

# Training **MATTERS**



A PUBLICATION OF THE NC DSS CHILD WELFARE SERVICES STATEWIDE TRAINING PARTNERSHIP

Volume 14, Number 2 • February 2013

*Training Matters* is produced by the North Carolina Division of Social Services Child Welfare Services Statewide Training Partnership, which is dedicated to developing and delivering competency-based, job-relevant, accessible child welfare training. Partners include:

- NC Division of Social Services
- NC Association of County Directors of Social Services
- Center for Family and Community Engagement at NC State University
- Independent Living Resources, Inc.
- NC Child Welfare Education Collaborative
- UNC-Chapel Hill School of Social Work (Jordan Institute for Families)
- UNC-Chapel Hill School of Medicine

#### **We Want to Hear from You!**

If you have questions or want to comment about something that appears in *Training Matters*, please contact Kathy Dobbs, Child Welfare Services, NC Division of Social Services, 2412 Mail Service Center, 325 N. Salisbury St., Raleigh, NC 27699-2412, Courier: 56-20-25, Tel: 919/334-1176, [Kathy.Dobbs@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:Kathy.Dobbs@dhhs.nc.gov).

#### **Visit Our Website**

Go to [www.trainingmatters-nc.org](http://www.trainingmatters-nc.org).

This issue of *Training Matters* was produced by John McMahon of the UNC-Chapel Hill School of Social Work. Special thanks to the Division of Social Services' Angela Holloway, Leotis McNeil, and Rick Zechman for their contributions to this issue.

## **Learning Resources for**

# **Strengthening Father Engagement in Child Welfare**

Over the past decade we've become increasingly aware of the contributions fathers can make to children's well-being. Indeed, the evidence shows that healthy father involvement can promote development and bring children other important benefits (Horn & Sylvestor, 2002; Horton, 2003; Flouri & Buchanan, 2004).

Fathers can have a positive impact on child welfare outcomes as well. One study found that children whose fathers are in the picture spend less time in foster care, are more likely to achieve reunification, and have a lower likelihood of subsequent maltreatment allegations (Malm, Zielewski, & Chen, 2008).

If you're a child welfare profes-

sional, chances are you already know that having fathers involved is a good thing. You probably also know that engaging fathers in child welfare work isn't always easy, especially when they don't live with their children.

Fortunately, father engagement is something workers and their agencies can get better at over time. Here are some resources that can help.

### **North Carolina Resources**

#### **Engaging the Non-Resident Father.**

In fall 2012 the Division of Social Services debuted *Engaging the Non-Resident Father*. This one-day course prepares county DSS child welfare supervisors to teach their staff skills and strategies for engaging fathers and non-residential parents.

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## **NC's Best Practice Guide**

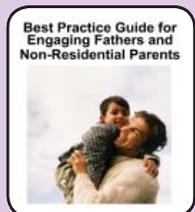
In December 2012 the NC Division of Social Services published the *Best Practice Guide for Engaging Fathers and Non-Residential Parents*. Developed with help from the NC Fatherhood Development Advisory Council, the NC Supervisory Best Practice Workgroup, Prevent Child Abuse-NC, the Center for Child and Family Engagement, and other partners, this guide provides specific, concrete suggestions for those working in CPS Intake, CPS Assessment (initial and ongoing), In-Home Services, and Out-of-Home Services.

Topic areas covered include diligent efforts to locate, suggestions for interviewing mothers and non-resident fathers, and more.

The guide offers useful tips for engaging fathers and families in a variety of situations, including: parents who are in jail or prison, families with multiple fathers, parents in the armed forces, families with a history of domestic violence, and same-sex parents.

It also includes a "Father Friendly Check-Up" readers can use to assess the degree to which their agency's operations encourage father involvement in the activities and programs it offers.

To read or download the guide go to <http://bit.ly/XSacpm>



# Father Engagement continued from page 1

*Engaging the Non-Resident Father* prepares supervisors to serve as a resource person in their agency for father engagement information. In addition, supervisors leave the course with everything they need to deliver training for their staff on this important topic.

*Engaging the Non-Resident Father* will be offered five times in spring 2013. For class times and locations and to register, go to [www.ncswlearn.org](http://www.ncswlearn.org) and click on "Find a Training."

**Building Awareness and Cultural Competency.** This three-day course, which is mandatory for all social workers and supervisors providing child welfare services, includes exploration of the cultural aspects of engaging fathers and other groups traditionally underrepresented in child welfare. You can register for upcoming events at [www.ncswlearn.org](http://www.ncswlearn.org).

**Children's Services Practice Notes.** *Father Involvement in Child Welfare*. Vol. 11, No. 1 (Dec. 2005). [http://practicenotes.org/vol11\\_no1.htm](http://practicenotes.org/vol11_no1.htm)



**Fatherhood Virtual Resource Center.** Prevent Child Abuse–North Carolina has developed an online clearinghouse where child welfare practitioners and others can access public awareness and marketing materials to support and promote engaged fatherhood in North Carolina. The site provides links to national and state resources, allows practitioners to share documents and materials, and provides up-to-date research and data. Online at <http://www.preventchildabusenc.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=cms.page&id=1033>

**March 26, 2013 Fatherhood Conference.** Goal: provide fathers with resources that will benefit them as parents and role models. Location: Sheraton Raleigh Hotel. Cost: \$20. Registration Deadline: February 28, 2013. To register, go to <http://bit.ly/11u1Y9T>.

## National Resources

**Child Welfare Information Gateway**  
<https://www.childwelfare.gov/>

**National Quality Improvement Center on Non-Resident Fathers and the Child Welfare System**  
<http://www.americanhumane.org/children/programs/fatherhood-initiative/qic-fatherhood-toolkit/>

**National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse**  
<http://www.fatherhood.gov/>

**National Center for Fathering**  
<http://fathers.com/>

**National Fatherhood Initiative**  
<http://www.fatherhood.org/>

**National Family Preservation Network**  
<http://www.nfpn.org/>

**National Latino Fatherhood and Family Institute**  
<http://www.nlffi.org/index.html>

**Native American Fatherhood and Families Association**  
<http://aznaffa.org/>

**Reframing Fatherhood: The Role of Fathers in Children's Healthy Development Webinar**  
<https://dss.ncgovconnect.com/p18442812/>  
Explores how to use the research on brain architecture to help fathers understand their importance in their children's lives.



## Suggestions for Interviewing Non-Resident Fathers

While conducting interviews with fathers, child welfare professionals should be aware of issues particularly relevant to fathers. Traditional roles of fathers as a provider, protector, and teacher still have great meaning for men today. Even if he has done nothing wrong, a man often views the maltreatment of his child as a failure on his part to protect the child. It is equally important to recognize that the entire self-perception of "manliness" and "fatherhood" are deeply intertwined. In every culture, "being a man" is loaded with deep meaning and these meanings vary across cultures (Rosenberg & Wilcox, 2006).

The first contact with a non-residential father is perhaps the most important. This is an opportunity to establish a basis for a positive, strengths-based relationship, free from judgments or assumptions. Approach fathers in a strengths-based way by reminding them of how important they are to their children, and that there are some things that only they can do for their kids.

Words or phrases that can be helpful during the first contact include:

- "Your kids will carry what you do forever."
- "You can change things for them by changing your behavior" (*if he has been neglectful*).

Ask a father how he wants his children to remember him 10-15 years from now. Even fathers who have been toxic to their families have positive visions about what they would like to mean to their kids. It's a way to inspire some non-defensive introspection. As a follow-up you might ask, "What can you do to make that happen?" After he replies, ask "How can I help you with that?"

At times, a social worker may contact a non-residential parent who has expressed a desire not to be involved in the child's life, refuses any contact with the child, provides no possible relative supports and refuses to cooperate with the social worker in the development of an agreement. If this happens, document all efforts to involve that parent in the planning for their child as well as the parent's responses.

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