, Caucasian or Latino), our religion, our age group and our neighborhoods (maybe you grew up on a certain city block where everyone knew you, kept an eye on you and expected certain behavior from you). Other cultural groups might include people with the same interests, such as musical cultures formed around hip-hop or sports cultures for basketball players (do you remember who the "jocks" were in school?), rodeo, skateboarding or Harley riding. Gender (what sex you are) and sexual orientation also have cultural traits that might be shared. People gain a lot of pride and understanding about themselves by being part of different cultures. Sometimes being part of a culture can be challenging. Sometimes people get pulled into cultures like a drug culture or a gang.

One really important thing for all of us to keep in mind is that being part of a culture does not mean you share all the beliefs or behaviors of everyone else who is part of that culture. Culture is about sharing some common values, ideas, activities, food, etc., but not necessarily all of them, all the time. Some people think that we need to believe and share everything within our culture and that type of thinking is how people sometimes get trapped into stereotyping others, even themselves. Being part of different cultures helps make up who you are, but then there is the part of you that is just "you".

- 1. What are three cultures that you are a part of?**
- 2. How would you describe each of these cultures to someone who did not know about them?**



FACILITATOR TIP

This conversation is designed to get Dads thinking about what culture means and the importance of culture in their lives. Sometimes people have a hard time identifying and describing their cultures because it is so much of who they are that they have not thought about it in this manner. If some of the Dads experience difficulty in identifying the cultures they are part of, try asking the group some of the following questions:

- How about your ethnic group(s)? What group(s) would you say you belong to? How would you refer to these groups? For example, some might say they identify themselves as “Hispanic,” but others might say “Latino.” A person might be Guatemalan and want to use that term instead of the broader term “Latino.” If they are Caucasian or White, they may want to use that term or identify the European country or countries their ancestors came from (e.g., Hungarian). If they are bi-racial, they might describe themselves as that (e.g., Tiger Woods says on his website that he is both African-American and Asian because his father is African-American and his mother is from Thailand.)
- What do you think about yourself as a man?
- Are you part of a religious community? Did you grow up in one?
- What are some things you like to do that are themselves cultures? For instance, do you participate in sports or music groups?
- How would you describe one of your cultures to someone who does not know about it? For example, what do people in your culture like to do? What do they believe is important in life?
- Do you think people outside your cultural group view your culture differently than the way people in your culture view themselves? Are these stereotypes?



BREAK

TIME

10 minutes

Running Time: 1 hr 00 m

3

Dad as Cultural Guide: The Role of Culture in Parenting ACTIVITY: DRAWING MY CULTURAL COAT OF ARMS



TIME

25 minutes

Running Time: 1 hr 25 m

PURPOSE

To make a cultural coat of arms as a way for Dads to see their culture and show others their cultural make-up.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY



Each of you has come up with at least three cultures that you are part of. Now take the handout entitled **My Cultural Coat of Arms** and draw in the cultures that really define who you are as a person. Make the most important ones stand out by size or color or however you want. You can use words, pictures or designs to display your cultures.

Explain the idea of a coat of arms, if needed. Used in some cultures, it is a group of symbols and pictures on a shield and it lets others know what family or group you are a part of. We are using a cultural coat of arms as a way to show important parts of each of us. (You may want to make your own cultural coat of arms as an example.)

Give Dads about 10 minutes to do this activity and then ask Dads in the group to volunteer to explain their cultural coat of arms. Encourage them to do this type of activity with their children over the age of 6. Children like to make coats of arms with things they like about themselves; this can include sports, ethnicity, interests, etc. This activity is a way for children and Dads to talk about how they are the same, how they are different and what is important to them. Dads can use this as an activity to start talking with their children about their cultures.



FACILITATOR TIP

This activity is designed to get the Dads to think more about what cultures they identify with and which of these cultures have a prominent role in their identities. Encourage them to speak about these areas as they share their cultural coats of arms.

4

Dad as Cultural Guide: The Role of Culture in Parenting ACTIVITY: FOCUS ON CULTURE AND CHILDREN



TIME

28 minutes

Running Time: 1 hr 53 m

PURPOSE

To identify the importance of ethnicity in identity formation.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Share that we are going to focus on the importance of culture and how Dads pass along cultural characteristics and messages to their children. It is important to think about how to share these things with our children in positive ways. By our teenage years, all of us are trying to figure out who we are and culture and ethnicity are a part of that self-identity.

Tell the Dads that you are going to show part of a DVD that was made for social workers who work with teenagers in foster care. The people in the DVD include young people in foster care, parents, foster parents and social workers. The DVD was made to show how important it is to help young people, both boys and girls, get in touch with their own cultures as defined by ethnicity. So, while this video is not about being a Dad, it is about how children get to know who they are if they have to grow up away from their families.

Encourage the Dads, as they watch this DVD, to think about what would have helped these young people get to know about their cultures if their Dads had been involved in their lives. After the video, share that you want to talk about what Dads can do to help their children know about their cultures and feel good about themselves as part of those cultures.

Show the two sequential parts of the video, "It's a Journey" and "Reaching Back" (starts about four minutes into the video; runs about 12 minutes). Then, encourage a discussion among the group by asking the following questions (examples of points that might come up are in parentheses):

- 1. What did these kids miss out on in terms of knowing who they are by living in foster care?** (They did not know about their cultures and did not know what being a member of a culture means. They felt unsure about who they are because of this missing experience. Sometimes they were teased because of it.)
- 2. What could their Dads have done if they had been in contact with their children (even if the children still lived in foster care)?** (Their Dads could have talked with them about their cultures and done things with them to help them learn about their cultures. For example, the African-American boy's Dad could have talked to him about music and listened to music with him. He could have talked to him about being very careful not to make himself vulnerable to traffic police, as the Mom talked about.)



- 3. In your culture(s), what is the role of a Dad? How does a Dad pass along your culture's way of seeing and doing things, such as traditions?** (Dads might suggest things like spending time with children by going to sporting events, helping children learn the difference between right and wrong or spending holidays together so children know family and cultural traditions. These examples demonstrate "intergenerational parenting" and are typical ways that Dads learn to be parents and teach their children.)



FACILITATOR TIP

This activity is designed to get Dads thinking about what kids need to know about their own cultures to form their self-identities. If some of the Dads in the group grew up away from their families part of the time or if they grew up without the presence of a Dad, ask them how their situations were the same or different from the ones discussed in the video.

Other possible questions for follow-up to this activity might include:

- What are traditions from your culture that you would like to pass on to your children?
- In what ways have you passed those traditions on to your children already?
- What barriers keep you from teaching your children your cultural traditions?
- How can you overcome those barriers?

5

Dad as Cultural Guide: The Role of Culture in Parenting THIS WEEK'S FOOD FOR THOUGHT



TIME

5 minutes

Running Time: 1 hr 58 m

PURPOSE

To introduce the activity for the upcoming week and to encourage the application of what is learned in group to their development as Dads.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Provide a brief description of the topic for next week's session and identify several of the main areas of discussion for that session. Have the Dads briefly share what they hope to gain from the session, in order to ensure that their needs are met by the information and content of the session. Remind the Dads that you will be following up with them throughout the week and that you are available for them to contact with any questions.



Introduce the Food for Thought activity for the upcoming week and distribute the appropriate **Food for Thought** handout. Ask them to please come prepared to discuss the activity at the next group session.

6

Dad as Cultural Guide: The Role of Culture in Parenting CLOSING REMARKS



TIME

2 minutes

Running Time: 2 hr 00 m

PURPOSE

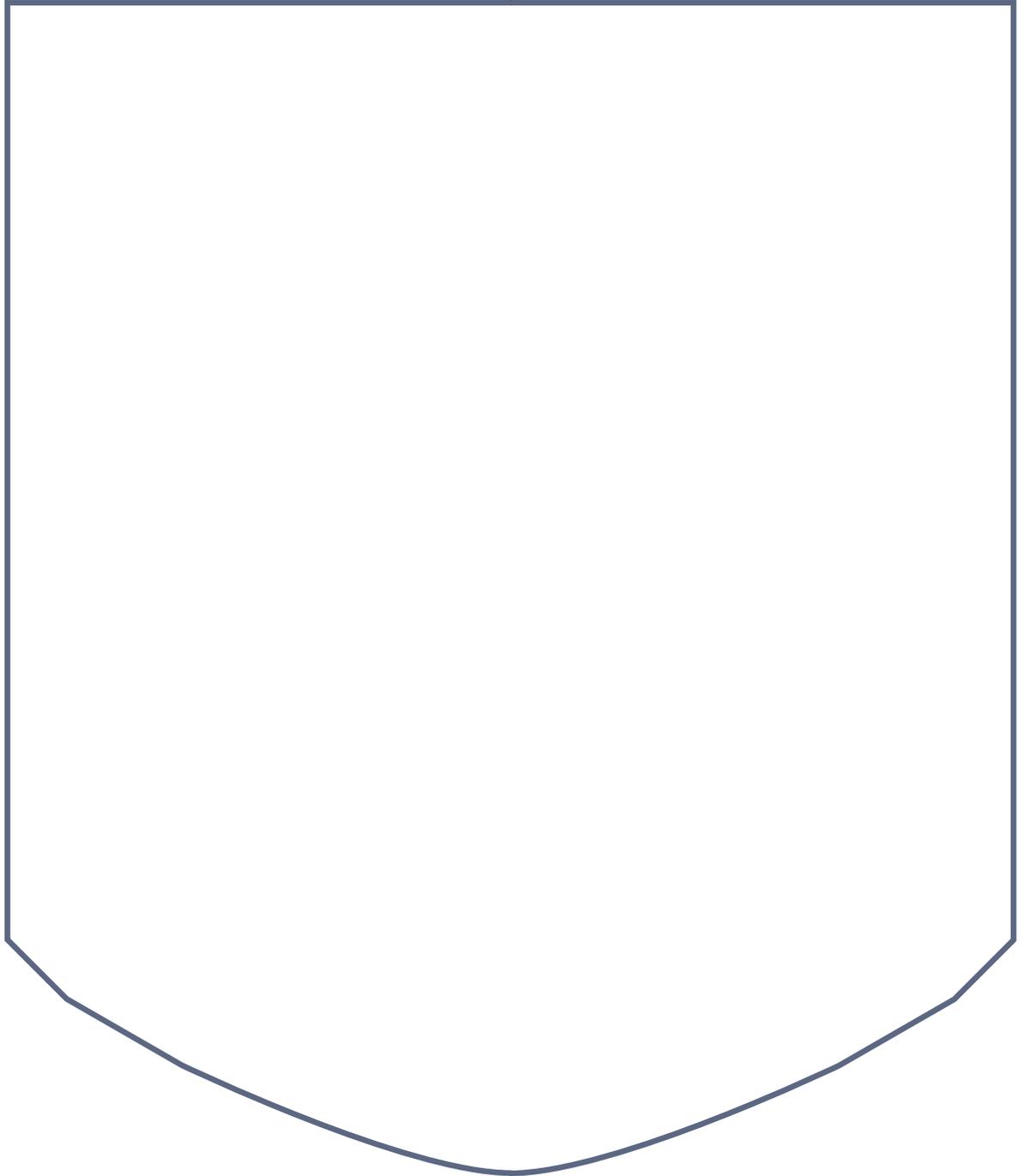
To encourage the Dads to use the information about culture to plan ways they can help their children learn more and feel good about their cultures.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Thank the Dads for their thoughtful questions and continued commitment to the learning and group process. Briefly reinforce what you heard or saw throughout the session that you thought was positive. Encourage the Dads to consider what was discussed today regarding culture and to plan some ways to help their children learn more and feel good about their cultures.



MY CULTURAL COAT OF ARMS





Food for Thought: Facilitator Introduction

Dad as Cultural Guide: The Role of Culture in Parenting

To introduce the Food for Thought questions, please read the following statement to the Dads and then give the group the handout of questions that follows.

We all belong to several cultures. For example, our cultures might include the racial or ethnic groups we belong to (like African-American, Caucasian or Latino), our religion, our age group and our neighborhoods (maybe you grew up on a certain city block where everyone knew you, kept an eye on you and expected certain behavior from you). Other cultural groups might include people with the same interests, such as musical cultures formed around hip-hop or sports cultures for basketball players (do you remember who the “jocks” were in school?), rodeo, skateboarding or Harley riding. Gender (what sex you are) and sexual orientation also have cultural traits that might be shared. People gain a lot of pride and understanding about themselves by being part of different cultures. Sometimes being part of a culture can be challenging. Sometimes people get pulled into cultures like a drug culture or a gang.

One really important thing for all of us to keep in mind is that being part of a culture does not mean you share *all* the beliefs or behaviors of everyone else who is part of that culture. Culture is about sharing some common values, ideas, activities, food, etc., but not necessarily all of them, all the time. Some people think that we need to believe and share everything within our culture and that type of thinking is how people sometimes get trapped into stereotyping others, even themselves. Being part of different cultures helps make up who you are, but then there is the part of you that is just “*you*”.



Food for Thought

Dad as Cultural Guide: The Role of Culture in Parenting

1. What are three cultures that you are a part of?

(1)

(2)

(3)

2. How would you describe each of these cultures to someone who did not know about them?

(1)

(2)

(3)



NATIONAL QUALITY
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THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM

DAD AS HEALTHY PARENT: TAKING CARE OF YOU





Dad as Healthy Parent: Taking Care of You



PURPOSE OF SESSION

Dads will learn why their health and well-being is important to their role as a Dad. The session will address potential problem areas in the Dads' lives and will provide them with some healthy principles for living. Dads will gain a better understanding of how their health directly affects their children. Dads will be able to identify the stressors in their lives and productive ways to reduce their stress and stay healthy.

FACILITATOR PREPARATION

- Assemble a packet or directory of local resources that includes information on fitness or recreation centers, such as YMCAs; for-profit gyms; local colleges; faith-based organizations; community mental health organizations and providers; hospitals and urgent care centers; and substance abuse treatment centers. You may be able to use some of the same resources from the Dad as Community Member session. When compiling the resource packet or directory, be sure to contact the organizations first to ensure that their programs and services are free or they have sliding scale memberships or other discounts available.
- Review all the Facilitator Resources listed below.
- Ensure that there are enough copies of all handouts for each Dad.
- Post the group guidelines developed in the Introduction session on the wall.
- Post a large piece of paper marked "Parking Lot" on the wall.
- Review "Parking Lot" questions presented at the previous session and prepare answers.
- Write the Food for Thought discussion text from Activity 2 on the easel notepad.
- Label one piece of large notepaper "Learning to be a Healthy Dad" and write the questions from Activity 3.
- Label one piece of large notepaper "Ways to Reduce Stress" (for Activity 6).
- Set up the room so that the chairs are arranged in a circle, with a break in the circle for an easel stand with large notepaper visible to all.

FACILITATOR RESOURCES

- The American Institute of Stress: <http://www.stress.org/>
- For resources and handouts on healthy eating (English and Spanish) visit the American Dietetic Association at http://www.eatright.org/cps/rde/xchg/ada/hs.xsl/nutrition_15643_ENU_HTML.htm



MATERIALS FOR GROUP SESSION

- Easel stand with large notepad
- Permanent markers
- Tape to hang large notepaper on wall
- Paper or Styrofoam cups (6 oz. or smaller)
- Rocks or pebbles (enough for each Dad to have a handful)
- Two 1-gallon jugs of water (can be tap water)
- Towels or paper towels

HANDOUTS



- Handout: **50 Common Signs of Stress** (for Activity 4)
- Handout: **Local Resource Packet for Healthy Dads** (for Activity 7; created by facilitator)
- Handout: **Food for Thought** that corresponds with next week's session (for Activity 8)

1

Dad as Healthy Parent: Taking Care of You WELCOME AND “DAD MOMENT OF THE WEEK”



TIME

10 minutes

Running Time: 0 hr 10 m

PURPOSE

To identify positive parenting activities. To follow up on “Parking Lot” questions.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Welcome each Dad to the group. Begin the session by asking each Dad to share aloud his “Dad Moment of the Week” (any interaction, thought, action, etc. that he is proud of as it relates to his children or his role as a Dad). Answer the “Parking Lot” questions relevant to the previous session.



FACILITATOR TIP

The goal of having the Dads identify their “Dad Moment of the Week” is to help them build on their successes throughout their time in the program. This regular activity will encourage them to recognize and continue their “smaller” interactions with their children (e.g., phone calls, praising, saying “I love you”).

Throughout this session, look for ways to normalize the experience of the Dads. Remind Dads that their challenges and successes, while unique, may be shared in general with other Dads from all walks of life (e.g., all Dads must address challenges related to discipline of their children, shared parenting, extended families and job-related stressors).

It is also important to acknowledge listed “Parking Lot” items, even if you cannot answer them at this time. It will help the Dads feel that their questions are being heard, that you take them seriously and that you are working to address them.

Remind the Dads that as they share their personal experiences with one another, what is shared in the group stays in the group.

2

Dad as Healthy Parent: Taking Care of You DISCUSSION OF LAST WEEK'S FOOD FOR THOUGHT



TIME

15 minutes

Running Time: 0 hr 25 m

PURPOSE

To get the Dads' responses to the homework assignment from the last session and to begin thinking about ways they already are healthy parents.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

At the end of the previous session, each Dad received a handout with the following statement and a list of items to think about. Invite the Dads to share one of the six areas in which they think they are doing well, with some examples of what they are doing to meet that need, and one area that they could improve on.

Being a parent is not just about taking care of your children — it is also about taking care of yourself. Parents have many of the same needs as their children: physical, emotional, social, intellectual, spiritual and creative. Think about some ways you already take care of yourself and meet these needs. Using the definitions provided, write down two things you do to meet your needs in each of the six areas.



FACILITATOR TIP

To facilitate the discussion, here are some examples of answers that can be shared with the group for each category:

- Physical – keeping a healthy diet, working out, running, biking, owning a home, renting a home or apartment, playing sports with your child
- Emotional – attending this group for non-resident fathers, talking with the facilitator or case manager on a regular basis, talking with friends and family, letting your children see you express your feelings and emotions
- Social – meeting friends for social activities, eating lunch with co-workers, going dancing, playing sports with friends
- Intellectual – attending this group for non-resident fathers, reading the newspaper, doing crossword puzzles, going to school, attending training through work
- Spiritual – involvement with a faith-based organization, talking with your children and your family about your religious or spiritual beliefs



- Creative – having a hairstyle or wearing clothing which is expressive of who you are, helping solve a visitation scheduling problem, music, dance, poetry, coming up with solutions to the challenges you face

Asking the Dads to share the area(s) in which they are doing well and the area(s) in which they could improve should provide the Dads with additional ideas from one another and should demonstrate that they all feel that there are areas in their lives that need improvement.

3

Dad as Healthy Parent: Taking Care of You FACILITATED DISCUSSION: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A HEALTHY DAD? WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?



TIME

15 minutes

Running Time: 0 hr 40 m

PURPOSE

To help Dads understand why their health (mental, physical and emotional) is important to their ability to be a healthy Dad.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Explain to the Dads that their good health and well-being is an important part of life. Continue by sharing that being healthy is not just about avoiding illness, but also about having healthy ways of thinking, feeling, acting and living. It is also important for the Dads to understand that their health, good or bad, has an effect on their children.

Now ask the Dads to think about the influence their Dad had over their knowledge about what it means to be healthy. Turn the easel notepad to the sheet labeled, "Learning to be a Healthy Dad," and review the questions you have written there:

- 1. What kinds of things did you learn about being healthy from your Dad?**
- 2. If your Dad wasn't around, do you feel like you missed out on learning about ways to live a healthy life?**
- 3. Are there things that you can help your children with that nobody else can do as well as you can? If so, what and why?**
- 4. How do you think your children will be affected if you are not around to help guide them?**
- 5. What barriers keep you from teaching your children about living a healthy life?**
- 6. How can you overcome those barriers?**

Spend the next eight minutes inviting the Dads to share their thoughts with the group.

Share with the Dads that their health greatly impacts their children's lives in many ways. Their health will obviously have a large impact on their ability to be able to take care of their children. It will also influence whether they are around to see the major milestones in their children's lives, such as birthdays, graduations, marriages, grandchildren, etc. Being a good role model for their children is a large part of being a good Dad.

4

Dad as Healthy Parent: Taking Care of You FACILITATED DISCUSSION: CAUSES AND WARNING SIGNS OF STRESS



TIME

20 minutes

Running Time: 1 hr 00 m

PURPOSE

To help Dads recognize stress and learn how to manage stress effectively.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Continuing with the theme of the last exercise, share with the Dads that how their children see them live their lives and be involved in their children's lives sends important messages. Children often pick up on what the people around them are feeling and may take on some of those same feelings as a result. While there are enormous benefits to getting more involved in the lives of your children, it is also possible that you will experience some increased stress by becoming a more involved parent. For example, if you have had a bad day at work and go to a visit without much to say to your child because you are tired or angry, your child may become depressed or withdrawn because of the way you are acting. Share with the Dads that their status as a non-resident father and their family's involvement with the child welfare system can bring a lot of stress and anxiety to their lives and the lives of their children. Sometimes we are stressed by the frustrations of trying to control problems or situations that are outside of our control. When possible, it is good to check in with yourself about what is really within your control and what is not and then try to figure out what you can and cannot do to try to address these issues. Any amount of stress can affect our ability to stay healthy, as "stress is an emotional response to the demands of life."¹ It is estimated that 75-90 percent of all illness (including physical illness) is stress-related.

Ask the Dads to spend five minutes brainstorming aloud all of the stressors in their lives. Ask a volunteer to write their responses on the easel notepad.



Next, pass out the handout entitled **50 Common Signs of Stress** and spend 10 minutes reviewing it aloud. Invite the Dads to share whether they have ever experienced or are experiencing any of these signs because of their children's involvement with the child welfare system. Then, invite them to add any signs of stress they have seen in themselves or in others.



FACILITATOR TIP

If none of the Dads volunteer to write on the notepad, feel free to do it yourself.

¹BAVOLEK, S. J. (1999). NURTURING PARENTING: TEACHING EMPATHY, SELF-WORTH AND DISCIPLINE TO SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN. ASHEVILLE, NC: FAMILY DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES, INC.



BREAK

TIME

10 minutes

Running Time: 1 hr 10 m

5

Dad as Healthy Parent: Taking Care of You ACTIVITY: THE IMPORTANCE OF REDUCING STRESS FOR YOUR CHILDREN



TIME

20 minutes

Running Time: 1 hr 30 m

PURPOSE

To show the Dads how their stress affects their ability to have a relationship with their children.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Explain to the Dads that in order to illustrate the importance of balancing their mental, emotional and physical health with their role as a Dad, they are going to do a short activity.

Ask the Dads to put any paper materials they have (binders, handouts, etc.) under their chairs. Give each Dad one empty cup, pass around the gallon water jugs, and tell them to fill the cup about half full with water. Then, give each Dad another cup filled with rocks or pebbles. Once everyone has both cups, explain that the water in the cup represents the time and energy you have to develop your relationship with your children. Share with the Dads that the rocks represent all of the stressors in their life. Explain that you will be reading off a list of life activities or events and for each one that they are experiencing they must drop a rock into their cup of water. Ask if there are any questions. Then begin reading off the items below, one at a time, giving the Dads enough time to put a rock in their cup.

“Put a rock in your cup if you. . .”

- 1. Have a child involved with the child welfare system**
- 2. Are sharing parenting with other caregivers**
- 3. Have to find an attorney**
- 4. Have orders from a judge to complete services or an evaluation**
- 5. Have more than one child**
- 6. Have a cell phone**
- 7. Have moved in the past year**
- 8. Are looking for a job**
- 9. Do not exercise regularly**
- 10. Do not see your doctor regularly**
- 11. Have a teenager**
- 12. Are worried about paying the bills**
- 13. Smoke cigarettes**



- 14. Sit in traffic everyday in a car or on a bus**
- 15. Have changed jobs in the past year**
- 16. Work more than 40 hours per week**
- 17. Have gone through a divorce**
- 18. Are about to have another child**
- 19. Worry about the neighborhood you live in**
- 20. Have lost a loved one recently**

Slowly, the cups will begin to overflow with water as more and more rocks are added. Allow the Dads to react to this experience. Then, clean up the materials for the activity.

Share with the Dads that this activity is meant to illustrate how the stressors in our lives can impact the amount of time and energy we have to build a relationship with our children. Invite them to share their thoughts on the activity and that statement.



FACILITATOR TIP

Feel free to ask the Dads to help you distribute materials for this activity. When reading off the list of life activities or events, be sure to leave enough time for the Dads to look around and see who else might be experiencing that same stressor. You may not need to use all of the items on the list, so feel free to select the ones that relate most to the group of Dads you have. Pay attention to the Dads and as their cups begin to overflow, stop and debrief. This activity should be fun, engaging and a little messy.

6

Dad as Healthy Parent: Taking Care of You FACILITATED DISCUSSION: BRAINSTORMING WAYS TO REDUCE STRESS



TIME

13 minutes

Running Time: 1 hr 43 m

PURPOSE

To help the Dads find new ways to reduce stress in their lives.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Share with the Dads that the most important aspect of stress in their lives is how they deal with it. Flip to the easel notepaper labeled "Ways to Reduce Stress." Share with the Dads that as a group, they are going to spend 10 minutes brainstorming some positive ways they can deal with different kinds of stress.

Ask for a volunteer from the group to write the group's answers on the notepaper. Hang the notepaper pages on the wall as they are filled with suggestions.

Share with the Dads that you will take their ideas and write or type them up and have copies available for the Dads at the next session.



FACILITATOR TIP

If none of the Dads volunteer to write on the notepad, feel free to do it yourself. The following ideas can get the group started with the activity, continue the brainstorming or offer other ideas not stated by the group members:

- Engage in regular physical exercise
- Eat foods that are healthy for you
- Get regular and sufficient sleep
- Listen to your body when you start to get sick and take it easy
- Get medical attention when it is needed
- Set realistic goals for yourself
- Improve communication skills with others, particularly your children's other caregivers
- Try to think positive thoughts
- See a therapist or counselor



- Leave work at work
- Get organized
- Find a support network of people you trust
- Find healthy social activities
- Play on a sports team
- Relax
- Find a hobby you enjoy
- Laugh — find humor in things
- Change jobs or careers if your work-related stress is high
- Cut back on spending
- Participate in a faith-based community

7

Dad as Healthy Parent: Taking Care of You REVIEW OF LOCAL RESOURCE PACKET



TIME

10 minutes

Running Time: 1 hr 53 m

PURPOSE

To familiarize Dads with valuable resources in their area that deal with physical, mental, emotional or spiritual health and well-being.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY



Distribute the handout entitled **Local Resource Packet for Healthy Dads** (generated by the facilitator) and encourage the Dads to begin looking through it. Share with the Dads that this packet contains a list of places and providers that might help them with their physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well-being.

Take 10 minutes to review the information in the packet and highlight the resources that are free of charge or have discounted rates, sliding scale payments or other valuable activities. Explain that a sliding scale is when a membership or other type of payment is based on the Dad's income, so the fees are adjusted to meet what they are able to pay. Answer any questions they have about the information provided and encourage them to speak with you one-on-one if they would like to find out more about a resource or how to get involved.

8

Dad as Healthy Parent: Taking Care of You THIS WEEK'S FOOD FOR THOUGHT



TIME

5 minutes

Running Time: 1 hr 58 m

PURPOSE

To introduce the activity for the upcoming week and to encourage the application of what is learned in group to their development as Dads.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Provide a brief description of the topic for next week's session and identify several of the main areas of discussion for that session. Have the Dads briefly share what they hope to gain from the session, in order to ensure that their needs are met by the information and content of the session. Remind the Dads that you will be following up with them throughout the week and that you are available for them to contact with any questions.



Introduce the Food for Thought activity for the upcoming week and distribute the appropriate **Food for Thought** handout. Ask them to please come prepared to discuss the activity at the next group session.

9

Dad as Healthy Parent: Taking Care of You CLOSING REMARKS



TIME

2 minutes

Running Time: 2 hr 00 m

PURPOSE

To encourage the Dads to put to use the information learned on being a healthy man and parent.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Thank the Dads for their thoughtful questions and continued commitment to the learning and group process. Briefly reinforce what you heard or saw throughout the session that you thought was positive. Ask the Dads to begin to pay more attention to the stress in their lives and how it impacts their physical, mental and emotional well-being and, most importantly, their relationship with their children.



50 COMMON SIGNS OF STRESS

Stress is difficult to define because things that are stressful for some people may not be for others. We all react differently to stress, too. Some people eat more or get sick, while others get tired easily or have trouble sleeping. Here are some common signs related to feeling stressed.



1. Headaches or constant body aches
2. Grinding teeth
3. Difficulty speaking clearly
4. Shaking — most commonly lips or hands
5. Neck ache, back pain, muscle spasms
6. Lightheadedness or dizziness
7. Ringing, buzzing or popping sounds
8. Frequent blushing or sweating
9. Cold or sweaty hands or feet
10. Dry mouth or problems swallowing
11. Frequent colds or infections
12. Rashes, itching, hives or “goose bumps”
13. Unexplained or frequent “allergy” attacks
14. Heartburn, stomach pain or nausea
15. Excess belching or farting
16. Constipation or diarrhea
17. Trouble breathing or taking deep breaths
18. Sudden panic attacks
19. Chest pain
20. Frequent urination
21. Poor sexual desire or performance
22. Lots of anxiety, worry, guilt or nervousness
23. Increased anger or frustration
24. Depression, frequent or wild mood swings
25. Increased or decreased appetite





Dad as Healthy Parent: Taking Care of You



26. Trouble falling asleep or nightmares or disturbing dreams
27. Trouble concentrating or racing thoughts
28. Trouble learning new information
29. Forgetfulness, disorganization or confusion
30. Trouble making decisions
31. Feeling overloaded or overwhelmed
32. Frequent crying spells or thoughts about suicide
33. Feeling lonely or worthless
34. Little interest in one's appearance or being on time to things
35. Nervous habits, fidgeting or foot tapping
36. Increased frustration or irritability
37. Overreaction to small problems or situations
38. Increased number of minor accidents
39. Obsessive or compulsive behavior
40. Drop in work performance
41. Lies or excuses to cover up poor work
42. Fast or mumbled speech
43. Feeling defensive or suspicious of others
44. Problems in communicating or sharing
45. Withdrawing from others or isolating yourself
46. Constant tiredness or weakness
47. Frequent use of over-the-counter drugs
48. Weight gain or loss without dieting
49. Smoking, drinking or using drugs more
50. Too much gambling or impulse buying





Food for Thought

Dad as Healthy Parent: Taking Care of You

Being a parent is not just about taking care of your children — it is also about taking care of yourself. Parents have many of the same needs as their children: physical, emotional, social, intellectual, spiritual and creative. Think about some ways you already take care of yourself and meet these needs. Using the definitions provided, write down two things you do to meet your needs in each of the six areas.

Physical – People need to eat, drink, bathe, rest, exercise, breath air and have shelter.

Emotional – People need to give and receive love, experience closeness and attachments to other people and feel trust, acceptance, recognition, security and intimacy.

Social – People need other people in their lives (friends, family) and activities that allow them to interact with others.

Intellectual – People need to use their brains to learn, read, talk with others, listen to others, challenge people’s opinions and beliefs and figure out solutions to problems.

Spiritual – People need to believe in something, belong to something and have a purpose for doing things in their lives.

Creative – People need to express themselves through how they dress, their talents, their style, their culture and their appearance.



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DAD AS PARENT: UNDERSTANDING YOUR CHILDREN





Dad as Parent: Understanding Your Children



PURPOSE OF SESSION

Dads will learn about and discuss the developmental needs of children. Dads will also identify and discuss what children need from their Dads and how Dads can meet the needs of their children to promote healthy child development.

FACILITATOR PREPARATION

- Review all the Facilitator Resources listed below.
- Ensure that there are enough copies of all handouts for each Dad.
- Post the group guidelines developed in the Introduction session on the wall.
- Post a large piece of paper marked “Parking Lot” on the wall.
- Review “Parking Lot” questions presented at the previous session and prepare answers.
- Set up the room so that the chairs are arranged in a circle, with a break in the circle for an easel stand with large notepaper visible to all.
- Set up working areas described in Activities 3 and 4 (four work areas with handouts, paper and markers).

FACILITATOR RESOURCES

- American Academy of Pediatrics. (n.d.). *Parenting corner*. Retrieved March 17, 2008, from <http://www.aap.org/parents.html>
- Bright Futures at Georgetown University (<http://www.brightfutures.org/tools/#tools>):
 - Assets for Colorado Youth. (n.d.). Retrieved March 27, 2008, from <http://www.buildassets.org/>
 - Mayer, R., Anastasi, J., & Clark, E. M. (2006). *What to expect & when to seek help: Social & emotional development in infancy ages birth-12 months*. Retrieved March 17, 2008, from <http://www.brightfutures.org/tools/BFtoolsIN.pdf>
 - Mayer, R., Anastasi, J., & Clark, E. M. (2006). *What to expect & when to seek help: Social & emotional development in early childhood ages 1-4 years*. Retrieved March 17, 2008, from <http://www.brightfutures.org/tools/BFtoolsEC.pdf>
 - Mayer, R., Anastasi, J., & Clark, E. M. (2006). *What to expect & when to seek help: Social & emotional development in middle childhood ages 5-10 years*. Retrieved March 17, 2008, from <http://www.brightfutures.org/tools/BFtoolsMC.pdf>
 - Mayer, R., Anastasi, J., & Clark, E. M. (2006). *What to expect & when to seek help: Social & emotional development in adolescence ages 11-21 years*. Retrieved March 17, 2008, from <http://www.brightfutures.org/tools/BFtoolsAD.pdf>
- Child Welfare Information Gateway. (n.d.). *Child abuse and neglect: Impact*. Retrieved March 17, 2008, from <http://www.childwelfare.gov/can/impact/> [This website has numerous articles on the impact of child abuse and neglect on children’s development.]



- Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2001, April). *Acts of omission – an overview of child neglect*. Retrieved March 17, 2008, from <http://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/focus/acts/acts.pdf>
- Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2006, April). *Long-term consequences of child abuse and neglect*. Retrieved March 17, 2008, from http://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/long_term_consequences.pdf
- Dicker, S., & Gordon, E. (2004, January). *Ensuring the healthy development of infants in foster care: A guide for judges, advocates and child welfare professionals*. Retrieved March 17, 2008, from <http://www.zerotothree.org/site/DocServer/ensuringhealthydev.pdf?docID=562>
- Goldman, J., & Salus, M. K. (with Wolcott, D., & Kennedy, K. Y.) (2003). *A coordinated response to child abuse and neglect: The foundation for practice*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved March 17, 2008, from <http://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/usermanuals/foundation/foundation.pdf> [Recommended reading: Chapter 6, pp. 35-39]
- Nemours Foundation. (n.d.). *KidsHealth*. Retrieved March 17, 2008, from <http://www.kidshealth.org/parent>
- Pruett, K. D. (1997, August/September). *Zero to three: How men and children affect each other's development*. Retrieved March 17, 2008, from http://www.zerotothree.org/site/PageServer?pagename=ter_key_childdevt_fathers&AddInterest=1153&printer_friendly=1
- Resiliency in Action. (n.d.). Retrieved March 27, 2008, from <http://www.resiliency.com/>
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MATERIALS FOR GROUP SESSION

- Easel stand with large notepad
- Permanent markers
- Tape to hang large notepaper on wall

HANDOUTS



- Handout: **What Do Kids Need?** (one handout per working area for Activity 3)
- Handout: **Picture pages of babies, toddlers, school-aged kids and teenagers** (for Activity 3)
- Handout: Printouts of Bright Futures at Georgetown University's **What to Expect & When to Seek Help: A Bright Futures Development Tool for Families and Providers** (available in English and Spanish; have copies of all four handouts available for each Dad) (for Activity 3)
- Handout: **Food for Thought** that corresponds with next week's session (for Activity 5)

1

Dad as Parent: Understanding Your Children WELCOME AND “DAD MOMENT OF THE WEEK”



TIME

10 minutes

Running Time: 0 hr 10 m

PURPOSE

To identify positive parenting activities. To follow up on “Parking Lot” questions.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Welcome each Dad to the group. Begin the session by asking each Dad to share aloud his “Dad Moment of the Week” (any interaction, thought, action, etc. that he is proud of as it relates to his children or his role as a Dad). Answer the “Parking Lot” questions relevant to the previous session.



FACILITATOR TIP

The goal of having the Dads identify their “Dad Moment of the Week” is to help them build on their successes throughout their time in the program. This regular activity will encourage them to recognize and continue their “smaller” interactions with their children (e.g., phone calls, praising, saying “I love you”).

Throughout this session, look for ways to normalize the experience of non-resident fathers. Remind Dads that their challenges and successes, while unique, may be shared in general with other Dads from all walks of life (e.g., all Dads must address challenges related to discipline of their children, shared parenting, extended families and job-related stressors).

It is also important to acknowledge listed “Parking Lot” items, even if you cannot answer them at this time. It will help the Dads feel that their questions are being heard, that you take them seriously and that you are working to address them.

2

Dad as Parent: Understanding Your Children DISCUSSION OF LAST WEEK'S FOOD FOR THOUGHT



TIME

15 minutes

Running Time: 0 hr 25 m

PURPOSE

To identify what the Dads know about their children and who they can talk with to learn more about their children's needs.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

At the end of the previous session, each Dad received a handout which had a list of questions for them to answer about one of their children. If they did not know the answers, they were to identify and contact another adult in their children's lives to learn the answers. Invite the Dads to share their thoughts about the activity as a whole and about what they learned about their child.



FACILITATOR TIP

To draw out more conversation, try asking follow-up questions, such as:

- What did you learn that surprised you?
- Did you talk to anyone else to learn more about your child? Who did you talk to and what did you learn?
- What did you learn about yourself as a Dad through this activity?

3

Dad as Parent: Understanding Your Children

FACILITATED DISCUSSION: WHAT DO KIDS NEED?



TIME

40 minutes

Running Time: 1 hr 05 m

PURPOSE

To create an awareness and understanding for Dads of what children need at various stages of development.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Share with the Dads that in order for them to understand their children and how to parent them, they must first identify the needs of children as they grow and develop. Children's needs change with age, but overall, there are certain things they need in order to grow and develop in a healthy way.

Introduce the activity by telling the Dads that there are four working areas set up around the room. In each working area they will find a large piece of paper to write on, markers, the handout  **What Do Kids Need?**, and one of the four **handouts with pictures of babies, toddlers, school-aged children or teenagers**. At each working area, the Dads will brainstorm and write down answers to the question "What do kids of this age need?" Encourage them to think about children they know in that stage of development — nieces, nephews, neighborhood children, etc. — or even what they remember about being that age. Recognize aloud that given their children's experiences of abuse or neglect and their involvement in the child welfare system, many of their children could have special needs that may fall outside of the general areas they identify.

Introduce the idea that children have many different types of needs at every age. They need things to help their bodies grow and stay healthy; to help their brains grow so they understand what is happening around them, to help them get along with others, to help them understand the difference between right and wrong, to help them be able to share their thoughts and feelings, to help them learn and do well in school, and to know where they come from culturally.

Have the Dads form four groups. Each group should start at one of the working areas. Tell them that they will have two minutes at the first station to write down as many ideas as they can to answer "What do kids of this age need?" After two minutes, the groups will rotate clockwise to the next working station and will have four minutes to review and add to the list developed by the previous group(s). Facilitate the rotating of the groups between working areas until all four groups have contributed to all four areas. Conclude the activity by having each group read aloud what needs have been identified on the paper at their working area.



To provide the Dads with more information on what children need at certain ages, distribute the **What to Expect & When to Seek Help** (Bright Futures Developmental Tools) handouts for each of the four age groups. Encourage the Dads to take the handouts that are most appropriate for the ages of their children or one of each. Explain that each handout discusses what to expect of children at that age, what to expect from yourself as a parent and when to seek help for your child or yourself. Briefly review one of the handouts with the group so the Dads become familiar with the information available.



FACILITATOR TIP

The goal of this activity is to have Dads recognize the different types of needs that children have throughout development (physical/health, emotional, social, educational/learning and cultural). Given the abuse and neglect their children have experienced, it is *extremely* important for the Dads to hear and recognize that the development of children can be dramatically impacted by these experiences. As a result of the abuse or neglect, it is very likely that their children have special needs in addition to their everyday needs. These needs could include, but are not limited to:

- Appropriate and adequate supervision in their home and other environments
- Assured safety from caretakers in their home environment — create a safety plan for children so they know what to do when they do not feel safe
- Assurance that their placement in foster care is not their fault — find language that they know to help them understand why they are not living with their parents right now
- Permission from their parents to talk about things that are going well and things that are not going well, without their parents reacting negatively
- Regular talks with caregivers and other involved adults about boundaries — children should be asked and invited to share their feelings about what they need to feel safe and what types of physical touches are okay and not okay for them
- Exclusion from conflicts between Dad and other caretakers — to not be put in the middle of adult conflicts
- Help in gaining a feeling of control over their lives
- Visitation with siblings who are not in the same foster home or placement
- Maintained connections with their neighborhood, family, extended family, friends, religious organizations and other groups to which they belonged prior to placement in foster care
- Therapy services to address their experiences of abuse or neglect
- Family therapy services to address concerns within their family unit
- Special education services to address any identified educational, behavioral or emotional concerns
- Medical services (and medication, if necessary) to address any injuries or chronic conditions that resulted from their abuse or neglect



As you review this activity, try to identify what areas of development might have been overlooked or missed as their lists were developed (including those listed above). To do this, follow up with the group as a whole with questions such as:

- What about children's need to learn about their culture? How did you learn about your culture? Do you think this is a need for children? Why or why not?
- For infants, you identified that they need to be held. What about being held is important for children at this age?
- For school-aged children, you brought up their need to go to school and learn. What might children need from their parents to help them with their education and learning?

Encourage them to think about people they can talk to in order to learn more about their children's specific needs. Examples:

- Foster mother or father
- Social worker or case worker
- Children's therapist (if applicable)
- Children's teachers or child care providers
- Children's mother
- Extended family members who spend time with the children
- Older siblings, if appropriate
- Pediatrician
- Children themselves! Regularly ask children directly (if they are old enough) about what goes on at school, what goes on in their foster home, who their friends are and what they do with them, how they are feeling, what they eat, etc. And, by talking with your children, it will help them to develop their language, social and thinking skills. Listen to what children tell you. Children often tell trusted adults how they are feeling or what they are thinking, but adults need to be better about listening and responding to what children tell them.

Also, share with the Dads that in addition to talking with certain adults or family members to learn more about their children's needs, they should also:

- Watch children's behavior. Are they acting differently than usual? Are they showing acting-out behaviors? A lot can be "said" through how children behave.
- Trust their "gut" instinct as a parent. This instinct is especially important for parents who have children who are not yet verbal. If a Dad feels that something is not right with his child or that something is different, then he should go with what his instinct is telling him and seek help.



BREAK

TIME

10 minutes

Running Time: 1 hr 15 m

4

Dad as Parent: Understanding Your Children ACTIVITY: WHAT DO KIDS NEED FROM THEIR DADS?



TIME

38 minutes

Running Time: 1 hr 53 m

PURPOSE

To identify what Dads can do to meet the needs of their children.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

For this activity, have the Dads form groups based on the age of one of their children. For instance, all Dads who have an infant are in one group and all Dads who have a teenager are in another group. If a Dad has several children, have him pick the age of the child he feels he knows the least about and find a group accordingly.

Once the groups have been formed, have each group go to one of the four working areas used in the last activity. For this activity, provide them with another large piece of paper and the list of “what kids need” that corresponds with the age group of their children, which was developed in the previous activity. Have each group review the list again and then brainstorm and write down answers to the question “What do I as a Dad need to do to meet my kids’ needs?” Share the following example: “Let’s say that one of the needs identified on the “babies” list was that they need food to grow and be healthy. What can a Dad do to provide his baby with food? A Dad can learn about what the baby regularly eats (from the foster parents or other caretakers), find out if the baby has any food allergies, buy the food and any bottles or utensils for the baby to keep, find out how often the baby is fed, and develop or keep a regular feeding schedule during visits.”

After allowing 15 minutes for them to brainstorm, have each group share their thoughts with the larger group. Introduce ideas from the Facilitator Tip below if the group does not mention them.



FACILITATOR TIP

The goal of this activity is to challenge the Dads to think about what they need to do to meet their children’s needs. In brainstorming, the Dads should begin to see how their unique role — apart from the Mom’s role — influences and enhances the development of their children. You can also point out in this discussion what children miss without their Dad’s involvement.

This activity and discussion will no doubt raise a wide variety of responses. As you review this activity, try to identify what aspects of parenting the Dads might have overlooked or missed as their lists were developed. For example:

- What about discipline? A discussion of appropriate consequences for misbehavior by children of a particular age would be helpful here.



- What about praising your children or offering rewards for good behavior? What are some things you can praise your children for? Encourage the Dads to find ways to praise their children by catching them “being good.”
- What about setting appropriate boundaries for children? For infants and toddlers, this might be done by ensuring that your house is “baby-proofed” by keeping things that might be harmful to them (i.e., sharp objects, cleaning supplies, electrical outlets) out of their reach. For older children, this might be done by setting a bedtime for them when they have overnight visits or monitoring the types of television shows or movies they watch, based on what is appropriate for their age. And for teenagers, this might be done by setting a curfew or monitoring how much time they spend on the phone or on the internet.
- What about helping children find positive extracurricular activities to take part in? These activities are especially important for older children. Are there positive activities for them to participate in through a religious community or organization, through school or through a community center? Participation in activities should be discussed with the children’s foster parents and other caretakers as well.
- What about finding help for your children when they need it? For instance, what if children are having difficulties in school, adjusting to foster care or handling the stress of the family’s separation?
- What about taking care of their bodies? In addition to discussing healthy nutrition for children of all ages, it is important for Dads to talk about how to talk to their children about keeping their bodies safe. This kind of conversation is especially important for children who are in foster care and have experienced abuse in the past. Encourage the Dads to talk with their social worker about how to initiate this conversation and what to teach their children.

If you have not already had the Dad as Community Member session, this might be a helpful one to do next in order to talk about where Dads can go to get help for their children and who they can reach out to for assistance. If you have had this session, then it would be good to remind the Dads about what was learned and discussed in that session as it relates to seeking out information and resources. In addition, many of the issues raised in talking about what kids need from their Dads are issues that the Dads should be talking about with the children’s foster parents and Moms as well, so that there is consistency in the messages that children receive from their parents and caregivers. If you have not already had the Dad as Team Player session, you can mention this connection to the Dads and let them know this is something you will discuss in this later session.

5

Dad as Parent: Understanding Your Children THIS WEEK'S FOOD FOR THOUGHT



TIME

5 minutes

Running Time: 1 hr 58 m

PURPOSE

To introduce the activity for the upcoming week to encourage application of what is learned in group to their development as a Dad.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Provide a brief description of the topic for next week's session and identify several of the main areas of discussion for that session. Have the Dads briefly share what they hope to gain from the session, in order to ensure that their needs are met by the information and content of the session. Remind the Dads that you will be following up with them throughout the week and that you are available for them to contact with any questions.



Introduce the Food for Thought activity for the upcoming week and distribute the appropriate **Food for Thought** handout. Ask them to please come prepared to discuss the activity at the next group session.

6

Dad as Parent: Understanding Your Children CLOSING REMARKS



TIME

2 minutes

Running Time: 2 hr 00 m

PURPOSE

To provide continued encouragement for their commitment.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Thank the Dads for coming and for their continued participation in the group process. Briefly reinforce what you heard or saw throughout the session that you thought was positive. Remind the Dads that you will be following up with them throughout the week and that you are available for them to contact with any questions.



WHAT DO KIDS NEED?



Strong, Healthy Bodies



Active Minds



How to learn and do well in school



Knowing how to get along with others



Learning ways to share what they think and feel



WHAT DO BABIES NEED?





WHAT DO TODDLERS NEED?





WHAT DO SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN NEED?





WHAT DO TEENAGERS NEED?





Food for Thought

Dad as Parent: Understanding Your Child

Take some time over the next week to think about what you already know about your child. Complete the information below in pen. For the information you do not know, see how much you can learn throughout the week by asking the child's foster parents, the child's mother, the child him/herself, the caseworker, etc. Write what you learn in pencil. If you cannot get in touch with someone to learn the information, write next to that question the name of a person who you would contact to get that information.

Child's Full Name: _____

Child's Date of Birth: _____ Current Height: _____ Weight: _____

What is your child's doctor's (pediatrician's) name? _____

What is the phone number of this doctor's office? _____

Is your child taking any medication? If yes, what is the medication for? _____

Does your child have any allergies (to food, medicine, animals, etc.)? If so, list those allergies:

What size clothing does your child wear?

Tops: _____ Bottoms: _____ Shoes: _____

Name your child's five favorite and five least favorite foods or drinks:

FAVORITE

LEAST FAVORITE

(1) _____ (1) _____

(2) _____ (2) _____

(3) _____ (3) _____

(4) _____ (4) _____

(5) _____ (5) _____

(continued)

Name five people with whom your child spends time:

- (1) _____
- (2) _____
- (3) _____
- (4) _____
- (5) _____

Name five activities your child spends the most time doing:

- (1) _____
- (2) _____
- (3) _____
- (4) _____
- (5) _____

Name five things that can make your child smile or laugh:

- (1) _____
- (2) _____
- (3) _____
- (4) _____
- (5) _____

Name three things that make your child angry or upset. Next to each, briefly explain how you know he or she is feeling this way (how does your child show anger? fear?).

- (1) _____
- (2) _____
- (3) _____

Name three wishes or dreams that your child has shared with you (e.g., what your child wants to be when he grows up, "big" things she wants, people he wants to meet, etc.). If your child is too young to verbalize these, name three wishes or dreams that you have for your child.

- (1) _____
- (2) _____
- (3) _____



QUESTIONS YOU MAY WANT TO DISCUSS WITH YOUR LAWYER

- 1. What rights and responsibilities do I have as the child's father? What are my rights to see my child? What are my rights to know about and participate in court hearings for the dependency case?**
- 2. How long does my child have to stay in foster care? Can my child stay with me or one of my relatives?**
- 3. As the child's father, do I have a right to a lawyer? Will the court or agency pay for my lawyer? If not, where can I go to get free or low-cost representation?**
- 4. Is what I tell my lawyer kept confidential? What information should I give my lawyer?**
- 5. What should I do if I don't understand what my lawyer tells me about my case or about what I have to do?**
- 6. What will my lawyer be able to help me with in the dependency case (placement, visitation, services, etc.)? Will my lawyer help me with other legal matters as well, like child support or a criminal case?**
- 7. What should I do if my lawyer does not return my phone calls? What should I do if I don't like my lawyer? Can I get another one?**
- 8. How much can (or should) I talk to other people involved in the case (caseworker, mom's attorney) when my lawyer isn't with me?**
- 9. How will becoming involved in the dependency case affect my child support obligations? How will getting partial custody or increased visitation affect them?**



TEN TIPS ON HOW TO WORK WITH YOUR LAWYER

- 1. Be Honest:** Your lawyer cannot tell anyone what you share with him unless you say it's OK. So, you should not be afraid to be open and honest with your lawyer about the facts of your case and be sure to share with him any information that may be brought up against you in court. Telling your lawyer everything that happened and relevant information about you, good and bad, will help him give you the right advice and make the best case for you in court. This may include information you have about how or whether your child was abused or neglected, whether you have a criminal history or if you live with someone who may raise concerns if you are asking for custody of your child.
- 2. Be Prepared:** Take notes on the events that brought your child into the system and what happens during your case to share with your lawyer so she knows what is happening and can advocate for you. Each time before you meet with your lawyer, write down questions or issues you want to discuss with her. This will help your lawyer understand what is going on and what you want. Your lawyer is probably very busy with a lot of cases, so writing things down before you meet will give you a chance to discuss everything you want to cover.
- 3. Talk About What You Want:** It is your lawyer's job to help you get what you want from the court and agency. Take your time and think about what you want for you and your child and share these goals with your lawyer. When you first meet with your lawyer, tell him what your expectations are and ask him what he will be able to do for you. He will ask you questions about your goals and give you advice on how best to achieve them. He will also give you feedback on whether your goals can be met and if not, what else you should try to accomplish.
- 4. Ask Questions:** Ask your lawyer questions if you don't understand something. The court and child welfare systems can be confusing. It is important that you understand these systems so you can achieve the result you want for you and your child.
- 5. Listen:** Your lawyer will analyze the law and the information you provided her to give you legal advice on what she believes you should do. Listen carefully to this advice and decide if you want to follow it. Your lawyer provides you advice with your best interests in mind. If you don't agree, tell your lawyer why, so the two of you can talk about your options.
- 6. Attend Out-of-Court Meetings:** Ask your lawyer to go with you to important case planning and other meetings with the child welfare agency and other service providers. Your lawyer can advocate for you in these meetings and help make sure that the agency provides you services you need and asks you to complete them within a reasonable time. Try to get your lawyer's advice before you agree to participate in and complete services.



7. **Keep in Touch:** Make sure you have your lawyer's name, phone number and address so you can contact him when there are new developments in your case or when you have questions or concerns you want to discuss. Try to meet with your lawyer before each court hearing to update him on what is happening in your case, the progress you have made with your case plan and what you want to happen during the court hearing and to give him important documents you have received from other parties since your last meeting. Make sure that your lawyer has all of your contact information (address, cell phone, etc.), and make sure to let him know if you move or get a new phone number.
8. **Keep Your Own File and Share Important Documents:** Keep copies of all the papers you get from anyone involved in your case. This includes orders from the court, any papers you get from your lawyer and any documents you get from the agency or other service providers like a substance abuse program, parenting class or job training program. When you start, make progress in or complete a class or program, make sure you get a written record of this progress and share it with your lawyer.
9. **Follow-Up:** If you have called your lawyer, but she has not responded after a few days, don't be afraid to follow up. Leave her another message with your phone number asking for a call back within a certain amount of time or write her a letter. If you are not happy with how your lawyer is representing you, ask to meet with her to discuss your concerns. If you are still not happy with your lawyer's representation of you, ask your lawyer to withdraw as your counsel and request that the court appoint you a new lawyer. Child welfare cases move quickly and a parent may be required to do a lot in a short time. If you are not happy with the representation you are getting in court, it is important that you express your concerns and resolve these problems quickly.
10. **Speak the Same Language:** If you are assigned a lawyer who speaks a different language than you do, make sure you ask for an interpreter to be present at all meetings where you and your lawyer are present so that you can communicate and your lawyer can properly advise you.

Things to Bring When You Meet With Your Lawyer

- List of questions to ask or issues you want to discuss with your lawyer.
- Your notes of what has happened in your case since you last spoke with your lawyer. Your notes may cover things like your progress in finding housing, your contact with your children and your attendance at agency meetings.
- Documents you have received since you last met with your lawyer (e.g., certificate from a parenting class, a letter from a caseworker, etc.)
- Your calendar, to schedule future meetings and confirm upcoming court dates.



NATIONAL QUALITY
IMPROVEMENT CENTER
ON NON-RESIDENT FATHERS AND
THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM

DAD AS PART OF THE JUVENILE COURT PROCESS: LEGAL ADVOCACY AND COURT ETIQUETTE





Dad as Part of the Juvenile Court Process: Legal Advocacy and Court Etiquette



PURPOSE OF SESSION

Dads will learn how the juvenile court legal process works and where they and their children currently are in the phases of the legal system. Dads will meet a parent attorney and be able to ask questions. The parent attorney will only be able to talk about general situations, since he or she cannot provide legal advice to nonclients.

FACILITATOR PREPARATION

- Identify a parent attorney who is experienced in working with Dads and who will assist with this session by (1) helping you customize the handouts to match your juvenile court system or obtaining materials developed for your juvenile court system and (2) joining the sessions to co-facilitate and answer questions. He or she will not provide specific legal advice; if Dads want more specific advice they will need to hire an attorney of their own. If you have difficulty locating a parent attorney to help, please contact Lisa Pilnik or Jessica Kendall, QIC-NRF project partners at the American Bar Association, at (202) 662-1732.
- Customize the handouts and materials or find and obtain other materials designed for parents from your juvenile court system. Find or develop a handout called **How to Find an Attorney** (for Activity 4).
- Hang a large version of the **Steps in the Juvenile Court Process** flowchart on the wall.
- Review all the Facilitator Resources listed below.
- Ensure that there are enough copies of all handouts for each Dad.
- Post the group guidelines developed in the Introduction session on the wall.
- Post a large piece of paper marked “Parking Lot” on the wall.
- Review “Parking Lot” questions presented at the previous session and prepare answers.
- Set up the room so that the chairs are arranged in a circle, with a break in the circle for an easel stand with large notepaper visible to all.

FACILITATOR RESOURCES

- Resources on the Internet:
 - McCarthy, J., Marshall, A., Collins, J., Arganza, G., Deserly, K., & Milon, J. (2005). *A family's guide to the child welfare system*. (2nd ed.). Retrieved March 26, 2008, from http://gucchd.georgetown.edu/files/products_publications/AFamilysGuide.pdf
 - Jones, W. G. (2006). *Working with the courts in child protection*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved March 28, 2008, from <http://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/usermanuals/courts/courts.pdf>



- State-Specific Resources:
 - Colorado: El Paso Department of Human Services. (2006). *A parent's handbook*. Available from the El Paso Department of Human Services, 105 N. Spruce, Colorado Springs, CO 80905.
 - Texas: State Bar of Texas. (n.d.). *A handbook for parents and guardians in child protection cases*. Retrieved March 28, 2008, from http://www.texasbar.com/Template.cfm?Section=Committees_List1&Template=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=8500
 - Any state, regional or county resources for families that explain your state/region/county child welfare system and provide contact information

MATERIALS FOR GROUP SESSION

- Easel stand with large notepad
- Large version of **Steps of the Juvenile Court Process** to hang on wall
- Small sticky notes
- Permanent markers and felt-tip markers
- Tape to hang large notepaper on wall
- Prizes or candy for all participants
- A stopwatch or other timing device
- A whistle or other noisemaking device

HANDOUTS



- Handout: **Key Players in the Juvenile Court Process** (for Activity 3)*
- Handout: **Steps in the Juvenile Court Process** (for Activity 3)*
- Handout: **Child Welfare Terms: A Dictionary for Dads** (for Activity 3; Saved on CD of materials)*
- Handout: **Sample Court Order** (for Activity 3; obtain locally)
- Handout: **Tips for Dads in Court** (for Activity 4)
- Handout: **Parent Rights in Juvenile Court** (for Activity 4)
- Handout: **Important Court and Attorney Contact Information** (for Activity 4)
- Handout: **How to Find An Attorney** (for Activity 4; obtained or created by facilitator)
- Handout: **Food for Thought** that corresponds with next week's session (for Activity 5)

* Please note that indicated handouts will need to be reviewed and customized for your area. You may want to augment or replace them with material already developed for your area.

1

Dad as Part of the Juvenile Court Process: Legal Advocacy and Court Etiquette WELCOME AND “DAD MOMENT OF THE WEEK”



TIME

10 minutes

Running Time: 0 hr 10 m

PURPOSE

To identify positive parenting activities. To follow up on “Parking Lot” questions.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Welcome each Dad to the group. Begin the session by asking each Dad to share aloud his “Dad Moment of the Week” (any interaction, thought, action, etc. that he is proud of as it relates to his children or his role as a Dad). Answer the “Parking Lot” questions relevant to the previous session.



FACILITATOR TIP

The goal of having the Dads identify their “Dad Moment of the Week” is to help them build on their successes throughout their time in the program. This regular activity will encourage them to recognize and continue their “smaller” interactions with their children (e.g., phone calls, praising, saying “I love you”).

Throughout this session, look for ways to normalize the experience of non-resident fathers. Remind Dads that their challenges and successes, while unique, may be shared in general with other Dads from all walks of life (e.g., all Dads must address challenges related to discipline of their children, shared parenting, extended families and job-related stressors).

It is also important to acknowledge listed “Parking Lot” items, even if you cannot answer them at this time. It will help the Dads feel that their questions are being heard, that you take them seriously and that you are working to address them.

A parent attorney will be present throughout this session. Briefly introduce the attorney and have him or her write his or her name and relevant information on the easel notepad at the beginning of the session. Be sure to make it clear to the Dads that while the attorney is there to educate and support the Dads, like the facilitator, he or she is also a mandated reporter when not serving as a client’s retained attorney. This information should be reinforced again at the start of Activity 3.

2

Dad as Part of the Juvenile Court Process: Legal Advocacy and Court Etiquette DISCUSSION OF LAST WEEK'S FOOD FOR THOUGHT



TIME

20 minutes

Running Time: 0 hr 30 m

PURPOSE

To identify what Dads know about the juvenile court process and what they want to know about it.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

At the end of the previous session, the Dads received a **Food for Thought** handout with questions which the facilitator read to the group. The Dads were asked to think about these questions in the week leading up to this session.

Tell the Dads that in order to bring a little bit of creative thinking, energy and fun to a pretty complicated topic, we will brainstorm answers to the Food for Thought questions in an activity called "Think Fast."

1. Divide the group into three equal teams of players. Distribute several sheets of large notepaper and a felt-tip marker to each team.
2. Introduce the participants to four basic rules of brainstorming:
 - a. Do not critique others' ideas.
 - b. Do build on other ideas; there is no ownership of an idea.
 - c. Do go for the greatest number of ideas.
 - d. Do get outrageous; it is easier to tone down than create anew.
3. Explain the task for each team to complete by saying, "I will announce a category for brainstorming related to what we will discuss today. Each team then has 60 seconds to identify as many ideas as possible that fit the category. Record your ideas on your large notepaper. When the time is up, each team will walk us through their list and we will assign points."
4. Announce the topic aloud to the groups and then give the teams 60 seconds to write down their answers. Call "GO" to begin. Call "time's up" at the end of 60 seconds. Possible topics include:
 - *Consider having a practice round first. Announce the topic: "things having to do with spring in (name of city or state)."*
 - Positive information for Dads to share about themselves with the court (e.g., see children regularly, have a job, good relationships with family, etc.)
 - Things you can expect from your attorney (e.g., advocate for me, let me know hearing dates, help me talk with caseworker, etc.)



- Things you want to know about the court process (e.g., how do I get an attorney, how often do I go, what should I wear, etc.)
5. Have each team in turn post and read its list aloud.
 6. When all teams have reported, tally their scores as follows:
 - 5 points for each unique item (something that another group did not list).
 - 1 point for each item also found on another group's list.
 - 0 points for items that do not fit the category as decided by the facilitator.
 7. Continue to play in this manner for 1-2 more rounds (decide how many in advance). The team with the most points when play ends is the winner, but of course everyone gets a prize. The winning team gets to choose prizes first.

Tell the group that they all have one or more children now in “placement” in the child welfare system, meaning the children are living with someone else — maybe a relative or foster family, or maybe in a residential child care facility. This “placement” happened because the child welfare system believed that whoever was taking care of the children (such as the Mother or someone else) was having problems and could not keep them safe for the time being. It also likely means that their children are under the supervision of the juvenile court.

Explain that understanding how the court and legal system works can be overwhelming and scary, especially when it comes to knowing how these systems will affect your relationship with your children. It is important to know how the court system operates and how to work with your attorney. It is also essential for you to know your rights and responsibilities as a Dad, so that you can have the most positive impact on decisions made about your children and you.



FACILITATOR TIP

The Dads may have strong reactions toward the courts. This module focuses primarily on how to have success with the juvenile court. With that said, it is possible that Dads will need to vent first before being able to move forward with the content of this session. It may be helpful to tell them that Dads who have previously learned about the juvenile court process were surprised at how helpful that information was to them, even though they were doubtful at first. The goal of this first activity is to try to have some fun while brainstorming together for future connections with the court and attorneys, even though the issue of court involvement is a tough one.

All Dads in this group have had recent contact with the child welfare system, which made them eligible for participating in this program. They may also have had previous experiences with the juvenile court and have feelings or experiences related to these connections. The Dads may have many beliefs or concerns about the juvenile court process, such as:



- Children are removed without good reason or, conversely, some parents are given too much leniency and the children should be removed sooner;
- Parents, especially Dads, are not sufficiently involved in the court process;
- The court favors children's relationships with their mothers;
- The courts are quick to place children in out-of-home care before even considering placing them with their Dads;
- The court will want child support money from me, but won't let me have my children;
- Once removed, children rarely return home.

Many Dads do not understand the steps of the juvenile court process or the roles of all the "players." They might not know what they are being judged on except in a general way. They may have unrelated negative experiences with courts and they may not know the difference between criminal and civil court, much less that children's issues (such as dependency petitions and hearings) are different from other civil court arenas (e.g., traffic violations).

To draw out more conversation, try asking follow-up questions such as:

- What did you learn that surprised you?
- What were the good ideas you heard from other Dads about what to share with the court and your attorney?
- What were you reminded of about yourself as a Dad through this activity?
- What are some of the emotional struggles you worry about in developing a positive relationship with the court and your attorney?

3

Dad as Part of the Juvenile Court Process: Legal Advocacy and Court Etiquette FACILITATED DISCUSSION: STEPS OF THE JUVENILE COURT PROCESS



TIME

35 minutes

Running Time: 1 hr 05 m

PURPOSE

To help the Dads understand the different hearings and steps of the juvenile court process, the “players” involved and where the Dads are within the system.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY



Distribute the handouts entitled **Key Players in the Juvenile Court Process, Steps in the Juvenile Court Process, Sample Court Order** (obtained locally) and **Child Welfare Terms: A Dictionary for Dads** (this handout is the same used in the Dad as Part of the Solution and Dad as Planner sessions. Copies of the dictionary should be available during this session as well for those who need another copy). In beginning this discussion, reinforce the importance of confidentiality within the group so that everyone feels safe in sharing their personal experiences. (Note: This does not exempt the facilitator or the parent attorney from their mandated reporting obligation.)

The parent attorney should begin the discussion by sharing that the juvenile court process will be explained step by step. Like the child welfare system, the juvenile court process is complicated to most people, so it helps to know the basics of how the system works. In many ways, the juvenile court follows different legal rules and guidelines and is more flexible than other courts. Explain that you will go through the court process, what happens at each step, who is involved at each step and the language or “jargon” often used by those involved. Let the Dads know that they will have a chance to see where they and their children are right now in the juvenile court process and where they may be heading next. Share that you will also talk with them about how they can be most successful in working with the courts and their attorney (if they have one). Let them know that you will not go over the **Child Welfare Terms: A Dictionary for Dads** handout, but that it is available as a reference if they need it. It has a fair amount of “jargon” or child welfare “code words” in it and they may want to discuss the terms with someone who knows the system well (e.g., their attorney or case worker).

Have the Dads look at the handout entitled **Key Players in the Juvenile Court Process**. Note that for most of “the players,” there is a short description of their roles (bolded) and then a longer description. The parent attorney should review the handout aloud. Describe each player’s role just long enough for Dads to get a sense of who they are and the role they play in the court process.



Reassure the Dads that the juvenile court wants them and others in their children's family to succeed. Pass around small sticky notes to the group and ask the Dads to write their names on one of the notes. The parent attorney should then review the **Steps of the Juvenile Court Process**, referring to the flowchart and the handouts when relevant. Ask the Dads to walk up to the large flowchart and put their sticky note on the chart when the part of the system they are currently in is reviewed. The representative should ensure that the explanation and terms are correct for the local juvenile court system. As each step is reviewed, stop and check for questions and ask a couple of the Dads to volunteer to talk briefly about where they are in the juvenile court process.



FACILITATOR TIP

The facilitator and the parent attorney should remember their roles as mandated reporters during this session. If information that needs to be reported becomes known to them, they should make a report as soon as possible following the group session.

The juvenile court process is complex and is not the same for all families. For example, the timing of court hearings may vary based on the case, the jurisdiction or the presiding judge. The adjudication hearing may precede or happen at the same time as the dispositional hearing. Another example is that children may have been placed in foster care at the time of child welfare's initial contact with the family or much later in the life of the case. It is important to remember and stress to the Dads that the complexity of the system will not be fully understood in this brief session and that follow-up with the Dads about their own situations will help them resolve issues and better understand the court process.



BREAK

TIME

10 minutes

Running Time: 1 hr 15 m

4

Dad as Part of the Juvenile Court Process: Legal Advocacy and Court Etiquette FACILITATED DISCUSSION: WHERE ARE YOU IN THE JUVENILE COURT PROCESS AND WHAT ARE YOUR RIGHTS?



TIME

38 minutes

Running Time: 1 hr 53 m

PURPOSE

To help Dads understand the expectations of the juvenile court, the expected accomplishments at each step and effective strategies to achieve success in the eyes of the court.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY



Review the handouts **Tips for Dads in Court, Parent Rights in Juvenile Court, Important Court and Attorney Contact Information** and **How to Find An Attorney** (created by the facilitator). Following that, review where Dads identified that they currently are on the **Steps in the Juvenile Court Process** flowchart (note how many Dads are at each step). Then, for each step, facilitate a discussion about some of the strategies that Dads can use to present themselves to the court in a “positive light” and show that they care about their children and are focused on meeting their needs. The examples listed in the Facilitator Tip below can be used to help facilitate the discussion on the handouts.



FACILITATOR TIP

The two facilitators should focus on helping Dads brainstorm and find connections between how their views, their actions and the goals of the juvenile court and the child welfare system match up. It is critical for success that Dads begin to understand the juvenile court process and the court’s motives, goals and processes. Remind the Dads that the handouts entitled **Tips for Dads in Court, Parent Rights in Juvenile Court** and **Important Court and Attorney Contact Information** will be helpful resources in preparing for every court hearing. If your community has a handout on how to find an attorney, please provide it. Otherwise, please have your guest speaker address how to find an attorney based on local information and resources.

The following examples can be used to help facilitate further discussion of the handouts in this activity:

- Show that you have your child’s best interests at heart. Talk about what you believe your children need and how you can help provide for those needs. Let the court and others know that you believe that the children need their Dad and that you can provide love, guidance and cultural connections to who they are because you are their Dad.



- Be open to learning. Let the “players” (e.g., attorney, judge, guardian ad litem, etc.) know you want to learn about how the court and child welfare systems work. Find out from them what they think you can be doing to be effective at each step in the process.
- Follow through on what the juvenile court has ordered and what you say you are going to do for yourself and for your children.
- Make an effort to see the situation from everyone’s point of view, even if that feels very hard. Try to keep thinking about what will help your children the most. The court will want to see that you are committed to putting your children first by cooperating with others.
- Show in small and big ways that you are committed to your children. Make every effort to talk with, see and learn about your children, and let your caseworker, attorney and the judge know about what you have done or learned. For example, “I show up early and with ideas about how to spend my time with my children during visits. I make sure I meet with the case aide to go over what went well and what I can work on once the visit ends. I learned a new bus route so I can get to my visits on time. I call the foster parents to ask if there is anything I should know before our visits to help our time together go as well as possible (e.g., if my children are sick, if anything happened in school that day, if they shared any concern about the visit with them).” Or, talk about what you are doing with your days and how you are contributing to your child’s care. You can talk about the important relationships your children have with your family and friends. Most importantly, share openly about how you are following through with any current case plan or court order (this would be a good place to remind the Dads to look again at the **Sample Court Order**). For example, “I just started a new job that is 25 hours a week, but if that goes well I might be able to go full-time in a few months” or “I completed the substance use evaluation the court ordered two weeks early.”
- Have people you know come with you to court to talk about the good work you have done as a Dad or have them write letters that support you that you can take to court. Talk honestly with the court about the things that have been difficult and about the ways you have tried to resolve these things, including working with your caseworker to come up with new ideas.
- Learn about your rights in court and, if possible, have an attorney to represent you and explain the purpose of each hearing so that you can be prepared.
- If you hire an attorney, it is also important to know his role and what he can do for you. Refer again to the handout entitled **Important Court and Attorney Contact Information**.

5

Dad as Part of the Juvenile Court Process: Legal Advocacy and Court Etiquette THIS WEEK'S FOOD FOR THOUGHT



TIME

5 minutes

Running Time: 1 hr 58 m

PURPOSE

To introduce the activity for the upcoming week and to encourage the application of what is learned in group to their development as Dads.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Provide a brief description of the topic for next week's session and identify several main areas of discussion for that session. Have the Dads briefly share what they hope to gain from the session, in order to ensure that their needs are met by the information and content of the session. Remind the Dads that you will be following up with them throughout the week and that you are available for them to contact with any questions.



Introduce the Food for Thought activity for the upcoming week and distribute the appropriate **Food for Thought** handout. Ask them to please come prepared to discuss the activity at the next group session.

6

Dad as Part of the Juvenile Court Process: Legal Advocacy and Court Etiquette CLOSING REMARKS



TIME

2 minutes

Running Time: 2 hr 00 m

PURPOSE

To provide continued encouragement for their commitment.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Thank the Dads for coming and for their continued participation in the group process. Briefly reinforce what you heard or saw throughout the session that you thought was positive. Encourage the Dads to consider what was discussed today regarding the juvenile court process and to identify and commit to taking the steps to begin, continue or improve their involvement and effectiveness in the process.



KEY PLAYERS IN THE JUVENILE COURT PROCESS

A **judge** or **magistrate** is the person who oversees, or is in charge of, the legal proceedings in the family's child welfare case. He or she:

- Manages and explains the court process.
- Listens to important information, evidence and opinions about a child's and family's situation and seeks opinions about what should happen and about whether or not progress has occurred.
- Is expected to be objective and neutral when hearing information about the case and making decisions. Has final decision-making power.

Decisions can include:

- Whether a child should be placed in out-of-home care;
- Where the child should be placed;
- What the case plan should include (treatment, evaluations, educational plan and much more); and
- When and how often the parents can visit their child.

Later, this person will decide whether enough progress has been made for the child to go back with family or if another permanent living situation should be found for the child. The judge (or a jury in some communities) also has the authority to decide if a parent's rights to their children should be permanently terminated (legally ended).

Your **attorney** is the person who represents your expressed interests in court. He or she:

- Explains your legal rights and responsibilities to you and will tell the court what you want to happen in the case during court hearings.
- Advocates for you about your situation and what you want (in less formal case meetings and in court). He or she also offers advice based on his or her experience about the best way to work with the court and CPS. This may include helping you:
 - Get the services and support you need
 - Make sure you get regular visits with your child
 - Seek custody to get your child to live with you
- Explains what is in your court order, including what is expected from you, what you agreed to do, timelines, what services your children (and you) will receive and what other people have to do (other parent, case worker, etc.).

The **mother's attorney** will do for your child's mother what your attorney does for you.

The **child's attorney** will do for your child (usually over age 12) what your attorney does for you.



A guardian ad litem (GAL) is the person who tells the court what he or she believes is in your children's best interests.

- The guardian ad litem will look at the situation and investigate what happened. Often he or she will also talk to or meet directly with your children. If your child is too young to say what she wants, this person will also talk to other people to get other opinions so that he or she can represent your child's best interests.
- Guardians ad litem also talk with child protective services to understand needs and available services. They make independent recommendations to the court about what is in your children's best interests regarding their placement, visitation and services.

A court-appointed special advocate (CASA) is the community volunteer (sometimes an attorney) who helps the court by keeping track of how things are going in the case.

- The CASA will look at the situation and try to understand what happened. He or she will also talk to or meet directly with you and your children.
- The CASA will talk with child protective services to understand needs and available services. He or she makes independent recommendations to the court about what is in your children's best interests regarding their placement, visitation and services.

An educational advocate is the person who tells the court what he or she believes are your child's educational needs. In some states, this person is an attorney who may be assigned to your children's case if they have special education needs.

- This advocate or attorney will work to make sure your children get the right services in school and are going to a school that meets their needs. This person may also attend court hearings to report to the parties on how your children are doing in school.

A court clerk usually receives the petitions, evidence and other documents from attorneys and others and makes sure they are included in the court file.

A court reporter records official conversations and testimony at the court hearing into a permanent written document.

A bailiff or deputy protects the peace and order in the courtroom.



TIPS FOR DADS IN COURT

THE BASICS

- Arrive at court early. If you have an attorney, he or she will usually want to meet with you at court right before the hearing. Being on time also shows the judge that you respect the court's time and your children's needs. Check in with the bailiff or clerk at the court as soon as you arrive.
- Attend all hearings.
 - The judge may assume you are not interested in your children if you are not there.
 - Decisions may be made without you if you are not present.
 - If an emergency arises that prevents your attendance, contact your attorney, caseworker or the court to inform them as soon as possible.
- Dress in neat and clean clothing and look neat and clean yourself.
- Do not bring food or beverages into court (water is often provided). Do not chew gum.
- Turn off all cell phones, pagers and video games when you are in a hearing.
- Do not bring any weapons to court (or anything they might consider a weapon). Some examples — No knives, guns, pocketknives or heavy chains.
- Bring all the documents and information that your attorney has asked you to bring.
- If you have asked friends or family members to attend court with you, make sure they also follow these tips. Talk with your attorney about who you should invite.
- Introduce yourself to others in court or ask your attorney or caseworker to introduce you so you know who all the “players” are.
- Respond to a judge or attorney's questions politely and respectfully. Address the judge as “Your Honor” unless asked to say something else.
- Don't speak when someone else is speaking and it is not your turn. Don't raise your voice, yell or swear. If you are frustrated, you can say so.
- Always pay attention in court. Let the court (or your attorney) know whether you do or do not understand something that is being said or being asked of you. Ask for help to better understand.
- Your children may be in court at the same time you are. Keep that in mind and set a positive example. Do not ask them to take sides when in court.



Dad as Part of the Juvenile Court Process: Legal Advocacy and Court Etiquette

TIPS FOR DADS IN COURT

- Before you leave court, make sure you know what decisions have been made, what your role is and the timeline for doing things. If you agree to be responsible for certain parts of the case plan, you must follow through. It is better to talk about what may be difficult up front in court, than to say yes and disappoint your children or anger the court by not following through. See if you can help come up with other ways of meeting the court's goals for your children and present them to the court for consideration.
- The juvenile court has very clear timelines. Please go over these with your attorney, the court and your caseworker.
- Get the court branch number and all contact information for the judge, attorneys and caseworker so that you have it when you need it later.
- Remember, there are rules about who you can talk with, write letters to or communicate with when you are connected to the court.
 - You are not allowed to communicate with the judge and other attorneys if you have an attorney yourself. If you have an attorney, he or she will need to communicate with them.
 - You can talk with your case worker, the GAL and the CASA.
- Make sure you know when the next court date and time is. If it is scheduled in the hearing, make sure it is at a time you can attend.

Remember, this is about your child first.

Demonstrate that you care about what is best for your child.



PARENT RIGHTS IN JUVENILE COURT

The law says that you have rights as a parent in the juvenile court process. Listed below are some of your rights. Talk with an attorney in your area to learn if there are more.

- You have the right to an attorney. This does not mean that you will automatically be provided with an attorney for free. In most areas, you will be expected to hire one on your own if you can afford one and want one. In some places, an attorney will be provided free of charge or at a reduced fee if you can prove you meet income eligibility requirements.
- In most places, if you cannot afford to pay for an attorney, and child protective services is seeking to terminate your parental rights, you may ask the judge to appoint an attorney for you.
- In a few states, you may have the right to a jury trial (most often, this may be offered during a termination of parental rights (TPR) hearing).
- You have the right to admit or deny the allegations made about you and your family.
- You have the right to be notified of all court hearings.
- You have the right to attend all court hearings and meetings.
- You have the right to be heard in all court hearings and meetings.
- You have the right to an interpreter in court if you do not understand English or are hearing-impaired.
- You have the right to talk to your child protective services caseworker and your attorney. Remember they may be busy with someone else when you call. Be sure to leave a message with a phone number where you can be reached or try to call them again. Keep track of the best times to call them.
- You have the right to visit your children unless there are safety concerns or it would be harmful to your children's well-being (like their health or mental health).
- You have the right to reasonable efforts, meaning that the court and child protective services must try to help your family succeed.

In many courts, these rights are yours only after you have been legally determined to be the father.

Adapted from State Bar of Texas. (n.d.). *A handbook for parents and guardians in child protection cases.*



IMPORTANT COURT AND ATTORNEY CONTACT INFORMATION

MY ATTORNEY

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Best time to call: _____

Things I want to discuss or ask about: _____

JUVENILE COURT JUDGE

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

The Next Hearing is:

Date: _____

Time: _____

Place: _____



ATTORNEY FOR CPS (DISTRICT ATTORNEY)

The child welfare agency also has an attorney, who represents the agency in court and who must prove why your children should be in the agency's custody.

CPS Attorney's Name: _____

CHILD'S ATTORNEY – GUARDIAN AD LITEM (GAL)

The GAL is the attorney appointed by the court for your child. The GAL will meet with your child and will stand up in court for your child's best interests.

Name _____

Phone: _____

Things I want to discuss or ask about: _____



COURT-APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATE (CASA) VOLUNTEER

Name: _____

Volunteer Supervisor: _____

Phone: _____

Things I want to discuss or ask about: _____

CPS CASEWORKER

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Best time to call: _____

Supervisor: _____

Things I want to discuss or ask about: _____

Adapted from State Bar of Texas. (n.d.). A handbook for parents and guardians in child protection cases.



Food for Thought

Dad as Part of the Juvenile Court Process: Legal Advocacy and Court Etiquette

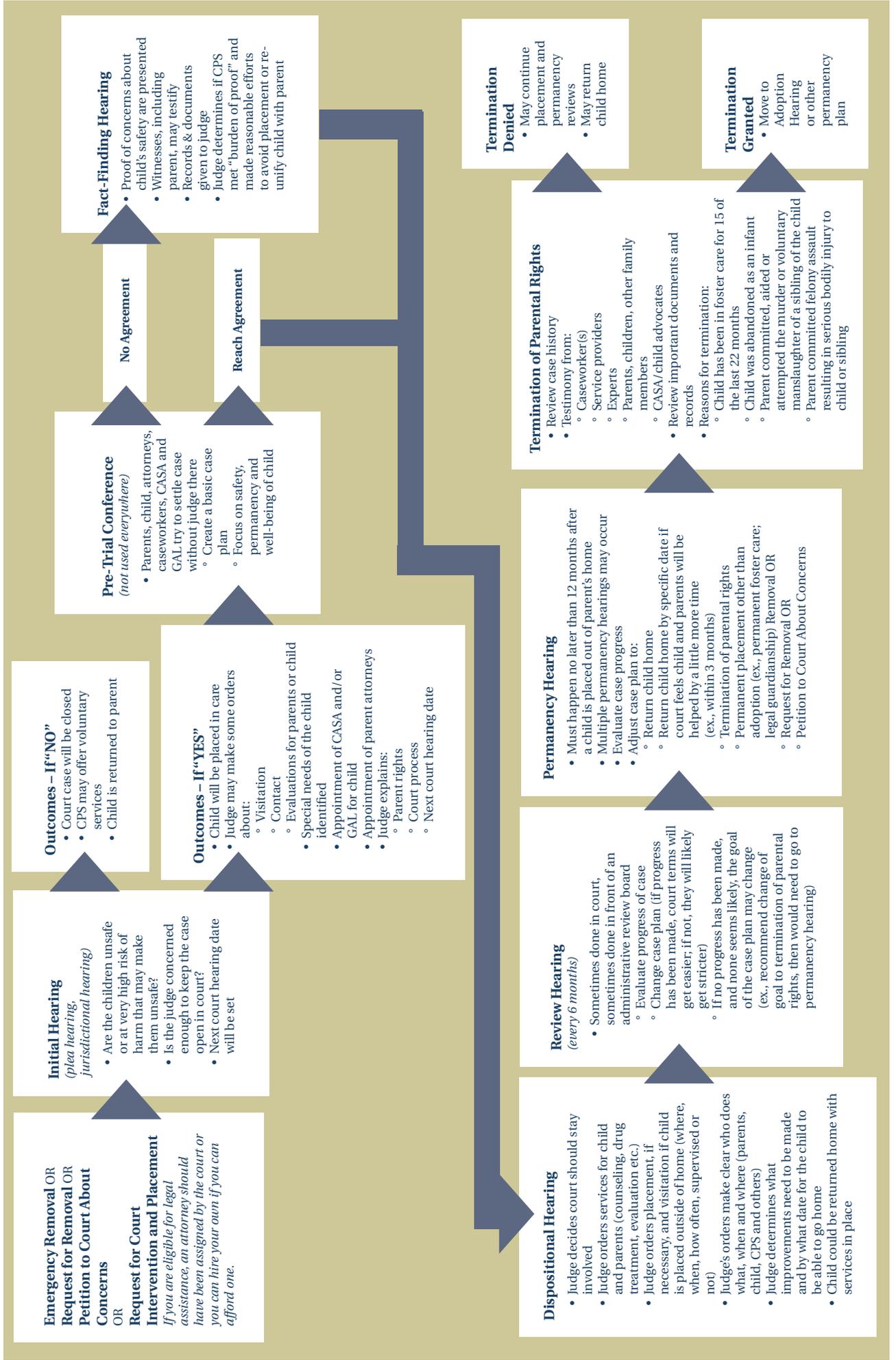
1. What do you want to know about how the juvenile court process works?

2. What are some things you would want the court and your attorney (if you have one) to know about you as a Dad?

3. What are some things you think your attorney can and should do for you?

Dad as Part of the Juvenile Court Process: Legal Advocacy and Court Etiquette

STEPS IN THE JUVENILE COURT PROCESS





NATIONAL QUALITY
IMPROVEMENT CENTER
ON NON-RESIDENT FATHERS AND
THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM

DAD AS PART OF THE SOLUTION: OVERVIEW OF THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM





Dad as Part of the Solution: Overview of the Child Welfare System



PURPOSE OF SESSION

Dads will learn how the child welfare system works as well as where they and their children currently are in the phases of the system. They will meet a representative of the child welfare system and be able to ask questions.

FACILITATOR PREPARATION

- Identify a child welfare professional who is experienced in working with Dads to assist with this session and the Dad as Planner session by: (1) helping you customize the handouts for your child welfare system and obtaining materials developed for your child welfare system and (2) joining the sessions to co-facilitate and answer questions.
- Customize the handouts and materials or find and obtain other materials designed for parents in your child welfare system.
- Hang a large version of the **Steps in the Child Welfare System** flowchart on the wall.
- Review all of the Facilitator Resources listed below.
- Ensure that there are enough copies of all handouts for each Dad.
- Post the group guidelines developed in the Introduction session on the wall.
- Post a large piece of paper marked “Parking Lot” on the wall.
- Review “Parking Lot” questions presented at the previous session and prepare answers.
- Set up the room so that the chairs are arranged in a circle, with a break in the circle for an easel stand with large notepaper visible to all.

FACILITATOR RESOURCES

- Resources on the Internet:
 - McCarthy, J., Marshall, A., Collins, J., Arganza, G., Deserly, K., & Milon, J. (2005). *A family's guide to the child welfare system*. (2nd ed.). Retrieved March 26, 2008, from http://gucchd.georgetown.edu/files/products_publications/AFamilysGuide.pdf
 - U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families. (2005). *Child maltreatment 2005*. Retrieved March 26, 2008, from <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/pubs/cm05/index.htm> [See Chapters 3 and 4]
- State-Specific Resources:
 - Indiana: IARCCA...An Association of Children and Family Services. (2000, August). *In the child's best interest: A practical guide to assist parents through the child in need of services process*. (v. 2). Retrieved March 26, 2008, from <http://www.iarcca.org/referencelibrary/Sites/Site1/Homepage.asp?&Check=True&Check=True>



- Texas: State Bar of Texas. (n.d.). *A handbook for parents and guardians in child protection cases*. Retrieved March 26, 2008, from http://www.texasbar.com/Template.cfm?Section=Committees_List1&Template=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=8500
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation. (2006, December). *Child welfare casework with nonresident fathers of children in foster care* (ASPE Issue Brief). Retrieved March 26, 2008, from <http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/06/CW-involve-dads/ib.htm>.
- Any state, regional or county resources for families that explain your state/region/county child welfare system and provide contact information.

MATERIALS FOR GROUP SESSION

- Easel stand with large notepad
- Tape to hang large notepaper on wall
- Large version of the **Steps in the Child Welfare System** flowchart to hang on wall
- Permanent markers
- Sticky notes



HANDOUTS

- Handout: **“The Players”**: Who Works in the Child Welfare System? (for Activity 4)
- Handout: **Steps of the Child Welfare System** (for Activity 4)*
- Handout: **Child Welfare Terms: A Dictionary for Dads** (for Activity 4; Saved on CD of materials)*
- Handout: **What Dads Can Do When Their Children Are in the Child Welfare System** (for Activity 5)
- Handout: **Food for Thought** that corresponds with next week’s session (for Activity 6)

** Note that the indicated handouts will need to be reviewed and customized for your area. You may want to augment or replace them with material already developed for your area.*

1

Dad as Part of the Solution: Overview of the Child Welfare System WELCOME AND “DAD MOMENT OF THE WEEK”



TIME

10 minutes

Running Time: 0 hr 10 m

PURPOSE

To identify positive parenting activities. To follow up on “Parking Lot” questions.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Welcome each Dad to the group. Introduce the child welfare representative. Begin the session by asking each Dad to share aloud his “Dad Moment of the Week” (any interaction, thought, action, etc. that he is proud of as it relates to his children or his role as a Dad). Answer the “Parking Lot” questions relevant to the previous session.



FACILITATOR TIP

The goal of having the Dads identify their “Dad Moment of the Week” is to help them build on their successes throughout their time in the program. This regular activity will encourage them to recognize and continue their “smaller” interactions with their children (i.e., phone calls, praising, saying “I love you”).

Throughout this session, look for ways to normalize the experience of non-resident fathers. Remind Dads that their challenges and successes, while unique, may be shared in general with other Dads from all walks of life (e.g., all Dads must address challenges related to discipline of their children, shared parenting, extended families and job-related stressors).

It is also important to acknowledge listed “Parking Lot” items, even if you cannot answer them at this time. It will help the Dads feel that their questions are being heard, that you take them seriously and that you are working to address them.

Give a brief introduction of the child welfare representative who will be present throughout this session and have him or her write his or her contact information on the easel notepad at the beginning of the session. Be sure to make it clear to the Dads that the representative is there to educate and support them. This information should be reinforced again at the start of Activity 4.

2

Dad as Part of the Solution: Overview of the Child Welfare System

DISCUSSION OF LAST WEEK'S FOOD FOR THOUGHT



TIME

20 minutes

Running Time: 0 hr 30 m

PURPOSE

To identify what Dads know about the purpose of the child welfare system and what they want to know about it.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

At the end of the previous session, the facilitator read the statement below and the Dads received a handout of the questions below to think about in the week leading up to this session.

Turn the easel notepad to display the page that lists the questions. Reread the statement (modify as needed if there are Dads whose children do not have a permanency plan of reunification):

“All of you have one or more children who are now in ‘placement’ in the child welfare system, meaning they are living with someone else. Maybe they are with a relative or a foster family or in a residential child care facility. This ‘placement’ happened because the child welfare system believed that whoever was taking care of your children (such as their Mother or someone else) was having problems and could not keep them safe for the time being.

Now the child welfare system is working with your children’s family, including you and your relatives, so that your children do not stay any longer than necessary in placement. Probably, the plan for your children is that they will return to living with someone in their family when it is clear they can be safe there.”

Ask the Dads to share aloud their thoughts on the questions below. Write their responses as they share them. Explain that the child welfare representative will go over the system in a lot of detail next, but you first want to understand their thoughts on how their children got involved, what the system is supposed to be doing and what questions they have.

- 1. What is the purpose of the child welfare system? What is it supposed to be doing for your children and for other children?**
- 2. What do you want to know about the child welfare system so that you can help your children in the short term and the long run?**



FACILITATOR TIP

All Dads in this group have had recent contact with the child welfare system, which made them eligible to participate in this program. They may also have had previous experiences with child welfare, perhaps involving prior reports of possible child maltreatment of these children or other children they have, or when they were children themselves. The Dads may have many beliefs or concerns about the child welfare system, such as:

- Children are removed without good reason or, conversely, some parents are given too much leniency and the children should be removed sooner;
- The courts are quick to place children in out-of-home care before even considering placing them with their Dads;
- Parents, especially Dads, are not sufficiently involved in decision making;
- The child welfare system has a strong bias against Dads. Often child welfare does not even seek out non-resident fathers until the children go into placements and then it is because the system wants the child support payments to help pay for their care; and
- Once removed, children rarely return home.

Many Dads may not understand the differences between some of the government agencies they may have contact with, especially child welfare, TANF and child support enforcement. They might not understand the steps of the child welfare system or the roles of all the “players.” They might not know what they are being judged on except in a general way. They may have unrelated negative experiences with courts and they may not know the difference between criminal and civil court, much less that children’s issues (such as dependency petitions and hearings) are different than other civil court arenas (e.g., for traffic violations).

For nearly all Dads, their children’s plan will be reunification. However, in a few cases, the Dad may have been involved only after another permanency plan was made (e.g., living with a guardian). Be sure to tell Dads that they should know the current permanency plan and concurrent plan for their children.

For the second question, write what they want to know on the large notepaper so it can be addressed in the next activity if not answered here.

The purpose of the two child welfare sessions (this one and Dad as Planner) is to clear up the process for the Dads and give them perspectives and strategies for being effective advocates in the system on behalf of their children and themselves.

3

Dad as Part of the Solution: Overview of the Child Welfare System FACILITATED DISCUSSION: OVERVIEW OF THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM: PURPOSES AND IMPLICATIONS FOR NON-RESIDENT FATHERS



TIME

15 minutes

Running Time: 0 hr 45 m

PURPOSE

To identify the purposes of the child welfare system, illustrating why children come into the system and acknowledging that the child welfare system has a tradition of not involving Dads. To clarify the benefits for children if their Dads get involved.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

As this discussion begins, the facilitator and the child welfare representative (who has the main facilitation role) should make the following points (see Facilitator Resources, McCarthy et al., *A Family's Guide to the Child Welfare System* and Facilitator Resources on the Internet for more details):

1. The child welfare system was created to help every child live in a safe and secure home.
2. Many children are harmed, left alone or placed in other dangerous situations each year in America and other countries. For example, in 2005, the U.S. child welfare system had nearly 900,000 children come to its attention who were found to be harmed or left alone. Of those, 1,460 children died.
3. Most of the families of these children are struggling and have a lot of stressors in their lives. They face many challenges, like not enough money, addiction to drugs or alcohol, conflict in the family, dangerous neighborhoods and so on. But, many families do overcome these challenges so that they can take care of their children. The child welfare system tries to help families deal with these challenges so that they can keep their children at home, or, if they need to live somewhere else for awhile, the children can return home at some point. The success rate is pretty high, as most children who go into out-of-home care do return to their families.
4. Many children in the child welfare system are from homes in which their biological parents do not live together. In fact, most children in foster care are not living with their Dads at the time they are removed from their homes (see Facilitator Resources, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, *Child Welfare Casework With Nonresident Fathers of Children in Foster Care* for more information).

After reviewing this information, stop and ask the Dads, **“When you hear all of this information, what do you think it means for the children and for their Dads?”** (To probe further, ask, “Do you think most of these children will have more or less contact with their Dads after they go into



foster care?") You might hear some of the following comments by Dads or you might want to suggest them to further the discussion:

- If families get some help, like with drug problems or finding jobs, then maybe the children will get to see their Dads more.
- Maybe Moms will learn that they should be letting Dads into their children's lives because it is good for them.
- Maybe Dads will have some support from other people in exercising their rights to see their children.

Continue by sharing these additional points:

While going into foster care or going to live with a relative is hard on children, it is often a good time for Dads who have not been living with their children to start playing a bigger role in their lives. Think of it this way: the child welfare system wants to get children back with their families when possible and wants to keep children connected with their families while they are living in foster care or with relatives. And, since the biological Dad and his family are half of the child's family, they are resources for the children. There are many studies that show just how important Dads are for children, not only in providing financial support, but also in providing emotional support. Children who know and are close to their Dads (whether they live with them or not) grow up with more confidence and get along better in life. This is true for both girls and boys. So, the child welfare system is going to try to help you get involved or stay involved with your children.

At this point, ask the Dads, **"When I say that the child welfare system is going to try to help you get involved or stay involved with your children, what is your reaction? Is that the way you see the child welfare system?"** They may be skeptical of this statement about the child welfare system. Elicit their opinions and acknowledge that traditionally the child welfare system has not reached out to Dads, but that their approach is changing.

Explain to the Dads that in the last several years, the child welfare system has been trying to focus more on Dads by identifying and finding the Dads on their cases, helping Dads be more involved with their children and viewing Dads as a real resource for their children. This program is just one example of the many programs across the country that are being created for Dads whose children are involved in the child welfare system.



FACILITATOR TIP

This is an opportunity for the child welfare representative to emphasize the points that children really do need their Dads as they grow up and that the child welfare system is committed to involving Dads and treating them with respect. It is important for the facilitator to support the child welfare representative in asserting the child welfare system's commitment to Dads. Dads may have negative reactions to the child welfare system's assertions about involving them if they have had poor experiences with the system in the past. These reactions should be acknowledged and the facilitator and child welfare representative should encourage Dads to let child welfare workers know that they have had poor experiences and also that they want to improve the working relationships between them.

4

Dad as Part of the Solution: Overview of the Child Welfare System FACILITATED DISCUSSION: STEPS OF THE CHILD WELFARE PROCESS



TIME

40 minutes

Running Time: 1 hr 25 m

PURPOSE

To help Dads understand the steps in the child welfare system, the “players” involved and where they are within the system.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY



Distribute the handouts entitled **“The Players,” Steps of the Child Welfare System** and **Child Welfare Terms: A Dictionary for Dads**.

In beginning this activity, reinforce the importance of confidentiality within the group so that everyone feels safe in sharing their personal experiences. (Note: This does not exempt the facilitator or the child welfare representative from their mandated reporting obligation.)

The child welfare representative should begin the discussion of the steps of the child welfare system by sharing that the system will be explained. The child welfare system is complicated to most people, so it helps to know the basics of how the system works. The representative should explain that he or she will go through the system process step by step, sharing what happens and who is involved at each step, and the language or “jargon” terms often used by those involved. Let the Dads know that they will have a chance to see where their children are in the system right now and where their families are heading. Share that you will also talk with them about how they can be most effective in working with the child welfare system. Share with them that you will not go over the **Child Welfare Terms: A Dictionary for Dads**, but it is there for their reference if they need it. It has a fair amount of jargon in it and they may want to discuss the terms with someone who knows the system well.

Have the Dads look at the handout entitled **“The Players.”** Note that for most of “the players,” there is a short description of their roles (bolded) and then a longer description after that. The child welfare representative should share that the child welfare system is made up of more than just the child welfare agency, as other agencies have a big say in what happens. Review **“The Players”** handout aloud. Explain each “player” long enough for the Dads to get a sense of who they are and the role they play.



Next, the child welfare representative should share that the extent to which the children's parents (both Mom and Dad) and other relatives get involved and work on behalf of their children makes a huge difference in what happens in the end. The child welfare system does not want to raise your children. The child welfare system is under the spotlight from the federal government, the state government and all the experts in the field of child welfare to get children home with a parent or relatives as soon as possible and to not have children stay in foster care any longer than necessary. Having children in foster care costs a lot of money and it also causes a lot of problems for many children: they miss their parents and often they feel like they do not belong. They can lose a sense of their family's culture and they often feel sad, unloved, lonely and angry, wondering why their parents could not "get it together" to take care of them. These feelings can last their entire lives.

Reassure the Dads that the child welfare system wants them and others in their children's family to succeed. It makes the child welfare system feel they are doing their job when parents succeed.

Finally, the child welfare representative should review the steps of the child welfare system process, referring to the flowchart and the handouts when relevant. Before you begin, pass around sticky notes and ask the Dads to write their names on one of the notes. Ask them to walk up to the large flowchart poster and put their name on the chart when you review the part of the system that they are currently in. As each step is reviewed, stop and check for questions.



FACILITATOR TIP

The child welfare system is complex and the process is not the same for all families. For example, the timing of court hearings may vary based on the case, the jurisdiction or the presiding judge. Another example is that children may have been placed in foster care at the time of the child welfare agency's initial contact with the family or much later in the life of the case. The child welfare agency may or may not conduct family team meetings (or a variant thereof) for all or some of the decision making. It is important to remember and stress to the Dads that the complexity of the child welfare system will not be fully understood in this brief session and that follow-up with Dads about their own situations will help them resolve personal issues and concerns and continue building their understanding of the system.



BREAK

TIME

10 minutes

Running Time: 1 hr 35 m

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

The break can take place at an appropriate time during the previous activity or after the activity is completed.

5

Dad as Part of the Solution: Overview of the Child Welfare System FACILITATED DISCUSSION: WHERE ARE YOU IN THE SYSTEM, NEXT STEPS AND WHAT YOU CAN DO



TIME

18 minutes

Running Time: 1 hr 53 m

PURPOSE

To help Dads understand that the system is looking for certain accomplishments at each step and that there are effective strategies to reach these accomplishments.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Review where the Dads identified they currently are on the **Steps of the Child Welfare System** flowchart (note how many Dads are at each step). Then, for each step, facilitate a discussion about some of the strategies that Dads can use at that step to help their children and achieve the goals of that stage. Ask the Dads to share their suggestions aloud -- perhaps things that have worked for them in the past or ideas they have about what might work. Refer Dads to the handout entitled **What Dads Can Do When Their Children Are in the Child Welfare System**. The examples below are facilitator notes for fleshing out the points on the handout.



Examples:

1. Show that you have your children's best interests at heart. Talk about what you believe your children need and how you can help provide for those needs. Let the people involved know that you believe that children need their Dads and that you can provide love and guidance that is uniquely important because you are the Dad. Let them know that you can share your culture with your children in a way that will help them know who they are as they grow up and that this will be critical for them in their teenage years.
2. Be open to learning. Let the "players" (caseworker, attorney, judge, GAL, etc.) know you want to learn about how the system works and what they think you can be doing to be effective at each point.
3. In the Dad as Part of the Juvenile Court Process session, you will learn more about your rights as a parent. However, at this point it's also important to know that while you are working with the other "players," you also need to be protecting your own rights as a Dad (e.g., to prevent termination of parental rights). Sometimes it is hard to find the right balance. You will also need to find a way to work with other "players" on the case plan, reassessment, etc. so that they can see your interest in meeting your children's needs. These relationships can be complicated and this group can help you come up with good ideas about what might work best.
4. "Walk the walk." Follow through on what you say you are going to do for yourself and your children.



5. Avoid unnecessary conflict with your children's Mother, her family and the "players" in the system.
6. Be clear and firm. You do not need to "give in" to get along. If you feel strongly about something, speak your thoughts and support them with facts. Do not appear threatening or put others down.
7. Make an effort to see the situation from everyone's point of view. When you understand what others feel, believe and need to accomplish, you are halfway toward finding solutions that work. The child welfare system wants "win-win" situations for children and families. Help them make that happen for your family.
8. Show in small and big ways that you are committed to your children. Learn about your children. Be open about the fact that your children are both a source of joy and of frustration — all parents feel that. Make every effort to talk with, see and learn about your children, and let your caseworker know about what you have done or learned. Your caseworker will gain confidence in you when you say things that show you are being real. For example, "I get frustrated with him when he cries (or won't cooperate), but I'm trying to learn how to handle it. Like, I try to get him to pay attention to something else. Or I try time-outs. It doesn't always work but I know it's his age and that I'm doing the right thing." Or, show up to a scheduled visit with toys that your children can play with and then play with them. Or, ask your children's caregiver, "How are they doing? How do you handle it when they cry? What do they eat?" People are impressed when they think you sincerely want to learn about and from your children.



FACILITATOR TIP

The two facilitators should focus on helping Dads brainstorm and find connections between how their views, their actions and the goals of the child welfare system match up. It is critical for success that Dads begin to see that understanding the child welfare system and its motives, goals and processes is fundamental to developing strategies that will work for themselves and their children.

6

Dad as Part of the Solution: Overview of the Child Welfare System THIS WEEK'S FOOD FOR THOUGHT



TIME

5 minutes

Running Time: 1 hr 58 m

PURPOSE

To introduce the activity for the upcoming week and to encourage the application of what is learned in group to their development as Dads.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Provide a brief description of the topic for next week's session and identify several of the main areas of discussion for that session. Have the Dads briefly share what they hope to gain from the session, in order to ensure that their needs are met by the information and content of the session. Remind the Dads that you will be following up with them throughout the week and that you are available for them to contact with any questions.



Introduce the Food for Thought activity for the upcoming week and distribute the appropriate **Food for Thought** handout. Ask them to please come prepared to discuss the activity at the next group session.

7

Dad as Part of the Solution: Overview of the Child Welfare System CLOSING REMARKS



TIME

2 minutes

Running Time: 2 hr 00 m

PURPOSE

To encourage Dads to use the information obtained to create action steps for change.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Thank the Dads for their thoughtful questions and continued commitment to the learning and group process. Briefly reinforce what you heard or saw throughout the session that you thought was positive. Encourage the Dads to consider what was discussed today regarding the child welfare system and to identify and commit to taking the steps to begin, continue or improve their involvement and effectiveness as part of the solution.



“THE PLAYERS”: WHO WORKS IN THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM?

CHILD WELFARE/CHILD PROTECTION

- **An investigative or initial caseworker or assessor is the *first* child welfare caseworker to see the family and follow up on the report that comes to the child welfare agency.**

The investigative caseworker tries to understand why the report was made, including:

- Are the children safe?
- Are there concerns about the home, parents, other household members or the children that means there is a big risk of abuse or neglect?
- What services or support would be helpful to the family and children?
- Can a short-term plan be worked out that will keep the children safe? Can the family and CPS (child protective services) make the plan work?
- Do the children need to be removed from their home for safety reasons and placed temporarily with a relative or in foster care?

The investigative worker also provides information about community resources, CPS resources and court. If the children are removed and a court hearing is held, he or she will also make recommendations to the court about what might help the children and family. If the court or CPS are going to stay involved, the intake worker will transfer the case to an ongoing worker.

- **An ongoing caseworker takes over for the first worker (intake or investigative worker) for the rest of the time the family is involved in the child welfare system.**

The ongoing worker is responsible for:

- Helping the family think about what is going well (strengths) and what is not going so well (problems and needs).
- Providing ideas and resources to help the family and children get back together.
- Working with the parents and others (extended family, service providers, guardian ad litem) to develop a case plan that is a good fit, including help getting important services put in place.
- Making recommendations to the court about what will be best for the children (and including those in the case plan).
- Reporting to the court on case progress and areas for more improvement.
- Tracking how the children are doing wherever they are living (such as foster care or with another relative) and helping communication and visits go well.
- Setting up a visitation schedule and location.
- Staying in touch with all service providers and support people to see how things are going.
- Meeting with parents, children and other important people regularly.



Dad as Part of the Solution: Overview of the Child Welfare System

- **A foster care worker or other out-of-home care worker works with children who are in out-of-home placement.** This person works with the relatives, foster parents or staff at the treatment center where the children are living. He or she keeps track of how the children are doing while away from home, helps provide special services or support to the children and caregivers if needed, and may do a home study to help make it possible for other family members to become foster parents.
- **Visitation workers (case aides) supervise the visits between children and their family members.** They help parents plan for their visits with their children (activities, what to bring, transportation, etc.) and will observe the visit to make sure it is safe, to help parents learn new skills and to be able to give feedback (information) to parents and the ongoing worker about what is going well and what needs to change. They may also drive the children to the visit, check in with them before and after the visit to see how things went and give them emotional support.
- **Casework supervisors oversee the work of caseworkers.** They help the worker think through what might be best for the children and their families, find resources and services that will be helpful and review all safety decisions and court recommendations. Sometimes they provide backup when a worker is unavailable.
- **Administrative reviewers check on families' progress and if CPS has followed through on their responsibilities and provided the services ordered by the court.** In between court hearings, the reviewer will bring together the family, the caseworker and the service providers to review progress (usually after six months).

COURTS

- **The judge or magistrate is the person who oversees or is in charge of the legal proceedings in the family's child welfare case. He or she:**
 - Manages and explains the court process.
 - Listens to important information, evidence and opinions about a child's and family's situation and seeks opinions about what should happen and about whether or not progress has occurred.
 - Is expected to be objective and neutral when hearing information about the case and making decisions. Has final decision-making power.

Decisions can include:

- Whether a child should be placed in out-of-home care;
- Where the child should be placed;
- What the case plan should include (treatment, evaluations, educational plan and much more); and
- When and how often the parents can visit their child.

Later, this person will decide whether enough progress has been made for the child to go back with family or if another permanent living situation should be found for the child. This person (or a jury in some communities) also has the authority to decide if a parent's rights to their children should be permanently terminated.



Dad as Part of the Solution: Overview of the Child Welfare System

- **Your attorney is the person who represents your expressed interests in court. He or she:**
 - Explains your legal rights and responsibilities to you and will tell the court what you want to happen in the case during court hearings.
 - Advocates for you about your situation and what you want (in less formal case meetings and in court). He or she also offers advice based on his or her experience about what is the best way to work with the court and CPS. This may include helping you:
 - Get the services and support you need
 - Set up visitation
 - Seek custody
 - Explains what is in your court order, including: what is expected from you, what you agreed to do, timelines, what services your children (and you) will receive and what other people have to do (other parent, caseworker, etc.).
- **The mother's attorney will do for your child's mother what your attorney does for you.**
- **A Guardian ad litem (GAL) or Court-Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) is the person who represents what he or she believes is in your child's best interest.** Some children (usually over the age of 12) may also have their own attorney who acts just like your attorney does and advocates for what the child wants.
 - The Guardian ad litem or CASA will look at the situation and investigate what happened. Often, he or she also talks to or meets directly with your children. If your child is too young to say what she wants, this person will also talk to other people to get other opinions so that she can represent your child's best interests.
 - GALs and CASAs also talk with CPS to understand needs and available services. They make independent recommendations to the court about what is in your child's best interests regarding his placement, visitation and services.
- **An educational advocate represents your children's educational interests in court.** In some states, this person is an attorney who may be assigned to your children's case if they have special education needs.
 - This attorney will work to make sure your children get the right services in school and go to a school that meets their needs. This person may also attend court hearings to report to the parties on how your children are doing in school. **(Note to facilitator: If your site does not have an educational advocate, omit this term from the list.)**



Dad as Part of the Solution: Overview of the Child Welfare System

FOSTER CARE AND OTHER OUT-OF-HOME CARE PROVIDERS

When children live in out-of-home care, they may be with relatives, in a foster home, in a group home, or in a residential treatment center. So, their caregivers might be:

- **Foster care parents**
- **Staff of group homes or residential care centers where children live**
- **Mother's relatives**
- **Father's relatives**

These people are responsible for taking good care of your children and helping them adjust and deal with problems they may face, including being away from family. These people must work with the caseworker to be sure that your children have their visits with you or other relatives (like brothers and sisters and grandparents) as decided by the court. They also must follow through on anything the court has made them responsible for (for example, communication, working with service providers, making sure the children's school and health care needs are met).

SERVICE PROVIDERS

The child welfare system works with many service providers. Who your children and family work with will depend on what kind of help is needed. Often service providers include:

- **Therapists and counselors** (substance abuse, mental health, domestic violence, employment counseling, etc.)
- **Clergy** (pastors, priests, imams, rabbis)
- **Teachers** (parenting education)
- **Support group facilitators** (such as the staff of the fathers program you are in)

These people are responsible for giving you and other members of your children's family the help you need based on the case plan and the kind of services they specialize in. Also, service providers must let the caseworker know about child and family progress and problems.

OTHER KEY PEOPLE

- **Child support enforcement staff** is responsible for holding parents accountable for contributing financially to their children's care. They are responsible for tracking nonpayment of support and keeping the court informed.
- **School officials such as teachers, principals and guidance counselors** are responsible for educating your child and for staying in touch with the caseworker and family about how the child is doing and what he or she might need.
- **Financial assistance -- TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families)** is a program that provides money (and sometimes other benefits) for families with children and very limited financial resources. The TANF worker is responsible for determining whether a family is eligible and how much aid they can receive.



WHAT DADS CAN DO WHEN THEIR CHILDREN ARE IN THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM

- Show that you have your child's best interests at heart.
- Be open to learning about how the system works.
- Know your rights.
- "Walk the walk."
- Avoid conflict about the small stuff.
- Be clear and firm about the big stuff.
- Try to see the situation from everyone's point of view.
- Show in small and big ways that you are committed to your child. Learn about your child.



Food for Thought: Facilitator Introduction

Dad as Part of the Solution: Overview of the Child Welfare System

To introduce the Food for Thought questions, please read the following statement to the Dads and then give the group the handout of questions that follows. (Modify as needed if there are Dads whose children do not have a permanency plan of reunification).

All of you have one or more children who are now in “placement” in the child welfare system, meaning they are living with someone else. Maybe they are with a relative or a foster family or in a residential child care facility. This “placement” happened because the child welfare system believed that whoever was taking care of your children (such as their Mother or someone else) was having problems and could not keep them safe for the time being.

Now, the child welfare system is working with your child’s family, including you and your relatives, so that your children do not stay any longer than necessary in placement. The plan for your children is that they will return to living with someone in their family when it is clear they can be safe there.

You will be part of making this work out well for your child, so you need to know how the child welfare system works. The next two sessions will focus just on that. So, in getting ready for the next two sessions, please think about these two questions:

- 1. What is the purpose of the child welfare system? What is it supposed to be doing for your children and other children?**
- 2. What do you want to know about the child welfare system so that you can help your children in the short term and the long run?**

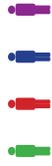


Dad as Part of the Solution: Overview of the Child Welfare System

STEPS IN THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM

When children go into placement and the plan is for the children to go home with their family (Reunification)

What Has Already Happened



Step 1 - Report to CPS

Somebody is worried about children and calls CPS or police. CPS asks questions and then looks over all the information and may decide to go see the family.



Step 2 - Investigation/Assessment & First Plans

CPS meets with family members, including children and parents, and seeks to understand what's going on for the family and if the children are safe.



Step 3 - Placement

If children aren't safe at home and the family isn't able to make a plan for their safety, the children are placed temporarily.

Court Hearings

- Emergency Removal Hearing
- Adjudication Hearing – determine child is dependent, based on concerns about abuse, neglect and safety
- Disposition Hearing – to determine a plan of action, including visitation plan (*may occur later*)

Where Is Your Family Now and What Is Coming Up for Your Family?



Step 4 - More Assessment & Planning

- What does the family need?
- How can each person in the family help the children?
- What services and other help can be put into place for family members?



Step 5 - A Written Plan

- What problems need to be worked on?
- What strengths does each family member have that can help him or her help the children?
- What services and other help are needed?
- What will each family member do and be responsible for?
- Who are the service providers, and what will they do and be responsible for?
- What are the timelines for everyone?
- What's the permanency goal? (*example: child will go home to one of his parents or other relative*)
- What are the goals for the parents? (*example: parents will be sober*)
- What are the steps to the goals? (*example: parent will attend AA*)
- How will it be clear that there is progress and success? (*measures*)

Court Hearings

- Disposition Hearing might occur at this point

Who Could Be Involved?

- Family, their friends and helpers
- Child welfare/child protection
- Court (*judge, magistrate, GAL, CASA, attorneys*)
- Foster Parents (*relative care providers or residential care providers*)
- Service Providers (*therapists, counselors, clergy*)
- Police
- Other concerned persons (*community members*)



Step 6 - Work on the Plan

- Family works on the plan: participates in services and tries to make changes that will be good for them and the children
- Service providers and others help the family as is written in the plan
- Caseworker supports the family, talks with them about how they are doing, makes sure services are available, reassesses safety and how family is doing, writes progress reports
- Foster family or relative takes care of the child
- Family visits with child
- Changes made to plan if needed

Court Hearings

Review Hearing (*6 months after child removed from home*) – to determine if progress is being made and if permanency plan should stay the same or change



Step 7 - Permanency for Children

- Family, caseworker, and service providers review progress
- Decision about what to recommend to court about permanency
- Ongoing services to family as needed

Court Hearings

Permanency Hearing (*at 12 months*) – should child be returned to a parent or live somewhere else? If somewhere else, the court will look at adoption or guardianship with a relative. If the court decides the children should be adopted, this is likely to lead to a hearing called a Terminating Parental Rights (TPR) hearing to terminate parents' rights to their children.



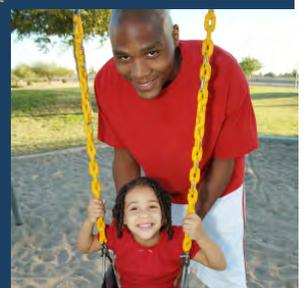
Step 8 - Closure & Follow Up

Family, caseworker and maybe team meet to decide what after-care services and other help are needed



NATIONAL QUALITY
IMPROVEMENT CENTER
ON NON-RESIDENT FATHERS AND
THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM

DAD AS PART OF CHILDREN'S PLACEMENT: VISITING WITH YOUR CHILDREN





Dad as Part of Children's Placement: Visiting With Your Children



PURPOSE OF SESSION

Dads will learn the purpose and goals of visitation (as identified by the child welfare system), what the child welfare system looks for to evaluate the success of visitation, and what Dads can do to have successful visitation with their children.

FACILITATOR PREPARATION

- Review all of the Facilitator Resources listed below.
- Ensure that there are enough copies of all handouts for each Dad.
- Post the group guidelines developed in the Introduction session on the wall.
- Post a large piece of paper marked "Parking Lot" on the wall.
- Review "Parking Lot" questions presented at the previous session and prepare answers.
- Talk with your child welfare representative to gain an understanding of the local child welfare system's visitation program and the kinds of factors assessed during supervised visits. Obtain a visitation observation checklist, if they use one. With this information, modify Activity 5 as necessary.
- Set up the room so that the chairs are arranged in a circle, with a break in the circle for an easel stand with large notepaper visible to all.

FACILITATOR RESOURCES

- Children and Family Research Center. (2001, March). *Conducting parent-child visits: Research integration document*. Retrieved March 21, 2008, from <http://cfrwww.social.uiuc.edu/pubs/pdf.files/childvisits.pdf>
- National Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice and Permanency Planning. (n.d.). *Family/child visiting*. Retrieved March 21, 2008, from http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcp/info_services/family-child-visiting.html
[This website has many resources about visitation in child welfare, including descriptions of programs, studies and good practice ideas.]
- Smariga, M. (2007, July). *Visitation with infants and toddlers in foster care: What judges and attorneys need to know*. Retrieved March 21, 2008, from http://www.nationalcasa.org/download/Judges_Page/0710_visitation_with_infants_and_toddlers_0119.pdf
- El Paso County Department of Human Services. (2007). *El Paso county initial parenting time assessment*. [Saved on CD of materials]



MATERIALS FOR GROUP SESSION

- Easel stand with large notepad
- Permanent markers
- Tape to hang large notepaper on wall

HANDOUTS



- Handout: **Visiting With My Children** (for Activity 4)
- Handout: **Planning a Visit With My Child** (for Activity 4)
- Handout: **What Makes for a Successful Visit in the Eyes of the Child Welfare System?** (for Activity 5)
- Handout: **Food for Thought** that corresponds with next week's session (for Activity 6)

1

Dad as Part of Children's Placement: Visiting With Your Children WELCOME AND "DAD MOMENT OF THE WEEK"



TIME

10 minutes

Running Time: 0 hr 10 m

PURPOSE

To identify positive parenting activities. To follow up on "Parking Lot" questions.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Welcome each Dad to the group. Begin the session by asking each Dad to share aloud his "Dad Moment of the Week" (any interaction, thought, action, etc. that he is proud of as it relates to his children or his role as a Dad). Answer the "Parking Lot" questions relevant to the previous session.



FACILITATOR TIP

The goal of having the Dads identify their "Dad Moment of the Week" is to help them build on their successes throughout their time in the program. This regular activity will encourage them to recognize and continue their "smaller" interactions with their children (e.g., phone calls, praising, saying "I love you").

Throughout this session, look for ways to normalize the experience of non-resident fathers. Remind Dads that their challenges and successes, while unique, may be shared in general with other Dads from all walks of life (e.g., all Dads must address challenges related to discipline of their children, shared parenting, extended families and job-related stressors).

It is also important to acknowledge listed "Parking Lot" items, even if you cannot answer them at this time. It will help the Dads feel that their questions are being heard, that you take them seriously and that you are working to address them.

2

Dad as Part of Children's Placement: Visiting With Your Children DISCUSSION OF LAST WEEK'S FOOD FOR THOUGHT



TIME

15 minutes

Running Time: 0 hr 25 m

PURPOSE

To identify what the Dads' experience with child welfare visitation has been.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

At the end of the previous session, each Dad received the following statement and questions to think about in the week leading up to this session. Ask the Dads to share their thoughts on these questions aloud with the group.

Children need to see their parents and other family members when they are living with someone else. In the child welfare system, seeing your children while they are in placement is called "visitation." Visitation helps both children and parents stay "bonded" or close to each other during the time they are apart. When children are bonded to their parents and other family members, they feel more secure. Also, for most children, the more they visit with their family, the more likely they will return to living with their family permanently. The next group session is going to be about visitation with your children. If you have not yet visited with them, please still answer questions 2 and 3.

- 1. Describe your experience so far in visiting with your children while they are in placement.**
- 2. What are some activities you have done or could do with your children while you are visiting them?**
- 3. How would these activities help you and your children bond during this time?**



FACILITATOR TIP

During this conversation, try to engage the Dads to share with you any concerns and questions they have about visitation. Share with them that this session will focus on what visitation is supposed to accomplish, how to handle difficulties in visiting and how to make the most out of visits with your children.

3

Dad as Part of Children’s Placement: Visiting With Your Children FACILITATED DISCUSSION: WHY IS VISITATION SO IMPORTANT?



TIME

10 minutes

Running Time: 0 hr 35 m

PURPOSE

To create an awareness and understanding for Dads of the importance of visitation for their children and for them as parents.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Share with Dads that over the years literally millions of children have lived at least part of their lives in out-of-home placement due to difficulties their parents were having.

Ask the Dads, **“Did any of you live part of your childhood in out-of-home placement?”**

In the past, many children in out-of-home care did not return home. But, today, the majority of children do return home to live with at least one of their parents. This happens more now because the child welfare system and the court make a greater effort to get children back in their homes.

The child welfare system and the court have learned over time that:

Most children do much better if they can grow up with their family and in their own culture than if they grow up in the home of someone they are not related to or do not know. And children who stay more than one year in out-of-home placement are likely to live in more than one home during that time. In fact, some children end up living in a series of homes and residential centers.

Moving from one place to another can create insecurity in children. On the other hand, children who stay bonded to their families have a better idea of who they are and tend to feel more secure as they grow up. All of this information is known from years of working and talking with children and families who have been involved with the child welfare system, and is written up in many research studies.

Most children will return home to live with one of their parents and they will return home in a shorter amount of time than children did in the past. With all that is known, the child welfare system and the court now try to *help* keep children and parents connected through visitation by:

- helping parents plan visits;
- teaching parents how to learn about their children’s needs; and
- doing activities during visits that will help the parent and child bond.



At the same time, the child welfare system is also watching parents and determining how committed they are to their children by noting the following:

1. Are the parents scheduling visits?
2. Do the parents get to the visit on time or call ahead if they are going to be late?
3. Do the parents pay attention to their children's needs during the visit?
4. Do the parents ask for help and advice if they need it?

The court sets the schedule for you to visit your children, but you can and should say what you want and what you think is best for your children. In fact, you have the right to visit your children as long as this does not put your children in danger. If you are concerned about the amount of visitation you have, talk to your caseworker and your attorney, if you have one.

Often, the court increases the number of visits when parents can show that they are responsible. If the court and the child welfare system are concerned about your children's well-being when you visit, you can show by your actions during visitation that you are responsible.

Sometimes the number of visits scheduled for you are limited by the availability of someone to supervise them. You might want to suggest people who could supervise your visits (such as someone in your family) other than those who work for the child welfare system, if it is possible for this type of supervision to occur.

If someone from child welfare supervises your visits, take the point of view that this supervision can work in your favor. Talk with the person who is supervising and ask him or her for help or ideas when needed. Let this person know you are trying to make sure your visit is based on what your children need at that time. Be open to sharing your thoughts and to receiving his or her ideas as well. Sometimes the visitation supervisor is in the room with you and your children the whole time, and sometimes just part of the time. A few places where visits are held have a one-way mirror looking in on the room. If this is the case, know that your visit may be watched this way. You can ask about how it will be done. If you feel like the person supervising the visits is not helpful or is hostile, tell this person that you would like their help. Try to bring him or her around to your side (their job is to help you as well as to monitor you). If you feel the problem is not getting better, talk to your caseworker (or your attorney).

There are a variety of places where visits can be held. If the court requires your visits to be supervised by a professional, your visits will probably be at the child welfare office or at a visitation center. Check out or ask about the room you will be using and what is available to you there (toys, books, etc.). Then make plans to bring other things that your children would enjoy doing if needed. You can plan ahead by getting a bag (such as a diaper bag) and filling it with things that you can do with your children or that your children might need during visits.



You will probably want to move toward the goal of unsupervised visits. You can reach this goal faster by having good visits with your children and making progress on your case plan. Think ahead and talk to your caseworker or visitation supervisor about plans for an unsupervised visit. If you now have a visitation supervisor who is helpful and supportive, talk with this person about what might come up when the visits are not supervised. This person might have some good ideas about how to handle things that come up (for instance if your child won't mind you or is upset) and this person will be impressed that you are seeking help.

As you visit with your children, keep in mind that the child welfare system is trying to help you succeed as a parent, but is also watching you to determine your commitment to your children. It is the same as with other parts of your case plan — are you using services and other help to deal with your problems? You can compare this to getting a new job with an employer who wants you to succeed — you will get help in learning how to do the job and you will also be watched as to how well you do it. There will be positive results if you are successful and negative consequences if you are not.

Ask the Dads to share their thoughts on the information you have just shared with them. Ask them:

- 1. In your own situation with your children, do you see the child welfare system and the court making visitation an important issue?**
- 2. What do you think visiting with your children can accomplish?**
- 3. Do you see the child welfare system helping you be successful?**



FACILITATOR TIP

The goal of this introduction to visitation is to make sure that Dads fully appreciate how important visitation is for their children and for themselves as parents. They need to understand how much emphasis the child welfare system and the court puts on visitation in terms of permanency decisions (meaning where the children will live for the rest of the time they are growing up).

4

Dad as Part of Children’s Placement: Visiting With Your Children ACTIVITY: WHAT CAN I DO TO MAKE MY VISITS WITH MY CHILDREN SUCCESSFUL?



TIME

40 minutes

Running Time: 1 hr 15 m

PURPOSE

To help Dads see that their ability to read their children’s feelings will help them be good Dads and that knowing what to do with children of various ages helps visits go well.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Share with Dads that the key to successful visits is watching for and responding to your children’s needs and doing things with them that help them feel safe and comfortable with you.

Tell the Dads that their children are in placement and that means they were removed from their home (most often their Mom’s home). Ask the Dads to share their thoughts on the following questions:

1. **What might be some of the things your children are thinking and feeling during the visits?**
2. **What could you do to respond to your children’s thoughts and feelings?**



Share with the Dads that it is a good idea to think about and plan ahead what to do during the visits with their children. Distribute the handout **Visiting With My Children**. Ask the Dads to form groups based on the ages of their children (group those with small children together, those with teenagers together, etc.; it is okay if they all fall into the same age group). Once they are in these groups, ask the Dads to read over the list of activities for their children’s age group and brainstorm some more ideas for activities, writing them on the handouts. Then, ask each Dad to come up with a plan of activities for a two-hour visit with one of his children in this age group and



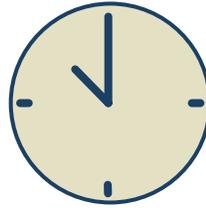
to write the plan on the handout entitled **Planning a Visit With My Child**. Have the Dads share their plans within their small group. Ask for a few examples to be shared with the larger group.



FACILITATOR TIP

Reinforce Dads’ empathic responses about their children’s feelings regarding visitation, such as “scared,” “angry” or “unsure of what will happen next,” and what they can do to respond to these feelings or thoughts during visits with their children.

The goals of this activity are to help Dads think about what their children may be thinking or feeling during the visits, based on having been placed in out-of-home care; plan their visits with this information in mind; and prepare in advance some ideas about age-appropriate activities they can do with their children during visits. Encourage the Dads to also use what they know about their children’s likes and dislikes to plan the visits’ activities.



BREAK

TIME

10 minutes

Running Time: 1 hr 25 m

5

Dad as Part of Children’s Placement: Visiting With Your Children ACTIVITY: WHAT WILL THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM LOOK FOR DURING SUPERVISED VISITS?



TIME

28 minutes

Running Time: 1 hr 53 m

PURPOSE

To learn what the child welfare system looks for in visitation and how to have successful visits.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Tell the Dads about a Dad named Jack whose two children are Eddie, age 6, and Lisa, age 4. Both children were placed with their Mother’s aunt and uncle two weeks ago because their Mother was doing drugs and left them alone. Jack lived with the children’s Mother until Lisa was 6 months old. He has seen the children occasionally, about every three to four months. It has been about three months since he last saw them. Now he is scheduled to see them at the child welfare visitation center and he knows his visit will be supervised by a worker who will be in and out of the room.

Explain to the Dads that you are going to tell them about three things that come up for Jack over the next few weeks. Then you will ask the Dads to share what they think would be best for Jack to do for his children and what the child welfare system is looking for during supervised visits — what will they see as signs of success? (Signs of success are noted in parentheses below.) Write their ideas on the easel notepaper and discuss. Repeat with the second and third scenarios.

Scenario 1: The caseworker told Jack that his son Eddie has been saying that he is mad at Jack for not taking care of them. Eddie told the caseworker, “When I see him, I’m going to kick him hard.” What do you think Jack can do about that? What will the visitation supervisor be looking for? (The visitation supervisor will want to see that Jack does not blame Eddie for feeling this way. He can show this by telling Eddie that it is OK for Eddie to tell him how he feels, but that Eddie needs to use his words and not his feet to share how he is feeling.)

Scenario 2: Jack has been visiting his children for about a month. He has a visit scheduled for Saturday at the visitation center but now his new boss has told him he has to work that day or his hours will be reduced. The boss does not care what Jack already has planned for that day, even if it is a visit with his children. In fact, the boss says that he may need Jack to be available on short notice for overtime in the future as well. Jack has had a very hard time landing a job and he does not want to lose it. But his boss is making it really hard for Jack to schedule visits. What should he do? (Jack needs to talk with the caseworker about this situation and see what can be arranged for back up plans. He also needs to talk to his children and let them know that if he needs to change a visit, it is because he needs to keep his job in order to be a good Dad to them. He should be



sure he is talking to his children on the phone regularly, if possible. Jack also needs to talk to the aunt and uncle and explain his situation, and thank them for any flexibility they can give him as it relates to visiting his children.)

Scenario 3: Jack's daughter Lisa has begun to throw temper tantrums when they visit. She does this at the aunt and uncle's house as well. Jack is really at a loss about what to do. What should he do? (He should talk to anybody and everybody who can help him: the visitation supervisor, the caseworker, the aunt and uncle. He should make it clear that he wants and will use help. He should show that he knows his daughter is having a rough time, but that he is willing and able to help her through it.)



Next, refer the Dads to the handout entitled **What Makes for a Successful Visit in the Eyes of the Child Welfare System?** Share with them that these are questions that the caseworker may ask at some point. You, the facilitator, are going to play the caseworker and ask each of these questions aloud to the group. The Dads should call out some suggested answers and then ask the group to discuss those suggestions.

The notes in parentheses are the types of answers you might want to reinforce.

- 1. How often do you want to have contact with your children?** (I think about once a week or more. I could also talk to them on the phone several times a week.) The research shows that children need to see a parent at least once a week. For smaller children, more frequent but shorter visits are recommended. Parents can also talk to their children on the phone in addition to visiting, but not as a replacement. Remember, though, it is the court that actually sets the visits.
- 2. What do you foresee happening in your life that could get in the way of scheduling visits?** (My job schedule could change or my car could break down, but these visits will be my first priority.)
- 3. What would you do if a conflict or problem in getting to your visit comes up?** (I will try my best to get to the visit, but I will definitely call ahead or call as soon as I can if something comes up. I want to get the number I should call if there is a problem. I do not want to disappoint my child.)
- 4. Do you have some ideas about coming to the visit prepared?** (It would help me if you or someone else gave me a heads up if there is anything I should know about my child's current situation before I come. Also, I plan to bring some things that we could do together or I will find out what is there for us to do together.)
- 5. How will your children know you are glad to see them?** (I know I will be glad to see my children and I'll do things that let them know, such as smile and tell them how glad I am to see them. If my children seem a little reserved, I will try to tune in and figure out whether to hug them right away or not.)



- 6. How will you know what your children are feeling and how will you react?** (I will watch for signs, such as whether they kind of close up or are open to seeing me and what mood they are in. I will try to respond in a way that shows respect for their feelings.)
- 7. What will you do with your children?** (I have some activities planned that make sense for my children's ages and interests and I will try to gauge their moods. I will not force anything.)
- 8. What if they will not cooperate?** (I have some rules about stuff like hitting and throwing and I will tell him that is not OK to do those things. I will try some things like changing what we are doing and telling them what is OK and not OK. I realize this is a tough situation for my children and for me and I will try to be consistent without being overbearing.)
- 9. What if your children are having trouble with something like a game or coloring?** (I will try to give suggestions and not take over unless they seem to really need that.)
- 10. How do you plan to handle the fact that someone will be supervising your visit?** (It might make me kind of nervous but I figure this person knows a lot about children and if I need help, I will ask.)

6

Dad as Part of Children's Placement: Visiting With Your Children THIS WEEK'S FOOD FOR THOUGHT



TIME

5 minutes

Running Time: 1 hr 58 m

PURPOSE

To introduce the activity for the upcoming week and to encourage application of what is learned in group to their development as a Dad.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Provide a brief description of the topic for the next week's session and identify several of the main areas of discussion for that session. Have the Dads briefly share what they hope to gain from the session, in order to ensure that their needs are met by the information and content of the session. Remind the Dads that you will be following up with them throughout the week and that you are available for them to contact with any questions.



Introduce the Food for Thought activity for the upcoming week and distribute the appropriate **Food for Thought** handout. Ask them to please come prepared to discuss the activity at the next group session.

7

Dad as Part of Children's Placement: Visiting With Your Children CLOSING REMARKS



TIME

2 minutes

Running Time: 2 hr 00 m

PURPOSE

To provide continued encouragement for their commitment.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Thank the Dads for coming and for their continued participation in the group process. Briefly reinforce what you heard or saw throughout the session that you thought was positive.



VISITING WITH MY CHILDREN

Below are some suggested activities, by age, which you can do with your children while you are visiting with them. Sometimes you will be visiting with your children in a room together and other times you might be able to take them where you want to go. Sometimes your visit may be supervised by a worker and sometimes it may not. If your visit is being supervised, feel free to ask for ideas and help from the worker, if you need it. The supervising worker is more than willing to help and will appreciate your openness to ask for help.

Remember, your children have been removed from their home and placed with someone else. Different children react differently to this situation, but many feel scared, angry, nervous or unsure about what is going to happen to them. Do not be afraid to ask your children how they are feeling at the start of a visit. Respond in whatever ways you can to help them feel safe and comfortable during your time together.



BABIES & EARLY TODDLERS (0-2)

VISIT ACTIVITIES

Meet basic needs (feeding, changing, holding and cuddling). If you feel awkward or uncomfortable doing these things, do not worry. Ask for help and try to learn how best to respond to your baby's needs.

Play peek-a-boo games.

Name objects you see around the room, look at or read picture books to your child.

When he is about 1, help your baby to stand or walk by holding his hands. Encourage him to come to you as he is learning to walk. Play "come to me" games (in which you encourage your baby to walk to you).

Encourage your child to explore; take walks with your child (either carrying her or helping her walk); play together with colorful, noisy, moving items.



Dad as Part of Children's Placement: Visiting With Your Children



TODDLERS (2-4)

VISIT ACTIVITIES

Make and consistently enforce rules to keep your child safe. Do not just say "no," but also share why something is not safe.

Read simple stories or look at books together.

Play "let's pretend" games; pretend you are cleaning the house, making dinner or going to the store.

Play together at the park; help your child learn to ride a tricycle; dance together to music.

Draw together or play with Play-doh; string beads together.

Repeat activities many times; at this age, children love to do things over and over.

Let them make simple choices between two things that you suggest: what activities to do, what clothes to wear, what food to eat.



Dad as Part of Children's Placement: Visiting With Your Children



**PRESCHOOL/
EARLY
SCHOOL
(5-7)**

VISIT ACTIVITIES

Encourage choices in activities; it is still best to limit a choice to two things, for example "Do you want to read this book or that one?"

Plan activities with a beginning, middle and end (for example, cooking: get the ingredients together, make the meal and then clean up).

Play simple board or card games such as CandyLand or Go Fish.

Go to the playground and help your child when needed (for example, help him get up on playground equipment or catch him coming down a slide).

Read books or listen to music together (over and over; they still like to repeat favorite activities).

Make and enforce consistent rules; discuss consequences of behavior.

Point out cause-and-effect and logical consequences of actions. For example, "if you pound it on the floor, it will break and you won't be able to play with it anymore." Or, "if you eat your dinner, you can have some candy after."

Be open to discussing your child's ideas about what it means to be a girl or a boy.

Be open to discussing physical differences between girls and boys.

Shop for school clothes together.



Dad as Part of Children's Placement: Visiting With Your Children



SCHOOL-AGE (8-12)

VISIT ACTIVITIES

Ask your child about and offer help with his homework.

Practice sports she likes together.

Show you are interested in what interests your child, such as watching him dance or play sports or looking at a collection of dolls or action figures.

Attend school conferences and activities.

Work together on household tasks.

Attend team activities with your child (either the child's team, or watch another team together).

Be open to talking with your child about whatever is on her mind.

Discuss physical changes expected; answer questions openly (for instance, about how his body will change or is changing).





TEENAGERS

VISIT ACTIVITIES

Find things that you both enjoy doing, such as watching movies, sharing mealtimes, reading books, listening to music, hiking or school activities.

Tell your teenager what you like and admire about her.

Do not take things personally if your teen is negative. Lots of young people are negative, critical of adults and self-centered some of the time.

Do not be afraid to discuss things that really matter or that could get your teen into trouble (such as using drugs, sexual intimacy and life choices).

Avoid power struggles. Give your teen choices.

Let your teen be an expert on some things. Ask him for information or to explain something to you. Ask for your teen's opinions and reasons for opinions.

Discuss mutual respect and how best to show that to one another.

Let your teen know that you enjoy spending time together.

Ask her about and offer help with her homework.



PLANNING A VISIT WITH MY CHILD

Suppose that this Saturday, you have a two-hour supervised visit with one of your children at a visiting center. Look back over the activities on the **Visiting With My Children** handout and see what activities are suggested for your child's age. Think about your child and his or her interests and decide which of these activities he or she would enjoy doing with you. Or, come up with your own activity ideas. Then, below, write your plan for what you would do during the two-hour visit.

My Child's Name _____ My Child's Age _____

I would bring to the visit _____

When my child arrived, I would begin the visit by _____

Some activities we could do during the visit would be _____

If I did not feel like things were going well, I would _____

When it was time to end the visit, I would _____



WHAT MAKES FOR A SUCCESSFUL VISIT IN THE EYES OF THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM?

1. Do you schedule visits regularly?
2. Do you make every effort to get to all of the visits?
3. Do you call ahead if there is a problem with getting to the visit on time?
4. Do you come prepared for the visit?
5. Do you show joy in seeing your child?
6. Do you tune in to your child and pay attention to his or her feelings?
7. Do you do activities with your child that make sense for his or her age and what he or she is feeling?
8. Are you consistent with your child and have rules that make sense for his or her age?
9. Do you help your child without taking over?
10. Do you ask the person supervising the visit for help and ideas when needed?



NATIONAL QUALITY
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THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM

DAD AS PLANNER: SERVICE PLANNING IN THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM





Dad as Planner: Service Planning in the Child Welfare System



PURPOSE OF SESSION

Dads will learn more about how the service- or case-planning stage of the child welfare system works and how they can be effective participants. Dads will meet a representative of the child welfare system and be able to ask questions relating to their experience within the system.

FACILITATOR PREPARATION

- Identify a child welfare professional with experience in working with Dads to assist with this session and the Dad as Part of the Solution session by (1) bringing copies of the local version of case planning form(s) and (2) joining the session as lead facilitator in presenting information, answering questions and assisting with a practice session.
- Ask the child welfare representative to provide you with the local statistics on the percentage of children for whom reunification is the permanency goal and for whom reunification occurs.
- Identify a willing Dad in the group who is comfortable sharing parts of his written case plan with the group.
- Have the Dads bring their case plans with them to group only if the case plans are completed and the Dads feel comfortable doing so.
- Review all the Facilitator Resources listed below.
- Ensure that there are enough copies of all handouts for each Dad.
- Post the group guidelines developed in the Introduction session on the wall.
- Post a large piece of paper marked “Parking Lot” on the wall.
- Review “Parking Lot” questions presented at the previous session and prepare answers.
- Write the questions from the Food for Thought activity on a piece of large notepaper to refer to during Activity 2.
- Set up the room so that the chairs are arranged in a circle, with a break in the circle for an easel stand with large notepaper visible to all.



FACILITATOR RESOURCES

- Resources on the Internet:
 - McCarthy, J., Marshall, A., Collins, J., Arganza, G., Deserly, K., & Milon, J. (2005). *A family's guide to the child welfare system*. (2nd ed.). Retrieved March 26, 2008, from http://gucchd.georgetown.edu/files/products_publications/AFamilysGuide.pdf
- State-Specific Resources:
 - Indiana: IARCCA...An Association of Children and Family Services. (2000, August). *In the child's best interest: A practical guide to assist parents through the child in need of services process*. (v. 2). Retrieved March 26, 2008, from <http://www.iarcca.org/referencelibrary/Sites/Site1/Homepage.asp?&Check=True&Check=True>
 - Texas: State Bar of Texas. (n.d.). *A handbook for parents and guardians in child protection cases*. Retrieved March 26, 2008, from http://www.texasbar.com/Template.cfm?Section=Committees_List1&Template=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=8500
 - Your state's pamphlet for families in the child welfare system.

MATERIALS FOR GROUP SESSION

- Easel stand with large notepad
- Tape to hang large notepaper on wall
- Large version of the **Steps of the Child Welfare System** flowchart to hang on wall
- Permanent markers

HANDOUTS



- Handout: **Child Welfare Terms: A Dictionary for Dads** (for Activity 2; Saved on CD of materials)
- Handout: **Service Plan Form** (for Activity 3; Supplied by child welfare professional)
- Handout: **Food for Thought** that corresponds with next week's session (for Activity 6)

1

Dad as Planner: Service Planning in the Child Welfare System WELCOME AND “DAD MOMENT OF THE WEEK”



TIME

10 minutes

Running Time: 0 hr 10 m

PURPOSE

To identify positive parenting activities. To follow up on “Parking Lot” questions.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Welcome each Dad to the group. Introduce the child welfare representative. Begin the session by asking each Dad to share aloud his “Dad Moment of the Week” (any interaction, thought, action, etc. that he is proud of as it relates to his children or his role as a Dad). Answer the “Parking Lot” questions relevant to the previous session.



FACILITATOR TIP

The goal of having the Dads identify their “Dad Moment of the Week” is to help them build on their successes throughout their time in the program. This regular activity will encourage them to recognize and continue their “smaller” interactions with their children (i.e., phone calls, praising, saying “I love you”).

Throughout this session, look for ways to normalize the experience of non-resident fathers. Remind Dads that their challenges and successes, while unique, may be shared in general with other Dads from all walks of life (e.g., all Dads must address challenges related to discipline of their children, shared parenting, extended families and job-related stressors).

It is also important to acknowledge listed “Parking Lot” items, even if you cannot answer them at this time. It will help the Dads feel that their questions are being heard, that you take them seriously and that you are working to address them.

Give a brief introduction of the child welfare representative who will be the lead facilitator for this session, and have him or her write his or her contact information on the easel notepad at the beginning of the session. Be sure to make it clear to the Dads that the representative is there to educate and support them.

2

Dad as Planner: Service Planning in the Child Welfare System DISCUSSION OF LAST WEEK'S FOOD FOR THOUGHT



TIME

20 minutes

Running Time: 0 hr 30 m

PURPOSE

To identify what Dads know and what they want to know about the purpose of service planning.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

At the end of the previous session, the facilitator read the following statement and the Dads received a handout of the following questions to think about in the week leading up to this session.

Turn the easel notepad to display the page that lists the questions. Reread the statement:

“Next we are going to concentrate on the step in the child welfare system where a service plan is made. You may already have a written service plan, or maybe you are a part of service planning right now but the plan is not finished yet. Or, maybe that has not started yet for you. Whatever your situation is, please think about these questions.”

Ask the Dads to share their thoughts aloud on the following questions. Write their responses on the large notepad as they share them. Explain that the child welfare representative will go over service planning in a lot of detail next. Find out if the Dads know what a service plan or a case plan is and if they have a copy of theirs with them. Explain the basics of a service plan if they do not (see the handout entitled **Child Welfare Terms: A Dictionary for Dads**).



- 1. What do I need help with that will make a difference for my child, for me and for other people in my child’s family?**
- 2. What strengths do I have as a man and as a Dad that I can use to help make the service plan work?**
- 3. What can I do to make sure that my voice is heard during service planning?**



FACILITATOR TIP

Some Dads in this group already have, or will soon have, a written service plan that guides the child's family in efforts to have the child reunited with someone in the family. Some Dads may just be entering the child welfare system and do not yet know about the service plan. Some of the Dads' children will have plans with two permanency goals: the primary goal is reunification and the second is a "back-up" goal (called a concurrent plan) if reunification does not look like it is going to be possible at some point in the case. Often the concurrent plan is adoption. By law, the child welfare agency must work on both plans at the same time so that if the reunification plan does not work out, the child will not be in out-of-home care for longer than necessary. Sometimes the concurrent plan is made early in the planning process and sometimes up to a year later. This varies by jurisdiction.

Usually when the primary permanency plan is "reunification," this means return to the same home from which the children were removed, which for most of these children is probably the Mother's home. But, it could mean Dad's home. If Dad is thinking about asking for the child to live with him, he should let the attorneys, the judge and the caseworker know this as soon as possible.

It is important for Dads to understand the process of case planning, how plans are used in the child welfare system, what written plans look like and what they can do as Dads to implement the plan.

Highlights of each of these points are listed below:

- **Process of Service (or Case) Planning**
 - Planning always involves going over the assessment information (family problems, safety and risk concerns, family strengths and parental capacities, and needs) followed by thinking through what kinds of services and other help would assist the family in dealing with or solving their problems.
 - Once the plan is worked out, it is formalized on the child welfare agency's form (usually within an electronic child welfare records system) and signed by everyone involved.
 - The specific planning process can vary by area, so check with the co-facilitating child welfare representative to find out how planning is done. There may be more than one way. Generally, one of three approaches is used (sometimes two are used for the same family):
 - Family members meet (in a group or individually) with the caseworker and they develop the plan;
 - A family team meeting (or other family group decision making process) is attended by a broad representation of family members, friends, family supporters and others whom a family member wants present. The caseworker, and sometimes a family group coordinator, meets with the family to explain the approach and the resources. Depending on how this



approach is used, the professionals may or may not leave the room while the family takes the lead in planning. If the professionals leave the room, the family explains the plan once they return. The caseworker must approve the plan the family creates; or

- Family members and professionals working with the family (such as a substance abuse counselor or therapist) meet with the caseworker and develop the plan.
- **How Service Plans Are Used in the Child Welfare System**
 - The service plan is the guide for action. It describes services and actions that need to be taken and lists in detail what everyone in the family, the service providers and the child welfare agency need to do. It has time frames for finishing all of these activities and is reviewed at various points.
 - The written plan becomes part of the court record and is the basis for reviewing progress on the case, including whether each person has fulfilled the plan and reached the desired outcomes (for example, went to drug treatment and stayed drug-free). It is important to know that while the family service plan is written up in one of the ways described above, it must be approved by the court in which the dependency action was filed.
- **What Written Plans Look Like**
 - The format for the service plan varies among child welfare agencies, but most plans require or include the following:
 - A statement of the permanency plan (for these Dads' children, the permanency plan will be reunification);
 - Statements of what the situation will look like when the family's problems are resolved. These may be called outcomes or objectives. For example, "Parents will be sober at all times when they are with their children," "Parents will keep children safe when they are with them," or "The home will be clean and free from dangers";
 - A list of services (your program may be one of these services);
 - A clear description of everyone's responsibilities in providing services, using services, supporting the family and monitoring progress;
 - Time frames for completing services and for reviewing progress.
- **What Dads Can Do to Implement the Service Plan**
 - Dads can contribute on many levels by offering their ideas to the:
 - Assessment — saying what they think are the family's challenges, strengths and needs;



- Discussion of services and other types of help — they may have ideas about services or other help the family needs or they may know of helpers (they should be given information about helping agencies);
- Decisions about services, other help and responsibilities — once the brainstorming of services has been done, Dads should be asked for their opinions and commitments and about practical issues of schedules and contingencies (e.g., what if Dad's work schedule changes and makes it hard for him to attend AA?);
- Time frames — how long services should be used and when re-evaluation will happen.

3

Dad as Planner: Service Planning in the Child Welfare System FACILITATED DISCUSSION: WHAT IS SERVICE PLANNING?



TIME

30 minutes

Running Time: 1 hr 00 m

PURPOSE

To ensure that Dads understand the service planning process.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

As this discussion begins, the child welfare representative (who is the lead facilitator) should make the following points. At each point, ask the group for examples from their experience, or if they have not yet had a service plan developed, what they think would work best.

What is a Service Plan?

The purpose of a service plan is to give Dads and everyone else involved with a case a “road map” to use as they go through the child welfare system. The service plan shows the “destination” (your children returning to one of their homes to live there permanently) and what has to be done to get there. Continuing with this example, let us say you were going to drive across the state. You would need to know what roads to take, where there is construction that might hold you up, and what you had to do to make sure you got there safely (like stop for gas, get something to eat when you are hungry and take a nap on the side of the road if you get tired while driving). The service plan explains all the things that need to be done to get to the destination.

What is a Service Plan Based On?

It is based on the assessment of your family’s challenges, strengths and needs. A good service plan links these things to services and other resources that can help the family overcome challenges, use their strengths and meet their needs.

Who Makes the Service Plan?

Everyone who has a key role in the child’s future, including you as the Dad, should be participating. (Describe your child welfare agency’s system of service panning.) The court must approve the plan and will occasionally add or remove something from a plan. The service planning process might occur between the caseworker and family, in a family meeting or as part of a mediation session.



What Is in a Written Service Plan?

(Modify using your agency's service plan format)

A written service plan includes:

1. A statement of the ultimate goal for your children, which is called the “permanency plan.” For your children, the goal is reunification. Permanency means the child’s permanent home and reunification means going back to live with someone in the family, usually Mom or Dad. Reunification is the first or primary permanency plan. For many of you, there is also a “back-up” plan, which designates somewhere the children could grow up if moving back with the family does not work out. This is called the “concurrent” plan because it is planned at the same time, or concurrently, as the reunification plan. Usually the “back-up” plan means getting the children adopted, by either a relative or someone you do not know who has volunteered to parent a child. This is planned at the same time as the permanency plan so that if it does not work out for your children to live with your family, the children can get into a permanent home as quickly as possible. This means the children will not be without a permanent home longer than necessary. Most children who are in out-of-home care with reunification as their first goal do actually go home (share your child welfare agency’s statistics on this happening).
2. Statements of what the situation will look like when the family’s challenges or problems are resolved. These statements may be called outcomes or objectives. For example, “Parents will be sober at all times when they are with their children,” “Parents will keep the children safe when they are with them,” or “The home will be clean and free from dangers.”
3. Services that need to be followed by the parents or others in the family. It may be that this Dads program is one of the services on your plan.
4. A clear statement of everyone’s responsibilities regarding what services need to be used, how and when to use those services and how the family will be supported.
5. Timelines for finishing services and reviewing progress, and how and when the agency and the court will decide if progress is being made. Explain your area’s timeline for reviews or re-assessments.
6. Signatures from everyone who is involved in making the plan work for the family, showing that they agree to what is listed.

What are Key Elements of Good Service Plans?

1. As we said before, a good service plan ought to help the family overcome challenges or problems, build on their strengths and meet their needs so that children can return home and be safe there.
2. Additionally it should be:
 - a. **Possible.** Everyone should be able to do all of the things listed within the time allowed. For example, it does not make sense to require so many services that the parent does not



- have time in the week to get them all done. At the same time, the most-needed services need to be in the plan. For example, a child should not be sent home if the parent still has not had treatment for substance abuse and is still drinking or using drugs.
- b. **Clear about contingencies.** This means that if something unplanned happens, the parent or others involved still know what they should do. For example, if a Dad plans to visit his child on Wednesdays and Saturdays, and his work schedule changes and he can not get there, he should know that he needs to call the caseworker as soon as he knows his schedule is changing.
 - c. **Clear about what success is.** Everyone involved needs to know and agree on what defines success in completing the service plan. For example, a parent may say that he did not make it to two visits with the child, but did make it six times, which might be a success for him. Others may not agree that is successful. Another example would be if a mom thinks she is successful because she was sober when she visited with her children, but still felt it was okay to drink when she was not with them. That is probably not going to be okay, as it will not be seen as successfully overcoming her drinking problem.

What Does the Written Service Plan Look Like?



Distribute and review the **Service Plan Form** for your area (provided by the child welfare representative).

What are the Consequences of Not Following the Plan?

Remind the Dads that the service plan is the “road map” and that everyone involved uses it to decide whether progress has been made. The court will review the plan periodically. Dads will need to talk to their attorney and caseworker to know the time frames for their case. No progress or not enough progress can lead to serious consequences for parents. Sometimes, although not always, children are not returned to the family or parents’ rights to visit their children are cut off. For instance, if a parent cannot make a safe home for a child after a year, the court may begin the process to terminate the parent’s rights. If a parent shows up at visitation drunk or high, visitation may be suspended for a while. So, once the plan is in place, everyone needs to follow it. If something prevents you from following it, you must let the caseworker know immediately and then work to make a new plan that will work for you.

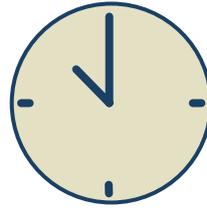
An Example of a Plan

If a Dad volunteered prior to the session to discuss some aspects of his plan, ask the Dad to share his plan with the group.



FACILITATOR TIP

This discussion is an opportunity to identify and clear up some of the misconceptions Dads may have about service planning, and to identify areas where it might be helpful for Dads to role play or practice skills (which could modify the content of Activity 4).



BREAK

TIME

10 minutes

Running Time: 1 hr 10 m

4

Dad as Planner: Service Planning in the Child Welfare System ACTIVITY: PRACTICE SERVICE PLANNING



TIME

30 minutes

Running Time: 1 hr 40 m

PURPOSE

To assist Dads in looking ahead to or reflecting on what parts of the service planning process are difficult. To offer practice opportunities for helping Dads learn how to deal with the difficult areas of this process.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Either the facilitator or the child welfare representative should begin this activity by sharing that it is harder to achieve success at some steps in the service planning process than at others. Share that you are going to identify some of these difficult steps now and then you will have the Dads discuss and practice strategies to achieve success.

Ask the Dads to share aloud what they think might be hard about the service planning process. Write their responses on the easel notepaper. Prompt with the following examples, as needed:

1. What problems or needs do you, your children or your children's Mother have?
2. What are your strengths? What are you good at? How can these things help you be a good Dad as they relate to things like visiting with your children, dealing head-on with a substance abuse problem or finding a job and keeping it?
3. What services or other help do you think would make sense and be helpful to you or your family?
4. What about handling the suggestions of someone involved in the service planning process that you might not agree with or think are important? For example, the judge orders that you get a substance abuse evaluation. You know you should not be using as much as you are, but you do not want to get an evaluation and you think you can cut down on your own.
5. What about speaking up when you do not agree with someone else's ideas? For example, someone in the planning process thinks you ought to go to parenting class with your child's Mother. While you are okay with getting some help on how to be a good Dad, you think you and she are having too much conflict right now to go to the class together.



Once the group generates some ideas about difficult aspects in the case planning process, select two or three difficulties that seem to be true for many of the Dads and practice dealing with them using the following method:

1. State the identified difficulty (e.g., talking about your strengths or what you are good at).
2. Ask for a Dad to volunteer to role play a scenario with you and thank him aloud for volunteering. If no Dad volunteers or seems comfortable doing so, do the first role play with the child welfare representative.
3. Set the stage by telling the Dads, “We are in [John]’s service planning session and we are at the part where [John] is being asked what he thinks his personal strengths are and how he thinks these might help him to ____.” (Fill in the blank with one of the following or make up another example: have good visits with his children, be successful in substance abuse treatment, find and keep a job).
4. Say to your partner in the role play, “[John], I know you want to be successful in [selected example]. Tell me how you can bring some of your strengths to this situation — what are you going to do to be successful?”
5. Give [John] a few minutes to respond and then praise him for his response.
6. Ask the other Dads for their thoughts about what he said and what else he might have added.
7. Repeat this with another volunteer and another example.

Place the Dads in small groups of 2-3 and have each group select an example to role play. Assist them in setting up the practice with the steps above and then have them practice in their small groups. After it seems all of the groups have had a chance to practice, bring them back to the large group and ask for some examples of what they did and said.



FACILITATOR TIP

The facilitator and child welfare representative can walk around to the various groups or stay back and observe from a distance, depending on how they read the groups’ need for help or autonomy.

5

Dad as Planner: Service Planning in the Child Welfare System FACILITATED DISCUSSION: WHAT TO WORK ON FOR THE SERVICE PLANNING PROCESS



TIME

13 minutes

Running Time: 1 hr 53 m

PURPOSE

To reinforce each Dad's commitment to act in a way that leads to success.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Ask each Dad to think for a moment about one thing he wants to do to make sure the service planning process works for him (or to make the service plan work, if the planning process is complete). Invite each Dad to share this aloud.



FACILITATOR TIP

Help the Dads connect their idea of what to work on with something they previously indicated they want to succeed in. You may know what they want to succeed in from other discussions you have had with them, either in previous sessions or in case management interactions.

6

Dad as Planner: Service Planning in the Child Welfare System THIS WEEK'S FOOD FOR THOUGHT



TIME

5 minutes

Running Time: 1 hr 58 m

PURPOSE

To introduce the activity for the upcoming week and to encourage the application of what is learned in group to their development as Dads.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Provide a brief description of the topic for next week's session and identify several of the main areas of discussion for that session. Have the Dads briefly share what they hope to gain from the session, in order to ensure that their needs are met by the information and content of the session. Remind the Dads that you will be following up with them throughout the week and that you are available for them to contact with any questions.



Introduce the Food for Thought activity for the upcoming week and distribute the appropriate **Food for Thought** handout. Ask them to please come prepared to discuss the activity at the next group session.

7

Dad as Planner: Service Planning in the Child Welfare System CLOSING REMARKS



TIME

2 minutes

Running Time: 2 hr 00 m

PURPOSE

To encourage Dads to use the information obtained on service planning to create action steps for change.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Thank the Dads for their thoughtful questions and continued commitment to the learning and group process. Briefly reinforce what you heard or saw throughout the session that you thought was positive. Encourage the Dads to consider what was discussed today regarding service planning and to identify and commit to taking the steps to begin, continue or improve their involvement and effectiveness in this process.



Food for Thought: Facilitator Introduction

Dad as Planner: Service Planning in the Child Welfare System

To introduce the Food for Thought questions, please read the following statement to the Dads and then give them the handout of questions that follows.

Next week, we are going to concentrate on the step in the child welfare system where a service plan is made. You may already have a written service plan, or maybe you are a part of service planning right now but the plan is not finished yet. Or, maybe that has not started yet for you. Whatever your situation is, please think about these questions.



Food for Thought

Dad as Planner: Service Planning in the Child Welfare System

1. What do I need help with that will make a difference for my child, for me and for other people in my child's family?

2. What strengths do I have as a man and as a Dad that I can use to help make the case plan work?

3. What can I do to make sure that my voice is heard during service planning?



NATIONAL QUALITY
IMPROVEMENT CENTER
ON NON-RESIDENT FATHERS AND
THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM

DAD AS PROVIDER: SUPPORTING YOUR CHILDREN





Dad as Provider: Supporting Your Children



PURPOSE OF SESSION

Dads will learn about the importance of providing financial support to their non-resident children and will discuss what this type of support means for their children and for their self-identification as a Dad. Particular emphasis should be placed on the value of all types of support given by a Dad (i.e., financial, emotional and physical). Dads will meet a local child support enforcement office representative and will learn about child support enforcement and how to navigate the child support system.

FACILITATOR PREPARATION

- Identify and contact a representative from the local child support enforcement (CSE) office who can be present to assist with this session. Be sure to select a representative who understands the nature of the group and the experiences and status of the Dads as it relates to child support, and who has a supportive demeanor when working with non-resident fathers. Ask the representative to bring any available materials for Dads, including informational brochures, contact information lists for local CSE office personnel and actual forms and applications used at the CSE office.
- Review all the Facilitator Resources listed below.
- Review the Facilitator Answer Guide for Activity 4. Have the CSE representative help you identify the correct answers to each statement based on your state's laws.
- Ensure that there are enough copies of all handouts for each Dad. Copies of the **Facilitator Answer Guide** for the Myth or Truth: The Realities of Child Support activity should also be made for the facilitator(s).
- Post the group guidelines developed in the Introduction session on the wall.
- Post a large piece of paper marked "Parking Lot" on the wall.
- Review "Parking Lot" questions presented at the previous session and prepare answers.
- Write the statements to be discussed in the Food for Thought activity (#2) and the Being a Provider activity (#3) on the easel notepad.
- Set up the room so that the chairs are arranged in a circle, with a break in the circle for an easel stand with large notepaper visible to all.

FACILITATOR RESOURCES

- Rausch, J., & Rawlings, T. (2008, Winter). Integrating problem-solving court practices into the child support docket. *Juvenile and Family Justice Today*, 16-19.



Dad as Provider: Supporting Your Children

- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Child Support Enforcement. (2005). *Handbook on child support enforcement: Answers to your questions*. Retrieved March 12, 2008, from http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse/pubs/2005/handbook_on_cse.pdf
- State-specific resources:
 - CSE office websites:
 - Colorado: <http://www.childsupport.state.co.us/do/home/index>
 - Indiana: <http://www.in.gov/dcs/2663.htm>
 - Texas: <http://www.oag.state.tx.us/cs/index.shtml>
 - Washington: <http://www.dshs.wa.gov/dcs/>
 - Attorney General of Texas. (n.d.) Handbook for non-custodial parents. Retrieved March 12, 2008, from http://www.oag.state.tx.us/AG_Publications/pdfs/qa_ncp.pdf
 - Colorado Department of Human Services, Division of Child Support Enforcement. (2006, May). *A father's guide to child support*. Retrieved March 12, 2008, from <https://childsupport.state.co.us/siteuser/do/general/GetPDF?PDFNumber=83> [While specific to Colorado, content could be useful to all Dads.]
 - Irvine, J. A. Colorado Foundation for Families and Children. (2004). *Connecting with your kids: Important information on parenting time in Colorado*. (2nd ed.). Retrieved March 4, 2008, from <http://www.courts.state.co.us/chs/court/forms/domestic/ParentingTimeBook.pdf> [While specific to Colorado, content could be useful to all Dads.]

MATERIALS FOR GROUP SESSION

- Easel stand with large notepad
- Permanent markers
- Tape to hang large notepaper on wall

HANDOUTS



- Handout: **Myth or Truth: The Realities of Child Support** (for Activity 4)
- Handout: **Food for Thought** that corresponds with next week's session (for Activity 6)
- Any materials provided by the child support enforcement representative

1

Dad as Provider: Supporting Your Children WELCOME AND “DAD MOMENT OF THE WEEK”



TIME

10 minutes

Running Time: 0 hr 10 m

PURPOSE

To identify positive parenting activities. To follow up on “Parking Lot” questions.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Welcome each Dad to the group. Begin the session by asking each Dad to share aloud his “Dad Moment of the Week” (any interaction, thought, action, etc. that he is proud of as it relates to his children or his role as a Dad). Answer the “Parking Lot” questions relevant to the previous session.



FACILITATOR TIP

The goal of having the Dads identify their “Dad Moment of the Week” is to help them build on their successes throughout their time in the program. This regular activity will hopefully encourage them to recognize and continue their “smaller” interactions with their children (e.g., phone calls, praising, saying “I love you”).

Throughout this session, look for ways to normalize the experience of non-resident fathers. Remind Dads that their challenges and successes, while unique, may be shared in general with other Dads from all walks of life (e.g., all Dads must address challenges related to discipline of their children, shared parenting, extended families and job-related stressors).

It is also important to acknowledge listed “Parking Lot” items, even if you cannot answer them at this time. It will help the Dads feel that their questions are being heard, that you take them seriously and that you are working to address them.

Given the representative from the child support enforcement office will be present throughout this session, give a brief introduction of the representative and have him or her write his or her contact information on the easel notepad at the beginning of the session. Be sure to make it clear to the Dads that the representative is there to educate and support the Dads and that there will not be repercussions for Dads who disclose that they have not been paying child support. This information should be reinforced again at the start of Activity 5.

2

Dad as Provider: Supporting Your Children DISCUSSION OF LAST WEEK'S FOOD FOR THOUGHT



TIME

15 minutes

Running Time: 0 hr 25 m

PURPOSE

To identify the obstacles, barriers or “mental blocks” behind why some Dads do not provide financially for their children.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

At the end of the previous session, each Dad received the following statement and question to think about in the week leading up to this session. Turn the easel notepad to display the page that lists this statement and question. Ask the Dads to share their thoughts on this question aloud with the group.

One of the most natural roles of men throughout history is to be a provider. Most often, this plays out in providing for one's family — parents, significant others and most importantly, children. Some men have a strong desire to provide, but are unable to do so due to a lack of resources. For other men, the natural tendency to serve as a provider for one's children is ignored or pushed aside. Explore this situation by considering...

- **What challenges do non-resident fathers face in providing for their children?**



FACILITATOR TIP

Because this conversation might be difficult for some Dads to have because they are not currently paying child support, the question provided is designed to elicit “externalizing examples” which allow the men to explore the topic and even advocate their own positions with impersonal scenarios. By waiting patiently for the Dads’ responses, you will get *their* experiences rather than offering scenarios for them. If needed to draw out more conversation, try providing the following “externalizing examples” of hypothetical situations to elicit their feedback:

- What about a Dad who has lost his job or is “underemployed?”
- What about a Dad who is living with and providing for his girlfriend and their biological children?
- What about a Dad with limited or no arranged visitation with his children?
- What about a Dad who does not feel he can trust his children’s Mother and how she spends money?

Before the Dads can begin to identify the benefits of providing financial support for both their children and themselves, they must come to terms with why they are not currently providing child support, if that is the case.

3

Dad as Provider: Supporting Your Children ACTIVITY: BEING A PROVIDER



TIME

15 minutes

Running Time: 0 hr 40 m

PURPOSE

To identify the benefits for children and for Dads when Dads provide financial support to their children.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Turn the easel notepad to display the page that lists the following statements. Given the previous discussion of reasons why Dads may not provide financial support, encourage the Dads to begin to think about what impact or benefits financial support would have for their children and for them as Dads. Read each statement aloud and invite the Dads to finish the sentences.

If I provide consistent and timely financial support to my children, . . .

My children will be able to _____.

My children will feel _____.

My children will have _____.

I will be able to _____.

I will feel _____.

I will have _____.



FACILITATOR TIP

This activity is included in order to have Dads begin recognizing and understanding — from a parent’s perspective — what financial support can mean to children and the benefits it can have on children’s lives and well-being. It also allows them to see what benefits they might gain from providing financial support (e.g., feeling security in knowing their children will have food, clothes and medical care; security in knowing they will not go to jail for arrears).

4

Dad as Provider: Supporting Your Children ACTIVITY: MYTH OR TRUTH – THE REALITIES OF CHILD SUPPORT



TIME

23 minutes

Running Time: 1 hr 03 m

PURPOSE

To identify factual information about child support and enforcement, distinguishing truth from myth.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY



Distribute a copy of the handout entitled **Myth or Truth: The Realities of Child Support** to each Dad. Have the Dads take turns reading each statement aloud and then as a group, collectively determine whether the statement is a myth or a truth. Invite the Dads to share any personal thoughts, experiences and insight related to each statement. If questions related to the child support system arise throughout this activity, have the Dads write them on the “Parking Lot” to be answered during Activity 5.



FACILITATOR TIP

During this activity, it could become apparent to you as the facilitator that many of these Dads do not have a strong familiarity of what is expected of them in paying child support and what can and cannot be done to enforce payment. Encourage them to share their own experiences and to challenge one another’s assumptions. The presence of the child support enforcement office representative will also be beneficial to ensuring that the Dads have the most accurate information about what is expected of them and how the CSE office works. Remind the Dads that as they share their personal experiences with one another, what is shared in the group stays in the group.

It is also important to help the Dads, both in this activity and throughout the session, see and understand the difference between “formal” and “informal” child support. Some Dads who already provide financial support by giving the Mom cash or buying things for her or the children might not realize that this is not a substitute for paying on the child support order.



BREAK

TIME

10 minutes

Running Time: 1 hr 13 m

5

Dad as Provider: Supporting Your Children FACILITATED DISCUSSION: THE “INS AND OUTS” OF CHILD SUPPORT



TIME

40 minutes

Running Time: 1 hr 53 m

PURPOSE

To provide information to Dads on child support and child support enforcement.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Introduce the representative from the child support enforcement office. Have the representative write his or her contact information on the easel notepad at the beginning of the session and welcome the Dads to contact him or her directly. The representative should also explain that he or she is here to educate and support the Dads and that there will not be repercussions for Dads who disclose that they have not been paying child support. Encourage the Dads to freely ask questions throughout the session to ensure that they gain the information that is most useful to them. Distribute any materials or handouts from the CSE office. Have the representative speak to the following topics:



1. What is child support?
2. Why does a Dad have to pay child support?
3. Overview of child support system.
4. How does a Dad set up child support payments?
5. How much do Dads have to pay? For how long?
6. What happens when a Dad cannot make the payments?
7. What are the ways in which child support can be collected (enforcement tools)?
8. What should a Dad do when his employment changes (income increases or decreases)?
9. What are the court activities related to child support?
10. Why is record keeping important?
11. What are the local resources for Dads related to child support?
12. What if a Dad has concerns about how his child support money is being spent? Where does his money really go?
13. What if a Dad is paying child support, but visits with his children are not taking place or are not consistent?
14. Establishing paternity, if applicable.



FACILITATOR TIP

Many of these topics can erupt into lengthy conversations about scenarios personal to individual Dads. Rather than becoming side-tracked from the purpose of the activity, the child support enforcement representative should concentrate on presenting the factual material while offering time outside of group to talk or work with Dads on individual issues. This approach will help with time efficiency.

Most Dads in this group have established paternity as a prerequisite for recruitment and participation in the program. However, this might be important information to review should they need to know how to do this for other children they have.

6

Dad as Provider: Supporting Your Children THIS WEEK'S FOOD FOR THOUGHT



TIME

5 minutes

Running Time: 1 hr 58 m

PURPOSE

To introduce the activity for the upcoming week and to encourage application of what is learned in group to their development as a Dad.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Provide a brief description of the topic for next week's session and identify several of the main areas of discussion for that session. Have the Dads briefly share what they hope to gain from this session, in order to ensure that their needs are met by the information and content of the session. Remind the Dads that you will be following up with them throughout the week and that you are available for them to contact with any questions.



Introduce the Food for Thought activity for the upcoming week and distribute the appropriate **Food for Thought** handout. Ask them to please come prepared to discuss the activity at the next group session.

7

Dad as Provider: Supporting Your Children CLOSING REMARKS



TIME

2 minutes

Running Time: 2 hr 00 m

PURPOSE

To encourage Dads to use the information obtained on child support to create action steps for change.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Thank the Dads for their thoughtful questions and continued commitment to the learning and group processes. Briefly reinforce what you heard or saw throughout the session that you thought was positive. Encourage the Dads to consider what was discussed today regarding child support and to identify and commit to taking the necessary steps to begin, continue or improve their financial commitment to their children (e.g., what will they do differently now that they have this information?).



MYTH OR TRUTH: THE REALITIES OF CHILD SUPPORT

Check the box with your answer — Myth or Truth — for each statement given.

Myth Truth Statement



_____ _____ 1. If one parent goes on TANF, the law says the other parent must pay child support.



_____ _____ 2. The law says that both parents have to support their child until the age of 18.

_____ _____ 3. A parent will go to jail if he/she does not pay court-ordered child support.



_____ _____ 4. A parent must pay child support even if he/she is still in school.

_____ _____ 5. A parent who does not pay court-ordered child support can be put on probation by the court.

_____ _____ 6. A parent who does not pay court-ordered child support may have his/her driver's license suspended.



_____ _____ 7. The parent not living with the child must pay child support even if his/her only income is from unemployment or disability.

_____ _____ 8. The state's child support enforcement office reports parents who owe child support to the credit bureau.

_____ _____ 9. Parents going into the military do not have to pay child support.



_____ _____ 10. A parent who does not have custody of the child can stop paying child support if the parent who does have custody marries someone else.

_____ _____ 11. If a parent owes child support, it can be taken out of that parent's paycheck.

_____ _____ 12. A parent who does not have custody can open a child support case with the state's child support enforcement office.

_____ _____ 13. If grandparents are raising a child, only the father of the child has to pay child support.

THIS ACTIVITY IS ADAPTED FROM THE PARENTING AND PATERNITY AWARENESS (P.A.P.A.) PROGRAM TEACHER'S GUIDE, DEVELOPED BY THE TEXAS OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL, WITH FUNDING FROM THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES.



Dad as Provider: Supporting Your Children



Myth Truth Statement

_____ 14. If a parent who does not have custody remarries, child support can be taken out of the new spouse's paycheck.

_____ 15. If a parent is under the age of 18, the grandparents must legally pay for their teen children's child support payments.

_____ 16. All information about a child support case with the state's child support enforcement office is confidential.



_____ 17. The state's child support enforcement office can change who has custody of a child and can enforce parent and child visitation.

_____ 18. Parents who do not have custody of their child and who are in jail must still pay child support.



_____ 19. If a parent who does not have custody of a child does not pay child support, he/she cannot visit with the child.

_____ 20. Interest will be added to child support payments that have not been paid and are overdue.

_____ 21. Child support that has not been paid must still be paid even after the child turns 18 years old.



_____ 22. The state's child support enforcement office can help parents who are behind in paying their child support with finding counseling, a job, substance abuse treatment or other needed services or help.

_____ 23. Parents who do not live with their child must pay for all or part of the medical bills for the child.

_____ 24. When a parent gets a raise in pay, the court can raise how much child support he/she must pay. When a parent gets a cut in pay, the court can lower how much child support he/she must pay.



_____ 25. Courts can order a parent to pay child support from the date a child was born or from the date the parents separated (if they were married).

_____ 26. A parent who does not have custody of his/her child can stop paying child support if the parent who does have custody will not let him/her see the child.



MYTH OR TRUTH: THE REALITIES OF CHILD SUPPORT FACILITATOR ANSWER GUIDE

Check the box with your answer — Myth or Truth — for each statement given.

Myth Truth Statement

- | | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | 1. If one parent goes on TANF, the law says the other parent must pay child support. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | 2. The law says that both parents have to support their child until the age of 18. |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 3. A parent will go to jail if he/she does not pay court-ordered child support. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | 4. A parent must pay child support even if he/she is still in school. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | 5. A parent who does not pay court-ordered child support can be put on probation by the court. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | 6. A parent who does not pay court-ordered child support may have his/her driver's license suspended. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | 7. The parent not living with the child must pay child support even if his/her only income is from unemployment or disability. |
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| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 9. Parents going into the military do not have to pay child support. |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 10. A parent who does not have custody of the child can stop paying child support if the parent who does have custody marries someone else. |
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Dad as Provider: Supporting Your Children



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_____ X 16. All information about a child support case with the state's child support enforcement office is confidential.

X _____ 17. The state's child support enforcement office can change who has custody of a child and can enforce parent and child visitation.

_____ X 18. Parents who do not have custody of their child and who are in jail must still pay child support.



X _____ 19. If a parent who does not have custody of a child does not pay child support, he/she cannot visit with the child.

_____ X 20. Interest will be added to child support payments that have not been paid and are overdue.

_____ X 21. Child support that has not been paid must still be paid even after the child turns 18 years old.



_____ X 22. The state's child support enforcement office can help parents who are behind in paying their child support with finding counseling, a job, substance abuse treatment or other needed services or help.

_____ X 23. Parents who do not live with their child must pay for all or part of the medical bills for the child.

_____ X 24. When a parent gets a raise in pay, the court can raise how much child support he/she must pay. When a parent gets a cut in pay, the court can lower how much child support he/she must pay.



_____ X 25. Courts can order a parent to pay child support from the date a child was born or from the date the parents separated (if they were married).

X _____ 26. A parent who does not have custody of his/her child can stop paying child support if the parent who does have custody will not let him/her see the child.



Food for Thought

Dad as Provider: Supporting Your Children

One of the most natural roles of men throughout history is to be a provider. Most often, this plays out in providing for one's family – parents, significant others and most importantly, children. Some men have a strong desire to provide, but are unable to do so due to a lack of resources. For other men, the natural tendency to serve as a provider for one's children is ignored or pushed aside.

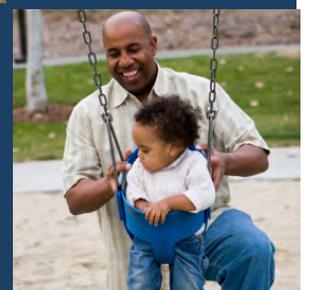
Explore this situation by considering. . .

What challenges do non-resident fathers face in providing for their children?



NATIONAL QUALITY
IMPROVEMENT CENTER
ON NON-RESIDENT FATHERS AND
THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM

DAD AS TEAM PLAYER: SHARED PARENTING





Dad as Team Player: Shared Parenting



PURPOSE OF SESSION

Dads will learn about shared parenting and why it is important to their children's healthy development. Dads will discuss productive ways to share the parenting of their children with the Mother, their extended families, a foster family and other important support people in the children's lives.

FACILITATOR PREPARATION

- Review all the Facilitator Resources listed below.
- Ensure that there are enough copies of all handouts for each Dad.
- Post the group guidelines developed in the Introduction session on the wall.
- Post a large piece of paper marked "Parking Lot" on the wall.
- Review "Parking Lot" questions presented at the previous session and prepare answers.
- Watch the video *For Our Children: Learning to Work Together* and become familiar with the families featured and how they have dealt with shared parenting. Pay particular attention to the first scenario with Donte, James and Lisa, as their situation will be used as an example in the role playing in Activity 6.
- Label a sheet of large notepaper "For Our Children: Learning to Work Together," and write down the discussion questions from Activity 4.
- Set up the room so that the chairs are arranged in a circle, with a break in the circle for an easel stand with large notepaper visible to all.

FACILITATOR RESOURCES

- The Office of the Attorney General of Texas, Division for Families and Children. (2006). *For our children: Learning to work together co-parenting guide*. [booklet] Retrieved March 27, 2008, from http://www.oag.state.tx.us/AG_Publications/pdfs/coparenting.pdf
- Deal, R. L. (2002). *Effective co-parenting, part one*. Retrieved March 27, 2008, from <http://www.family.org/parenting/A000000677.cfm>
- Deal, R. L. (2002). *Effective co-parenting, part two*. Retrieved March 27, 2008, from <http://www.family.org/parenting/A000000679.cfm>



MATERIALS FOR GROUP SESSION

- Easel stand with large notepad
- Permanent markers
- Tape to hang large notepaper on wall
- TV and DVD player
- Hayes, M. (Producer), & Leahy, M. (Director). (2005). *For our children: Learning to work together* [Motion picture]. United States: Socci Communications (for the Office of the Attorney General of Texas, Division for Families and Children).

HANDOUTS



- Handout: **Communication Challenges in Shared Parenting Situations** (for Activity 5)
- Handout: **Shared Parenting Hints** (for Activity 5)
- Handout: **Food For Thought** that corresponds with next week's session (for Activity 7)

1

Dad as Team Player: Shared Parenting WELCOME AND “DAD MOMENT OF THE WEEK”



TIME

10 minutes

Running Time: 0 hr 10 m

PURPOSE

To identify positive parenting activities. To follow up on “Parking Lot” questions.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Welcome each Dad to the group. Begin the session by asking each Dad to share aloud his “Dad Moment of the Week” (any interaction, thought, action, etc. that he is proud of as it relates to his children or his role as a Dad). Answer the “Parking Lot” questions relevant to the previous session.



FACILITATOR TIP

The goal of having the Dads identify their “Dad Moment of the Week” is to help them build on their successes throughout their time in the program. This regular activity will encourage them to recognize and continue their “smaller” interactions with their children (e.g., phone calls, praising, saying “I love you”).

Throughout this session, look for ways to normalize the experience of non-resident fathers. Remind Dads that their challenges and successes, while unique, may be shared in general with other Dads from all walks of life (e.g., all Dads must address challenges related to discipline of their children, shared parenting, extended families and job-related stressors).

It is also important to acknowledge listed “Parking Lot” items, even if you cannot answer them at this time. It will help the Dads feel that their questions are being heard, that you take them seriously and that you are working to address them.

2

Dad as Team Player: Shared Parenting DISCUSSION OF LAST WEEK'S FOOD FOR THOUGHT



TIME

15 minutes

Running Time: 0 hr 25 m

PURPOSE

To have Dads identify a shared parenting situation and to have them begin thinking about the concept of parenting as a shared activity with the other adults in their children's lives.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

At the end of the previous session, each Dad received a handout with questions to think about in the week leading up to this session. The questions are listed below. Ask the dads to share their thoughts on these questions aloud with the group.

1. **Think of a specific time when you had to work with your child's Mother or caregiver to parent your child. Describe the time and situation.**
2. **Describe how you worked together.**
3. **Describe how you each got your opinions heard.**
4. **How was the situation resolved?**
5. **Did the situation end the way you hoped it would? Explain.**
6. **Has that situation helped your relationship with your child's mother or other caregivers?**



FACILITATOR TIP

Invite Dads to share their thoughts aloud. Be prepared to share your thoughts about some of the following shared parenting situations if none of the Dads volunteer right away or if you want to solicit more responses from them.

- **Dad will have to work with the foster family to coordinate a meeting at his child's school to discuss the child's Individual Education Plan (IEP) for special education needs.** It is so important that you, as Dads, know about every aspect of your children's life, including their education, health, after-school activities, etc. It is important that you let all of your children's caretakers know you are interested in participating in these activities so that you are on their list of people to contact when these meetings and activities take place. Be sure to ask for clarification when participating, if you need more information about what is being discussed.



- **Dad and Mom have to work together with the foster parents to coordinate visitation with their children.** This will be an ongoing shared-parenting situation that may change over time. It can be very difficult to gain agreement about visitation, especially when it involves holidays, birthdays, vacations or school breaks.
- **Dad has expressed concerns about his children getting too close to Mom's new partner.** This is also a situation that will change over the course of your children's lives. It is important to put yourself in the other parent's "shoes." Would you want your children getting close to someone you were dating and saw a future with? Why is that different from the way the child's Mother might feel?
- **Dad may have to talk to Mom's extended family about the way they talk about him in front of his children.** Children may return from a visit with grandma or other family members on Mom's side of the family and have lots to share, like "Grandma says you drink too much and that's why we can't live with you," or "Aunt Maria says that you don't pay Mom enough to buy us new clothes." It will be important that you respond to your children by saying, "I will talk to grandma about that" or "I will need to talk to Aunt Maria about that." Never talk about your personal feelings about the other parent, their family or other caregivers in front of your children.

3

Dad as Team Player: Shared Parenting FACILITATED DISCUSSION: WHAT IS SHARED PARENTING? WHY IS IT IMPORTANT FOR YOUR CHILDREN?



TIME

10 minutes

Running Time: 0 hr 35 m

PURPOSE

To help Dads gain a better understanding of shared parenting and why it is important for their children.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Share with the Dads that, as they already know, there are many adults involved in their children's lives. Emphasize that it is their responsibility to make an effort to work constructively with those adults in order for their children to hear and see a consistent message from all of their caretakers. Ask the Dads, **"what are the challenges you face in sharing your parenting role with others?"** Wait patiently for the Dads' responses and write them on a piece of large notepaper.

Continue by sharing the following points, beginning with the ones which correspond to the Dads' list of challenges.

1. Shared parenting or co-parenting is when parents or caretakers work together as a team to raise their children.
2. These terms usually refer to parents who no longer have a relationship with one another besides being the parents of the same children.
3. Shared parenting takes a lot of cooperation and often a change in attitude and approach by all people involved to make it work.
4. Even if you have personal conflicts with the other parent or other adult caretakers in your children's lives, it is very important for your children's well-being that you work to overcome these conflicts and develop a relationship that consists of open communication about your children. These relationships are also beneficial because they give you more support and more resources and your children will have the love of two families, which will help them adjust and develop.
5. As you will see from the video we will watch, shared parenting is not easy.
6. Shared parenting can be stressful for you, your children and your children's other parent or caretaker(s). Children of all ages rely on their parents to provide consistent, predictable routines that stabilize their environment and help them feel safe. Creating that predictability and safety can be challenging under the best of circumstances. When there are multiple people helping you care for your children, it is even more essential that the children see and hear consistency between caretakers and that they receive regular assurance that all the adults in their lives love them, no matter what.



7. Shared parenting or co-parenting is also important for your children because it will send them a consistent message about what is right and wrong and what is expected of them. As you will see in the video, children of different ages and different situations are affected by shared parenting very differently. Some children fear abandonment; some may feel sad, confused, angry or lonely, or feel that their family's situation is their fault. Children can show these feelings in different ways, including through angry outbursts, a drop in school performance, choosing or "siding" with one parent over the other or attempting to push their parents back together or further apart.



FACILITATOR TIP

This activity is intended to be a preliminary discussion of shared parenting and the effects of shared parenting on children. Please note that you do not need to spend too much time on this discussion because the following activities will help illustrate this information. Be sure to validate the Dads' challenges and make relevant points that fit their situations.

4

Dad as Team Player: Shared Parenting VIDEO AND FACILITATED DISCUSSION: FOR OUR CHILDREN: LEARNING TO WORK TOGETHER



TIME

35 minutes

Running Time: 1 hr 10 m

PURPOSE

To show Dads examples of shared parenting. To have Dads hear the stories of children who have experienced the impact of shared parenting on their lives.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Share with the Dads that they will watch a video illustrating the importance of shared parenting on the lives of children. Tell the Dads that the video features four families with children who live in different kinds of shared parenting situations and whose parents have struggled or are struggling to work together. Turn the notepad to the sheet labeled “For Our Children: Learning to Work Together,” and go over the following list of discussion questions.

1. **What surprised you about the video?**
2. **What from the video can you relate to?**
3. **What kinds of relationships seem most important for children?**
4. **What is the most important thing you can take away from this video as you think about your relationship to your children?**

After showing the video, ask the Dads to respond to these discussion questions, particularly question 4. Be sure to gather overall reactions and feedback from the Dads on the video.



FACILITATOR TIP

Introducing the discussion questions before showing the video will allow the Dads to watch more purposefully. Encourage the Dads to talk with each other about their reactions to the video and be sure that they are driving the conversation and not relying on you to supply comments. Physically step back from the discussion and provide the group enough time for everyone to share their thoughts. Step back into your facilitator role to review the final question as a class.



BREAK

TIME

10 minutes

Running Time: 1 hr 20 m

5

Dad as Team Player: Shared Parenting FACILITATED DISCUSSION: GUIDELINES AND POTENTIAL COMMUNICATION PROBLEMS FOR SHARED PARENTING



TIME

10 minutes

Running Time: 1 hr 30 m

PURPOSE

To provide Dads with useful guidelines for shared parenting and to highlight some common situations they may encounter when co-parenting.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY



Pass out the handouts entitled **Shared Parenting Hints** and **Communication Challenges in Shared Parenting Situations**. Spend five minutes going over each item on the **Shared Parenting Hints** handout. Ask volunteers to read the items aloud to the group. Ask the Dads if they have ever used any of the points on the handout and if so, invite them to explain the circumstances. Spend the remaining five minutes going over the **Communication Challenges in Shared Parenting Situations** handout. Ask the Dads if they have ever been in any of these situations and if so, invite them to share how they handled the situation.



FACILITATOR TIP

If no one volunteers to read aloud, feel free to read them yourself. Do not spend too much time on this activity because the Dads will be putting these points into action in the next activity. As you go over each of the handouts, be sure to stop at the end of each one and ask the Dads if they have any questions.

6

Dad as Team Player: Shared Parenting ACTIVITY: ROLE PLAYING ALTERNATIVE RESPONSES TO VIDEO SCENARIOS



TIME

23 minutes

Running Time: 1 hr 53 m

PURPOSE

To highlight multiple responses to shared parenting situations from the video.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Share with the Dads that they are going to spend the next ten minutes role playing a shared parenting situation. Remind the Dads that they saw four unique families in the video they just watched. A few of the Dads, particularly James, Donte's Dad, discussed how they have overcome obstacles when trying to co-parent. James had frequent problems when picking up Donte for their weekend visits. Lisa would offer Donte the choice as to whether or not to go with his Dad and Donte was not ready to leave when James arrived to pick him up. At the end of the video, James said that after he got a court order, their visitation got back on schedule. Share with the Dads that since many of them will need to co-parent with foster families, for the purposes of this activity, they are going to pretend that Lisa is a foster mom and not Donte's biological mother. Share with the Dads that they are going to spend ten minutes role playing alternative ways that James could have resolved the issue with Lisa, without getting a court order.

Share with the Dads that you will play the part of Lisa, the foster mom, and that you would like a volunteer to be James (See Facilitator Tip). Ask the Dads to think about the **Shared Parenting Hints** handout and to try to use a good option from that handout in role playing the situation. Share with the Dads that you will start the role play from the point where James is at the door to pick up Donte. Explain that at any point in the role play, the volunteer can "tag in" another Dad to take over for him. Ask if anyone has any questions about how the role play activity will work.

Start the role play by answering the door as if James has just arrived. Say, "Hi, James. Donte's not ready yet. Let me see what he's up to." Call out, "Donte, your Dad's here. What do you want to do?" Then, say to James, "I don't think Donte is feeling very good. He wants to just stay here this weekend." Let the Dad respond here or "tag in" another Dad if he is not prepared to answer.

Continue to play through the scenario until James and Lisa establish some consensus.

After the role play, spend five minutes reviewing this exercise by asking the Dads some of the following questions:

1. **How do you think our James did?**
2. **Ask the Dad who played James how it felt to have to talk to Lisa about Donte?**



- 3. What do you think Donte’s role should have been in this situation? Where should he have been while his Dad and caregiver were talking? How could his opinions have been heard without him needing to be present?**
- 4. What are some other ways this could have been handled?**

If you have time, initiate another role play with one of the alternative suggestions for how this situation could have been handled.



FACILITATOR TIP

It is essential to this activity that you keep the atmosphere in the room as light and playful as possible. Feel free to make jokes about the scenario or invite Dads to share their personal experiences with a similar situation. This exercise should be fun for the Dads and not one that causes stress or anxiety. Encourage the Dads who are role playing to stay in character as long as possible until the situation is resolved or they are not sure what else to say.

If it appears that a Dad is uncomfortable volunteering to be James, you can ask him to pick another Dad to be waiting on the sidelines and “tag in” when cued to provide additional help or an alternative response to Lisa.

During the review of the role play, ensure that the Dads remain respectful of each other when sharing their responses and listen to what everyone has to say. Be sure to provide a lot of encouragement to the volunteers and thank them for agreeing to participate. By acknowledging their efforts, you may encourage more of the Dads to volunteer for future activities. In addition, be sure to do a lot of active listening and paraphrase what you think you are hearing from the Dads so that everyone has a good understanding of how it felt to be the person role playing as James.

For the third question, regarding Donte’s role and opinions in this situation, share the following suggestion if no other ideas are shared:

Either parent could have approached Donte before the meeting and asked him to share how he was feeling and what he would want his visitation to look like with his Dad. Donte should not be present when his Dad and foster mother are speaking to one another. James and Lisa should discuss the visit together, considering Donte’s feelings, and then let Donte know what they decide to do. It is important to include any involved caretakers in conversations with the child, when possible, because it shows the children that they were all involved and all support the decisions made.

7

Dad as Team Player: Shared Parenting THIS WEEK'S FOOD FOR THOUGHT



TIME

5 minutes

Running Time: 1 hr 58 m

PURPOSE

To introduce the activity for the upcoming week to encourage the application of what is learned in the session to their development as Dads.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Provide a brief description of the topic for next week's session and identify several main areas of discussion for that session. Have the Dads briefly share what they hope to gain from this session, in order to ensure that their needs are met by the information and content of the session. Remind the Dads that you will be following up with them throughout the week and that you are available for them to contact with any questions.



Introduce the Food for Thought activity for the upcoming week and distribute the appropriate **Food for Thought** handout. Ask them to please come prepared to discuss the activity at the next group session.

8

Dad as Team Player: Shared Parenting CLOSING REMARKS



TIME

2 minutes

Running Time: 2 hr 00 m

PURPOSE

To provide continued encouragement for the Dads' commitment and to remind them of the key aspects of shared parenting.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Thank the Dads for their great acting, their thoughtful questions and their continued commitment to the learning and group process. Briefly reinforce what you heard or saw throughout the session that you thought was positive. Encourage the Dads to consider what was discussed today regarding shared parenting and how they can take an active role in their children's lives through open communication with all of their children's caretakers. Encourage them to do this by putting themselves in the "shoes" of the other caretakers and by focusing their efforts on what is best for the children.



SHARED PARENTING HINTS



The following hints will help you and your children move back and forth between their homes and will help you have a better relationship with your child's other caregivers. Remember, you have the ability to change your relationship with your child's other caregivers.

1. Show that you respect your children's other caregivers and their household.

- Everyone has a right to privacy about what goes on in his or her home.
- Recognize that there are many healthy ways to raise children.
- If you have concerns about living situations, activities or decisions, speak directly to the other caregiver.

2. Schedule a monthly meeting to discuss shared parenting matters.

- Talk about the children's schedules, how they are doing in school, any concerns about their behavior and any other needs they might have.
- Keep the focus of the meeting on the children.
- If you have difficulty talking with other caregivers face-to-face, try having a conversation on the phone or through email.



3. It is not okay to ask your children to be "spies" or "tattletales" about their other home(s).

- Children have loyalty toward all of their caregivers and should not be placed in this position. It can cause them a lot of emotional distress.
- Be happy when they talk about or enjoy the people in their new home.
- If children offer information about life in the other home, listen and stay neutral.

4. Help your children explore their feelings about the other parent or caregiver.

- Children need to be able to share their feelings about their parents. But this is not an opportunity for you to talk negatively about the other caregiver.
- Listen and help them explore their feelings without trying to sway their opinions with your own.
- Either speak positively about the other parent or caregiver or if you are not able, stay neutral in what you share with the child.



5. Children should have things that are theirs in each home.

- Provide for children's basic needs and keep items at your home such as a toothbrush, toothpaste, hairbrush, hairdryer and deodorant.
- Suggest that younger children take a favorite toy or game to help them feel more comfortable.
- Find out what kinds of things your children like to eat and use every day and try to have some of those at your house.



Dad as Team Player: Shared Parenting



6. Put aside your negative feelings toward the other caregiver before you spend time with your children.

7. Keep your promises and be reliable.

- Do what you say you will do.
- Keep your visitation schedule as agreed.
- Stay active in your children's lives.

8. Make your visitation schedule work for your children.

- Talk with the other caregiver when changes need to be made to the visitation schedule.
- Let the other parent know about any changes to your job or living arrangements that may also require an adjustment by the children.

9. If you plan to hire a babysitter for more than four hours while the children are in your home, give the other parent a chance to spend that time with the children instead.



10. Create special traditions with your child in your home.

- Create special traditions around the holidays or for birthdays. For example, you and your child might prepare breakfast together during every overnight visit to your house. This way, your child has special Dad-related memories and traditions to look forward to and do with their own children later in life.

11. A few more helpful hints:

- Sometimes it is tempting to do “special activities” only when all your children are with you. Realize that it is just being together that is important for you and for the children, so everyday activities (e.g., grocery shopping, running errands) are a good way to spend your time together as well.
- Do special things with differing combinations of children.
- Be sure to keep the lives of the children living with you as normal as possible when other children come for visitation.
- Keep children's toys and possessions in a private space where they are not to be touched or borrowed unless the “owner” gives permission (even while they are in the other home).
- If the children will go on a trip while in the other home, find out what they will be doing on their trip. You can help your children pack special items and needed clothing. And you can figure out a way for you to talk with them while they are away.
- Provide the other home with information regarding your child's changes. A switch in preferences (regarding music, clothes, hairstyles, foods, etc.), physical changes or a change in behavior are important for all caregivers to be aware of.





COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES IN SHARED PARENTING SITUATIONS

1. When Children Express Negative Feelings

- Remember, sadness, anger and resistance often go with having multiple homes and families.
- It is okay for children to feel this way and you do not need to try to talk them out of these feelings.
- Some children are more willing to talk about their feelings than others.
- Ask your children what they would do to make it better, then use as many of their suggestions as possible.

2. When Plans Change

- If you have to change the schedule, try not to do it at the last minute. Tell children why you need to change the plans and let them share their feelings about it.
- When another caregiver does not show up on time or calls just before the pick-up time to say he cannot make it, you should always keep your focus on your children's feelings about the situation. Do not share your own reactions with your children. Let them vent their anger, sadness or disappointment without adding your own feelings about the other caregiver.



3. When Children Are Afraid

- Talk to the other parent and find out if your children appear frightened at the other house.
- Encourage your children to talk about their fears.
- Children can also become anxious or nervous if their schedules change a lot or if they feel they cannot depend on their caregivers.
- Think about your parenting plan and how you cooperate and communicate. Make sure that you and the other caregivers are sending the same messages.



4. When Children Come Back From the Other House with Stories

- Your answer should always be some variation of "I'll talk to them directly about that."
- Try to understand why your children are telling the stories -- maybe they are scared for you to know what is really going on or they do not want to hurt your feelings.

ADAPTED FROM THE CENTER ON FATHERING. (1996). *POTENTIAL COMMUNICATION PROBLEMS IN CO-PARENTING SITUATIONS*. COLORADO SPRINGS, COLORADO.



Dad as Team Player: Shared Parenting



5. When Children “Twist” the Truth

- Some children will try to play one caregiver against the other or find loopholes in your shared parenting.
- Remember, the best answer to this situation is usually “I will talk to (your mother/your father) about that.” Let children know that you communicate with the other parent.
- Even if it is the first time your child is lying about something, pay attention. Twisting the truth or outright lying is usually a warning sign of unmet needs or even serious emotional problems.

6. When Children Are Confused

- It is inevitable that there will be mix-ups, mishaps and miscommunication between caregivers and children and between the caregivers themselves.
- Slow down and give your children a chance to tell you what they think is wrong.



7. When Children Complain About Other Caregivers

- Staying out of the “crossfire” between your children and the other caregivers is a real challenge, because their complaints may support your own feelings toward those people.
- Support your children. Let them vent their feelings, but encourage them to talk to the other caregivers about their complaints or frustrations.

8. When Children Get Into Trouble at the Other House

- When the other caregiver has given some kind of punishment (e.g., grounding, extra chores or privileges taken away), acknowledge the reasoning for that parenting decision and be supportive of the other parent.
- House-specific issues should stay house-specific, unless there is a high level of contact and cooperation between the children’s homes.
- When you make and explain the “house rules,” it is essential to set limits and let children know that you are serious. Many parents do not always make punishments “stick” or they go overboard and “ground” a child for a month. Whatever you do, be consistent and follow through.



9. When Children Say They Do Not Want to Go to the Other Caregiver’s House

- Do not let children think that they can make the decision not to go. Look at what is happening in your children’s lives and in both houses.
- When teenagers complain about switching, it can be related to their social life, activities, disagreements with parents or weekend plans.
- Children should see parents and extended family on a regular basis.



Dad as Team Player: Shared Parenting



- When a child does not want to go to the other parent's house, monitor your own reaction. Are you secretly glad? Do you contribute to the child's attitude?
- If you are the one the children do not want to see, consider whether you are giving the children what they need when they are at your house.

10. When Children Are Jealous

- Children can feel threatened and afraid about the new direction your life is taking, such as a new job that takes you away from home for longer hours, different activities or interests or a new person in your life.
- Give the children a chance to adjust to their new living situation before introducing new people into their lives.
- Plan special time to be alone with your children during times of change so that they know they can talk and you will listen about what they are feeling or thinking.



11. When Children Show Emotional Extremes

- Watch for extreme sadness, anger and wild mood swings in your children. They may seem depressed and quiet day after day. They may cry or react with anger with little or no reason. Their eating or sleeping patterns may change drastically.
- Children may refuse to listen to parents or other authority figures, may lock themselves in their room or stop wanting to spend time with friends or doing their "normal" activities.
- Begin by looking at what you are doing for your children or what you can do for your children and then seek professional help, if necessary.





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THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM

DAD AS WORKER: WORKFORCE READINESS





Dad as Worker: Workforce Readiness



PURPOSE OF SESSION

Dads will learn about the importance of being gainfully employed and will discuss the balance needed to handle the demands of employment and parenting. Dads will meet a local career or workforce readiness expert and will discuss the issues and challenges related to finding and maintaining employment.

FACILITATOR PREPARATION

- Identify and contact a local workforce or career readiness expert to be present during and assist with this session. When selecting an expert, be sure to find someone who understands the nature of the group and the experiences and status of the Dads as it relates to employment (or lack thereof), and who has a supportive demeanor about working with non-resident fathers. Ask the representative to bring any materials he or she has available for the Dads, including: informational brochures; contact information for workforce readiness offices or programs; and samples of actual forms, model resumes, or job applications used in different employment settings.
- Watch the movie *The Pursuit of Happyness* and encourage the workforce readiness expert to watch it as well. Prepare the clip for the group session by cueing the DVD to the scene indicated in Activity 3.
- Review all the Facilitator Resources listed below.
- Ensure that there are enough copies of all handouts for each Dad.
- Post the group guidelines developed in the Introduction session on the wall.
- Post a large piece of paper marked “Parking Lot” on the wall.
- Review parking lot questions presented at the previous session and prepare answers.
- Write question 4 from Activity 2 on the easel notepad.
- Set up the room so that the chairs are arranged in a circle, with a break in the circle for an easel stand with large notepaper visible to all.

FACILITATOR RESOURCES

- Black, T., Blumenthal, J., Tisch, S., Lassiter, J., Smith, W. (Producers), & Muccino, G. (Director). (2006). *The pursuit of happyness* [Motion picture]. United States: Sony Pictures.
- Websites Related to Job Search and Employment:
 - U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training: <http://www.doleta.gov/>
 - U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics: <http://www.bls.gov/emp/>
 - USA.gov: http://www.usa.gov/Citizen/Topics/Education_Training/Finding_Jobs.shtml



- Career Onestop: <http://www.jobbankinfo.org/>
- Jobing.com: <http://www.gojobing.com/>
- Monster: <http://www.monster.com/>
- Yahoo! Hotjobs: <http://hotjobs.yahoo.com/>
- Goodwill Industries International: <http://www.goodwill.org/page/guest/jobseekers>
- State Specific Resources:
 - **Colorado**
 - Colorado Department of Labor and Employment: <http://www.coworkforce.com/>
 - e-Colorado: <http://www.e-colorado.org/Default.aspx>
 - **Indiana**
 - Indiana Department of Workforce Development: <http://www.in.gov/dwd/2355.htm>
 - Learn More Indiana: <http://www.learnmoreindiana.org/Pages/default.aspx>
 - **Washington**
 - Access Washington: <http://access.wa.gov/employment/index.aspx>
 - United Way: <http://www.uwkc.org/kcca/impact/Employment/default.asp>
 - **Texas**
 - Texas Workforce Commission: <http://www.twc.state.tx.us/>
 - Workforce Solutions for Tarrant County: <http://www.workforcesolutions.net/>
- Career Interest Inventory Resource:
 - If you do not have a career interest inventory available through your local workforce program and you have some interest expressed in your group, we recommend that you familiarize yourself with the Self-Directed Search, 4th edition, as a tool to obtain and offer to the Dads. Your program can order a Self-Directed Search user kit from the publisher, Psychological Assessment Resources, Inc. (PAR, Inc.), which includes 25 sets of “paper and pencil” inventories and accompanying materials. Or, the Self-Directed Search can be purchased and completed online for \$9.95 per report. The Self-Directed Search can be purchased through:
 - Dr. John Holland’s Self-Directed Search: <http://www.self-directed-search.com/index.html>
 - PAR, Inc., Self-Directed Search Form R: https://www3.parinc.com/products/product.aspx?Productid=SDS_R

MATERIALS FOR GROUP SESSION

- Easel stand with large notepad
- Permanent markers
- Tape to hang large notepaper on wall
- DVD: The Pursuit of Happiness (see source under Facilitator Resources above)
- TV and DVD player

HANDOUTS

- Resource materials provided by the workforce or career readiness expert (for Activity 4)
- Handout: **Food for Thought** that corresponds with next week’s session (for Activity 5)



1

Dad as Worker: Workforce Readiness WELCOME AND “DAD MOMENT OF THE WEEK”



TIME

10 minutes

Running Time: 0 hr 10 m

PURPOSE

To identify positive parenting activities. To follow up on “Parking Lot” questions.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Welcome each Dad to the group. Begin the session by asking each Dad to share aloud his “Dad Moment of the Week” (any interaction, thought, action, etc. that he is proud of as it relates to his children or his role as a Dad). Answer the “Parking Lot” questions relevant to the previous session.



FACILITATOR TIP

The goal of having the Dads identify their “Dad Moment of the Week” is to help them build on their successes throughout their time in the program. This regular activity will encourage them to recognize and continue their “smaller” interactions with their children (e.g., phone calls, praising, saying “I love you”).

Throughout this session, look for ways to normalize the experience of non-resident fathers. Remind Dads that their challenges and successes, while unique, may be shared in general with other Dads from all walks of life (e.g., all Dads must address challenges related to discipline of their children, shared parenting, extended families and job-related stressors).

It is also important to acknowledge listed “Parking Lot” items, even if you cannot answer them at this time. It will help the Dads feel that their questions are being heard, that you take them seriously, and that you are working to address them.

2

Dad as Worker: Workforce Readiness DISCUSSION OF LAST WEEK'S FOOD FOR THOUGHT



TIME

25 minutes

Running Time: 0 hr 35 m

PURPOSE

To introduce Dads to a local workforce readiness expert. To provide Dads with an opportunity to explore their job or career history.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Introduce the workforce or career readiness expert. Have the expert write his or her contact information on the easel notepad at the beginning of the session and welcome the Dads to contact him or her directly. The expert should also explain that he or she is there to support the Dads and that there will be no repercussions for Dads who disclose that they are unemployed. Encourage the Dads to freely ask questions throughout the session to ensure that they gain the information that is most useful to them.

At the end of the previous session, each Dad received a **Food for Thought** handout with the following questions to think about in the week leading up to this session. Ask the Dads to share aloud their responses to the questions below. Write the Dads' responses to question 4 on the easel notepad.

1. **List the three most recent jobs you have had.**
2. **What did you like about these jobs?**
3. **What did you *not* like about these jobs?**
4. **What has worked well for you in the past in finding or keeping a job? What helped you succeed (e.g., people who assisted you, job leads or sources, other resources)?**
5. **What has been hard for you in finding or keeping a job in the past?**



FACILITATOR TIP

During this activity, it could become apparent that some of the Dads have not thought a lot about what types of careers interest them, but instead have worked in jobs that are close to where they live, were easy to obtain or are part of a family business. Encourage them to think beyond where they are currently and to really identify what types of jobs or work environments they have an interest in. Make every effort to support the Dads and encourage them to develop confidence in beginning or continuing to search for a job that meets their needs and their interests.

In addition, encourage the Dads to identify the challenges they have faced in the past to finding or keeping a job. The workforce readiness expert should pay close attention to these challenges in order to guide the discussion in Activity 4.

3

Dad as Worker: Workforce Readiness VIDEO AND FACILITATED DISCUSSION: *THE PURSUIT OF HAPPYNESS*



TIME

30 minutes

Running Time: 1 hr 05 m

PURPOSE

To show Dads an example of a highly determined Dad, demonstrating the positive consequences of extreme hard work and commitment. To identify and solve problems regarding the competing demands of employment and parenting.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

This activity should be co-facilitated by the facilitator and the workforce readiness expert.

Share with the Dads that they will watch a 5-minute clip from the movie *The Pursuit of Happyness*, which is based on a real story. Ask if anyone has seen the movie. If so, have someone volunteer to briefly explain what the movie is about. If no one has seen the movie, explain that it is about a single dad named Chris who faces possible job loss, eviction from his apartment and homelessness with his son. The clip that will be shown is Chris's interview for an unpaid internship with a prestigious stock brokerage firm, which he hopes will ultimately land him a job with the firm. He shows up for the interview in clothes covered in paint, having come from painting his apartment from which he was evicted and serving a few hours of jail time for unpaid parking tickets.

Play the DVD from **41:20 to 45:58** (running time: 4:38 minutes; stop the DVD immediately following the line "you can call me Jay"). After showing the clip, spend about 10 minutes gathering reactions and feedback from the Dads. Use the following questions to guide the discussion as needed:

- 1. What can you relate to from this clip?**
- 2. What did Chris do *right* in his interview?**
- 3. What did Chris do *wrong* in his interview?**
- 4. What do you think is the most important thing you can take away from this video?**

After discussing these questions, share with the Dads that what they did not see in this clip, but what takes place throughout the movie, is Chris balancing his role as a Dad with his drive and hard work to get and keep a job. Ask the Dads, "In addition to all your other life activities, what activities will you need to do to achieve balance as a worker and a father?" Have them think about the types of activities that have been discussed in previous sessions. Record this list of activities on the easel notepad. (See the list in the Facilitator Tip to elicit discussion.)



With this list in front of them, ask them to respond to the following questions:

1. **What are some challenges you can foresee in balancing what is expected of you at work with spending time with your children?**
2. **How do you think you will respond to these challenges to make sure you are doing what you need to do for your job, while more importantly attending to the things you need to do for your children?**



FACILITATOR TIP

Encourage the Dads to talk with each other about their reactions to the video and be sure that they are driving the conversation and not relying on you to supply comments.

It is very important that the facilitator relates this video to the Dads' situations with the child welfare system and the Dads' relationships with their children. The Dads should consider the following activities in balancing their role as employee and their role as Dad:

- Visitation with their children (balancing their work schedule, their children's schedules and the schedules of the other caregivers)
- Attending court hearings or meetings with their attorney
- Attending case planning meetings with the social worker or other child welfare representatives
- Attending court-ordered therapy or evaluation appointments
- Attending their children's school activities



BREAK

TIME

10 minutes

Running Time: 1 hr 15 m

4

Dad as Worker: Workforce Readiness FACILITATED DISCUSSION: BECOMING A WORKER



TIME

38 minutes

Running Time: 1 hr 53 m

PURPOSE

To share information with the Dads about job search resources, different types of jobs, preparing for a job interview, what to look for in a work environment and the benefits of being employed.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

 Reintroduce the representative from the workforce readiness program. The representative should also reiterate that he or she is here to educate and support the Dads and that there will not be repercussions for Dads who disclose that they are not employed. Encourage the Dads to freely ask questions throughout the session to ensure that they gain the information that is most useful to them. Distribute any materials or handouts from the workforce readiness program. Have the representative speak to the issues and challenges raised by the Dads in Activity 2 and to any of the following topics which have been identified as relevant for the group:

1. What do you need to begin looking for a job?
2. What transportation do you have available to you to get to an interview and to work each day?
3. What types of information do you need to have when you fill out an application (e.g., references, employment history list, previous salary information)? What is a resume? Do you need one? If so, how do you make one?
4. What types of programs or resources are available to people who are job searching?
5. What are the best ways to find job openings?
6. What are the differences between part-time and full-time positions besides the amount of hours expected (e.g., benefits, paid time off and sick leave, family leave, etc.)?
7. What do you need to do to prepare for a job interview?
8. What types of questions will be asked of the applicant during an interview?
9. What else are employers looking for during an interview?
10. What types of questions should the applicant ask of the potential employer during an interview?



11. What are some things to look for in a healthy work environment?
12. What type of supervision and training will you receive?
13. What are unemployment benefits and who is eligible?
14. What are the benefits for Dads of being employed?
15. What are the benefits for children of having parents who are employed?



FACILITATOR TIP

This discussion should remain as informative and informal as possible. Everything shared by the representative should be pertinent to the Dads' specific needs for learning about the job search and interview processes.

5

Dad as Worker: Workforce Readiness THIS WEEK'S FOOD FOR THOUGHT



TIME

5 minutes

Running Time: 1 hr 58 m

PURPOSE

To introduce the activity for the upcoming week and to encourage the application of what is learned in group to their development as a Dad.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Provide a brief description of the topic for next week's session and identify several of the main areas of discussion for that session. Have the Dads briefly share what they hope to gain from the session, in order to ensure that their needs are met by the information and content of the session. Remind the Dads that you will be following up with them throughout the week and that you are available for them to contact with any questions.



Introduce the Food for Thought activity for the upcoming week and distribute the appropriate **Food for Thought** handout. Ask them to please come prepared to discuss the activity at the next group session.

6

Dad as Worker: Workforce Readiness CLOSING REMARKS



TIME

2 minutes

Running Time: 2 hr 00 m

PURPOSE

To provide continued encouragement for their commitment.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Thank the Dads for their thoughtful questions and continued commitment to the learning and group process. Briefly reinforce what you heard or saw throughout the session that you thought was positive. Encourage the Dads to consider what was discussed today regarding workforce readiness and to plan some ways to advance their careers.



Food for Thought

Dad as Worker: Workforce Readiness

1. List the three most recent jobs you have had.

1)

2)

3)

2. What did you like about these jobs?

3. What did you not like about these jobs?

4. What has worked well for you in the past in finding or keeping a job? What helped you succeed (e.g., people who assisted you, job leads or sources, other resources)?

5. What has been hard for you in finding or keeping a job in the past?



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CHILD WELFARE TERMS: A DICTIONARY FOR DADS





Adjudication Hearing: See **Fact-Finding Hearing**

Adoption: This is when children who will no longer live with their biological parents become permanent legal members of another family. Sometimes they also keep contact with their birth family. If that happens, it is called an **open adoption**.

Advocates: People or groups who help parents or children give their opinions or ask for what they need in court, in schools and with service providers. They also help look out for the rights of the child or parent.

Allege: When someone claims something happened (for example, child abuse) without having to prove it. The claim someone has made is called an “allegation.”

Appeal Process: This process lets parents ask the child welfare agency or the court to think over their decisions when the parents do not agree with those decisions. An appeal of an agency decision is often called “filing a grievance.” This process might be used when a service is denied, when a family’s choice of service is not considered or when the family doesn’t feel they are getting quality services. The second type of appeal happens in court. People who do not agree with the court’s decisions about themselves or their children can appeal the judge’s decision with the help of an attorney.

Assessment (also called Risk Assessment): This term is used to describe the time a caseworker spends with children, families and others trying to learn about a family’s strengths, needs and resources. The caseworker takes the information he or she learned and plans help, services and supports for the family. There are many kinds of assessments. In **child protective services**, or “CPS,” usually three assessments are completed. First, when a family becomes involved with CPS, the caseworker does a safety assessment to find out if a child is in any immediate danger in his home. Next, a **risk assessment** is done to see if there are worries that a child might be abused or neglected in the future. A full family assessment will also be done. This happens once families and caseworkers have gotten to know each other better





and have more time to figure out family strengths and needs so that the children can stay at home. If a child is removed, then the assessment decides what needs to happen so the child can return home.

There are other kinds of assessments that children and parents might participate in. For example, when a child goes to a doctor, his physical health will be assessed. If there is worry about parent's alcohol or drug use, the court might ask or order a parent to have a substance abuse assessment. These kinds of assessments are done to find out what a child or parent needs and what can be done to help.

Case Plan: See **Service Plan**

Child Abuse and Neglect: There are several different types of child abuse and neglect:

Physical abuse is causing injury to a child by beating, kicking, biting, burning, shaking or some other way of harming the child. Sometimes even when a parent does not mean to hurt a child, a child's injuries might legally be called abuse. For example, the injury may have been because the parent was too harsh with discipline or physical punishment. Parents are responsible for their children's safety, even if the children are hurt accidentally when being disciplined or punished. Parents may also be responsible if someone else injures a child in the child's home (for example, a parent's boyfriend or girlfriend).

Child neglect is when a parent does not make sure that a child's basic needs are met (for example, having a place to live, having food to eat, going to school, seeing a doctor when necessary, being supervised by a safe adult, having mental health and emotional needs taken care of). Sometimes neglect of a child happens when a parent has a drug or alcohol abuse problem, mental illness or other issues. Not having enough money to take care of a child's basic needs does not mean a parent is neglectful. It may mean that the parent needs help or services. Also, families come from different cultures with different beliefs, which means that every parent raises his or her children differently. As long as





parents keep their children safe and do not break the law, their parenting style and cultural differences should be respected.

Sexual abuse includes any type of sexual activity or sexual contact by a parent, other caregiver or trusted adult with a child. Taking advantage of a child by using a child in a sexual way to make money or taking photographs or filming a child in a sexual way is also considered to be sexual abuse.

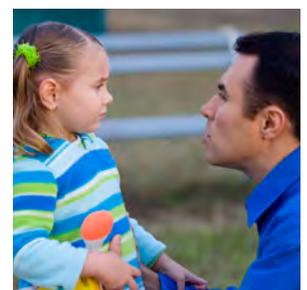
Emotional abuse includes actions of a parent or caregiver that can hurt a child's emotional health, such as screaming and name calling. Other acts, such as rejecting or withholding affection are also forms of emotional abuse.

Child Abuse Hotline (also called ChildLine): A toll-free number to report suspected child abuse or neglect. Anyone can report concerns of a child being abused or neglected to this Hotline. It is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. All reports are confidential and the name of the person calling will not be shared with the public, the child or the family.

Child Abuse Report: The call received by the child welfare agency to claim that a child was abused or neglected. Sometimes people make calls because they are worried about a child or parent, even if there has not been any obvious abuse or neglect. The information made in a report is written down and a decision is made about the seriousness of the information and whether or not some kind of follow-up needs to take place (for example, an **investigation** or services).

Child and Family Team: The child and family team comes together to develop **service plans** for the family. The team usually includes the people who provide various services families might need, the people who work for the child welfare agency working with the family, extended family members and other support people (such as neighbors or clergy). The team reviews each family's strengths and needs. Then the team figures out what help, services or supports to arrange for the child and family. Family members are expected to be active members of these teams and help plan for their children.

Child Maltreatment: Another term that means the same thing as **Child Abuse and Neglect**.





Child Protection Agency (also called Child Protective Services or CPS): The public government agency that is in charge of looking into (or investigating) cases of reported abuse or neglect of children. They are also in charge of providing services and supports to children and families.



Child Protective Services: See **Child Protection Agency**. Sometimes “Child Protective Services” is a term used to mean the services set up to help protect the safety of a child. Services are provided when children have been abused or neglected or there is a serious risk that they might be in the future.



Concurrent Planning: This means that the child welfare system is making two different plans for a child at the same time, in case one does not work (for example, a “Plan A” and a “Plan B”). The main plan (or “Plan A”) is to get the children and parents back together at home. At the same time, there is a back-up plan (or “Plan B”) for the child to live in another permanent home in case the child cannot return to his family. This way of planning is one way that the child welfare system tries to shorten the amount of time it takes for children to find permanent homes. It also helps cut down on the number of **out-of-home placements** for a child.



Court-Appointed Special Advocate or CASA: This **advocate** is a specially trained person chosen by the juvenile or family courts. This person is usually a volunteer from the community who is interested in helping children. The CASA’s job is to make sure that the needs and best interests of children who have been abused or neglected are considered during the court process. The CASA usually meets with the child, the parents and often others involved with the family or child to learn as much as he or she can about the child’s situation. The CASA reports to the court on a regular basis about how a child is doing.



Court Order: A document written by a judge that explains the judge’s instructions or directions. It is a legally binding document, which means that everyone involved in the court case must follow what the judge says in the order.



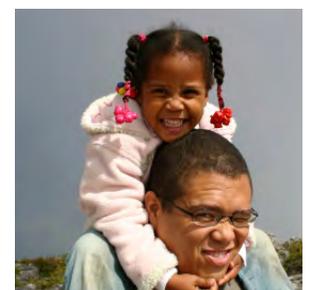


Custody: A judge grants this to an adult or an agency so that they have the legal right to care for a child. The custodian (or person who has custody) has the power to make major decisions regarding the child.

Dispositional Hearing: At this hearing, a judge makes a more permanent **court order** (usually lasting for a year) that lays out a plan to meet the needs of the child during that time period. The **CPS** caseworker files a court report that explains the story of what has happened with the child and family, what the caseworker thinks the child needs and what services and supports should be set up for the child and parents. These reports are usually very similar to what is written in the service plan or will help make a new **service plan**. A court order usually lists the legal reasons that the child and family is involved with the court and **CPS**, identifies the needs of the child and parents, lists the goals for the child and family, explains actions that parents and the child welfare system must take, lists the services that the child and parents are to receive and names a time period for working on all these things.

Emergency Placement/Removal: This is when a child is temporarily removed from his family and goes to live with a relative, in a **foster home** or in an **emergency shelter**. A child is removed from his home when the **CPS** caseworker has concerns about the immediate safety of a child. Before or right after the CPS caseworker removes a child from his home, the caseworker must get permission from a judge (called an “emergency protection order”). The emergency protection order will then be reviewed in a court hearing shortly after the child is removed to see if the child can return home.

Emergency Shelter: This shelter is a type of **out-of-home placement**. It is a temporary, short-term place where children and teenagers stay if the child welfare agency has removed them from their homes because of concerns for their immediate safety. The shelter may be in a family’s home or at a group facility. These types of shelters are set up to provide an immediate safe place for children to stay while long-term decisions are being made about where they will live.





Fact-Finding Hearing: At this hearing, the court decides if **CPS** has the facts or evidence that the **allegations** of child abuse or neglect are true. If the parents agree with the allegations, the judge will make a “finding” and will rule that the things listed in the CPS **petition** are true. If the parents do not agree with the information in the petition, the CPS attorney will present evidence or testimony from the caseworker, police officers or other witnesses or experts to support what CPS believes to be true. Documents such as medical records or photographs may also be presented to the judge. The attorney for the parents and the child (the **guardian ad litem**) has the right to question witnesses, present other evidence and have the parents, family members, neighbors or others testify.



Family Group Decision Making (also called Family Group Conferencing or Family Team Decision Making): This meeting takes place with the family and extended family members to plan for the child’s safety and for a permanent home for the child. The caseworker supplies information about the child and family’s situation at the beginning of the meeting. Families are encouraged to ask questions and think about the information shared with them and then make a plan together about how to keep the child safe. Families can also ask for resources from **CPS** and other service providers so their plan is strong. The family is given time to create their plan and then they share it with the caseworker and service providers at the meeting. If the caseworker agrees that it is a safe and good plan, the judge will then have to review and approve it. Family group decision-making meetings work differently in different communities.



Family Mediation: This process is when a trained person who has no particular interest in the case helps a family find solutions to problems with a child’s safety, well-being and placement. This person (often called a “mediator”) is not directly involved with the family or the child welfare agency. This person helps the agency workers and family members to come to an agreement. The goal is to find solutions in a positive way, with everyone having a chance to be heard.





Foster Home: This is a type of **out-of-home placement** where a child lives with foster parents who are licensed, trained caregivers for children (sometimes they may also be family members of the child). Foster parents work with **CPS**, families and other service providers to make sure that children are kept safe and their needs are met until they can return home or enter another permanent living arrangement.



Founded: The result after the first **assessment** by **CPS** when they find evidence that child abuse or neglect occurred. Another term that means the same thing as founded is **substantiated**.

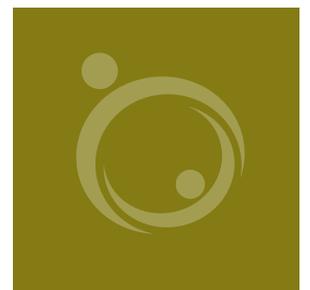


Group Home: This type of **out-of-home placement** is a home-like setting where unrelated children live together for different lengths of time. Group homes may have one set of “house parents” or may have staff who work in shifts to care for the children. Some treatment (or therapeutic) group homes have specially trained staff to help children who have emotional, behavioral or physical difficulties.



Guardian ad Litem or GAL: This person is usually a lawyer who is appointed by the court to meet with a child and report to the court what he or she believes is best for the child (on issues related to safety, placement, services and supports, and education). The GAL is the attorney for the child.

Guardianship: The legal term used to describe the role of an adult who is not the child’s biological parent when he or she becomes responsible for the care and well-being of that child. The birth parents do not give up their parental rights. Legal guardianship for a child is a relationship between the child and a caretaker that is created by the court and is intended to be permanent. Sometimes the child welfare agency gives the guardian financial help to care for the special needs of the child. This help is called “subsidized guardianship.”



Home Study: This process describes considering and preparing families to become either foster parents or adoptive parents. The home study includes a look at the strengths and needs of the families. The home study also helps families figure out which children (for example, based on age and support needs)





would benefit most from being in their care. A home study may also take place for a family member of the child who is being considered for **kinship care** or **guardianship**.

Independent Living Placement: This type of **out-of-home placement** is for older teenagers who move out of foster care to live on their own, usually in an apartment building with other youth. This type of permanent placement option is most often used for youth who cannot return home to live, are not placed with relatives or guardians and are not adopted.

Independent Living Services: This term is used to describe the services given to an older teenager to prepare him or her for adulthood or living on his or her own. These services usually include teaching teenagers what they need to know about living on their own, including money management, finding a job, daily living, finding housing and communication.

Indicated: The result of the first **assessment** by **CPS** when they find that there is reason to suspect that a child has been abused or neglected or that the child is at risk for abuse or neglect, but they cannot prove it. Currently, only 10 states use this as a category to describe the result of a first assessment.

Initial Hearing (also called Plea Hearing or Jurisdictional Hearing): This hearing is the first court hearing that takes place after a child has been removed from his home or a **petition** has been filed by **CPS** to provide in-home services to a child and family. This hearing is one of the most important hearings in the life of a court case because a lot of decisions are made early in the case.

Investigation: The formal information gathering process used by a **child protection agency** to decide whether **child abuse or neglect** has taken place.

Jurisdictional Hearing: See **Initial Hearing**.

Kinship Care Placement (also called Relative Placement): This type of **out-of-home placement** is where relatives, godparents, step-parents or other adults who have a family-like relationship or bond with the child care for the child full-time. This placement could also be with a close family friend, a neighbor





or a member of a child's tribe. Courts may formally place children in homes of their relatives, which is called kinship foster care. Or, the parent or guardian may informally place children on a voluntary basis with relatives or friends, but only if the court has not already placed them in out-of-home care. Kinship care families may be able to get some financial help from the child welfare system through special funding or **TANF**, if they are financially eligible. Some states will also help extended family become foster parents and receive funding that way. Many states do not have funding for children living with other family members or friends.

Medicaid: This program gives financial help for health and mental health care for eligible low-income children and families. Medicaid programs are run and funded by both the federal government and state government. Children normally qualify if they live in a family with very low income, have a serious disability or medical condition (for which they might also receive federal disability benefits such as Supplemental Security income (SSI)), or are in a court-ordered **out-of-home placement**.

Open Adoption: An **adoption** in which the adoptive parent and birth parent agree that the birth parent can continue contact with the child. This type of agreement may not stand up in court if a disagreement happens between the adoptive and biological parents. An open adoption often allows telephone calls, letters and visits between the child and biological parent, depending on the situation and agreement.

Out-of-Home Placement: A place where a child lives when he or she has been removed from his or her family's home.

Permanency: A goal established by federal law for children who are in an **out-of-home placement**. When a child has been placed outside of the home, the child welfare agency must find and arrange a permanent home for that child, which is a place where the child will have safe and nurturing family relationships expected to last a lifetime. In most cases, the **permanency plan** for the child is to return to the birth family. This plan is not always possible, so a judge may decide that





the child will live with relatives or adoptive parents. The term “permanency” is also used to refer to the importance of continuing family relationships and connections while the child is in out-of-home placement.

Permanency Hearing: The court hearing where a child’s current placement and **permanency plan** are reviewed. Federal law requires that the permanency hearing happen before a child has been in foster care for 12 months. These hearings are set on this time period to make sure children do not stay in foster care too long (usually 12-18 months) before they return home. If it seems that the child might not be able to return home, a court may order that a **concurrent plan** (or back-up plan) be in the works at the same time. If children are not able to go home in the time period set by the court, the judge will ask **CPS** and the **guardian ad litem** to make other suggestions about where a child should live permanently. These suggestions may include parents losing their parental rights (called **Termination of Parental Rights**) so that the child can have a different permanent and legal family or place to live.

Permanency Planning: The process the CPS caseworker goes through to make sure that children are in safe and nurturing family relationships expected to last a lifetime.

Petition: A document filed with the court that lays out the **allegations** of abuse or neglect of a child (based on local laws) and asks the court to be responsible for the supervision of the child through **CPS**. The petition starts the legal process.

Plea Hearing: See **Initial Hearing**.

Pre-Trial Conference: A meeting, or conference, that allows the parents, their attorneys, the child’s attorney and **advocates**, and the CPS attorney to discuss an agreement outside of the courtroom when they agree to the facts of a **petition** and the suggestions for service. Some courts use pre-trial conferences in a **child maltreatment** case, which means a trial in court is not necessary.





Reasonable Efforts: The steps child welfare agencies must take to prevent children from being removed from their homes or to help children who have been removed return home. States must also make efforts to help children find other permanent homes if they cannot return to their own families.

Registry (also called Abuse Registry or Central Register): A list or database kept by the child welfare agency of **founded** allegations of **child abuse or neglect** and the names of the people responsible for the abuse or neglect. Most states have a central place or registry for keeping track of reports and the results of child abuse and neglect **investigations**. The length of time that a name and **allegation** remains in the registry varies by state.

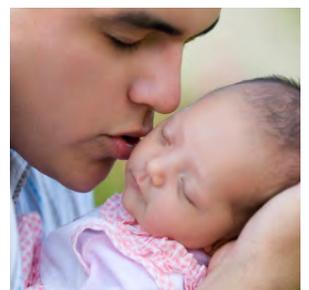
Residential Treatment Center (also called Residential Group Care): This type of **out-of-home placement** is a state-licensed, 24-hour facility for children who need intensive treatment services after being removed from their homes. The services at a residential treatment center include therapy to help children deal with emotional, behavioral or physical conditions. A residential treatment center is usually a temporary placement for children.

Respite Care: A service that gives a family a short break or relief from caring for a child by having someone else take care of a child for awhile. Respite can last a few hours, a few days or a week or more. Respite care can occur in a family's own home, at a respite care center or in someone else's home.

Review Hearing: The court hearing where the case or **service plan** is reviewed and changed if necessary, and where everyone's progress on the completion of services is reviewed. A review hearing may occur in court or more informally with a review officer.

Risk Assessment: See **Assessment**.

Service Plan: A written agreement between a parent and the child welfare agency that describes the reason a child and family are involved in the child welfare system, the family's strengths and needs, the child's strengths and needs, the child's and family's goals, actions the family and the child welfare system





must take, services a child and parents will receive, and a time period for working on these activities. The juvenile court usually includes parts of the plan in their **court order**. It is important for parents (and sometimes others, including the child, extended family and support people) to work together with the caseworker to develop a good plan.

If your child is living at home, the service plan describes what needs to happen so that the child is safe and can continue to live there. If your child lives in an **out-of-home placement**, the plan states the reason the child was removed and what needs to happen for the child to return to the family. Parents are expected to sign the plan and receive a copy to keep.

Substantiated: See **Founded**.

TANF (also called Temporary Assistance for Needy Families or Welfare or Public Assistance): A government program that gives cash and other help to eligible low-income families. In order to receive this help, parents must meet certain work and other requirements set by the state. Families can receive TANF assistance for no more than five years (less in many states).

Termination of Parental Rights (TPR): A legally binding court decision made by a judge that ends all parental rights of birth parents. After parental rights are terminated, a child is legally free to be adopted.

Therapeutic Foster Home (also called Treatment Foster Care): This type of **out-of-home placement** is when the foster parents have special training and skills to care for children and teenagers with serious emotional, behavioral or medical problems. Treatment foster parents receive additional support and resources to meet the special needs of the children in their homes.

Unsubstantiated (also called Unable to Substantiate or Unfounded): The result after the first **assessment** by **CPS** when they find that there is no evidence that child abuse or neglect occurred.





Introduction

GROUP SESSION TOPICS

Dad as Part of the Solution: Overview of the Child Welfare System

How does the child welfare system work? What part of the system are my children and I in now and what does that mean? A child welfare representative will join us to answer specific questions.

Dad as Planner: Service Planning in the Child Welfare System

How does the child welfare system give help to families? How can I help the system understand what my family needs? A child welfare representative will join us to answer specific questions.

Dad as a Healthy Parent: Taking Care of You

What choices do I need to make in my own life to be a better Dad for my children? What will it mean for my children if I am healthy? What kinds of things make it hard for me to make good life choices?

Dad as Community Member: Identifying and Accessing Resources

What kinds of help or services are available to me and my children in my community? How do I find out about them? What kinds of things can I do with my children that are free or reduced cost?

Dad as Cultural Guide: The Role of Culture in Parenting

What cultures am I a part of? How does my culture influence how I parent my children? What parts of my culture do I want my children to know about and how do I share these things with them?

Dad as Parent: Understanding Your Children

What do children need at all ages to grow up in a healthy way? What can I do to meet the needs of my children?

Dad as Part of Children's Placement: Visiting with Your Children

How does the child welfare visitation process work? What can I do as a Dad to have successful visits with my children?

Dad as Part of the Juvenile Court Process: Legal Advocacy and Court Etiquette

How does the juvenile court/legal process work? What part of the court process are my children and I in now and what does that mean? An attorney for parents will join us to answer specific questions.

Dad as Provider: Supporting Your Children

What is "child support" and what is expected of me as a Dad who does not live with my children? What will it mean for my children if I provide financial support? What other types of support do children need? A child support enforcement office representative will join us to answer specific questions.

Dad as Team Player: Shared Parenting

How do I get along better with my children's mother, our extended families and the foster parents or other involved caregivers in order to parent my child?

Dad as Worker: Workforce Readiness

Why is it important for my children and for myself that I have a job? What skills do I have to offer to an employer?