



Best Practice Guide for Engaging Fathers:
A Toolkit for Children Services Staff

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Introduction

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

Each year in Ohio, thousands of children become involved with child welfare as a result of abuse or neglect. Some of these children were living with both biological parents when child welfare became involved, and their mother, father or both maltreated them. However, many of these children were living with their mother, mother and/or her partner, or other relatives, but not with their father. In 2015, only 27.51 percent of Ohio children with ongoing child welfare cases lived in homes where their fathers were present.¹

In Ohio and across the country, the number of children born to unmarried parents has been steadily increasing. These changing family structures affect children. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, nationwide about 24 million children (one in three) live without their biological fathers. In Ohio, 45 percent live in female-headed households with no father present.² For these children, their biological fathers are often left out of caregiver search efforts, case planning, team meetings and court hearings, even if they had been a positive presence in the child’s life before child welfare’s involvement. This is especially true when the father is not living with his children.³

According to the Ohio Commission on Fatherhood, “Children with involved fathers have higher self-esteem and less depression as teenagers; higher grades, test scores and overall academic achievement; fewer problems with the judicial system; and lower levels of drug and alcohol use.”⁴ In addition, engaging fathers in child welfare can contribute to safety, permanency and well-being. Recent studies show that when nonresident fathers are involved in case planning, more children are reunited with their families, children exit foster care faster, and they are less likely to experience future maltreatment allegations.⁵ Involvement from fathers also may help mothers or other caregivers address the challenges that first brought the child to the attention of the child welfare system. When the father cannot be a positive presence in the child’s life, determining and documenting this throughout the case will reduce delays in permanency once the case reaches a final legal disposition.⁶

According to research, one of the primary reasons fathers have not, traditionally, been as involved in child welfare case planning is caseworker bias.⁷ In order for a child welfare system to improve its practice, caseworker bias must be acknowledged and addressed.

While working on the five-year Child and Family Services Plan, the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) and county partners recognized that Ohio counties were struggling to identify, locate and engage fathers and paternal relatives of children involved in the child welfare system.

¹ OhioSACWIS (2016)

² U.S. Department of Commerce: U.S. Census Bureau, American Fact Finder (2015).

³ Jessica R. Kendall and Lisa Pilnik, *Engaging Nonresident Fathers in Child Welfare Cases: A Guide for Court Appointed Special Advocates*, National Quality Improvement Center on Non-Resident Fathers and the Child Welfare System (2010)

⁴ Ohio Commission on Fatherhood. fatherhood.ohio.gov (2015)

⁵ Kendall and Pilnik, *Engaging Nonresident Fathers in Child Welfare Cases: A Guide for Court Appointed Special Advocates* (2010)

⁶ Kendall and Pilnik, *Engaging Nonresident Fathers in Child Welfare Cases: A Guide for Court Appointed Special Advocates* (2010)

⁷ Jeffrey Rosenberg and W. Bradford. *The Importance of Fathers in the Healthy Development of Children* (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2006).

Based on this compelling research, ODJFS formed the Engaging Fathers Subcommittee to do the following:

1. Identify the skills, values and supports caseworkers and agencies need to engage fathers and paternal relatives;
2. Develop and disseminate guidance and best practices for caseworkers and agencies; and
3. Seek venues for dialogue with agencies and caseworkers about the implementation of strategies and techniques to engage fathers and paternal and maternal relatives.

The subcommittee includes representatives from the Office of Families and Children, the Ohio Commission on Fatherhood, and county child welfare agencies of varying sizes and locations. Members are dedicated to supporting child welfare agencies as they work to help fathers and paternal relatives cultivate important and lasting connections with their children.

How to Use This Guide

This Best Practice Guide contains the subcommittee's suggestions for ways agencies can include fathers earlier and more effectively in each case, to ensure the best outcomes for children. We know that agencies have different levels of paternal engagement, and that changing agency culture and practice takes time and effort. This guide is designed to meet agencies where they are in that process. It covers the following topics:

- Agency Readiness
- Communication/Buy-in
- Workgroup Development
- Policy and Procedure Development
- Program Assessment
- Strategies for Engaging Fathers at All Stages of a Case

For each section, three levels of recommendations are offered: basic, enhanced and ideal. Basic recommendations are the foundation for good practice. Enhanced and ideal recommendations are additional options for consideration.

This guide is not meant to replace or override the Ohio Revised Code (ORC) or Ohio Administrative Code (OAC) requirements. Agencies must comply with all laws and rules as written. At the same time, they should examine their case practice related to the assessment and reassessment of issues to determine what might be precluding fathers from being viewed as a resource. Both bottom-up and top-down organizational efforts will be required.⁸ When fathers have the opportunity to be involved in their children's lives, they can make substantial contributions.

⁸ D. English, S. Brummer and P. Marten (2009). *Fatherhood in the child welfare system: Evaluation of a pilot project to improve father involvement* (Journal of Public Child Welfare, 2009), 213-234.

Agency Readiness and Communication/Buy-in

In recognition that agency needs and resources vary, three levels of recommendations are offered for each casework activity/process below: basic, enhanced and ideal. Basic recommendations are the foundation for good practice. Enhanced and ideal recommendations are additional options for consideration.

As agencies work to develop father-friendly environments, they should use a readiness tool to assess their strengths and challenges. Numerous tools exist for this purpose, and all agency staff should use them. Here are two options:

- **The Agency Readiness Tool for Developing a Fatherhood Program Assessment** – Summit County Children Services developed this as part of a toolkit of best practices that agencies can use to ensure fathers are included in discussions, decisions and case planning. (See Appendix A.)
- **The Father Friendly Check-Up for Child Welfare** – This tool assesses the degree to which agencies encourage father involvement. It was created by the National Quality Improvement Center on Non-Resident Fathers and the Child Welfare System, the National Fatherhood Initiative, the American Humane Association, and the American Bar Association Center on Children and the Law. (See Appendix J.)

In addition, to ensure the support of all staff – including the director and executive staff if they are not already involved – fatherhood engagement committees should be sure to widely communicate information about practice changes and goals.

Casework Activity/Process	Basic	Enhanced	Ideal
Agency Readiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create an internal committee to establish desired outcomes and goals • Disseminate father-friendly surveys and ask all staff to complete them • Use tools to assess barriers and biases • Use SACWIS Report 392, “Identified Fathers Report,” to gather baseline data on identified fathers • Require training for all direct-service staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a transition plan to identify, locate and engage fathers • Assign individual or subgroup tasks to move plan forward • Identify external stakeholders • Identify worker needs through unit visits • Require training for all staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold meetings with legal department • Address staff biases • Provide training to community partners and stakeholders
Communication/Buy-in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold an all-staff meeting to present the committee’s goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet with external stakeholders, including existing father groups, to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with community partners to see if they can help with

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Require committee representatives to provide updates at staff meetings • Include communication regarding changes on every agency meeting agenda • Ensure that all departments/units outline clear expectations • Identify local informal father groups, including faith-based groups, and provide information about them to direct-service staff 	<p>collaborate as much as possible</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement father-engagement training for all new workers; include information about the initiative and expectations • Set up regular meetings with external stakeholders, including courts, law enforcement, and local child support and mental health agencies • Provide information about the initiative to all child welfare staff 	<p>locating fathers and/or engaging them in case planning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure ongoing collaboration with local fatherhood groups • Obtain assistance from external stakeholders to help fathers provide more nurturing environments for their children; this can include such services as mentoring, as well as help with life skills, employment, education and housing • Ensure that each work unit tracks data and reports it back to the committees • Confirm that information about the initiative is being provided to all departments
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Workgroup Development, Policy and Procedure Development, and Program Assessment

In recognition that agency needs and resources vary, three levels of recommendations are offered for each casework activity/process below: basic, enhanced and ideal. Basic recommendations are the foundation for good practice. Enhanced and ideal recommendations are additional options for consideration.

In order to start engaging fathers more effectively, one of the first things agencies should do is review their policies and procedures. A workgroup can be established to do this. After workgroup members identify gaps, they should update policies and procedures and then inform staff of the changes. To ensure follow-through, the agency must commit to continued assessment.

Casework Activity/Process	Basic	Enhanced	Ideal
Workgroup Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Select a chair or cochairs to lead and develop a father engagement program; cochairs should have a favorable reputation and demonstrate competence in their ability to follow through on tasks Require the chair or cochairs to schedule and lead meetings, set the agendas, take notes, and ensure follow-up 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include members of all agency departments and work units 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have the chair or cochair plan an agency kick-off event Use an all-staff meeting with a fatherhood theme to engage staff Post meeting notices or send invitations to staff members and/or community members Include a father in the workgroup If the agency has the capacity to do so, establish subgroups (See Appendix B)
Policy and Procedure Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review current policies and procedures and update as needed Ensure that the agency has a father-specific policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review policies with staff; adjust them to include fathers in intake assessment and investigation protocol Review policies with staff; adjust them to include fathers in case planning, semiannual administrative reviews, case reviews, family 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a “Dad Packet” to distribute to fathers (see Appendix C) Develop a fatherhood program, locate a fatherhood practitioner, and distribute referral forms for the program to direct-service staff (See Appendix D)

		team meetings and other ongoing services	
Program Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designate someone from the agency to run a monthly SACWIS report to determine the number of fathers identified, included on case plans and/or receiving services • Create an absent-parent-search checklist to use on all cases necessary (See Appendix E) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the monthly SACWIS report to identify gaps in services and areas needing improvement; then increase efforts to engage fathers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review policies on a quarterly basis and amend as needed • Review practices on a quarterly basis; identify gaps in services and areas needing improvement • Use data and staff feedback to intensify efforts and identify improvement goals

Strategies for Engaging Fathers at All Stages of a Case

<p>In recognition that agency needs and resources vary, three levels of recommendations are offered for each casework activity/process below: basic, enhanced and ideal. Basic recommendations are the foundation for good practice. Enhanced and ideal recommendations are additional options for consideration.</p>			
<p>Screening and Referral</p>			
<p>Screeners should obtain information about fathers, including alleged fathers and noncustodial fathers, and document that information in the SACWIS intake report. This can help agencies identify the father before a case is opened, cross-reference the family history in SACWIS, and possibly resolve the presenting problem quickly by identifying additional resources (such as fathers or paternal relatives).</p>			
Casework Activity/Process	Basic	Enhanced	Ideal
<p>Information about Fathers to Collect from the Referral Source</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtain the father’s name, aliases, date of birth and possible addresses • Document race and ethnicity information • Document basic demographics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inquire about Indian heritage • Inquire about the father’s whereabouts • Ask about the father’s contact/visitation with the child 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask if paternity has been established (See Appendices H, I.) • Ask if child support has been ordered • Inquire about the father’s level of involvement with child • Ask about the father’s work hours and job location • Ask about the involvement of paternal relatives • Ask about the father’s friends, their addresses and their places of interest
<p>Historical Research</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review past referral reports to identify other case members and associated persons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review case closure summaries and/or intake dispositions that reference fathers, by screener and/or supervisor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review CAPMIS tool summaries from past case openings and investigations • Review agency document storage information, if applicable • Review SACWIS overview screens; screening decision makers should review them before screening

<p>Officer Acceptance Intakes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enter any fathers' names gathered by law enforcement during the incident 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work to increase communication between law enforcement and child protective services to locate fathers' information when law enforcement is involved • Request further assistance from law enforcement in gathering information about fathers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work on educating/partnering with local law enforcement to improve father engagement efforts
<p>After-Hour Procedures (Varies by County)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collect names of fathers and other family members from referral sources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase communication between law enforcement and child protective services regarding locating fathers' information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educate and partner with local law enforcement to improve father engagement efforts • Consider and engage fathers on all decisions (24/7)

Assessment/Investigation (A/I)			
Assigned A/I staff should continue gathering information described above under “Screening and Referral.” They should make diligent attempts to identify and locate fathers, including alleged fathers and noncustodial fathers. After a father has been located, the assigned worker should strive to build a relationship with that father so he will engage in the process and potentially help identify a viable placement for the child. All efforts should be documented in SACWIS.			
Casework Activity/Process	Basic	Enhanced	Ideal
Family Face-to-Face Contact (Search Efforts)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage mother/legal custodian to identify and locate the father Engage the child (if appropriate) to identify and locate the father 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educate the mother about the importance of father and paternal family connections. (See Appendix F.) Discuss with the mother the importance of the child’s knowledge of paternal family history, including medical history 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inquire about the father at each contact with case members and relatives Contact collaterals (including current/previous service providers for the children/mother) to inquire about the father’s contact with the family
Intersystem Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document the father’s information on all referrals to other systems (such as law enforcement, medical or behavioral health providers, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss the importance of father engagement with other involved parties (such as school contacts, law enforcement, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educate and partner with other involved parties to improve father engagement efforts Include paternal information in all Protective Service Alerts
Incarcerated Fathers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct a prison-system search to locate the father If the father is incarcerated, record his whereabouts Visit incarcerated fathers who are not 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage children and incarcerated fathers to call or write to each other to help them maintain contact, if doing so is in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set up visitations between children and incarcerated fathers if doing so is in the best interest of the child

	<p>alleged perpetrators to engage them in services and obtain paternal family information, if proximity allows</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call or send a letter to the incarcerated father, if a visit is not possible 	the best interest of the child	
Father Relationship Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reach out to any known fathers • Meet with the father • Invite all fathers to team decision meetings and family team meetings, if possible • Invite fathers to all court proceedings • Send fathers all disposition letters within two days • Assess kinship placement options, if necessary, from the paternal perspective • Ask all fathers if they have any American Indian/Alaskan Native heritage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer a variety of child/parent visitation options, such as phone calls, face-to-face visits, social media, etc. • Discuss with the mother the importance of developing a child/father bond 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess the father's relationship and ongoing involvement with the child • Start discussions regarding paternal relatives and the child having regular contact/visits with them • Document all known relationships for further case planning • Engage fathers in the family assessment for case planning services • Extend time frames on CAPMIS tools to engage fathers, if necessary
Transfer for Ongoing Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include all known information about fathers and paternal relatives in agency-specific transfer logs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send an email to the new team documenting the level of father engagement that occurred during A/I 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold transfer meetings between A/I and ongoing staff on all cases and discuss father engagement and the status of fathers' involvement

Ongoing Protective Services			
Assigned staff should continue efforts described above under “Screening and Referral” and “Assessment/Investigation.” Efforts to identify, locate, assess and engage fathers must continue throughout the life of a case. Relationship-building with both the mother and father is vital. Involving the father and paternal relatives could result in more timely permanency.			
Casework Activity/Process	Basic	Enhanced	Ideal
Case Assignment and Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the information found about the father by A/I staff Develop plan to follow up on any missing demographic information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review past case closure summaries, CAPMIS tools available, external documents, etc. Review search efforts checklist completed by A/I staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure fathers are identified on all cases prior to ongoing worker assignment
Case Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that the basic objectives on the case plan include establishing paternity and/or visitation between the father and child Ensure involved, presumed and legal fathers are included in case planning (See Appendix H.) Gather information about the child’s paternal relatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enlist the cooperation of the father or alleged father in the case plan development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include the father on the case plan if the agency has access to visit the father and if the father is willing and able to participate in services
Diligent Father Search Efforts during Family Contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage the mother to identify and locate the father Engage the child to identify and/or locate the father, when appropriate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research the case record for any past involvement with fathers and paternal relatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inquire about the father at each contact with case members and relatives

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtain information about paternal relatives for cases in which the father is identified and located • Continue to explore American Indian/Alaskan Native heritage on known and alleged fathers 		
Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue regular efforts to identify/engage the child’s father • Pursue fathers before and/or after the agency takes custody • Engage fathers in completing services needed to reunify with or obtain custody of the child • Provide fathers with community services information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refer fathers to community services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link all fathers with community services; call any agencies involved in referrals to discuss • Offer a full array of services for fathers, including mental health services, alcohol and/or drug addiction services, and domestic violence services
Caseworker Visits with Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue ongoing efforts to identify/locate/engage the child’s father • Complete monthly visits to the presumed or legal father 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain monthly face-to-face contact with all fathers/alleged fathers and involve them in case plans in accordance with federal, state and local mandates • When face-to-face contact is unsuccessful or not possible, follow up with 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the frequency of visits with fathers to ensure their involvement • Maintain the same reunification/permanency focus with fathers as with mothers or other primary caregivers

		monthly phone calls and/or correspondence	
Case Reviews/Semiannual Administrative Reviews/Team Decision Meetings/ Other Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite all fathers to all case reviews, semiannual administrative reviews, team decision meetings and other meetings throughout the life of the case, either in person or by phone • If safety concerns exist, make other arrangements – for example, hold a separate meeting with the father 		
Child/Parent Visitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer at least weekly visitations between the father and the child 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer other communication methods between the father and the child 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer additional parenting time for the father and/or paternal relatives, in addition to court-ordered access
Court Hearings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite all fathers to each court proceeding • When a court-involved case is closing, ask the juvenile court to order ongoing visitation and/or shared parenting for the noncustodial father, as appropriate • Use mediation to establish ongoing visitation/shared parenting arrangements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer transportation to court proceedings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the father practitioner attends court proceedings with the father, if available

<p>Incarcerated Fathers (proximity should be a rule-out only if the father is incarcerated out of state)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send an introduction letter to the father (See Appendix G) • Determine whether legal incarcerated fathers should be included on the case plan (consider proximity, service availability, length of prison term, father's ability/willingness to engage, father's relationship with the child, ability to have visits with the child, etc.) • If proximity allows, attempt to visit the father 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call or write the father monthly • When proximity allows, set up child/parent visitation with legal, incarcerated fathers • Ensure fathers' participation at court proceedings by requesting law enforcement transport or video participation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attempt a visit to engage the father at the place of his incarceration, regardless of location
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Legal Considerations

Some agencies have legal staff who can help with the tasks below. If your agency does not have a legal department, A/I or ongoing staff can perform these functions.

Casework Activity/Process	Basic	Enhanced	Ideal
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with the local child support enforcement agency to ensure that paternity information is accurately logged and tracked (See Appendices H, I.) • Serve all alleged, presumed and legal fathers as required by law • Conduct Putative Father Registry searches as required by law • Ensure that Indian Child Welfare Act mandates are followed for cases in which the father has American Indian/Alaskan Native heritage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use all available search tools to locate fathers, including social media and public websites (See Appendix E) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist alleged fathers in establishing paternity via DNA testing (See Appendices H, I.)

Appendix A – Agency Readiness Tool for Developing a Fatherhood Program Assessment

Summit County Children Services developed this assessment as part of a toolkit of best practices that agencies can use to ensure fathers are included in discussions, decisions and case planning.

Assessing Agency Readiness for Developing a Fatherhood Program

This tool will help you assess the degree to which your organization encourages father involvement.

Answer Yes or No

1. Administrative staff fully support a fatherhood program. _____
2. Staff are knowledgeable about techniques for identifying and locating fathers. _____
3. Staff can verbalize the importance of a father to his children. _____
4. Staff recognize that fathers and mothers parent differently. _____
5. The agency is committed to keeping records and collecting paternal family data. _____
6. Currently, workers are identifying fathers. _____
7. The agency considers fathers and mothers equally when determining the custody of children. _____
8. Staff are aware of father practitioners in the community. _____
9. The agency has a procedure/policy for engaging fathers and paternal relatives. _____
10. Staff attitudes toward fathers are positive. _____
11. Staff believe fathers can be excellent parents. _____
12. Staff know how to work with mothers to involve fathers in children’s lives. _____
13. Staff have knowledge of techniques to help fathers and mothers resolve differences in the best interest of the child. _____
14. The agency can support a fatherhood program with funding. _____
15. Staff member(s) have been selected to lead the fatherhood program. _____

To answer the questions below, agency-wide or caseworker-specific data can be pulled from SACWIS.

16. # of fathers participating in family meetings. _____
17. # of fathers visiting their children regularly. _____
18. # of fathers with custody of their children. _____
19. # of fathers identified on cases in SACWIS. _____

Appendix B – Father Engagement Workgroup Subgroups

To improve father engagement at your agency, it would be helpful to form a workgroup. If your agency has the capacity to do so, form subgroups within that workgroup to ensure that all needed action steps are completed. Here are some suggested subgroups and recommended action steps:

Father-Friendly Subgroup

- Assess the agency's environment for father-friendliness.
- Use the National Fatherhood Initiative's Father Friendly Check-Up to help determine the structure of your agency's program
- Review your agency's policies and procedures for father inclusiveness. Track father-specific data, such as whether fathers participate in meetings or have visitation or custody
- Include a father who has received services in the subgroup
- Include a fatherhood practitioner in the subgroup

Training Subgroup

- Assess staff training needs. Online survey tools, such as SurveyMonkey or SurveyGizmo, can be used for this purpose.
- Contact the Ohio Commission on Fatherhood. The commission offers free training and incentives for agencies starting fatherhood initiatives.
- Develop a training curriculum.
- Provide training to staff.
- Continue to assess staff fatherhood training needs.

Communication Subgroup

- Identify and partner with existing agencies that work with fathers.
- Compile a list of fatherhood practitioners or potential practitioners/father champions in your agency and community.
- Contact representatives from the faith-based community to see whether they have programming related to fathers.
- Develop a list of resources for staff and for fathers.
- Hold a resource fair involving fatherhood practitioners.
- If your county has a county-wide fatherhood initiative, be involved and communicate your strategic plan involving fathers. If your county has fatherhood practitioners, invite them to be involved in the agency initiative.
- Develop a brochure or flyer to educate staff about the importance of fathers.
- Develop bimonthly fliers to display within the agency.
- Hold a Father's Day event for fathers on or around Father's Day.

Appendix C – Sample Resource Guide for Fathers (Dad’s Packet)

Help for Fathers

You are receiving this guide because someone made a report of concern regarding your child or children. Getting involved with a children services agency can be intimidating and confusing. However, it also can lead to better outcomes – for your children and for you.

It’s important that children have good relationships with their fathers and paternal relatives. Research shows that children whose fathers are involved in their lives have higher self-esteem and less depression as teenagers, better grades, better health and better futures.

Sometimes fathers need help being the best fathers they can be. That’s why we’re providing this guide. It lists dozens of sources of assistance – from help paying for health care to help finding a job.

This guide was written by the Father Factor, a group of staff from ABC County Children Services, to help fathers in our community. Here are some other sources of help:

InfoLine, Inc., a 24-hour information and referral source: XXX-XXX-XXXX

National Fatherhood Initiative – **fatherhood.org**

State of Ohio Commission on Fatherhood – **fatherhood.ohio.gov**

ABC County Children Services – **abccounty.org**

Continued on next page

Alcohol and Drug Rehabilitation Services

Behavioral and Mental Health Services

Child Support

Children with Developmental Disabilities

Domestic Violence

Father Mentoring Programs and Parenting Classes

Food Assistance

GED Programs

Healthy Start/Health Families

Housing

Legal Assistance

Medicaid

Restored Citizens' Programs

Veterans' Services

Vocational, Job Training and Employment Programs

ALCOHOL AND DRUG REHABILITATION SERVICES

Alcohol, Drug and Mental Health Board

The Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health (ADAMH) Board of ABC County contracts with a network of health care organizations that provide treatment and services for people recovering from alcoholism, drug addiction and mental illness.

Address

Website

Phone Number

Indicate whether services are free or how much they cost

City Minority Alcoholism Drug Abuse Outreach Program, Inc.

The City Minority Alcoholism Drug Abuse Outreach Program takes a holistic approach to substance abuse education, prevention and wellness. It provides the following services:

Case Management

Intensive Outpatient Treatment Programs (Day and Evening)

Group Counseling

Individual Counseling

Assessments

After Care/Continuing Care

Support Groups: Sober Men United – Tuesdays and Thursdays at 10 a.m.

Address

Website

Phone Number

Indicate whether services are free or how much they cost

Appendix D - Important Components of a Fatherhood Initiative

OHIO COMMISSION ON FATHERHOOD

Every county fatherhood initiative in Ohio should start with a call to the Ohio Commission on Fatherhood. The commission seeks to improve the well-being of Ohio's children by helping fathers become better parents, partners and providers. As part of ODJFS, the commission strengthens vulnerable families by funding programs that serve low-income fathers. For more information, visit fatherhood.ohio.gov, email FATHERS@jfs.ohio.gov or call (614) 752-0583.

COLLABORATION WITH LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS

When starting a fatherhood initiative, agencies should identify and partner with existing groups in their communities that work with fathers. Compile a list of fatherhood practitioners or potential practitioners, as well as a list of local father champions. Reach out to representatives from the faith-based community, as well; they might have existing fatherhood programs. If your county has fatherhood practitioners, invite them to be involved in your agency's agency initiative.

To identify local fatherhood practitioners, check these sources: religious organizations, information and referral agencies, county departments of job and family services, and nonprofit social service organizations, such as the Urban League and the local United Way. Try searching the internet for fatherhood programs in your county.

Determine who should be involved and to what extent. Identify at least three tiers of stakeholders: Tier 1 stakeholders should be influential and directly connected to local fatherhood efforts. Tier 2 stakeholders may be indirectly or directly connected to local efforts. Tier 3 stakeholders might be indirectly connected but have the passion, interest and ability to provide support as needed. The more partnerships you can form, the more successful the initiative will be.

FATHERHOOD PRACTITIONERS

The ideal fatherhood practitioner must be able to engage fathers of varying ages, backgrounds and levels of involvement with their families. They must work well with fathers one-on-one, as well as in group settings in which participants are encouraged to interact. Agencies should contact the Ohio Commission on Fatherhood to verify whether a fatherhood practitioner has experience serving fathers. All fatherhood practitioners must complete child welfare training, just as all child welfare staff should complete fatherhood training.

Appendix E - Sample Absent Parent Search Checklist

The caseworker must confirm that the following searches were conducted. Please indicate the results of each search. If you have used one or more of these searches in the past, please conduct an updated search to ensure we have the **latest** information from each source. If nothing is found, please document that. Note: A date of birth and/or a Social Security number are helpful in conducting searches.

✓ **Child Support Records**

Attach the information/printouts from CSEA.

Name/Address(es) As of (date)

✓ **ODJFS Fraud Investigator Information Search (BMV)**

Driver's Inquiry Screen

innerapp.odjfs.state.oh.us/bmvfraud/fraud.aspx

Address(es) As of (date)

✓ **OHLEG**

Statewide computerized criminal history; if not available at the agency, can be obtained from the local sheriff's or prosecutor's office

Address(es) As of (date)

✓ **VINELink Online Offender Search**

To search prison records for incarcerated person nationwide, select a state and click on "Find an Offender."
vinelink.com

Address(es) As of (date)

✓ **Ohio Offender Search/Department of Corrections**

Data on offenders incarcerated in an Ohio prison, under department supervision, judicially released, or who died of natural causes while incarcerated.

drc.state.oh.us/OffenderSearch/Search.aspx

Address(es) As of (date)

Continued on next page

- ✓ **Federal Bureau of Prisons Inmate Locator**
To search federal prisons for incarcerated persons
bop.gov

Address(es) **As of (date)**

- ✓ **Ohio Sex Offender Registry**
icrimewatch.net/index.php?AgencyID=55149&disc=

Address(es) **As of (date)**

- ✓ **White Pages**
To search for persons by name in the U.S.
whitepages.com/ or paper book version

Address(es) **As of (date)**

- ✓ **Reverse Telephone Directory**
Telephone numbers indexed to addresses
reversephonedirectory.com

Address(es) **As of (date)**

- ✓ **County Auditor's Website**
Property search by name or address

Address(es) **As of (date)**

- ✓ **Grandparents and other relatives for whom we have contact information**
At a minimum, attempt to obtain addresses or other identifying information.

Address(es) **As of (date)**

- ✓ **Counseling agencies and others to whom you may have referred the person for services**
If applicable

Address(es) **As of (date)**

Appendix F - Strategies for Enlisting Support from Mothers

Explain:

- Father has a legal right to see his children (presumed/legal father)
- Children have a right to know their father

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Listen:

- To what the mother is saying about the father
- To what the father is saying about the mother

Encourage the mother to look beyond personal issues with the father:

- Lifetime benefits to the child
- Extra support for her during rough times

Ensure Safety:

- Of mother and child

Source: Trainers Guide: Skills & Strategies for Working with Fathers (2010) Professional Excellence Project. Georgia State University School of Social Work. Atlanta, Georgia.

- Communicate in a way to help alleviate fears.
- Starting with "I need to know" may cause anxiety.
- If the mother responds that she does not know where the father is upon the first request, rethink the approach.
- Focus on the children's safety.
- Tell why the information being sought is important.
- Be culturally competent and respectful.
- Explain that workers are required to search for fathers and ask the mother about any concerns she may have.
- Give examples of why it's important that workers be able to reach the father in case of emergency (e.g. the child needs medical treatment).
- Explain that the information she provides helps determine what's best for her children.
- Understand what kind of relationship mothers have with the fathers and adjust your approach accordingly.
- Mothers may be concerned that the children will automatically be placed with their father.
- Reassure the mother that the agency will investigate safety concerns provided about the father.
- Ask if the father needs help as well.
- Use an open-ended request, such as "tell me about the child's father."
- Ask about the father's family.
- Ask if there has been any past or possibly current domestic violence

Source: Parent Collaboration Group, February 2009. National Quality Improvement Center on non-Resident Fathers and the Child Welfare System.

Appendix G – Sample Incarcerated Father’s Introduction Letter

This is a sample of a letter that could be sent to a case manager or social worker at a correctional facility to let them know the agency is working with an incarcerated father’s child(ren).

Date:

Case Manager/Social Worker

(Name of Prison)

(Address of Prison)

RE:

(Name of Inmate)

(Inmate Number)

Dear Case Manager/Social Worker,

_____ is currently providing services to the child(ren) of the above inmate. Our agency values each parent’s input regarding plans and services related to their child(ren). In our work with the families, the service team develops a case plan that identifies the family’s strengths and concerns to determine the services needed. Our agency recognizes that often incarcerated parents can engage in services while confined.

Please find enclosed an information release form signed by the inmate. Also attached is an information sheet for you to complete. It includes information about services the inmate is involved in or could be involved in while at your facility. Please provide as much information as you can, and return it to my attention within 15 business days, if possible.

Our agency also asks if you can send quarterly updates regarding the inmate and services she/he is completing so that we can inform our juvenile court and make appropriate recommendations regarding the welfare and permanency of the child(ren) involved.

Thank you for your assistance in this matter. Please feel free to contact me at any time.

Sincerely,

(Name of Worker)

(Phone number)

(Email Address)

Continued on next page

Date: _____

Facility Name: _____

Please respond by: _____

Inmate Name: _____

Inmate #: _____

Please complete the following regarding the above inmate and services available at your facility.

Prison Term: Admission date: _____

Anticipated release date: _____

Available services offered for inmates at or through this facility:

Available (check if available)	Current/Past completion by identified inmate (list dates)	Name of Service	Describe the specifics of the service/program and indicate if the inmate successfully completed them
		Career/Vocational	
		Educational/Academic	
		Substance Abuse Group	
		Substance Abuse Individual	
		AA/NA/CA	
		Mental Health Group	
		Mental Health Individual	
		Parenting classes	
		Psychiatric Services	
		Psychological Services	
		Anger Management	
		Community Service Program	
		Dog training program	
		Reentry Program	
		Other (please describe)	

Additional comments:

Case Manager/Social Worker Signature: _____

Date: _____

If you have any questions, please call at _____.

Please return to:

(Name of Worker)

(Email Address)

(Street Address)

(City, State Zip)

Appendix H – Paternity Definitions

The definitions below are used by the ODJFS Office of Child Support.

Alleged Father – A male thought to be the father of a child, but who has not been legally determined to be the father. Also called the putative father.

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Biological Father – Sometimes referred to as the natural father

Legal Father – A male who is recognized by law as the father of a child.

Paternity – Legal determination of fatherhood. Paternity must be established before a child support order can be ordered.

Presumed Father – A man is presumed to be the natural father of a child in the following circumstances:

- A man is married to the child’s mother at the time of the child’s birth; or
- A man and the child’s mother were married to each other, and the child is born within 300 days after the marriage is ended by court order or death of the man or the mother; or
- A man and the child’s mother were married to each other, and the child is born after the man and the child’s mother file a separation agreement in court; or
- A man signed a Voluntary Acknowledgment of Paternity Affidavit (JFS 07038), which has been filed with the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, and the Acknowledgement has not become final

Presumption of Paternity – A legal assumption that a male is the father of a child under certain circumstances, but that can be rebutted by evidence that the male is not the father, usually through genetic testing.

Putative Father – A male thought to be the father of a child, but who has not been legally determined to be the father. Also called the alleged father. All of the following also must apply:

- The male is not married to the child's mother at the time of the child's conception or birth; and
- He has not adopted the child; and
- Prior to the date a petition to adopt the child is filed, no court or administrative agency proceeding in Ohio or any other state has determined that he has a relationship with the child.

Appendix I – Paternity Basics

Per ORC section 3109.042, an unmarried female who gives birth to a child is the sole residential parent and legal custodian of the child until a court issues an order designating another person as the residential parent and legal custodian.

If the mother is married, the husband is the presumed father of the child.

If a child is born to an unmarried mother, the child does not have a legal father unless the parents take steps to establish a legal father.

In Ohio, paternity can be established in three ways:

1. Both parties can sign an Acknowledgment of Paternity Affidavit (JFS 07038). This states that they are the biological parents of the child and choose to be named as the legal parents. The affidavit can be completed at the hospital after the child's birth, at a local health department or at a county child support enforcement agency (CSEA).
2. If there is uncertainty as to the parentage of the child or if paternity is contested, the mother, alleged father(s), or the child or child's guardian can request genetic testing. The CSEA will then issue an administrative paternity order based on the results of the genetic test. For paternity to be established, the results must show at least a 99 percent probability of parentage.
3. A juvenile or domestic relations court can issue a court order of paternity.

For more information, see OAC chapter 5101:12-40, "Child Support," and ORC Section 3111, "Parentage."

Appendix J – Resources/Articles

Best Practice Tips and Tools

Best Practice for Father-Child Visits in the Child Welfare System

nfpn.org/Portals/0/Documents/father_child_visits.pdf

This document includes research on parent/child visits, nationwide policies for parental visits in child welfare, best practice for parent/child visits, and a list of activities for fathers and children during visits.

Engaging Nonresident Fathers in Child Welfare Cases: A Guide for Court-Appointed Special Advocates

site.americanhumane.org/fatherhooddocs/casa_brief.pdf

This practice guide was created by American Bar Association and American Humane (2010). It is an excellent discussion of the barriers to father engagement and how child welfare organizations can overcome them.

Father Involvement and Child Welfare: The Voices of Men of Color

jswve.org/download/2014-1/articles/5-JSWVE-11-1-Father%20Involvement%20and%20Child%20Welfare%20The%20Voices%20of%20Men%20of%20Color-pp%2033-41.pdf

This study was published in 2014 in the Journal of Social Work Ethics and Values. Researchers interviewed 37 men and asked them questions about their relationships with their children's mother, with their children and with their children's caseworkers. One of the study's findings was that men who had female and male caseworkers did not feel that they were treated better by the male caseworkers than by the female caseworkers.

Improving Outcomes for Children and Families - PIP TIPS: Involving Fathers

dhs.state.mn.us/main/groups/county_access/documents/pub/DHS_id_051473.pdf

Each issue of PIP (Program Improvement Plan) TIPS focuses on practice related to the safety, permanency and well-being of children. This issue examines the role and involvement of fathers affecting several performance items.

A Systematic Approach to Improving the Engagement of Fathers in Child Safeguarding

orca.cf.ac.uk/64199/2/Scourfield%20A%20systemic%20approach%20to%20improving%20father%20engagement%20-%20submitted.pdf

Increasing the involvement of fathers in child safeguarding is an issue that has seen relatively little practice innovation in mainstream services.

National Health Statistics Reports: Fathers' Involvement with their Children: United States, 2006-2010

cdc.gov/nchs/data/nhsr/nhsr071.pdf

This report measures fathers' involvement with their children across the United States.

Principles of Father-Inclusive Practice

fira.ca/cms/documents/205/Principles_of_Father_Inclusive_Practice.doc

The Father Inclusive Practice Forum held in Newcastle, Australia, developed nine principles of father inclusion and explained the implications for service providers.

Promising Interventions for Strengthening Relationships between Non-Resident Fathers and Their Children

fatherhood.ohio.gov/Portals/0/Promising%20Interventions%20for%20Strengthening%20Relationships%20between%20Non-Residential%20Fathers%20and%20their%20Children.pdf

This article – on pages 8-10 of "The Source," a National Resource Center publication for professionals who help families affected by drug abuse – describes a federal study undertaken to better understand how engaging non-resident fathers can affect outcomes for children in the child welfare system.

Tips for Dads: Advice to Non-Residential Fathers

site.americanhumane.org/fatherhooddocs/tips_for_dad.pdf

Advice for fathers to support positive parenting

Father-Friendly Assessments

Father-Friendly Check-Up

fatherhood.ohio.gov/Portals/0/FatherFriendlyCheck_ChildWelfare.pdf

This tool assesses the degree to which an agency encourages father involvement in its programs, activities and meetings. It is provided by the National Quality Improvement Center on Non-Resident Fathers and the Child Welfare System, the National Fatherhood Initiative, the American Humane Association, and the American Bar Association Center on Children and the Law.

Father-Friendly Check-up for Child Welfare Agencies

fatherhood.ohio.gov/Portals/0/Father%20Friendly%20Check-up%20for%20Child%20Welfare%20Agencies.pdf

This assessment is designed to help child welfare agencies and organizations take an active, positive approach to creating environments that involve fathers and foster healthy child development. It encourages staff to examine their organizations, as well as their own attitudes about fathers. This tool was created by the National Quality Improvement Center on Non-Resident Fathers and the Child Welfare System, the National Fatherhood Initiative, the American Humane Association, and the American Bar Association Center on Children and the Law.

Father-Friendly Toolkits

Bringing Back the Dads: A Model Program Curriculum for Non-Resident Father Engagement

fatherhood.ohio.gov/Portals/0/Bringing%20Back%20the%20Dads_Model%20Curriculum.pdf

This curriculum was developed as a result of the five-year (2007-2011), federally funded National Quality Improvement Center on Non-Resident Fathers and the Child Welfare System project. The project was designed to promote the engagement of non-resident fathers of children involved in the child welfare system and to study the impact of engagement on child safety, permanency and well-being. Page | 34

Children in Foster Care with Parents in Federal Prison: A Toolkit for Child Welfare Agencies, Federal Prisons and Residential Reentry Centers

csgjusticecenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/COIP-Toolkit.pdf

This toolkit was produced by the Federal Interagency Working Group for Children of Incarcerated Parents in June 2013.

Quick Reference Guide: Navigating the Child Welfare System – Bringing Back the Dads

[fatherhood.ohio.gov/Portals/0/Quick Reference Guide_Navigating Child Welfare Bringing Back the Dads.pdf](http://fatherhood.ohio.gov/Portals/0/Quick%20Reference%20Guide_Navigating%20Child%20Welfare_Bringing%20Back%20the%20Dads.pdf)

This toolkit is for fathers of children in the foster care system. It was written with the help of child welfare professionals who recognize the importance of fathers being involved in their children's lives.

Father-Friendly Websites

Child Welfare Information Gateway

childwelfare.gov/topics/famcentered/engaging/fathers

This website, maintained by the federal Children's Bureau, contains links to research, reports and podcasts on engaging fathers in child welfare.

Ohio Commission on Fatherhood

fatherhood.ohio.gov

This website provides links to resources and programming for fathers in Ohio.

Ohio Practitioners' Network for Fathers and Families

opnff.net/search.asp

This website provides a county-specific listing of every registered fatherhood program in Ohio.

National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connection

nrcpfc.org/fewpt

This website provides resources for engaging families, including a web-based Engaging Family Practice Toolkit. The toolkit was funded by the Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College and the federal Children's Bureau.

Ad Council Public Service Announcements

psacentral.org/campaign/Fatherhood_Involvement

Visit this website for free posters, videos and other materials with positive images of involved fathers.

Enlisting Support from Mothers to Support Father Engagement

Skills and Strategies for Working with Fathers (2010)

[mncourts.gov/mncourtsgov/media/scao_library/CJI/17d-Fathers-Working-with-Fathers-Participant-Guide-\(Georgia\).pdf](http://mncourts.gov/mncourtsgov/media/scao_library/CJI/17d-Fathers-Working-with-Fathers-Participant-Guide-(Georgia).pdf)

This website has strategies for working with fathers and enlisting support from mothers.

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The ODJFS Office of Families and Children partnered with the Ohio Commission on Fatherhood and many public children services agencies to identify skills, values and supports needed by workers and agencies to better engage fathers and paternal relatives. Together, they formed the Engaging Fathers Subcommittee, which was charged with developing and disseminating a best practice guide for counties on how to not only locate fathers and paternal relatives, but also better engage them to improve outcomes for children and families. The following professionals were members of the committee:

Seth Bowersock	Allen County Children Services
Arvella Fike	Cuyahoga County Division of Children and Family Services
Toni Gillette	Ohio Department of Job and Family Services
John LaRoche	Belmont County Department of Job and Family Services
Jesse Looser, Co-Chair	Franklin County Children Services
Renee Lupi	Morrow County Job and Family Services
Monica Mahoney	Ohio Commission on Fatherhood
Karen McGormley	Ohio Department of Job and Family Services
Ann-Marie Mendenhall	Trumbull County Children Services
Jason Moore	Mahoning County Children Services
Rebekah Murray	Ohio Department of Job and Family Services
Staci Nichols	Allen County Children Services
Ann Ream, Co-Chair	Summit County Children Services
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John R. Kasich, Governor
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Cynthia C. Dungey, Director
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