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FATHER INVOLVEMENT

In recent years, there has been an upsurge of interest in father involvement, not only amongst social scientists, who have now begun to take a closer look at the role the father plays within the family, but also by fathers themselves, many of whom are becoming increasingly involved with their children.

However, the composition of families in the U.S. has changed. Marriage rates have declined, divorce rates have increased and there has been a rise in the rate of births to unmarried women. The result is an increased likelihood that today's children will spend time living away from their fathers.

Although many unmarried parents work together to raise their children, father involvement especially for most low-income families in this situation is not necessarily stable. And even within two-parent homes, the father's role has changed, whereby fathers are now taking on a greater share of childcare.

Regardless to whether it is a separated family or a two-parent household, we recognize that there are great benefits in father involvement; to children, fathers, mothers, families and the community.

Barriers to Father Involvement:

- Pre-existing Biases
- Family structure/ Family dynamics
- Personal reasons
- Cultural Beliefs

Benefits of Involved Fathers:

1. To Children:

- Cognitive Development:
Children of involved fathers are more likely to enter school prepared to learn, show higher cognitive competency, and higher academic achievement. They are less likely to drop out of school and more likely to go onto higher education.
- Emotional Development/Well Being:
Father involvement is associated with positive characteristics such as empathy, good self-esteem, lower levels of anxiety, less depression.
- Social Development:
Father involvement positively correlated with children's overall social competence.
- Physical Health:
Fathers indirectly influence their children's physical health and well being.

Benefits of Involved Fathers (continued)

2. To Fathers:

Involved fathers tend to benefit from a secure attachment relationship. They are better able to cope with stress, feel more useful, have better job performance and are generally more self-confident and happier.

3. To Mothers:

When fathers are involved, mothers report less stress and higher levels of life satisfaction.

4. To Families:

Involved fathers are more likely to have a positive impact on the family's financial situation.

When fathers are involved in the family, there is better communication amongst family members, resulting in a greater sense of commitment to the family unit.

Father Involvement = Positive Outcomes to Children

The child care community is in a unique position to help foster father involvement.

Strategies to Promote Dads in Programs:

- Set goals and prioritize them
- Complete a needs and motivations assessment for fathers
- Provide outreach, both passive and active
- Provide diverse opportunities for engagement at various levels, Individual, Both Parents, Family, Community
- Create a culture of inclusion/ making your center “*father friendly*”
 - How?
 - Collect enrollment information on fathers
 - Identify significant male role models
 - Hire a father involvement coordinator
 - Provide training and support services for staff
 - Recognize fathers “legal rights”
 - Use multiple recruitment methods
 - Schedule activities after work hours or on weekends
 - Sponsor programs/activities that teach fathers how to help their children learn
 - Offer activities that speak to Father/Male Specific Topics
 - Showcase pictures of fathers with their children around the day care center and schools
 - Educate fathers on the importance of their roles in their children's development.
 - Let dads know you appreciate them and their involvement!

