

**A Letter from Co-Founders of the Father Factor Program, a Program to Assist Men in the  
Public Child Welfare System**

**Dear Colleagues:**

**Welcome to the Father Factor Toolkit, based on a model we developed for Summit County Children Services in Akron, OH, when we began to think about truly connecting with fathers who were involved in child welfare. This Toolkit is a step by step method for developing a Father Program.**

**While we are the authors of this model, we were the recipients of a grant from the Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services whose goal was testing our model to see if it could be replicated. The materials are now public record and they can be used to develop a program for dads. Specifically the model is comprised of agency staff that organizes a committee to increase fatherhood involvement. One of the components is an educational program, using the Responsible Fatherhood curriculum written by the National Fatherhood Initiative. It helps dads to understand relationships, communication, discipline, the role of the mother and what a responsible dad is. At Summit County Children Services more than 200 fathers have completed the program and many have said it changed their life and the lives of their children.**

**So we invite you to use our materials to develop a program for these under-served and under-studied fathers who truly love their children. You will find this to be one of the most rewarding issues in child welfare and something that is heartwarming and healthy.**

**We patterned our Toolkit after the American Humane Association's Fatherhood QIC Toolkit website. The nine step developmental model contains: Leadership and Organizational Philosophy; Program Management Policies and Procedures; Organizational and Community Assessment; Parent and Family Involvement Practices, Program Physical Environment, Staff Training and Professional Development, Collaboration and Organizational Networking, Community Outreach and Information and Data-Supported Systems.**

**Sincerely,**

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## **INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

Studies have clearly shown that children with involved, loving fathers are significantly more likely to do well in school, have healthy self-esteem, exhibit empathy and pro-social behavior and avoid high-risk behaviors than children with uninvolved fathers. So, why then historically have so few fathers been involved with the child welfare system?

To both answer that question – and tackle that inequity- Summit County Children Services has created 'The Father Factor', an innovative approach in collaboration with several community partners to locate fathers of children in agency care and provide them with resources, support, hope and encouragement as the agency strives for the permanency, safety, and well-being of children. For child welfare to successfully and effectively involve fathers there must be commitment and active efforts from each worker, department, and administrators.

The mission of the Father Factor work team is to create awareness and educate Summit County Children Services staff and the community about the importance of identifying and engaging fathers. This also includes organizational expectations and accountability of the agency and the employees of the child welfare system. The Father Factor work team is committed to working with service providers in a collaborative effort to locate and promote resources for fathers. Through these advocacy efforts we will offer hope and encouragement to fathers as we strive for permanency, safety, and well-being for their children.

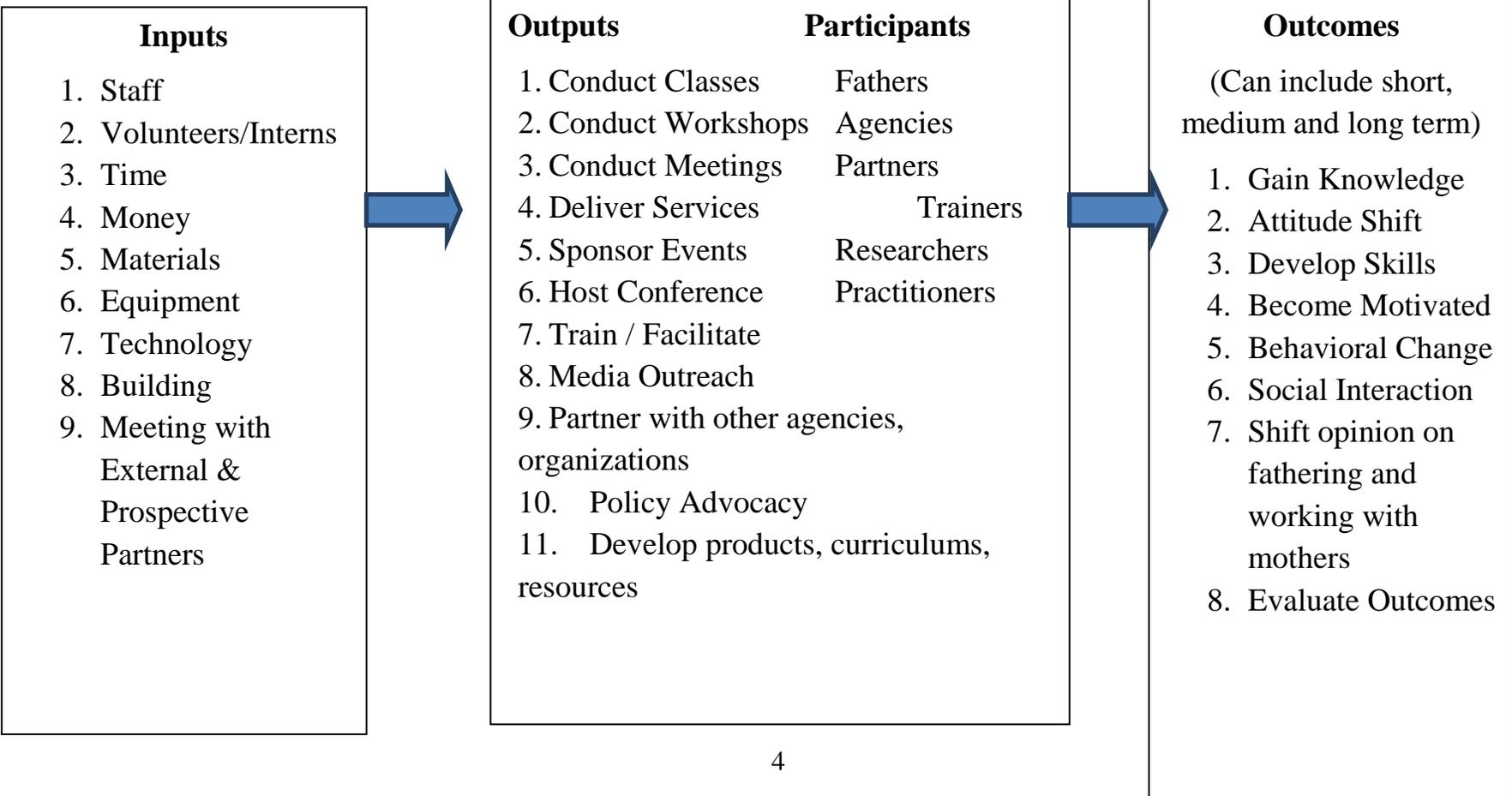
Through family search and engagement, it is a priority to identify fathers on each case that comes into the child welfare system. Fathers along with other paternal family members are invited to participate in the team decision making process. Each father needs to be identified and

located and engaged on every case. Fathers are invited and referred to participate in the father classes, an eight week program. The fathers attend bi-weekly classes that encompass what it means to be a man and father in our culture. The curriculum currently selected to utilize in the Father Factor program is 24/7 Dad which is supplied through the National Fatherhood Initiative. It is a comprehensive fatherhood program with tools and strategies that encompass a wide range of fatherhood skill-building. It is imperative that the teaching methods used are flexible in their service delivery. This will allow programs to tailor their curricula and services in order to meet the specific needs of the fathers. By using various teaching methods, the specific needs of the individual fathers can be identified because the fathers vary in age, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, educational status, and relationship status. The materials and activities used in the fatherhood classes are selected based on various multi-disciplinary theory-based approaches. All interventions selected best support and stimulate an atmosphere conducive of positive human behavior changes.

In order to the achieve the paradigm shift throughout the agency of involving fathers and providing them a significant role in the case process and meetings while their children are involved in the child welfare system, it is imperative to have involvement from all departments within the agency starting with the top down. Various staff, team, and executive meetings addressing the paradigm change should be held on a monthly basis.

# FATHER FACTOR PROGRAM LOGIC MODEL

Assumptions: A significant representation of fathers who are in the Children Welfare system are not involved in their children's lives and are devoid of the skills and knowledge to be an effective and involved father.



## **STEPS TO GETTING STARTED**

### **Plan for Initiative on Fatherhood Outline\***

#### **Internal**

- 1. Top down support: Make Environment Father Friendly**
- 2. Announce at All Staff Meeting – end of September**
- 3. Establish work group & establish name**
- 4. Have father as member of work group**
- 5. Create bulletin board in front lobby; create slogans**
- 6. Training on Fatherhood**
- 7. Identify worker needs via unit visits**
- 8. Plan to meet the workers' training needs**

#### **External**

- 1. Identify informal father groups in area, including faith based**
- 2. Meet with these groups, understand their services**
- 3. Compile information about groups to disseminate to our fathers**
- 4. Meet with groups on quarterly basis for updates**
- 5. Partner with Juvenile Court, Domestic Relations Court, and include them within Fatherhood Initiative groups.**

#### **Goals:**

- 1. Work with IT to establish baseline of identified fathers on case plans and case member list and increase this number by 25%.**
- 2. Alleged father, father or involved paternal relatives will be discussed in every weekly supervision.**
- 3. Caseworkers will recontact fathers upon case review at least every 90 days.**
- 4. Fathers will be invited to all team meetings.**
- 5. At every PPRP fathers whereabouts and contacts will be discussed.**
- 6. Fathers will be included in SAR meetings and discussion.**
- 7. Create a Dad Packet to distribute to fathers**

**\*Each section is further discussed and detailed within document.**

**See Appendices: A, B, C**

## **BUY IN**

An important factor to effectiveness and success of the fatherhood program is to have buy in from the Executive Director and top management. A key to the sustainability of the father program is having strong executive commitment. It is imperative to have collaboration from lead executives who are engaged and committed to facilitate and maintain a paradigm shift in the environment of the importance of the involvement of fathers within the child welfare system.

Here are key points and responsibilities for the Executive Director:

- Executive Director to schedule an All Staff Meeting and Kickoff of the Fatherhood Initiative. Use visuals to assist in the promotion of initiative: "It's time to connect with Fathers: - Clock. Make it fun!"
- At the All Staff meeting: Review the importance of the role of the father in the lives of children. Recognize and support that the agency must make strides in this area. It is the law, it is best practice and it is in the best interest of children.
- Executive Director to invite staff from all areas of the agency to join the initiative lead by Co-Chairs in Social Services.
- Continue support of engaging fathers.
- Discuss Fatherhood Committee in the community.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES OF PCSA IN FATHERHOOD PILOT PROJECT**

When a PCSA agrees to participate in a fatherhood program, there are responsibilities that go along with the commitment. Following is a list of those responsibilities:

- Assess agency readiness for working with fathers; reassess every 6 months and at end of grant period.
- Select co-chairs for the agency's fatherhood committee.
- Buy in from the top down.
- Initial and quarterly data to co-chairs.  
(number of fathers identified, number of fathers attending TDMs, SARs, other agency groups, number of fathers visiting, number of fathers securing custody, increase in positive attitudes about working with fathers, increase in worker skills in engaging fathers).
- Agency Kickoff of the father program and ongoing discussion of program at All Staff meetings.
- Monthly meetings of the fatherhood committee.
- Locate father practitioners.
- Permit co-chairs to work on this project.
- Help to train practitioner.
- Supply office, phone, and computer for practitioner.
- Find location for fatherhood groups run by practitioner.
- Look to secure funding for practitioner.
- Develop referral process for caseworkers.
- Develop policy and procedure for working with fathers and family engagement.

## **FATHERHOOD INVOLVEMENT PROCEDURES**

*The following document is in draft format.*

### **Procedure: Fatherhood Involvement**

#### **Purpose of Procedure:**

To ensure that SCCS employees understand their roles and responsibilities related to identifying, locating, engaging and involving fathers for all children who come to the attention of the agency.

#### **Statement of Procedure:**

##### **Intake Department Roles and Responsibilities**

###### Phone Room

Information about fathers, including alleged fathers and non-custodial fathers, will be obtained by hotline staff and documented in the Intake report in SACWIS. Phone workers will ask callers for the following information:

- Father's identity, date of birth and whereabouts;
- Whether or not paternity has been established;
- Whether or not there is an order for child support;
- Father's marital status;
- Current custodial status of the child, including any orders for shared parenting or visitation;
- The father's level of involvement with the child;
- Identity and involvement of paternal relatives.

##### **Intake Caseworkers**

Assigned workers are required to make diligent attempts to identify and locate fathers, including alleged fathers and non-custodial fathers, on all intakes. This can be accomplished through interviews of the child's mother, relatives and/or the child (if age-appropriate). Caseworkers should review history in SACWIS and KIDS 2100. Workers should also request person locator searches on fathers through the Phone Room or the Legal Department. Upon request, the Legal Department can also perform other searches in order to assist workers in locating fathers on their caseloads, including: docket searches, Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections inmate listings, the Federal Bureau of Prisons inmate locator and coordinate to get information from other systems as legally appropriate.

Once a father or alleged father has been identified, the following action will be taken by the assigned worker or social work assistant:

- Attempt phone and direct contact;
  - Contact should be attempted early in the case and prior to disposition of an intake report;
  - Correspondence should be sent if unable to reach the father via phone and/or direct contact;

- Provide names of any potential or alleged father to the Legal Department and prosecutor for court-involved cases;
- Complete the “Unable to Locate” checklist for an absent parent;
- Document search efforts in SACWIS Activity Logs (family search & engagement activity);
- Document fathers/alleged fathers in SACWIS as case members with the accurate relationship completed in the relationship grid;
- Document information related to fathers/alleged fathers in the Family Assessment under Family Function;
- Notify a non-custodial father who holds residual parental rights to the child and maintains an on-going relationship through visitation and/or child support of the receipt of the intake report, the report disposition and the case decision within two (2) working days of the completion of the intake assessment/investigation
  - Documentation of the notification shall be made in the case record;
- Ask the father whether he has any Native American heritage and forward this information to Legal.

Caseworkers should recognize that non-custodial fathers may be a collateral source for important information about the child and should always be invited to Team Decision Making Meetings.

For non-court involved cases, the assigned worker will share information with the father/alleged father when sharing such information is determined to be in the child's best interest. Although the presumption is to share information with the father, workers should conference with their supervisor regarding the following potential exceptions:

- Father/alleged father was the perpetrator of serious domestic violence, violent crimes or sexual abuse against children or family members;
- A Temporary Protection Order (TPO), Civil Protection Order (CPO), or no-contact order is in effect.

### **Protective Department Roles and Responsibilities**

Efforts to identify locate and engage fathers must continue throughout the life of case. The following action will be taken by the assigned protective worker or social work assistant / case-aide:

- Continue efforts of Intake worker to identify the child's father;
- Include the father on the case plan, whether paternity is established, alleged, or presumed;
- Ensure that basic objectives on the case plan include establishing paternity (where necessary) and/or visitation with the child;
- Enlist the cooperation of the father/alleged father in the development of additional case plan goals and objectives;
- Maintain monthly direct contact with all fathers/alleged fathers on case plans in accordance with compliance mandates. Follow-up with phone contact and correspondence when unsuccessful.

- Invite fathers / alleged fathers to all TDMs, SARs and other meetings throughout the life of the case unless there are TPOs, CPOs, No Contact Orders or other safety concerns.
- Encourage relationship building for father and child through visitation, phone calls and letters based on the child's best interests.
- Request the Juvenile Court to order ongoing visitation and or shared parenting for the non-custodial parent as appropriate when court-involved cases are closing. Mediation can also be an effective tool for establishing ongoing visitation/shared parenting arrangements.
- In the event that an alleged father comes to the agency's attention after the case has been transferred to Protective, ask the father if he has any Native American heritage and forward that information to Legal.

### **Placement/Custody to Fathers**

The Ohio Administrative Code requires SCCS to explore placement with a non-custodial parent before considering other relatives, unless it is not in the child's best interest. When children are brought into agency custody or custody is being considered, attempts to identify and locate fathers for placement or custody must be made prior to considering other relatives, provided that the father is not the alleged perpetrator on the intake. Efforts to explore the non-custodial parent must be documented in an activity log.

If a non-custodial parent has child protective services history and/or criminal history, but has been assessed and it has been determined that a safety threat is not present, placement can be considered. If the father has disqualifying history, whether child protective or criminal, placement will not be approved. Any exceptions must be made with approval by the Director of Social Services. The guidelines for completion of home assessments for kin families provide the parameters of exceptions and exclusions as found in the Kinship Placement Home Study Assessment.

In the event that a child comes to the agency's attention and an alleged father is being considered for custody, a filing of custody to the agency must be obtained first. The child can then be placed with the alleged father. Once paternity has been established, custody to the father can be pursued.

Ongoing efforts throughout the life of the case need to be made to determine paternity when paternity is not otherwise established. Continued inquiry with mothers about alleged fathers when paternity is in question can occur at TDMs, court hearings, SARs and other meetings. These efforts shall to be documented in activity logs.

The Interstate Compact for Placement of Children (ICPC) rules require an interstate study and approval through ICPC prior to placement with a non-custodial parent residing outside of Ohio. Some states require that alleged fathers establish paternity before completing the home study. The caseworker should consult the Placement and Permanency Planning Department if they are uncertain regarding the requirements for paternity in the receiving state (see also Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) - Placement of Children Procedure).

## Fathers Who Decline Involvement

In the event that a father on an intake or a protective caseload declines to be involved with the case or with the child, the worker should work with the assigned prosecutor to subpoena the father so that the father may confirm that he does not want to be involved with the case on the court record.

## Legal Department Roles and Responsibilities

For all court-involved cases, the Legal Department will:

- Work collaboratively with CSEA to ensure that paternity information is accurately logged and tracked.
- Serve all alleged, presumed, and established fathers as required by law
- Conduct Putative Father Registry searches as required by law
- Ensure that ICWA mandates are followed on cases in which the father has Native American heritage.

### **Related Laws and Standards:**

<b>Ohio Revised Code (ORC):</b>	2151.419(A)(2); 2151.412(A)(1)&(E); 5153.16(A)(12)
<b>Ohio Administrative Code (OAC):</b>	5101:2-42-05(A); 5101:2-33-21(D)(6); 5101:2-36-03(Z)(5); 5101:2-36-03(Z) (6); 5101-2-38-05(A)(B)(H)&(I); 5101:2-37-04(A)&(D)
<b>United States Code (USC):</b>	N/A
<b>Code of Federal Regulations (CFR):</b>	N/A

**Who is affected by the Procedure?** Social Services staff; Legal Department staff

### **Review/Effective Date:**

July 8, 2014

### **Procedure History Date:**

n/a

### **Key Words:**

Father, fatherhood, paternity, alleged, established

### **Associated Policy:**

Fatherhood Involvement Policy

### **Also documented in:**

n/a

\*\*End Draft\*\*

## **AGENCY READINESS**

To assess the strengths and weaknesses of the agency in compliance of a father friendly environment, the Assessing Agency Readiness for Developing a Fatherhood Program Assessment, developed by Summit County Children Services was administered to all personnel. This assessment asks questions in reference to data and statistics that must be reported. The Raising Staff Awareness and Acceptance of Fathers (Skills, Knowledge, & Attitudes) is another effective assessing tool to administer. This document lists knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to work with fathers.

Another assessment, the Father Friendly Checkup for Child Welfare was also administered. This assessment is provided by the National Quality Improvement Center on Non-Resident Fathers and the Child Welfare System, National Fatherhood Initiative (NFI), American Humane Association, and American Bar Association Center on Children and the Law. This is a tool that assesses the degree to which an agency encourages father involvement in the programs, activities, and meetings the agency provides. The results of these assessments were then used to determine the areas that needed attention and strategic planning for father friendly compliance.

A link to an electronic survey supported by Survey Monkey was prepared by the Father Factor Initiative that was available for 3 weeks for all agency employees. The purpose of the survey was a continuation of the assessment process in targeting the strengths and weakness of the agency for training purposes.

**See Appendices: D, E, F**

## **LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATION PHILOSOPHY**

### **SELECTING CO-CHAIRS**

In selecting the co-chairs to develop the Fatherhood program, select two staff persons from different departments of the children welfare system and with different skill sets. Those selected should have a favorable reputation in the agency, in terms of attitude, competence, organizational abilities, and ability to follow through and get things done. Both need very positive attitudes about father inclusion in child welfare. The co-chairs will run the meetings, take notes, set the agenda and be in charge of the program by leading a strong committee of staff members. Co-chairs should also have good interpersonal skills and solid networking ability and presentation skills, be "easy" to work with, and the ability to facilitate the role of leader, guide, mentor, and supporter effectively.

Once the co-chairs have been established, the co-chairs will assemble a group of individuals who will perform the role of committee chairs. Each member will be interviewed and must possess the passion, commitment, and values, that are necessary to successfully execute and uphold the mission of the Father Factor program. To serve in the capacity necessary to provide a program that is able to serve the diverse and challenging population of the clients who are in the child welfare system. It is imperative to have representation from all areas of practice within the child welfare system. Support and buy in needs to begin at top management. Use an all staff meeting to kick off the program. Pick a theme for the event and provide staff with a visual reminder of the event to put on bulletin boards.

## SUBGROUPS

A key component to the start of the fatherhood program is to assemble subgroups with each having very specific duties and responsibilities. Following is a breakdown of four significant subgroups with an outline of roles and responsibilities:

### **Father Friendly SubGroup**

- Assess the agencies environment for father friendliness.
- Structure of the agency and whether it has the foundation upon which to build a successful program (use of the National Fatherhood Initiative's Father Friendly Check Up).
- Review Policies and procedures for father inclusiveness (look at language such as mothers or parents as opposed to fathers.). Include language in TDMs, Review Panels, SARs, Case Reviews.
- Create material for Father Resources Booklet.
- Add fathers to committee.
- Add directors of father groups to committee.

### **Training Subgroup**

- Assess staff needs and provide trainings; survey gizmo can be used for this purpose.
- Assist in development of training curriculum.
- Continue to assess needs for ongoing training.

### **PR/Communication Subgroup: Ongoing**

- Develop brochure for Fatherhood Initiative or a single panel flyer.
- Develop fliers to display within the agency (bi-monthly).
- Write external communications on Fatherhood Initiative i.e., Kick Off or Events).
- Suggest ideas for Father Event – hold event for fathers on or around Father's day.
- Establish agency relationship with other Fatherhood programs and State of Ohio Commission on Fatherhood.
- Fliers in agency; brochure for staff; brochure for community; father event; work with State of Ohio Initiative on Fatherhood.

**Networking Subgroup: Ongoing**

- Partner with existing agencies that work with fathers. (Juvenile Court, Domestic Relations Court, Child Support Enforcement Agency).
- Research and compile a list of Fatherhood Service Practitioners in the community (FSPs)
- Contact religious/faith based community for programming related to fathers
- Discover other groups in community that work with fathers and meet with them
- Create lists of resources for staff; and a toolkit for fathers
- Hold an agency Resource Fair inclusive of Fatherhood Service Practitioners  
Involve Community Partners – Battered Women's Shelter, DR/Juv. Court, FSPs, Recovery Coaches, Surrounding Child Welfare county representatives, Faith-Based community, Fathers, School Board members, Legislatures, etc.
- Develop a strategic plan for the county

In addition, the Networking Subcommittee should be looking in the community for fatherhood practitioners and inviting them to join Father Factor. Get providers involved early on in the process so it is rooted in the community and to make them a part of the development.

## **PROGRAM MANAGEMENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

Review current organizational policies and procedures to identify the gaps between policy and practice. Over the course of the past four years, the Father Friendly Committee identified gaps in the areas of these policies, Family Search and Engagement, and Father Involvement procedures.

Procedures have been written that lessened the gaps. Staff will also be trained on these policies. Make adjustments as needed and educate and disseminate to reinforce the commitment to involving fathers.

The PR/Communications committee conducts internal PR to keep the momentum of including dads in the forefront with staff. A newsletter/flier was created and titled Father Facts which is displayed on bulletin boards and distributed throughout the agency. It is the goal of the PR/Communications committee to distribute a monthly flier.

The initial intake form that is used when fathers are referred to the fatherhood program is a referral form filled out by the assigned caseworker as well as a form provided by the Ohio Commission of Fatherhood. These forms are used to identify the father's initial needs.

**See Appendices: G, H**

## **COLLABORATION AND ORGANIZATIONAL NETWORKING (COMMUNITY OUTREACH)**

One of the necessary partnerships that every fatherhood program within the child welfare system should acquire is with the Ohio Commission of Fatherhood. It is a state-wide commission that is under the umbrella of the Ohio Department of Job & Family Services. The mission of the Commission is to enhance the well-being of Ohio's Children by providing opportunities for fathers to become better parents, partners and providers. The individuals who comprise the Commission personnel understand the agenda of fatherhood. It is imperative to cultivate relationships with outside fatherhood programs to create a bond of support, understanding, and collaborative moments.

### **STAKEHOLDERS**

A vital component of the sustainability of the program is to target and recruit individuals and other establishments that have comparable passion and interest in the fatherhood initiative. Targeting and involving the appropriate stakeholders and responding to their needs creates a lasting relationship and support system. By having a diverse team it allows for collaboration of ideas and various perspectives, nurtures social capital within the community, increases the visibility and credibility of the agency, and increases the chance of success and sustainability of the initiative. It is important to determine who needs to be involved and at what level. Have at least three different levels of stakeholders, tier 1 stakeholders should be the influential and directly connected; tier 2 stakeholders may be indirectly or directly connected to the cause of the initiative, and tier 3 stakeholders are not indirectly connected but have the passion and interest and ability to support in whatever ways are needed.

## **LOCATING FATHERHOOD PRACTITIONERS**

One of the responsibilities of the Networking Committee of the Fatherhood Program is to search within the community for any programs having to do with fathers. The committee should check these sources: religious community, information and referral, county job and family services, social service agencies such as the Urban League, and the local United Way. In addition google searches may be used (i.e. fatherhood programs in Summit County, OH). The Networking Committee compiles a list of their findings with address and phone and members contact the program to obtain how the organization works with fathers. Another way to locate practitioners is to contact the State of OH Commission on Fatherhood ([www.fatherhood.ohio.gov](http://www.fatherhood.ohio.gov)) to see the programs they are funding and the counties in which the programs work.

A recommendation from this committee is taken to the entire Fatherhood Program meeting so that the entire group can decide which practitioner group/s to invite to be part of the committee; they are invited to the next meeting to showcase their organization. If there is a good fit between the community program and the Committee, the program is asked to join the Committee. A good fit is described as the two having common goals (parenting classes; communication classes between men and women; interest or work in Juvenile Court; working with adult men who are fathers, etc).

Father Practitioners can then be recruited from the community programs. A job description and qualifications is provided in the appendix.

A staff person employed by the children services agency cannot serve as a fatherhood practitioner since that is not part of the position description. In addition the practitioner needs to be viewed as an outside bystander, not an agency employee.

## **FATHERHOOD PRACTITIONER**

The Practitioner must possess a skill set that is inclusive but not limited to the ability to engage fathers who are at many various levels in their role of father and member of his family. Another ability the Practitioner should possess is to facilitate effective interaction with the fathers in a group setting and on a one-on-one basis and have the ability to facilitate positive changes in the fathers with regards to the various roles such as fathers, partners, and positive member of the community.

Training on the child welfare system is a necessity for all Practitioners as is cross training for child welfare staff.

**See Appendix I (Fatherhood Family Practitioner Requirements)**

## **CROSSTRAINING**

### **Cross Training – Developed between the Fatherhood Practitioners and Child Welfare**

Once the Networking sub-committee has located the community practitioners working with fathers, a list needs to be compiled and these resources contacted in order to begin working with them.

The fatherhood practitioners are to be invited into the child welfare organization to meet with staff involved with the pilot and other staff members as deemed necessary. The Co-Chairs of the committee are responsible for arranging a question and answer session from the fatherhood groups to the entire committee.

The child welfare staff needs to be prepared with the following items: A list of acronyms of child welfare terms, a flow chart as to how a case progresses through the child welfare system, a copy of the most recent Annual report and other brochures or programming throughout the agency. The Co-Chairs must assure that key agency staff is available for the Q & A session. Social Services Departments (Intake, Protective, and Permanency Planning/Placements) are to be represented. It is also recommended that staff from Legal, Community Relations, IT, Staff Development and Organizational Research and Evaluation are present as well.

Once this has been accomplished, each fatherhood practitioner/provider will be asked to prepare a presentation to the committee to review their curriculum. This is to be done one provider at a time during a regularly scheduled committee meeting. The purpose of this is so that the child welfare staff can gain a better understanding of the services these partners provide to the client families if/when a referral is made for their service. Time for questions and answers is allotted at the end of each presentation. The practitioners are encouraged to bring copies of their materials, brochures or handouts. Program videos or PowerPoint presentations are also acceptable for cross training purposes.

Following the practitioner's presentation, an agency "walk-through" needs to be orchestrated. The "walk-through" consists of hosting a session within the child welfare agency for the fatherhood practitioners. The purpose of this exercise is to have the practitioner's gain a better understanding of what a father goes through once he is involved in an open child welfare case from the "front door" through the life of a case. The fatherhood practitioner participants all receive folders with information including but not limited to: agency and special program brochures, organizational charts, strategic plan etc. A representative from the agency legal department should be present to discuss the legal requirements and responsibilities regarding father involvement. Time for discussion and question and answers should be allotted.

A tour of the child welfare agency and campus is to occur as a part of the cross training. The tour for the practitioners will include a walk through the phone room, Intake and Protective Departments, family interaction/visitation center etc. If the child welfare agency hosting the walk through has Alternative Response units and offers Team Decision Making meetings, Family Team Meetings and/or Permanency Round Tables, a video or PowerPoint presentation of these initiatives need to be included in this format.

## **STAFF TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Incorporate into staff training an Overview of Nonresident Fathers in Child Welfare and the Importance of Father Involvement. The two key trainings given to child welfare staff are: Overview of Fatherhood and Engaging Dads. Other training possibilities are, Responsible Fatherhood, Motivational Interviewing, and Bridges Out of Poverty. Training for staff in these areas reflects the Ohio Child Welfare Training Program's caseworker related competencies including 301-01-007, Understands the difference between high context and low context communication styles and how this affects the selection of interviewing methods for different families. Also, 301-01-014, Knows how to use strength-based interviewing strategies during all phase of case intervention.

Child welfare workers have an incredibly difficult, yet vitally important job. It is important to continue to give child welfare workers the opportunities to attend trainings, education seminars and other workshops that will assist to increase the capacity, knowledge, vitality, and ability of the caseworkers.

**See Appendices J, K, L, M**

## **REFERRAL PROCESS**

### **The Referral Process: How to Refer a Father to Training Classes, Mediation and Father Program**

Caseworkers are trained on the procedure to refer fathers to the fatherhood practitioner's program (training classes, mediation and individual assessment) as they are referring families and fathers who have been assigned to them within their child welfare caseload.

A referral form is used to capture demographic data: name, address, phone, is paternity established, is he custodial parent; is there criminal history and what is military status, Also the child's name, age, date of birth and school is captured. This form also contains the following: brief synopsis of case; psychosocial history of father; other agency involvement; short term goals, past history with children services and substance abuse suspected or confirmed. There is a question related to desire of father to accept the service. In addition an agency release of information must be signed by the father.

The caseworker fills out the referral form and obtains the signature of the supervisor. The form is sent to the Department Director for signature. The form is then routed to the fatherhood practitioner. Within 24 hours the practitioner contacts the father to introduce himself and discuss the father's needs. If the need is training classes the practitioner tells the father the date/s of the next classes, or they can meet in person at the agency to discuss the same.

Services for the father begin and the practitioner sends emails to the caseworker and supervisor to update them on how the father is doing.

## **PARENT AND FAMILY INVOLVEMENT PRACTICES**

An initiative to incorporate into agency practice is to include fathers in the Team Decision Making meetings. Including goals and objectives specifically for fathers in the case plan gives the father the opportunity to join his family and staff in the decision making process.

Once dad has completed the educational series of classes, a graduation should be held to honor those dads that give the families the opportunity to join dad at the graduation to celebrate his success. The graduation is an opportunity for dads and families to come together and celebrate dad's achievements. As funds, manpower, and building availability opportunities arise, continue to sponsor events for the dad's and their children and families to keep the dads connected.

It is important to invite dads who have successfully completed the educational class series of classes to return to lend and receive support in their roles of being productive and effective fathers.

## **INFORMATION AND DATA SUPPORT SYSTEMS**

It is vital to your program to create a strong and comfortable working relationship with the Information Technology representative. Statistics will play an intricate role in supplying data information and statistics to track the effectiveness and uniqueness of the program. This should be done early in the program to develop process and ideally should occur quarterly. It is necessary to target a baseline of how fathers are identified and how many are engaged in case planning. The first thing to know is that father identification is measured per child (every child has a father) – and not by case plan.

From SACWIS, utilize the monthly report that reflects all people (the attached file is edited to children only) on case plans as of the end of the month. Exclude PC (but include all other types of legal status – even PPLA). It is vital to have someone at the agency who is able to assist with programming for this monthly report called: Case Plan People

**See Appendix: Z**

## **FUNDING AND SUSTAINABILITY**

### **Potential Funding Streams**

- Child Welfare Agency in which Father Program operates
- Local United Way Agency
- Research local foundations for those that are interest in fathers, fathers and mothers, children and fathers
- Local Jobs & Family Services of State of Ohio
- Use organizations that are funded by State of Ohio Commission on Fatherhood (i.e., Fame Fathers, that provides educational classes)
- Fundraising or sponsorships

### **Recommendations**

- Secure an individual who possesses the skill of grantwriting
- Create tier of stakeholders
- Recruit stakeholders who can provide not only financial support, but also food for events, gift card, and incentives for fathers who participate in program.

### **Suggestions for Sustaining and Maintaining**

A major function of the committee is to look at all aspects of the successful sustainability of the Father Factor program on both a long and short term basis. This will help to consider the finances for six months from now, but it will also help to create a visual to project where we want our organization to be in five years. Have leading questions such as: how much money the organization currently has, how much money Father Factor Program expects to have in the coming year to five years, what are the current and prospective lines of resources and how solvent are they, how much money goes to programs, staff, etc., and how much debt does your program currently have? Create a list of things that are essential to the mission, and a list of prospective plans, programs, and other

changes that are desired for the Father Factor program. Once that is complete, the committee will create an estimate of how much it would cost to facilitate or offer these activities considering both programmatic and staff costs.

## RESULTS AND SUCCESSES

### **Here are results and successes of Summit County Children Services' Father Factor Program.**

Working with fathers in child welfare since the onset of this initiative has most certainly yielded positive results and strides in terms of best practice. Improved father identification and involvement rates have been tracked for almost four years.

As of June 30, 2010, less than half (44.6%) of the children had their father identified on their case plan. On June 30, 2012, nearly two thirds (66.6%) of the child's case plan had father identification. The data has shown a statistically significant difference when comparing father identification rates.

Of further note, 72% of case plans (excluding children in Permanent Custody) as of May 31, 2013, 72% the father identification. About three-quarters (73%) of the non-custody population had the father identified on their case plan, while 69% of (non-PC) children in custody had their father identified. This data indicates that Summit County Children Services continues to improve in this area and is doing slightly better with father identification for the non-custody population. The difference in father identification between the custody versus non-custody populations is small.

Summit County Children Services has been offering fatherhood classes at the agency for the past 3 years. This has been a vehicle for fathers to have a voice and choice in their children's lives and be able to connect with a fatherhood practitioner right inside the walls of Children Services. To date, over 200 fathers have been referred to this program. The fathers participate in classes using the 24/7 Dads curriculum from the National Fatherhood Initiative. The state-wide data base which is used to capture activity logs, case members, case plan participants as well as all CAPMIS tools shows that the agency has over a 90% father identification rate on open case plans. This means that although we may not be able to identify all fathers of children we are involved with for various reasons, we do in fact have a high rate of identification on open cases.

Tracking data related to fathers specifically did not occur prior to the Father Factor initiative. Many of our policies and procedures used the terminology "the parent(s)" to address practice issues. Through our initiative, the workgroup wanted to take this a step further to assure staff adheres to roles and responsibilities when working with fathers. A sub-committee of the Father Factor, Father Friendly sub-committee spearheaded the creation of the procedure for fatherhood involvement. This is a roadmap for Social Services staff to guide the work that must be done with and for fathers.

Fathers attending Team Decision Making Meetings (TDMs) have also increased. A TDM is a sharing of all information about the family which relates to the protection of the children and functioning of the family. These meetings are held when a caseworker and supervisor believe a child is at imminent risk and needs to be removed. TDMs are also convened when a placement of a child in custody has become unstable or to look at a less restrictive plan. In 2011, there were 233 fathers at the TDMs. That number increased in 2012 to 271 and again in 2013 to 281. When families and fathers in this case are part of the decision making process, they are more likely to participate in services to keep their family together or to complete tasks in order to have their children safely returned.

Likewise, involving fathers in parent child interaction is important particularly when a child is in a substitute care setting. At the start of the fatherhood initiative, we did not capture the number of fathers that were included in parenting time at our Family Interaction Center. In 2013, our data indicates that 1,738 visits involving fathers occurred at the center.

Additional successes include a yearly Fatherhood Event for Fathers involved in child welfare to celebrate them and to offer educational sessions. Our first event was held in June 2012 in collaboration with the local fatherhood practitioners. Forty fathers attended that event. In June 2013, a baseball game was hosted by the Fatherhood collaborative where 80 fathers attended a baseball game in Akron with their children. In June 2014, Summit County Children Services hosted an event as part of Responsible Fatherhood Month. The event was funded by a grant from the Ohio Commission of Fatherhood and ODJFS.

## **LESSONS LEARNED FROM SUMMIT COUNTY CHILDREN SERVICES' FATHERHOOD PROGRAM**

- Those collaborating must learn the mission of the agencies, be trained on how they operate, and be kept up to date on changes.
- There needs to be a good working relationship with the collaborating parties and total respect for each other.
- Regular communication should occur with open dialogue about questions and issues.
- The goal of the collaboration needs to be in the forefront. For example, in this collaboration we are concerned with the best interests and outcomes for children.
- Keep leaders and staff of collaborating organizations current on all aspects of the program.
- Use visual reminders of the program to keep awareness at a high level.
- Identify key stakeholders who should be part of the committee and invite them to join.
- Begin collecting data on day one.

Diverse methods of capturing feedback from participants, volunteers, and staff will be utilized to capture what is most and least effective and strategic and challenges to overcome of the efforts of the programs.

All staff, Board members, and Father Factor Program funders will be notified of the Committee's efforts. By doing so, they might have some excellent suggestions your working group may not have considered. By receiving feedback, the plan may be even more effective than it would have otherwise.

Informing others may also help build an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect. There will not be unanswered questions, lack of communication, or feelings of being "left out of the loop." Open communication is a very important part of any organization. By keeping everyone informed, various problems can be avoided.

It will be important to develop a timeline that indicates the various actions to be taken, and when they should occur.

# APPENDICES

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