

Creating Positive Connections to Engage Fathers of Children with SED: Examples From the Field

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SAMHSA
Substance Abuse and Mental Health
Services Administration

Disclaimer Slide

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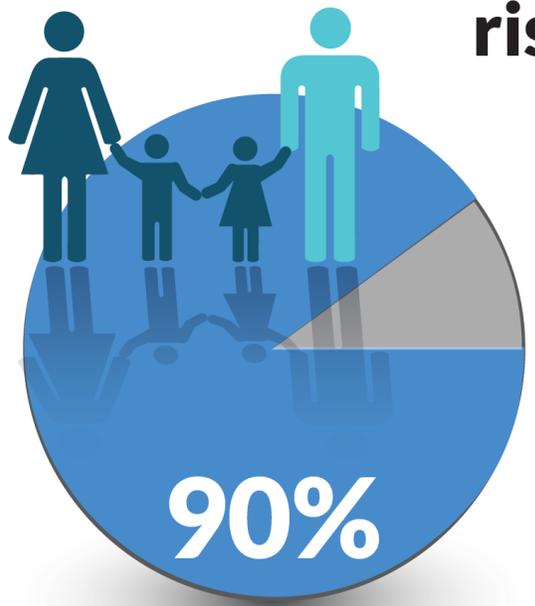
The Father Crisis in America

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 19.7 million children, more than 1 in 4, live without a father in the home.

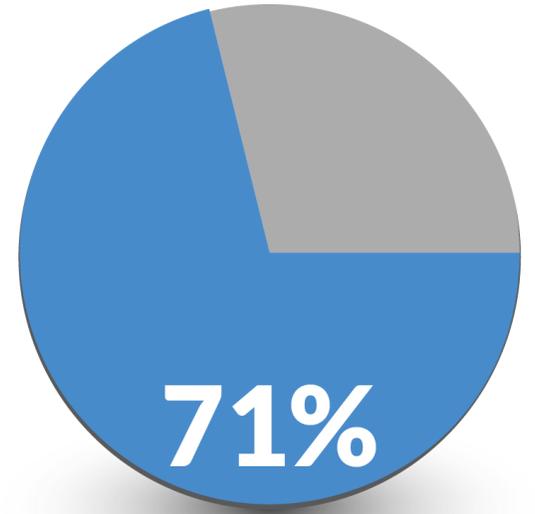
(2017. U.S. Census Bureau Data represent children living without a biological, step, or adoptive father.)



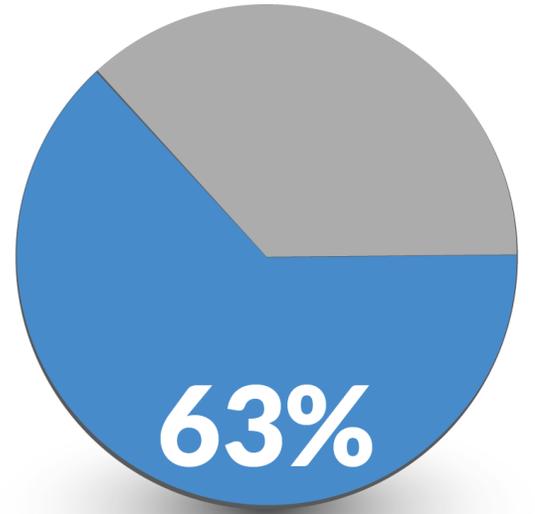
Children growing up **without fathers** face greater risks and account for:



Of Homeless & Runaway Youth



Of High School Dropouts



Of Youth Suicides

American Institutes for Research | www.air.org

MOM-CHILD HEALTH



**2X GREATER
RISK OF
INFANT
MORTALITY**

POVERTY



**4X GREATER
RISK OF
POVERTY**

BEHAVIOAL PROBLEMS

**MORE LIKELY
To Have
BEHAVIORAL
PROBLEMS**



CHILD ABUSE

**MORE
LIKELY
TO FACE**



ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Father Absence

Research shows being raised in a father-absent home can have adverse outcomes that extend into adolescence and adulthood.

TEEN PREGNANCY



**7X MORE LIKELY
TO BECOME
PREGNANT
AS TEEN**

EDUCATION



**2X MORE LIKELY
TO DROP OUT OF
HIGH SCHOOL**

Source: National Fatherhood Initiative Infographic www.fatherhood.org



Just the Facts
Daughters are less likely to engage in risky sexual behavior when they have consistent contact, and a sense of closeness, with their dads.

SOURCE: Green, B., Davis, C., Clark, T., Quinn, C., & Cryer-Coupet, Q. (2014). Father involvement, dating violence, and sexual risk behaviors among a national sample of adolescent females. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, <http://jiv.sagepub.com/>.

National Fatherhood Initiative **FATHER FACTS** SEVENTH EDITION **7**



Just the Facts
92% of parents in prison are fathers.

SOURCE: Glaze, L.E., & Maruschak, L.M. (2010).

National Fatherhood Initiative **FATHER FACTS** SEVENTH EDITION **7**

Just the Facts

Individuals from father
absent homes are

279%

more likely to carry
guns and deal drugs
than peers living
with their fathers.

SOURCE: Allen, A. N., & Lo, C. C. (2012). Drugs, guns, and disadvantaged youths: Co-occurring behavior and the code of the street. *Crime & Delinquency*, 58(6), 932-953.

National
Fatherhood
Initiative®

FATHER FACTS
SEVENTH EDITION

7

Just the Facts

Adolescent boys
with absent
fathers are more
likely to engage
in delinquency
than those with
fathers who are
present.

SOURCE: from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health. Cobb-Clark, D. A., & Tekin, E. (2014).

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Our Mission Statement

Our Mission Statement

To support and partner with families rearing children who have emotional and mental health needs in order to improve their quality of life.



All of the Staff Hired by AFN

Must be “family members”

- As family members we have negotiated the human service systems on a personal level.
- This experience allows us to offer a wealth of information and support to the families engaged in AFN programs and activities.



DADS MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE!

Children who grow up with INVOLVED fathers are:

39%

MORE LIKELY TO
EARN MOSTLY A'S
IN SCHOOL

45%

LESS LIKELY
TO REPEAT
A GRADE

60%

LESS LIKELY TO BE
SUSPENDED OR
EXPELLED FROM
SCHOOL

2X

AS LIKELY TO GO TO COLLEGE
AND FIND STABLE
EMPLOYMENT AFTER
HIGH SCHOOL

75%

LESS LIKELY
TO HAVE A
TEEN BIRTH

80%

LESS LIKELY TO
SPEND TIME
IN JAIL

Let's put ourselves in the shoes of single fathers.

What do single fathers see around them in the system?



The System

- What are fathers experiencing when you come in contact with them?
- What are some of the issues fathers face in the system?



What is the experience for single fathers?

(Generally)

- Embarrassment
- Frustrated by chaos and turmoil
- Disappointment, self-doubt
- Overwhelmed and beaten down
- Struggling with family stress
- Personal issues



These may be heightened when parenting a child who also experiences serious emotional disorders.

What is the experience for single fathers?

- Hurting over the loss of family, marriage, relationships
- Often clinging to the hope of reconciliation
- Often struggling with the mother over the care and management of their child(ren)
- Heartbroken over being forced away from their children
- Disempowered as the system interjects itself into their situation
- Often discouraged by attorneys
- Practical aspects - finances, being displaced, starting over

Fathers view the system as:

- Being biased
- Being predominantly staffed by women
- Having inequity regarding custodial and/or parental rights
- Having institutional barriers that work against them
- **Not inclusive of fathers in their child's treatment planning**

The result is often a feeling of disenfranchisement.

Why is a strategic framework needed when working with fathers?

- Engaging men as fathers both in working towards providing safety for children and service provision **can be difficult**, particularly for those men who contend with issues of identity and/or social and economic exclusion.
- Being able to better support men at all stages of the family life cycle will lead to **greater opportunities** for children and families.

Six Key Factors for a Strategic Framework

- 1. Operate from a child-centered and family inclusive philosophy.**
 - Focusing on **improving the engagement** of men in service provision could lead to finding **greater entry points** into their lives and to **better outcomes** for children.
- 2. Recognize that fathers represent a significant customer base in human service systems and services.**
 - An **improved awareness** of the needs and expectations of fathers, particularly in relation to providing the best care, protection and wellbeing of their children, will facilitate more **responsive service provision**.
- 3. Recognize that fathers are good for children and families.**
 - Men in their role as fathers who are **positively involved** in their children's lives **create greater opportunities and outcomes** for those children as well as benefiting their own **psychological and emotional wellbeing**.

Six Key Factors for a Strategic Framework

4. **Acknowledge changing roles, expectations and aspirations of fathers.**
 - Changes in the **composition and structure** of families require a commensurate change in the way organizations **understand and support families**.

5. **Adapt policy, research and program development trends.**
 - The development of a framework **ensures** organizations remain **progressive in their services and strategies**.

6. **Establish male positive and father inclusive practices within a gender equity framework.**
 - Valuing the **unique and important contribution of fathers** to families and community life underpins the framework.
 - Engaging fathers in a greater proportion of child care and domestic life **promotes greater gender equity** with mothers **within and outside the family**.

Tips for Working with Fathers

- **Start where the father is** not where you think he should be, or where stereotypes may lead you.
- **Be patient and willing** to hang in there, as most fathers in the system **will experience ups and downs** throughout the process.
- Ask explorative questions in a **non-threatening** manner.



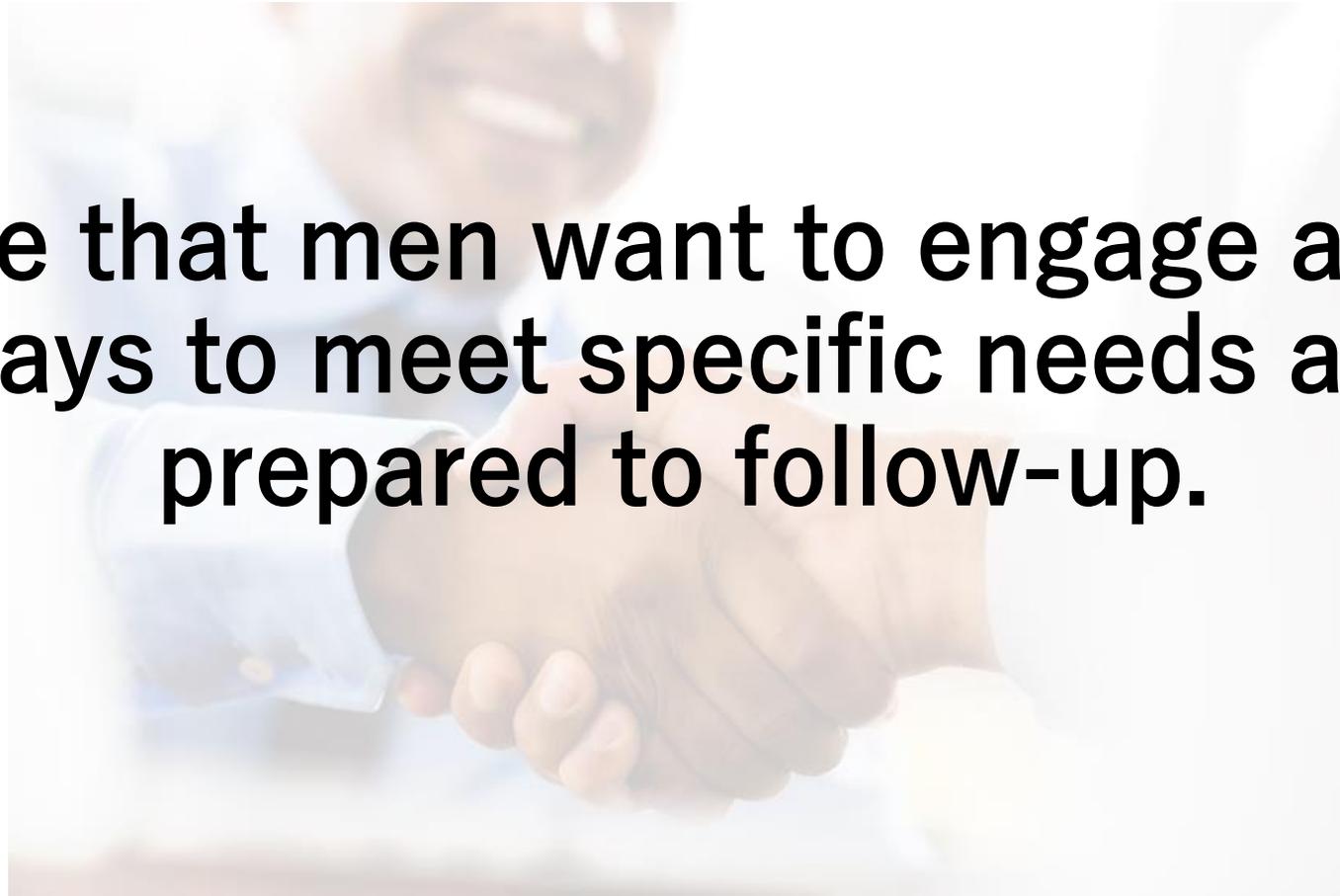
More Tips

- **Never** be judgmental. Recognize your **biases** and **manage** them.
- **Be respectful** and **understanding** of **cultural** definitions of masculinity.
- **Demonstrate genuine** and **ongoing** caring.
- Do not make **false promises**.



When Working With Fathers

Assume that men want to engage and look for ways to meet specific needs and be prepared to follow-up.



Engaging and Recruiting

We're looking for a few good men to step up and strengthen the chain!



Developing Your Toolkit

Resources include:

Peer to Peer Support

Employment Services

One-on-One Support

Legal Concerns

Housing and Education

Support Groups



Networking & Collaboration

Our degree of success has been based partly on our networking with agencies, programs, schools, churches, military, courts and other entities that have **involvement** with fathers. Its important to utilize every opportunity. Networking provides opportunities for us to form collaborations on projects such as:

Father Daughter Dinner and Dance
Speakers Bureau
Bring Your Father to School Day
Sports Events
Picnics



Support Groups

Our agency offers 12 different support groups around South Western PA. Of these groups, six are specialized support groups for men.



Fathers Involved Now
AFN Central
Crafton Heights
Mercy Behavior Health
Natrona Heights
Allegheny County Jail

Stages to Engagement

Engagement

Planning

Implementation

Transition

Follow-up



Initial Contact

Relationship Building

Utilize Personal Touch

Caring Attitude

Start Joint Planning

Initiate Paperwork



Fathers Support Plan (FSP)

Guide

Coach

Support

Cheer On



**Implement
Concrete Goals**

Action Steps

Support

Transition Phase



Connect to Natural Setting

Document the Outcome

Did We Make a Difference ?



Providing the Missing Link



**Fathers
Involved
Now**

Parent Support Network of Rhode Island

Rhode Island Fatherhood Initiative



About the RIFI



Established May 2017

The Rhode Island Fatherhood Initiative (RIFI) is a chapter of the National Fatherhood Initiative (NFI)

The RIFI is led by Parent Support Network of Rhode Island (PSNRI) and the Prevent Child Abuse Rhode Island Chapter (PCA-RI)

The National Fatherhood Initiative's vision is for every child to grow up with an involved, responsible, and committed father

The mission of the RIFI is to seek leadership, equality, and advocacy for dads throughout Rhode Island

Robert Reynolds, RIFI Coordinator

Recovery from substance use and mental health issues

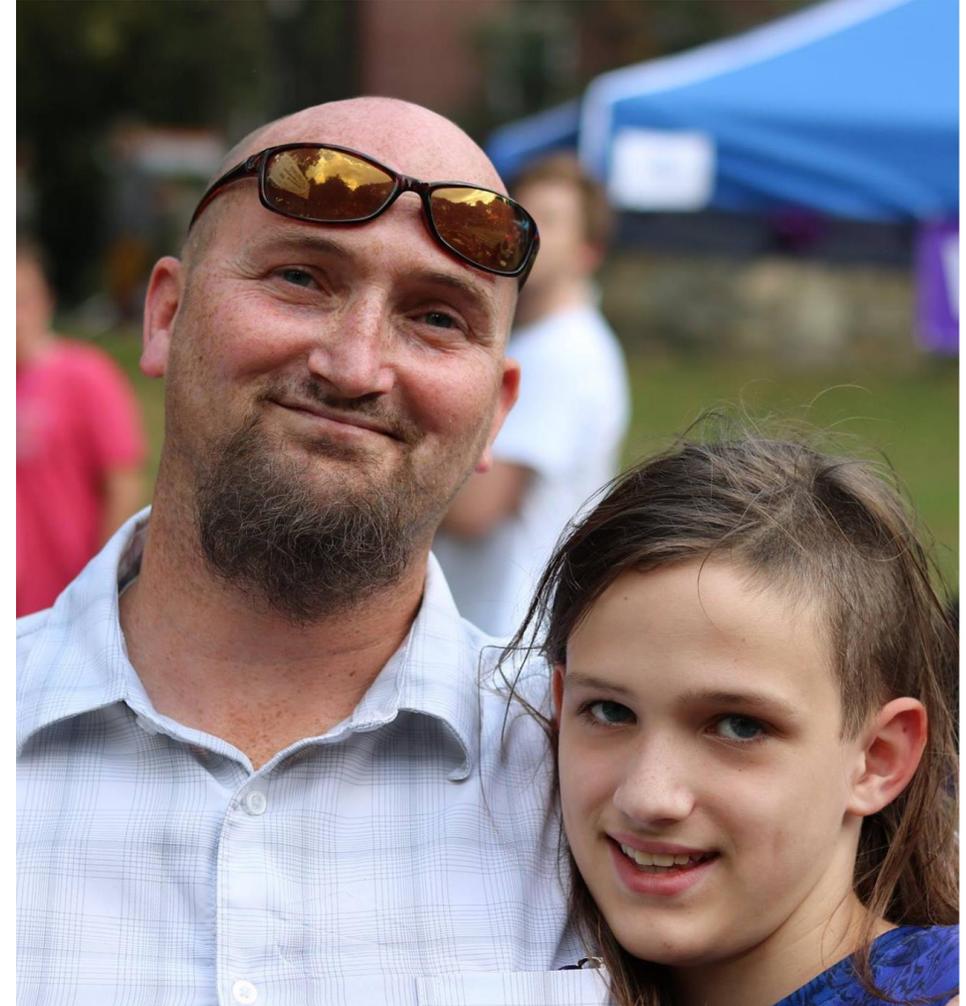
Experience with the criminal justice system, including incarceration

Experience with child welfare and reunification

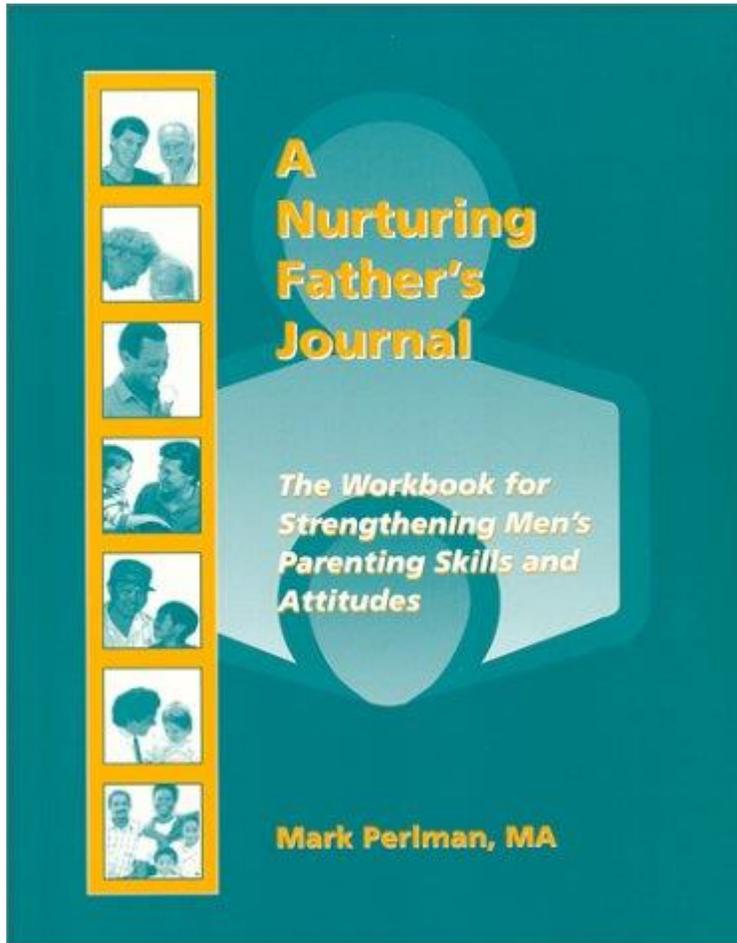
Experience navigating child support

Working on healing relationship with daughter

Happily married living with wife and son



RIFI Offers



Peer support

- Parent Partner
- Certified Peer Recovery Specialist (CPRS)
- Spanish-speaking peer on staff

Plan of care to support family preservation or reunification goals

Transportation and warm transfers to treatment

Resources and referrals

Bi-monthly father support group

Nurturing Father's Journal parenting class

Supervised visitation

Father-friendly social events

RIFI Partners

Father Leaders

Department of Children, Youth & Families (DCYF)

Department of Corrections (DOC)

Office of Child Support (OCS)

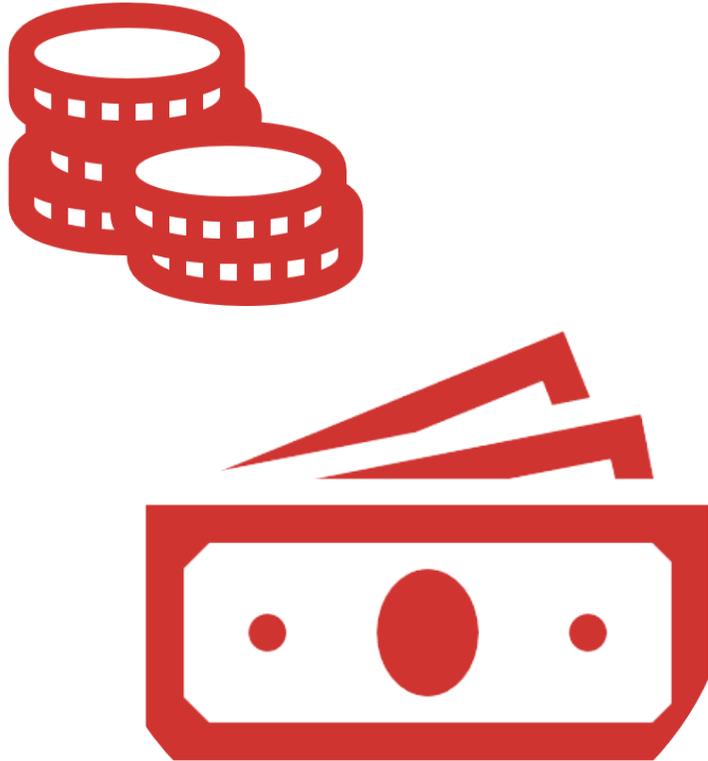
Family Care Community Partnership (FCCP)

Policy Makers

Prevention Coalitions



Funding



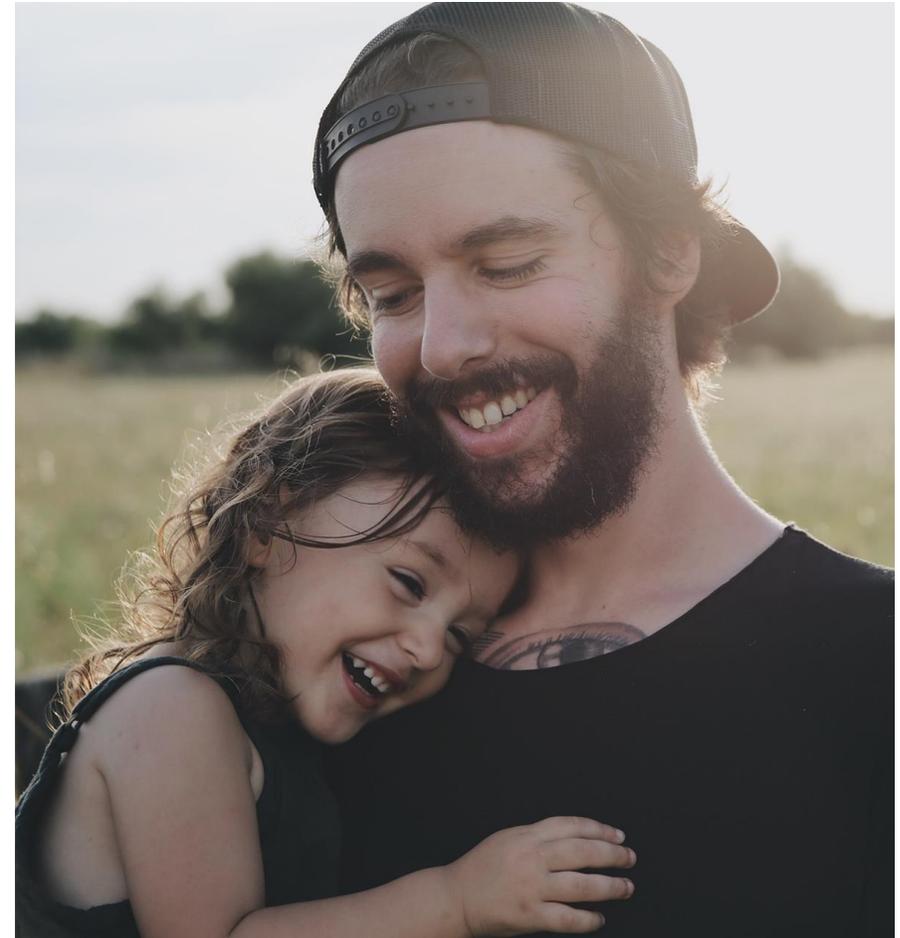
Fatherhood Research and Practice Network State Planning Mini Grant

- In February 2019 Rhode Island was announced as one of 11 states FRPN selected to receive a \$10,000 state planning mini grants
- The project runs from February 1- September 30, 2019

Community Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP)

Fathers as a Protective Factor

- Fathers make a unique contribution to the development and well-being of children
- Fathers playing a more active role in their child's life benefits both families and communities
- Having a positive relationship with their father builds social and emotional competence in children
- Fathers are both a role model and relational model for children
- We can't avoid all of life's hardships, but father involvement can be a factor in children building the resilience needed to overcome them



Barriers to Father Involvement

- Professional and systemic bias
- Time and resources needed to locate and involve non custodial fathers
- Mothers acting as “gate-keepers”
- Establishing paternity
- Lack of accessibility (work schedule, military service, incarceration, substance use, homelessness)
- Lack of father-friendly resources and supports
- Domestic violence

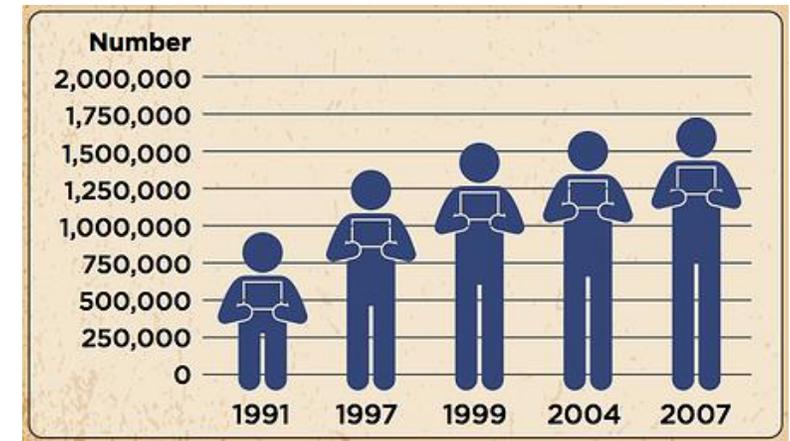


Effectively Engaging Fathers

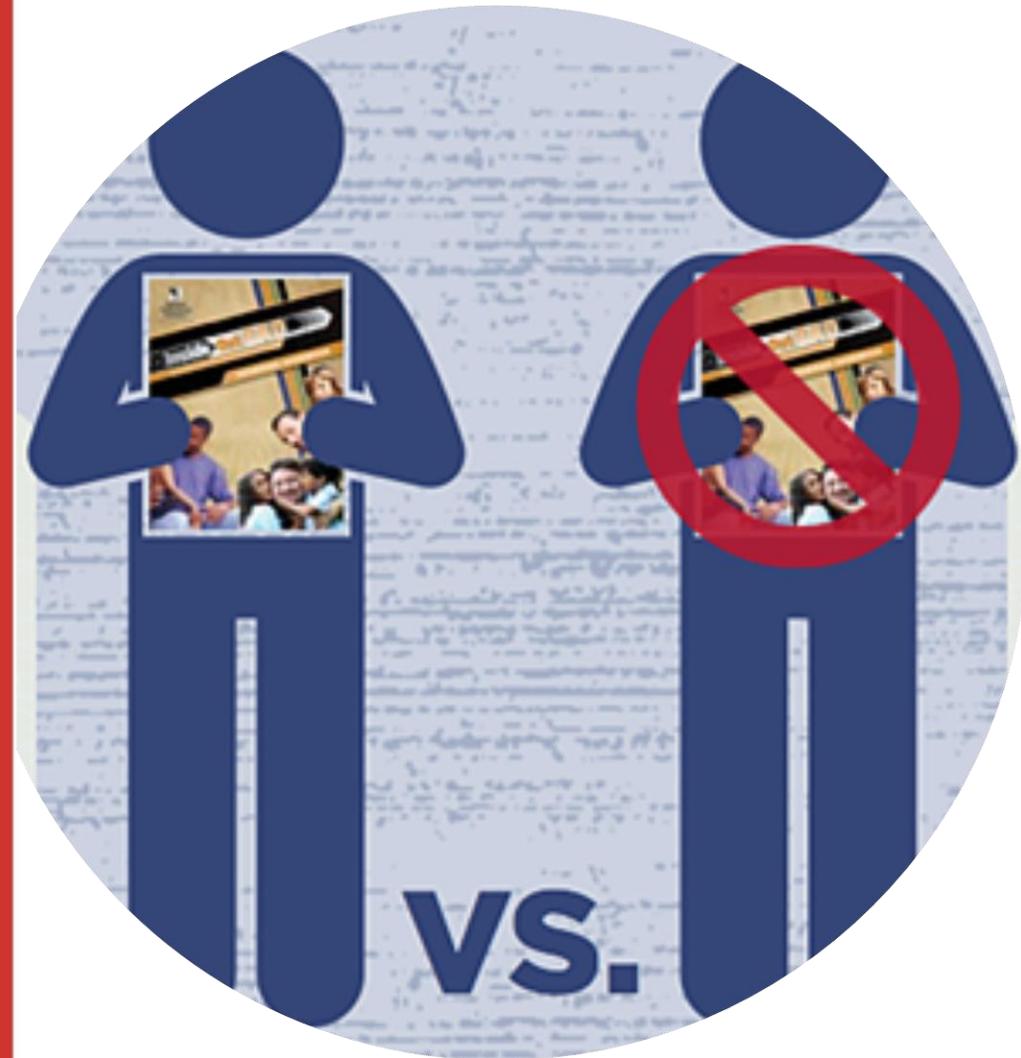
- Principles and values that support father involvement
- Address personal bias
- Resist stereotyping non custodial fathers
- Understand cultural identity and utilize cultural strengths
- Create an environment that welcomes fathers
- Make the first contact with a male whenever possible
- Avoid using jargon
- Give concrete support
- Be trauma-informed
- Build strong connections

Fathers Behind Bars

- The number of children with an incarcerated father grew by 79% between 1991 and 2007
- There are 2.7 million children with a parent in prison or jail
- 92% of parents in prison are fathers
- Fathers in prison are most often fatherless themselves
- Fathers are returning to their families without the skills they need to be successful



RIFI's Work with Incarcerated Fathers



- Parenting class held in male High Security Center in Cranston, RI
- Connects fathers to a peer with lived experience
- Utilizes evidence-based Nurturing Father's Journal as a framework
- Strengthens parenting skills, improves attitudes, and build confidence
- Increases likelihood of successful reentry
- Fatherhood programs have been shown to reduce recidivism

October 2017 RI Fatherhood Summit



- Nearly 100 attendees representing fathers, families, and providers
- State Panel presentation, including representatives from Department of Children, Youth & Families, Office of Child Support, Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Development Disabilities & Hospitals, Department of Health, Department of Corrections, and Family Court
- National Fatherhood Initiative Vice President Erik Vecere introduced strategic community action planning
- Fathers provided input on engaging fathers statewide and the need for the RIFI

Developing a Statewide Action Plan

- Community needs assessment
- Community action planning training with key leadership partners
- Focus groups representing state and community partners across key sectors
- Review draft community action plan for additional input and final recommendations for implementation
- Steering committee review of final statewide strategic community action plan and formal implementation



State Action Plan Priority Areas

Priority 1: Work with state government to develop and implement fatherhood policies and programs to increase positive outcomes

Priority 2: Develop and implement statewide fatherhood public health awareness campaign

Priority 3: Increase father voice and leadership in community and state policy and advisory boards

Priority 4: Engage men in family planning, prenatal, birthing, and early childhood stages to promote healthy child development

Priority 5: Support fathers' ability to economically care for their children

Priority 6: Increase education outcomes for boys

Priority 7: Increase family stability and well-being

Priority 8: Decrease young men and father involvement with the legal/criminal justice system



Father-Friendliness Index



The RIFI Steering Committee was tasked with developing a survey that measures how father-friendly an organization is

The survey analyzes areas such as organizational philosophies, staff attitudes, and physical environment

The data collected will be used as a tool in strategic planning

Organizations with five or more completed surveys will receive a summary to use in their own strategic planning

New England Fathering Conference



2019 Events & Activities

Family Fun Day with the PawSox at McCoy Stadium

Family & Youth Policy Academy

Engaging Fathers: Legislative Breakfast
Policy Roundtable

RICCF Advocacy Event

Promoting Positive Mental Health Ice
Cream Social

RIFI Bi-Monthly Support Group



RIFI Success Stories



*“I cannot think of any need in childhood as strong as the need for a father’s protection.”
– Sigmund Freud*

Questions and Final Comments

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