



# My Dad Matters

A toolkit for community service providers to assess and develop strategies for engaging men who care for children



The *My Dad Matters* toolkit was developed as a public resource for community service providers for assessing and developing strategies for engaging fathers. Through a process of research, pilot testing, and collaboration with community partners, the information within this manual reflects up-to-date understanding of fatherhood. Included are original descriptions and writing from the author, with adaptations of ideas and tools from other sources. Where possible effort was made to provide specific acknowledgement of these other sources. This manual also includes a list of references and resources, both print and web-based. This toolkit was not developed for commercial purposes and is not intended for commercial use.

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The views and opinions within this toolkit may not necessarily reflect the views of either The Counselling Foundation of Canada or The Public Health Agency of Canada.

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Dad Central Ontario (DCO) was established in 1997 as the Father Involvement Initiative – Ontario Network. It had become clear at that time that fatherlessness had presented a challenge in relation to healthy child development and resilience. From there, DCO has sought to promote and support responsible father involvement as a significant aspect of healthy child development. Over time, a long-term vision and strong commitment have evolved which have led to some significant achievements. This toolkit is a culmination of resources, conversations, and training that Dad Central has been part of over the years. All questions about the toolkit or to make use of DCO's training and consultation opportunities, please contact: [info@dadcentral.ca](mailto:info@dadcentral.ca) ([www.dadcentral.ca](http://www.dadcentral.ca))

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## Foreword

On behalf of The Counselling Foundation of Canada, I am delighted to provide a foreword for the Father's Engagement Program Manual produced by Dad Central/Papa Centrale Ontario.

Over the last two decades, the Foundation has supported a number of initiatives in the early childhood development and parental engagement sphere as we recognized their importance in eventual career-related outcomes. However, as we look to the future, it is our intention to be more focused on programming related to our core mission of promoting career counselling, career development and enhancing the employability of Canadians. Thus, as we exit the parental involvement space, we wanted to help in the creation of some legacy materials to assist agencies across the country who are undertaking work in this important field.

Dad Central/Papa Centrale Ontario is a leader in its field, with a broad network across Canada. Our support has allowed this small but mighty agency to update its existing father engagement manual, as well as to develop & pilot new content and activities that community agencies can implement to increase the involvement of fathers in the lives of their children, from early childhood to early adulthood. Some of the new curriculum includes culturally-relevant and appropriate tools for Aboriginal and newcomer fathers; content aimed at fathers with children with special needs; young- and single-fathers; and information that helps fathers develop their own career awareness, as well as how to provide career exploration advice to their children.

For those agencies who offer father engagement programs, it is our profound hope that within this manual, you will find a great deal of useful information to foster meaningful bonds between fathers and their children, and to help fathers be good role models for their children. We know that children who have had nurturing relationships in their formative years are more likely to have a positive sense of self, which will benefit them as they mature. This bodes well for their future employability and career awareness.

To Brian Russell and the team at Dad Central/Papa Centrale Ontario, we thank you for the extraordinary work that you are doing. And, we congratulate you for having developed this comprehensive and thoughtful manual that others across Canada who work in this sphere can draw from to support their work.

Yours sincerely,

**Bruce Lawson**

President, The Counselling Foundation of Canada

*From the Developer of the first My Daddy Matters because... toolkit:*

As the coordinator behind the original father toolkit which was disseminated across Canada, I am very pleased to see that there has been generous support from The Counselling Foundation of Canada to support the production of My Dad Matters.

The initial father toolkit began in earnest in 2002 with a very strong and passionate steering committee composed of representatives from across Canada, many of whom were very much dedicated to creating a tool that would help all organizations become more father friendly and ensure that fathers full potential as positive influences in the lives of developing children was fully realized.

This toolkit was created at a time in which many daycare and early learning programs and services were starting to see men and fathers showing up at their centres and these centres had very few father-friendly resources to provide to fathers, as well being unsure what to do with the fathers themselves!

The toolkit's initial two phases of funding were aimed at the creation of a tool that would build the capacity of family-centred agencies and organizations to engage and support fathers in their communities. The toolkit quickly became an influence in every part of Canada and also in other countries (notably, Japan and Australia).

Times have changed since the initial toolkit was created and the current needs of service provider organizations have largely been identified as the need to build meaningful, sustainable activities, services, and programs for various groups of fathers and to have an array of choices that service organizations can pick from.

Dad Central Ontario is the logical choice for the development of the My Dad Matters toolkit since they have been the Canadian authority for the past 17 years for the creation of evidence-based resources and tools that help to build father capacity at all levels. Whether it is to individual fathers, to couples, to families, to communities, to the policy level, and even messaging to the broad societal level, Dad Central Ontario has held fast to the ever resonating messaging that fathers matter and that: "Fatherhood: It's the best job on the planet".

I look forward to seeing the continued impact that My Dad Matters will have in Canada and around the world.

Sincerely,

**Tim Paquette**

Coordinator, *My Daddy Matters because... toolkit* (2004)



## Acknowledgements

The following organizations contributed direct feedback to the toolkit:

Better Fathers, Inc., Winnipeg, MB

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Davenport-Perth Neighbourhood Centre, Toronto, ON

Haliburton-Victoria-Brock Ontario Early Years Centre

Jessie's - The June Callwood Centre for Young Women, Centre, Toronto, ON

Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte, Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory, ON

Our Children Our Future, Sudbury, ON

Rural Response for Healthy Children, Clinton, ON

YMCA Early Years Centre, Kitchener-Waterloo, ON

Special thanks to the Dad Central Ontario Steering Committee for their tireless commitment to supporting and welcoming fathers.

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## Introduction

Father involvement has been constantly evolving over the past couple of decades. During that time there has been an increase in research on the impact of fathers, the ways parenting affects fathers, and how we can be supportive and inclusive of fathers in our work with families. In the past, much effort was given to convincing people of the importance of working with dads, why it is a necessary venture, and how supporting fathers is a key element of supporting families. Today, however, things have changed. People are not asking the “why” as much as they are asking the “how”. This is an important shift - one that has only happened because of the steady, determined efforts of those who see the crucial importance fathers play in the health and well-being of children and families.

*My Dad Matters* is for new and experienced practitioners who are interested in engaging fathers effectively within their communities. It is intentionally a *descriptive* approach that systematically guides you in your planning and delivery of father-focused services. Nothing is *prescribed*, instead you are encouraged to follow a step-by-step process that allows you to creatively respond to fathers in your particular community. Many issues are addressed, such as::

- the importance of engaging fathers.
- steps to building a strong, vibrant father engagement action plan.
- assessing strengths and dealing with barriers to reaching fathers.
- developing effective community partners and networks.
- discovering ways to recruit and maintain father participation.
- staff development, training and recruitment.
- resources to support efforts to engage fathers.

Using this toolkit will enable you to:

- apply new knowledge of fathering and father engagement to their practice.
- clearly tell the vision and purpose of their action plan.
- be familiar with the action steps, who will do them and by when.
- assess their personal attitudes and how these impact practice.
- explain activities and resources that support father engagement.
- tell of the benefits of father involvement programs.

This toolkit is also available online, along with videos, webinars, and other supplemental materials. Please visit: [www.mydad.ca](http://www.mydad.ca)

By implementing the ideas and principles laid out in this manual, our hope is that you will be able to say: *Fathers are welcome here.*





## Principles of Welcoming Fathers

### Definition of Responsible Father Involvement

There are many ways to look at what it means to be a responsible father. We want to take a straight-forward perspective on this.

A responsible father is a man who takes intentional interest in the care and well-being of a child.

**Intentional:** Being a responsible father is a choice that reflects a man's priorities and focus.

**Interest:** There is an investment of time and resources that come with being a responsible father.

**Care and well-being:** Nurturing means protecting, providing, committing, and relating in ways that support the development of a person.

**Child:** All this is done in the best interest of a child.

### Being Welcoming to Fathers

Welcoming fathers means striving to support fatherhood by:

- encouraging and respecting men in their role as fathers,
- inspiring their participation in all aspects of their children's lives (including at home and in community programs), and
- ensuring they are respectfully considered in all aspects of service delivery.

Fathers are taking part in more and more aspects of their children's lives, which means they are in more and more places where children are (family centres, doctor's offices, day cares, etc.). As we will discover throughout this toolkit, being welcoming to fathers requires we look at the ways we reach out to them, the types of programs and services that we offer and how we deliver them, and what it is like for a father to connect with our organization.

## Guiding Principles of Welcoming Fathers

Having a clear framework for your work with fathers provides important check-points for what you are doing. The following principles serve as guidelines for working with fathers and families. The rest of the toolkit is designed to give ideas and structure to making these principles practical and useful.

**Premise: Fathers are important to the healthy development and well-being of children.**

### Guiding Principle 1:

#### Welcoming fathers keeps children first.

- The well-being and healthy development of children is the primary consideration.
- Every child has the right to have access to a father's and a mother's positive involvement.
- Positive communication between parents is in the best interest of the children, regardless of the family structure.

### Guiding Principle 2:

#### Welcoming fathers acknowledges the importance of both parents.

- Both parents have unique contributions and responsibilities, and there is an advantage for children in having positive interaction with both parents regardless of the family structure.
- A key component of being an involved father is the partnership and mutual support of both parents for the benefit of the children.
- Communication between children's parents concerning the evolution of family dynamics is important.

### Guiding Principle 3:

#### Welcoming fathers affirms and values responsible father involvement.

- Fathers can and desire to develop intimate relationships with their children.
- Fathers can expand their understanding of the many facets of their fathering role.
- Along with the biological father, other men may complement or take on the fathering role, like grandfathers, uncles, brothers, neighbours, etc.
- Fathers can initiate and participate in open dialogue about the evolution of family dynamics.

*Engaging fathers means engaging men who are raising children, like grandfathers, uncles, brothers, step-dads and other male role-models.*

**Guiding Principle 4:**

**Welcoming fathers expects social responsibility and engages society as a whole.**

- Children are everyone's collective responsibility.
- Men become aware of the impact of their decisions on children in general as they assume their varied societal roles outside the family.
- Societal supports are necessary for any man who assumes the fathering role.

**Guiding Principle 5:**

**Welcoming fathers acknowledges diversity.**

- Fathers require unique support that addresses their unique needs and is not just a revision of strategies that are planned for mothers.
- The promotion of father involvement takes into consideration cultural diversity in its broadest sense, along with the different types of family structures.

**Guiding Principle 6:**

**Welcoming fathers seeks to empower men.**

- There is value in the varied dimensions of the father's role.
- Facilitating active and responsible father involvement is preferable to compensating for an absent father.
- Fathers need to participate at all steps of the engagement process: from needs assessment to implementation and facilitation of activities.
- Community development and social marketing approaches based on strengths, talents and capacities of the father and of the community aim to work with the fathers instead of for the fathers.
- Training strategies for staff, volunteers and/or fathers will: build on new and existing knowledge, strengths and abilities; encourage a transfer of abilities; empower people to act for change.

**Guiding Principle 7:**

**Welcoming fathers seeks collaboration.**

- Community partnerships are key to successful father involvement programs.
- Links to multiple networks that connect fathers to services they need (employment, housing, social services, etc.).

**Guiding Principle 8:**

**Welcoming fathers seeks sustainability.**

- Current and potential sustainable practices and opportunities to support father involvement strategies and efforts are sought out.

## Need for Innovation

Welcoming fathers is more than just a nice thing to do. Having a father intentionally part of his child's life makes a difference in the life of that child, the family, and the community. Therefore, we must be creative and innovative in the ways we support fatherhood. It matters for the following reasons:

- Fathers are committed to their children, yet are often a silent voice in parenting.
- Fathers matter to the development of their children.
- Fathers are looking to learn new skills and knowledge to apply to their relationship with their children.
- The relationship between parents is significant for children's development. Engaging fathers supports the co-parenting relationship.
- More men than ever before are primary caregivers and they are looking for support and resources.
- Some fathers think, act, and parent differently than mothers. Understanding this can encourage some mothers to relate more positively to fathers and children benefit from the uniqueness of fathers' attention.
- Having fathers attending programs and making use of services enriches the discussions and information in those programs and services.
- The gap in gender role bias, traditional parenting, and workplace structures needs to be addressed.
- Fathers' roles are changing and those who work with families need to adapt in order to keep in step.
- Fathers matter and engaging them gives them a voice.

*Success in engaging fathers is directly related to being intentional in your efforts.*

## Benefits of Welcoming Fathers

When fathers are responsibly involved with their children, many good things happen. The research has been growing over the years, but generally speaking, a father's involvement positively impacts a child's:

- school performance
- ability to share and get along with peers
- respectful relationship with adults
- depression, anxiety and other mental health issues
- physical health and development
- risk taking, problem-solving and self-confidence
- avoidance of criminal behaviour
- choices around sex as an adolescent

But it is not just good for the children. When fathers are involved, mothers are more content, feel less stress, and enjoy parenting more. And when a man is an involved father, among other things, he is a more efficient worker, he is healthier and lives longer, he is more satisfied as a parent, and he is more likely to take leadership in his community, i.e. join voluntary organizations, be involved in parent-teacher councils, etc.

We hope that using this toolkit creates momentum, encourages conversation, and provokes action that increases the positive presence of fathers in their children's lives.

*For more information on the evidence, please see:*

*A Summary of the Research on the Impact of Father Involvement*  
<http://www.dadcentral.ca/files/convickersupdate2007.pdf>

*Father Facts – National Fatherhood Initiative*  
<http://www.fatherhood.org/organizations/programs/father-facts/overview>

*Father Involvement in Canada, Ch 3.*



## Initial Considerations in Welcoming Fathers

It is important to shed light on the present practice of an organization's engagement of fathers. This will assist in securing commitment to engage fathers from key leaders and decision makers within the organization or community.

Innovative father involvement programs are doing many things, including counselling, family support, parenting classes, father/child activities, relationship skills, education, and more. In short, effective programs strive to strengthen the bonds between fathers and their children in a variety of creative ways, while keeping in mind the larger context of family.

### Highlights of an Effective Father Involvement Program

- Welcoming programs focus their attention on the dads as men, not just in their role as fathers. They provide support, referrals, and resources for issues outside of parenting.
- Welcoming programs value the role of mothers.
- Welcoming programs have staff-time dedicated to engaging fathers.
- Welcoming programs are consistently providing training opportunities for staff. This keeps staff on the edge of new resources, ideas, and innovations in working with fathers.
- Welcoming programs recognize and respond to the diversity of fathers. Diversity comes with culture, age, experience, sexual orientation, living situations, and more.
- Welcoming programs create a father-friendly atmosphere. Men must feel welcome when they come to an event, group or meeting.
- Welcoming programs forge partnerships with other community agencies.
- Welcoming programs do regular self-reflection on their work with fathers. This allows for highlighting successes and adjusting to barriers as they come along.

*From Step by Step: Engaging fathers in programs for families (Best Start Resource Centre)*

## Agency Commitment and Solid Leadership

Nothing moves forward without some level of commitment by the leadership of an agency. Once the leadership has made father engagement a priority it is easier for the front-line service providers to engage fathers and design programs and activities with them in mind.

An agency that has solidified its commitment to fathers will:

- give staff, volunteers and management opportunities to explore their beliefs and ideas about fathers.
- be aware of the growing evidence regarding the impact of father involvement.
- incorporate father involvement into agendas and strategic planning processes.
- seek to enhance its reputation for father involvement.
- understand the wholistic nature of father involvement.
- take risks in engaging fathers and think “outside the box” to develop strategies to promote responsible fatherhood.
- allocate staff time to father involvement.
- continually review and assess its connection with fathers.

For more information on leadership in welcoming fathers, check out the webinar for Managers, EDs ([www.mydad.ca](http://www.mydad.ca)).

## A Strength-based Framework

Just as this toolkit is a guide for you to decide how you will engage fathers, so in our practice with fathers we need to be a guide for them to decide what being a responsible father means for them. This means we can offer a *description* of fatherhood without *prescribing* how fathering should be done. Being descriptive of fatherhood presents principles and ideas that a father (regardless of culture, background, religion, etc.) can apply to his parenting. We need to stay away, generally speaking, from telling fathers how to be “good dads” (prescribing) and instead offer them opportunity to reflect on the values, ideals, and principles they want to see within their fathering.

We stay *descriptive* when we focus on a father’s strengths, as opposed to his deficits. There are many assumptions about fathers and their ability and/or desire to be engaged in their children’s lives. The assumptions we operate from will affect how we engage fathers. Dollahite and Hawkins (1997) suggest that fathers and their children both benefit and develop through the growth and interaction within their relationship. They offer the following assumptions to support a strength-based framework for engaging fathers.

Fathers have the desire and ability to:

- **Commit** – to provide physical and ongoing support and involvement with the child throughout his/her lifetime
- **Choose** – to make day-to-day decisions for and with their children that meet each child’s needs
- **Care** – to attend to the important transitions in a child’s life and to work to provide the optimal conditions that maximize their growth
- **Change** – to adapt as children grow older and the father matures in his relationship with his children
- **Create** – to provide resources for material wellbeing and the resolution of problems that allow opportunities for the development of emotional wellbeing
- **Connect** – to form lasting and healthy attachments with their children and other significant people. These attachments will change over time to meet their child’s evolving needs
- **Communicate** – to relate with children by sharing meaningfully with them, both verbally and non-verbally.

For more on understanding how our assumptions impact how we welcome fathers, check out the webinar *Strength-based Father Engagement* ([www.mydad.ca](http://www.mydad.ca)).

## Understanding Fathers

Men are looking for ways to bond with their children right from birth. By watching how a man changes a diaper, wrestles with his 4 year old, listens to his teenage daughter's school struggles, and watches his children negotiate possession of the same toy, it is clear that men care about their children. The context of the bond between a father and his child is **activation** (Paquette, 2004). Fathers look for ways to activate and stimulate their children. They often do this in unpredictable ways that children love and tend to seek out. Here are some implications of a father's style of bonding:

- **Developmental considerations.** Men are often not socialized as boys to be nurturing of children. Boys are expected to play rough, get dirty, and be independent. These help a man learn to play, but he may not get experience in the "softer" skills of parenting.
- **Risk-taking.** Fathers encourage risk-taking behaviours that encourage children to stretch their abilities, learn about their limits, develop emotional regulation, and have the confidence to try new things.
- **Safety.** Fathers are often very aware of the safety of their children. Men tend to be involved in the risky play that may seem unsafe, but by being involved fathers are closer at hand to deal with potential harm.
- **Play.** Play is the main context for bonding between fathers and children.
- **Wait and see.** Men tend to wait when children show some stress and see if they can work it out.
- **To the point.** Men's talk with children is often direct and to the point. They tend to not use emotion words and instead focus on details (who, what, when, etc.).
- **Experience.** Men have the ability to engage children well. At the outset, this may seem like a struggle for a father, but most men learn through experience. Fathers benefit from as much time with their children as possible, right from the start.
- **Interest.** Men pay attention to their children's needs and are looking for ways to help them along with their development.

For more on how fathers tend to parent, see *Fatherhood: why father care is as essential as mother care for your child*, by Dr. Kyle Pruett and *The Fatherhood Advantage* by Kevin O'Shea and James Windell.

Check out the webinar *What Dads Do* ([www.mydad.ca](http://www.mydad.ca)).

## What Fathers are Seeking

Innovative father engagement programs are aware of the scope of what fathers could be looking for. Not every organization can meet every need, but networking and partnerships will support the range of issues fathers may be dealing with. Here are some ways organizations can meet important needs for men:

- Parenting support and information
- Recreation ideas and activities to do with their children
- Assistance with navigating the child welfare system
- Help with social support systems
- Support groups dealing with separation, divorce, depression, etc.
- Job preparation and training
- Employment search
- Relationship support
- Substance abuse counselling
- Anger management
- Mediation services
- Health and nutrition
- Housing
- Crisis intervention

## What's Coming

Here is an overview of the process you will take towards your action plan.

As you proceed, look in the margin to keep track of your progress.





# Preparation

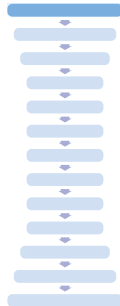
## Important Decision-point: Father-Friendly or Dads-Only?

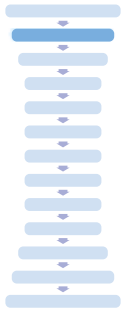
Sometimes it appears that the epitome of fathering programs is to offer programs specifically for fathers, with or without their children. These are considered “dads-only” activities and services. These may be drop-in programs for dads with children or fathers’ parenting programs. However, not all organizations and communities are able to or desire to offer dads-only programs and services. The other option is to become more father-friendly without having dads-only programs. This could include displaying fathering resources, ensuring the environment is comfortable for men, or inviting fathers to programs traditionally attended by mothers.

As you progress through this toolkit, keep these two directions in mind, realizing that by doing one or the other or both, you will be engaging fathers in new ways.

Make a list of the pros and cons of becoming father-friendly vs. offering dads-only service.

	FATHER-FRIENDLY	DADS-ONLY
PROS		
CONS		





## Readiness questionnaire

It is helpful to get a general sense of how ready an organization is to engage fathers by considering what is going well and what can be improved. This is important groundwork for completing the later tools.

Generally speaking, how would you rate your organization using the following scale?

1 = Not at all    2 = Poor    3 = Not bad    4 = Good    5 = Excellent

My organization has a clear mandate to meet the specific needs of fathers (e.g., father involvement is part of the strategic planning of the organization; leadership talks about father involvement in a supportive way).	
There are policies that encourage and enable services and programs aimed at the specific needs of fathers (e.g., male staffing; flexible work hours).	
We have intentional practices which are inclusive of the roles of both mothers and fathers (e.g., registration forms have space for more than one parent).	
Father involvement is an on-going theme within the organization's agenda and planning cycles.	
Resources are available to meet the specific needs of fathers (e.g., brochures that speak directly to fathers; information sheets that are relevant to fathers' interests).	
The type and frequency of programs and services are uniquely designed to meet the needs of fathers (e.g., meetings scheduled when men are available).	
The number of men on staff.	
The level of financial resources allocated to meet specific needs of fathers (e.g., dedicated funding; regular purchase of fathering materials).	
Staff training relating to father involvement is available on a regular basis.	
Fathers are involved in the decision-making and planning of my organization.	
There is visual evidence of the reality of fatherhood on the organization's premises (e.g., posters; men attending programs).	
Total	

## What level are you?

Referring to your total score from the Readiness Questionnaire, what level are you at in terms of engaging fathers?

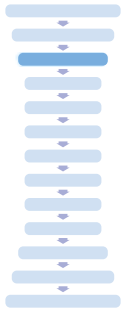
1	11 - 15	Nothing for fathers
2	16 - 26	Some father-focused resources available
3	27 - 38	Fathers invited to a program from time to time
4	38 - 46	Activities, resources and parenting programs fathers take part in
5	47+	Programming and community leadership

## What is a reasonable level your organization could aim for over the next:

6 months? \_\_\_\_\_ 1 year? \_\_\_\_\_

What your goals are will be determined by the level of present practice your organization is at and its readiness to make changes. Remember that reaching level 5 is not necessarily the goal for every organization. You can determine your goal based on what is reasonable for your organization and community. At all levels, connect with Dad Central Ontario for resources, training, and networking opportunities. Here are some general suggestions for possible next steps from each level:

LEVEL	FATHER-FRIENDLY FOCUS	DADS-ONLY FOCUS
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Find posters, brochures, booklets, and other resources that men may be interested in</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have a focus group with fathers and other men who are connected to your organization already</li> <li>Acquire some professional development training on father involvement</li> </ul>
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintain the stock of resources</li> <li>Ensure there are posters that show men with children</li> <li>Have magazines in waiting rooms that men find interesting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Talk with fathers to find out what they would like more of in your services</li> <li>Connect with a community partner to offer a workshop for fathers or an activity for fathers and children</li> </ul>
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintain programs, look for new ideas and community partners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deepen the connections by offering discussion oriented-groups on parenting, men's issues, etc.</li> </ul>
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Look for new content for workshops and groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Find new places in the community to deliver groups</li> </ul>
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintain the connections already made</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Present at conferences, share experience and expertise</li> </ul>



## Barriers to Welcoming Fathers

If welcoming fathers was straight-forward there would be no need to talk about ways to reach out to them. However, this is not the case. Here are some things which can hinder a father's participation in programs and services:

### Personal (fathers' attitudes, situation, relationships, etc.)

- Possibility of conflict between custodial and non-custodial parents, especially if they are on the premises at the same time.
- Fathers may feel intimidated by women-centred programming and discussions.
- Fathers may not understand the importance of their influence and that they make a difference for children.
- Fathers may have less experience in parenting and feel they cannot or should not be more involved.
- Employment situation can reduce a father's availability.
- Men tend to have limited support networks that they can rely on.
- There is peer pressure for some fathers to not be as engaged with their children as possible.
- Men do not often seek help on their own until there is a crisis that they have difficulty controlling.
- Men are often socialized to look after problems on their own and that weakness or having questions equals failure.

### Systemic (programming, funding, policies, environment, etc.)

- Fathers may not be asked to be involved or they may not be aware of programs.
- Concern that providing funding and time for fathering programs will impact the delivery and support for mothers.
- Lack of staff experience and understanding of working with fathers.
- Fathers may not feel welcome in a centre or comfortable to participate in a program.
- Programs may not be available when fathers are able to attend.
- Attempts are not made to connect with fathers whose children attend programs.

Make a list of barriers to engaging fathers that you see in your organization and programs.

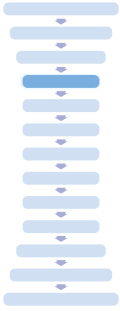
PERSONAL	SYSTEMIC

## Count the Cost

Any time change is made in an organization there will be implications to how work is done and how priorities are made and met. For example, a young parents residential support program may have expectations of confidentiality for the residents. If a mother and her child are residents and the father comes to the centre asking to see his child, the centre may not be able to allow him to see his child if there is no agreement with the mother.

To get some ideas of how engaging fathers may affect your organization, discuss possible implications of changing some of the barriers you listed above.

BARRIER WE COULD ADDRESS	HOW IT MAY HELP	HOW IT MAY HINDER



## Community mapping

Networking with others who are working with families is very helpful in your efforts to engage fathers. Brainstorm the following questions to get a sense of who else you can be connecting with. This list will be helpful later on as you incorporate community partnerships into your action plan.

Who else is working with men and fathers?

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What are existing programs and services for families that men can be accessing?

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What do fathers and their families need in our community?

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Who are potential partners we could connect with?

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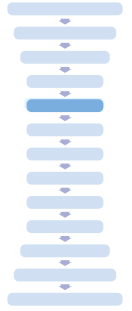
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## Defining a Purpose Statement

Having a clear purpose or mission statement gives an organization a framework for making programming decisions. Anytime a new idea or opportunity arises, it can be placed within the purpose statement to see if it is consistent with the goals. A strong purpose statement for a fathering program:

- can be stated in a single sentence.
- focuses on the children, not solely on the father.
- comments on the impact and importance of fathers in the healthy development of children.



### *Different Approaches*

*Some things will affect the approach taken to reach fathers:*

- *the make-up of your community: rural/urban, size, employment situation, etc.*
- *the group of dads you are targeting: young dads, single dads, age of children, Aboriginal dads, etc.*
- *the issues that face fathers in your community: employment, mental health, housing, etc.*
- *resources available or dedicated to engaging fathers: funding, agency mandates, location of agency, ability of facilitators, etc.*



### Step 3: Synthesize

Form a single sentence based on these ideas.

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#### *Examples of Purpose Statements*

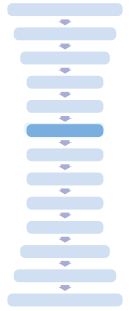
*We will deepen the connections between fathers and their children, and between fathers and other men.*

*To have fathers engaged in every aspect of their children's lives.*

*We will be a place where dads and other male-caregivers will get all the information they need and get it in a comfortable environment.*



# Organizational Assessment



The following assessments are tools that give an in-depth view of your present work (within the last 6 to 12 months). These will give insight into the goals in your action plan. It is recommended that all sections are completed and used together, but they can be broken down into sections, depending on what the goals are and what the agency hopes to change/focus on.

Step 1: Answer each statement by placing a check (✓) in the appropriate column.

Y - Yes      S - Sometimes      N - No      N/A - Not applicable

Step 2: Total the number of checks in each column for each section.

Step 3: Once all sections are completed, place a check (✓) in the **P** column beside the statements you see as **priorities** for your organization. Try to have no more than three priorities in each section.

## Programming

How do we serve fathers?

P		Y	S	N	N/A
	We offer programs and activities specifically for fathers/men only.				
	We offer programs and activities for fathers and children together.				
	We provide opportunities for healthy discussion about fatherhood, motherhood and relating to children.				
	Programs take advantage of men's typical roles (fixing things, sporting events, community projects, etc.)				
	Programs are scheduled at times when fathers are more likely to be available.				
	Home visits and meetings are scheduled around the availability of both parents.				
	The approach to reach fathers differs from the approach to reach mothers.				
	Mothers are given information about the importance of father involvement.				
	During meetings with families, we elicit comments and questions from fathers as well as mothers.				
	Our programming reflects the diversity of fathers and men raising children.				
	We help families look at fatherhood from a holistic perspective (physical, emotional, spiritual, etc.)				
	Total				

## Environment and Resources

What is it like for a man to be on our premises?

P		Y	S	N	N/A
	In general, our premises are comfortable for men and fathers.				
	Staff address fathers as well as mothers when they visit our premises.				
	We have visible posters that reflect a diversity of men in positive relationships with children.				
	We have resources that speak to men's issues, including fathering, health, stress, work, etc.				
	We have neutral colours in our offices, waiting rooms, playrooms and other places men may be.				
	Videos in waiting rooms include things that appeal to men.				
	There is a baby-changing table in the men's washroom.				
	Total				

## Staff Development

How are staff supported in their efforts to engage fathers?

P		Y	S	N	N/A
	Our staff has been trained in best practices in engaging fathers.				
	We make father engagement/involvement a regular discussion item in staff meetings.				
	We know where to get answers to questions about reaching fathers.				
	Staff are trained to understand how men tend to interact and bond with children.				
	Staff are trained to recognize and address biases and assumptions that can stereotype men/fathers and women/mothers.				
	Father involvement is included in orientation of new staff.				
	The capacity to work effectively with fathers is included in reviewing staff performance.				
	Staff encourage fathers to participate in all activities, not just ones that may be "typical" for men.				
	On-going training is encouraged to increase staff knowledge and capacity to engage fathers.				
	Diversity training includes learning about men and fathers.				
	Total				

## Policies and Procedures

How does our organization prioritize father involvement?

P		Y	S	N	N/A
	There are policies that reflect intentional efforts to reach out to fathers.				
	It is assumed that fathers will participate in programs and services.				
	Our client forms have a place for more than one parent's information.				
	We regularly ask for updated contact information if a father is not living with his children.				
	Flyers and other written announcements are addressed to mothers and to fathers.				
	If a father is not living with his children, efforts are made to regularly contact him.				
	Referrals are available for fathers to meet a variety of personal and parenting needs.				
	We regularly evaluate programs and activities we offer for fathers.				
	Total				

## Agency Support and Buy-in

How does our organization prioritize father engagement?

P		Y	S	N	N/A
	Our organization supports staff efforts to engage fathers more effectively.				
	Our organization has prioritized the development of men as fatherhood leaders.				
	Our organization has a Father Engagement purpose statement.				
	Our organization has a Father Engagement action plan.				
	Specific events encouraging fatherhood are supported by my organization (within the organization and in the community).				
	Our agency makes efforts to hire men into staffing positions.				
	Our organization helps staff who are fathers balance life and work.				
	There is adequate funding provided by the organization to effectively serve fathers.				
	We actively seek men's input in future directions for engaging fathers.				
	Total				

## Community Engagement

What is our reputation in the community for father engagement?

P		Y	S	N	N/A
	The community sees our organization as a place fathers can get support.				
	We have partnerships that can support our efforts to engage fathers.				
	We intentionally promote our programs in places where fathers are more likely to be.				
	Fathers are part of the planning and delivery of services.				
	There are men (not necessarily fathers) who are interested in and work with us in engaging fathers (workshops, speakers, promotion, etc.)				
	We have men from the community who can speak to a group of fathers about different parenting and relationship issues.				
	We are part of a larger father involvement community network.				
	We have partners in the community where we can refer fathers for other resources they need to care for and support their family.				
	Our organization makes use of media contacts to promote father involvement.				
	We promote father involvement as a preventative measure against such social issues as crime, high school drop-out rates, teenage pregnancy, substance use, etc.				
	We use social media to share ideas about father involvement and to spread the word about programs.				
	Total				

## Priorities

Write out the priorities you identified from each section. These priorities will be used later in the action planning process.

### Programming

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

### Environment and Resources

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

### Staff Development

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

### Policies and Procedures

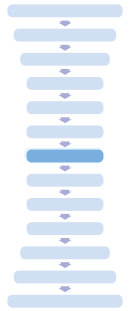
1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

### Agency Support and Buy-in

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

### Community Engagement

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_





## Overview of Best Practices

There are many things that can be implemented in order to welcome fathers. Some things are simple, take minimal effort and cost nothing. Other ideas will take effort and commitment.

Review the following ideas. At each point write in your thoughts, ideas, or information gathered.

### Planning

**Survey the men in your community.** Gathering the following information will focus your efforts.

- Types of fathers in your area (Aboriginal dads, gay dads, young dads, new dads, etc.)

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- Age, ethnicity, race

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- Education level

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- Living situation

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- Marital/relationship status

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- Employment issues, common employers

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- Concerns they have for their community (safety, employment, etc.)

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- Ways men are already leading in your area/community (Big Brothers, religious institutions, teachers, etc.)

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- Key stakeholders in leading community organizations (Executive Directors, managers, politicians, etc.)

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**Know the needs of the fathers in your community.**

What roles do they play in their families now?

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What roles do they want to play in their families?

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What is the level of commitment/involvement with the community?

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What personal issues are fathers facing (employment, housing, divorce, etc.)?

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**What resources are presently available for men raising children?** Refer back to Community Mapping exercise on page 26.

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**What are the relevant barriers for fathers participating in your organization's programs and activities?** Refer to Barriers to Engaging Fathers on page 27.

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There are two surveys available online at [www.mydad.ca](http://www.mydad.ca) that can help you get fathers' and mothers' perspectives on how you are engaging men.

## Environment

The initial feeling a man has as he walks into an organization will give him a sense of how welcomed he will be. Place a check (✓) beside the ideas you already do. Draw an arrow (→) beside the ideas that you could work on implementing.

	Agency décor is attractive to fathers.
	Reading materials are available for fathers (magazines, newspapers). Suggested magazines: Maclean's, Outdoors, Popular Science, National Geographic.
	Specific resources are available for fathers: information sheets, booklets, brochures that speak to men's and fathers' issues.
	Neutral colours in offices, waiting rooms, play areas and other places men may be.
	Diaper changing table in the men's washroom or in a place accessible to men.
	Posters reflect men in healthy, nurturing roles with children and women/partners.
	Have children's books that show dads with children and families.
	Have a variety of toys and activities men enjoy doing with their children (books, puzzles, blocks, playdough, balls, etc.).
	Have a bulletin board or "father's corner" specifically for dads information.
	Be friendly and genuine in your welcome of fathers. Be careful to not overwhelm a man when he first enters.

### *Making it work*

*Give these ideas about the environment to some men for their feedback on what it is like to be in your organization.*

## Programming

Though first impressions matter, most men are at your agency for a reason. Making the programs, activities, and services accessible and attractive to men is a key step to retaining them. Place a check (✓) beside the ideas you already do. Draw an arrow (→) beside the ideas that you could work on implementing.

	Offer activities that fathers can do with their children.
	Schedule programs, appointments and services when the fathers are available.
	Offer programs for dads and moms/partners to attend together.
	Hire a male, if possible.
	Provide food.
	Provide activity-based programs, like gyms, science activities, projects, and crafts.
	Focus on the strengths men bring to parenting.
	Promote positive parenting in men through discussions, posters, and types of programming.
	Provide services with a variety of types of fathers in mind.
	Support fathers at key transition points, like prenatal, children entering or changing schools, separation and step parenting, or changes in employment.

### *Finding the Time*

*Scheduling is an important factor in engaging fathers.*

- *Some fathers work shift work and don't have a steady schedule.*
- *There are fathers who have seasonal work or work away from home for weeks at a time.*
- *Fathers are generally available outside of "regular" work hours when staff are also not readily available.*
- *Some fathers work more than 8 hours each day.*

## The Line Up

Offer a comprehensive range of services for fathers.

Fathers come from different circumstances and will have different interests and needs. They will want to connect using a variety of means. Organizations can meet a broad range or stay focused on a few fathers. Under each point below, write in your ideas, suggestions, etc.

### Father-child activities

- Activities for fathers and their children, like a museum visit or visiting a fire hall.
- Simple building projects, like a bird house or small car.

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### Group discussions and support groups for fathers

- Fathers discuss issues around fatherhood and their relationships with their children.
- Fathers feel free to discuss their views and ideas on fatherhood in a friendly, supportive environment.

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### Group discussions for NEW Fathers and Fathers TO BE

- Group meetings to discuss their partner's pregnancy or adoption, meet with other new fathers and explore their own feelings on fatherhood;
- Workshops on how to care for a newborn.

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**Workshops on development of specific abilities**

- Workshops on individual or parenting abilities, conflict resolution, time management, communication skills, relationships, job search, housing, etc.
- Classes on house maintenance, cooking, safety, set-up for children, family/work balance, etc.

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**Information session or conferences (one-time activities)**

- Presentations on the importance of fathering, single fatherhood, employment, custody/legal issues, or to develop a specific parenting skill.
- Press conferences, panel discussions, meetings, newsletters, celebrating and informing the public and organizations about the importance of fatherhood.

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**Therapeutic services**

- Individual, couple or family counselling; support groups for grief and loss.
- Speech programs or other supports for child development.

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**Media**

- Have a website and/or social media site where fathers can connect with each other and with a service.
- Share father involvement information with TV and radio stations.

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## Recreation / Social Opportunities

- Sports and recreation activities allow for men to bond with each other and to have fun with their children.
- Go to a park, play in a gym or go bowling.

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### *Types of Fathering Groups*

*Learning Groups are set up for participants to develop a new set of tools/skills for parenting, enhance existing parenting abilities. These include presentations, role-plays, and practical exercises.*

*Support Groups are where participants face common experiences such as prenatal, separation and divorce, or children with disabilities.*

*The Open Discussion Group provides support and learning through sharing common needs, experiences and knowledge. This can lead to the building of networks and relationships between the fathers and various service providers and raise awareness of the issue.*

*The choice of programs or services will depend on:*

- *The target population of dads that are being served.*
- *The strengths of your organization.*
- *Unique characteristics of your community.*

## Recruiting

### Marketing to Men

- On flyers and other marketing materials use “moms, dads” etc., instead of “parents”. This gives a man less opportunity to pass the program over to mom. He sees he is invited and expected to be there.
- Keep your message clear and concise. Men tend to hone in on what they are looking for quickly. They often don’t take time to browse.
- Men focus on what they need in the moment, not what they might need later (eg. men tend to stop antibiotics when they feel better; women tend to take the whole regime). Keep your message relevant and applicable (practical).
- Men look for orderliness and consistency. Compare Home Depot (which is the same all the time) to Winners (which is constantly bringing in new things and new looks). Men shop there out of necessity, not the joy of it.
- Men tend to be self-reliant. They seek the answer on their own and once they find one, they try it out. Marketing needs to focus on how the program or resource will benefit their child.

### Emotional hooks for men

- **Adrenaline.** Men look for the rush that comes from car crashes, spectacular feats, and heroic efforts. Activity-based programming is the adrenaline that feeds the bond of fathers with children (gym time, hiking, projects, swimming, etc.).
- **Keep it real.** Men want to be authentic and simple. They are looking for the most efficient way to get things done. In their busy life men want the answer straight, quick and to the point.
- **Success.** Men strive to succeed. Encourage men to strive to be the best fathers possible without using guilt tactics.
- **Safety.** Men are aware of the hazards that are facing their children. They are looking for the tools that will help them keep their children safe, from bassinets to tricycles to social media use.

### Good marketing materials

- Reflect the kinds of fathers being served.
- Have input from the fathers being served.
- Are placed in locations fathers are more likely to be.
- Are shared in ways that fathers are more likely to access.
- Use language that is attractive to men/fathers.
- Keep the messages short, concise and punchy.
- Connect using search engines and social media platforms.
- Encourage word of mouth information sharing.
- Use words that reflect strength, like confident, adventurous, influence, etc.

## Good messages for fathers

- Focus on their impact on children.
- Are wholistic in their content.
- Encourage a healthy bond within families.
- Avoid negative stereotypes and biases based on age, race, social class, etc.
- Affirm the value and importance of women in a child's life (i.e., avoid bashing women).

## Word of Mouth

In many ways, engaging fathers is not so much about how to get them to come to a program or service as it is about what we offer when they are there. The best way to attract fathers is to do a good job for them. Fathers are the best messengers you have. Allow them to spread the word. Our key role is to respond well when a father does arrive.

## Sustaining

- Keep good records of the fathers who attend your services.
- Have a caring, attentive staff.
- Do a good job.
- Be consistent in programming.
- Give your program time (i.e., don't give up too soon).

### *Interesting stats*

*50% of dads (25-44 yrs old) are influenced by digital ads and banners.*

*68% of male smartphone users are likely to make purchases thanks to mobile ads (58% female).*

*5% of men use catalogues for ads.*

*44% of dads (25-44 yrs old) are influenced by major search engines.*

*44% of men told their friends about positive experiences they had concerning products or brands.*

*54% of men use social networks when researching products.*

*58% of dads say they use 4 or more sources of information to help make purchase decisions.*

*From <http://www.entrepreneur.com/article/226528>*

## Staffing

Whether or not specific programs for fathers are offered, there are certain competencies that all staff can have that will encourage fathers to feel welcome.

- **Recommended staff competencies:**

- build rapport through good listening skills, genuine interest in a dad's situation, and paying attention to his experiences and concerns.
- flexibility and "being real" with the men.
- ability to be relational.
- comfortable with the emotions men may express (like anger, sadness, etc.).
- focusing on ideas and solutions by helping a father see where he wants to be and what he can do about it.
- awareness of local resources.
- genuine caring and willingness to serve fathers.
- focus on strengths fathers bring and encourage him to be part of the solutions.
- maintain respectful environment for men and women.

- **A successful program has staff that:**

- are specifically tasked with engaging fathers.
- are trained to understand the unique ways fathers interact with children.
- understand the important role fathers play in healthy child development.
- respect and are aware of the diversity of fathers.
- are knowledgeable of the different issues fathers face.
- desire to develop rapport with all men using services.
- recognizes the strengths each father brings to parenting.
- are willing and able to be flexible with their time and availability.

Check out the video *Women Working with Men* ([www.mydad.ca](http://www.mydad.ca)).

## Partnerships

Partnerships are key to success in engaging fathers. Here are sources of potential partners you can consider connecting with in your community:

- Early childhood programs
- Family Resource Centres
- Schools and school boards
- Libraries
- Local businesses
- Daycare centres
- Community centres
- Job skills training programs
- Child welfare agencies
- Public Health Units
- Health clinics, doctors, hospitals
- Correctional facilities
- Judges, attorneys and probation offices
- Municipal officials
- Barbershops, gyms, and other places men are
- Faith-based organizations
- Substance abuse programs



# Strategic Planning

## Step 1: SWOT Analysis

SWOT analysis is a structured planning method that gives an overall picture of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats involved in a project.

**Strengths:** what is going well already; what sets us apart; what resources do we have; what is our reputation.

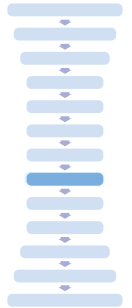
**Weaknesses:** what are we lacking; what gives us a disadvantage; what can we improve on.

**Opportunities:** what can we take advantage of; what partnerships are available; what is missing in services.

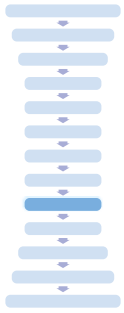
**Threats:** who is doing what we are doing; what may stop us; what should we avoid.

See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SWOT\\_analysis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SWOT_analysis) for an extended overview of SWOT analysis.

Complete the following chart by listing the top 3 strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats your organization and/or community may be facing in moving forward with engaging fathers.



		WHAT HELPS in reaching our goals	WHAT HINDERS in reaching our goals
INTERNAL ATTRIBUTES OF OUR ORGANIZATION	1		1
	2	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
	3		
EXTERNAL ATTRIBUTES OF THE ENVIRONMENT	1		1
	2	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
	3		



## Step 2: Dotmocracy

Now that the SWOT analysis is done, the next step is to begin dealing with developing specific goals for engaging fathers. There are many ideas and plans that need to be distilled down to 3-4 reasonable and achievable goals.

This will be done through a process called Dotmocracy:

“Dotmocracy is a transparent, equal opportunity, and participatory large group decision-making tool. It is a simple method for recognizing points of agreement among a large number of people. Participants write down ideas on specially designed paper forms called Dotmocracy sheets and use pens to fill in one dot per sheet, recording their levels of agreement. The result is a graph-like visual representation of the group’s collective opinion”. *Dotmocracy.org*

The Dotmocracy worksheet is presented in the following pages. Additional copies are available from [www.dotmocracy.org](http://www.dotmocracy.org)

### *SMART goals*

*Effective goals meet the following criteria:*

*Specific – clearly states what is expected*

*Measurable – the outcome will be evident when reached*

*Attainable – the goals are possible within the confines of resources, environment and ability*

*Relevant – the goal matters to the people working on them*

*Time-bound – target dates are set*

**Review all that has been discussed so far:** mission statement, priorities from assessment, best practices, and SWOT analysis.

**Determine a question or questions that will be the basis of brainstorming.** Sample questions:

- How can we adapt the environment to be more father-friendly?
- How can our agency have a clearer mandate for father engagement?
- What kind of staff training do we need?
- What programs can we offer dads?
- How can we adapt present programming to be more father-friendly?
- What kind of programming can we do that is father-friendly?
- How can we engage the community to support father involvement?
- What partnerships can we pursue?
- What marketing strategies can we use to promote our programs, services, and/or resources?

**Discuss potential answers to each question,** one at a time, in groups of not more than 6 people.

- Allow 10-15 minutes for free brainstorming. No judging. No speeches. Focus on new ideas.
- List all answers on a sheet of paper.

**Write the best (3-4) ideas** for each question on Dotmocracy sheets, one idea per sheet.

**Post Dotmocracy sheets** so they are viewable by all participants (on a wall, on clipboards, spread out on tables, etc.).

**Have all participants circulate and fill in dots and record opinions, thoughts, signatures.**

**Report on the results to the larger group.**

- Determine the most popularly agreed upon ideas and answers to the question(s).

**Discuss what you, your staff, and your organization need to do to ensure that the ideas and priorities are carried out:**

- Short-term goals (within 6 months)
- Mid-term goals (6 – 12 months)
- Long-term goals (1 yr +)

Write one idea here in large letters:

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Facilitator:

# Do you agree?

Fill your one dot below & sign on the right:



Strong Agreement



Agreement



Neutral



Disagreement



Strong Disagreement



Confusion

Place:

## Strengths & Opportunities

Optionally add brief comments:

## Concerns & Weaknesses

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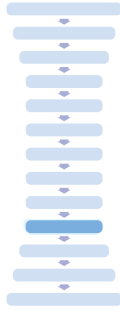
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Date/time:

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### Step 3: Action Plan

Using the ideas generated from the Dotmocracy process, complete the following Action Plan.



GOAL	EXPECTED RESULTS	ACTION STEPS	WHO	TARGET DATE
Hold a focus group for fathers	8 fathers attend a 90-minute discussion	Set date and book room Develop flyer Contact fathers Hold meeting	Barb Chris Barb Chris & Barb	June 15 July 4 July 15 July 31

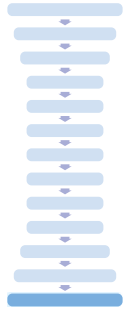
EXAMPLE







## Evaluation



After your action plan has been implemented and all action steps have been attempted, complete the following assessment. It is best to do this 6 to 12 months after implementing the action plan. The present scores will be compared to the scores on the assessment you completed earlier.

Step 1: Answer each statement by placing a check (✓) in the appropriate column.

Y - Yes      S - Sometimes      N - No      N/A - Not applicable

Step 2: Total the number of checks in each column for each section.

### Programming

How do we serve fathers?

P		Y	S	N	N/A
	We offer programs and activities specifically for fathers/men only.				
	We offer programs and activities for fathers and children together.				
	We provide opportunities for healthy discussion about fatherhood, motherhood and relating to children.				
	Programs take advantage of men's typical roles (fixing things, sporting events, community projects, etc.)				
	Programs are scheduled at times when fathers are more likely to be available.				
	Home visits and meetings are scheduled around the availability of both parents.				
	The approach to reach fathers differs from the approach to reach mothers.				
	Mothers are given information about the importance of father involvement.				
	During meetings with families, we elicit comments and questions from fathers as well as mothers.				
	Our programming reflects the diversity of fathers and men raising children.				
	We help families look at fatherhood from a holistic perspective (physical, emotional, spiritual, etc.)				
	Total				

## Environment and Resources

What is it like for a man to be on our premises?

P		Y	S	N	N/A
	In general, our premises are comfortable for men and fathers.				
	Staff address fathers as well as mothers when they visit our premises.				
	We have visible posters that reflect a diversity of men in positive relationships with children.				
	We have resources that speak to men's issues, including fathering, health, stress, work, etc.				
	We have neutral colours in our offices, waiting rooms, playrooms and other places men may be.				
	Videos in waiting rooms include things that appeal to men.				
	There is a baby-changing table in the men's washroom.				
	Total				

## Staff Development

How are staff supported in their efforts to engage fathers?

P		Y	S	N	N/A
	Our staff has been trained in best practices in engaging fathers.				
	We make father engagement/involvement a regular discussion item in staff meetings.				
	We know where to get answers to questions about reaching fathers.				
	Staff are trained to understand how men tend to interact and bond with children.				
	Staff are trained to recognize and address biases and assumptions that can stereotype men/fathers and women/mothers.				
	Father involvement is included in orientation of new staff.				
	The capacity to work effectively with fathers is included in reviewing staff performance.				
	Staff encourage fathers to participate in all activities, not just ones that may be "typical" for men.				
	On-going training is encouraged to increase staff knowledge and capacity to engage fathers.				
	Diversity training includes learning about men and fathers.				
	Total				

## Policies and Procedures

How does our organization prioritize father involvement?

P		Y	S	N	N/A
	There are policies that reflect intentional efforts to reach out to fathers.				
	It is assumed that fathers will participate in programs and services.				
	Our client forms have a place for more than one parent's information.				
	We regularly ask for updated contact information if a father is not living with his children.				
	Flyers and other written announcements are addressed to mothers and to fathers.				
	If a father is not living with his children, efforts are made to regularly contact him.				
	Referrals are available for fathers to meet a variety of personal and parenting needs.				
	We regularly evaluate programs and activities we offer for fathers.				
	Total				

## Agency Support and Buy-in

How does our organization prioritize father engagement?

P		Y	S	N	N/A
	Our organization supports staff efforts to engage fathers more effectively.				
	Our organization has prioritized the development of men as fatherhood leaders.				
	Our organization has a Father Engagement purpose statement.				
	Our organization has a Father Engagement action plan.				
	Specific events encouraging fatherhood are supported by my organization (within the organization and in the community).				
	Our agency makes efforts to hire men into staffing positions.				
	Our organization helps staff who are fathers balance life and work.				
	There is adequate funding provided by the organization to effectively serve fathers.				
	We actively seek men's input in future directions for engaging fathers.				
	Total				

## Community Engagement

What is our reputation in the community for father engagement?

P		Y	S	N	N/A
	The community sees our organization as a place fathers can get support.				
	We have partnerships that can support our efforts to engage fathers.				
	We intentionally promote our programs in places where fathers are more likely to be.				
	Fathers are part of the planning and delivery of services.				
	There are men (not necessarily fathers) who are interested in and work with us in engaging fathers (workshops, speakers, promotion, etc.)				
	We have men from the community who can speak to a group of fathers about different parenting and relationship issues.				
	We are part of a larger father involvement community network.				
	We have partners in the community where we can refer fathers for other resources they need to care for and support their family.				
	Our organization makes use of media contacts to promote father involvement.				
	We promote father involvement as a preventative measure against such social issues as crime, high school drop-out rates, teenage pregnancy, substance use, etc.				
	We use social media to share ideas about father involvement and to spread the word about programs.				
	Total				

## Assessment: Before and After

Refer to the **Organizational Assessment** completed on pages 33 to 36. Compare the total “yes” responses from each section with the total scores from this assessment to determine if there has been a marked change in engaging fathers.

CATEGORY	ORIGINAL SCORE	PRESENT SCORE	DIFFERENCE (±)
Programming			
Environment & Resources			
Staff Development			
Policies & Procedures			
Agency Support & Buy-in			
Community Engagement			

There are other ways of assessing the impact of your action plan:

**Survey fathers who attend a program or use a service.** Ask them to complete a couple of the assessment tools. The sections most relevant to fathers would be:

- Environment & resources
- Community engagement
- Programming
- Agency support & buy-in

**Impact statements** provide feedback on how the men and their families changing because of the program or service. You could ask:

- What have you learned since coming to the program?
- How has your relationship changed with your child?
- How are you relating differently with your spouse/partner?

## Other Toolkit Elements

Check out [www.mydad.ca](http://www.mydad.ca) for these resources:

### **My Dad Workshop Series**

Money Matters: Financial Planning for New & Expecting Dads

Future Matters: Helping Kids with Career Choices

Just for New Dads! What to Expect the First Year

Father Involvement in Children with Disabilities

Why We Stressin'? The Father-Child Stress Connection

I'm a PARENT Now: Effective Fathering for Young Dads

Fathering in a New Land: A Newcomer's Guide to Being a Dad in Canada

### **Do-it-yourself Focus Groups for Dads**

Focus groups are a great way to find out what dads, moms, and other may think about how to best provide services for fathers.

### **Do-it-yourself Media Kit**

Putting Together a Local Father Involvement Media Package

### **Social Media Kit**

### **Father Involvement Factsheets**

### **For Dads: Know Your Child**

### **Webinars and Videos**

Highlights of Effective Father Involvement Programs

Top 10 Best Practices

Managers, Executive Directors, and Decision-makers

Women Working with Men

Strength-based Father Engagement

Understanding Fatherhood



## Other Resources

**Dad Central Ontario** ([www.dadcentral.ca](http://www.dadcentral.ca)) has a number of resources for fathers and those who work with families:

- Booklets on different topics for fathers
- Posters showing fathers in caring relationships with their children
- Bookmarks on different issues relevant to fatherhood
- DVDs (Young Fathers and Aboriginal Fathers)

**24 Cribside Assistance for New Dads** ([www.newdadmanual.ca](http://www.newdadmanual.ca))

### **Step By Step: Engaging Fathers in Programs for Families**

English

([www.beststart.org/resources/howto/pdf/BSRC\\_Engaging\\_Fathers.pdf](http://www.beststart.org/resources/howto/pdf/BSRC_Engaging_Fathers.pdf))

French

([http://www.meilleurdepart.org/resources/howto/pdf/BSRC\\_Engaging\\_Fathers\\_fn.pdf](http://www.meilleurdepart.org/resources/howto/pdf/BSRC_Engaging_Fathers_fn.pdf))

**National Fatherhood Initiative (US)** - [www.fatherhood.org](http://www.fatherhood.org)

**Fatherhood Institute (UK)** - [www.fatherhoodinstitute.org](http://www.fatherhoodinstitute.org)

**Blogs and Other Sites for Dads** Find more links at [www.mydad.ca](http://www.mydad.ca)

- [bestjobontheplanet.wordpress.com](http://bestjobontheplanet.wordpress.com)
- [youngpfathers.org](http://youngpfathers.org)
- [canadiandad.com](http://canadiandad.com)
- [lifeofdad.com](http://lifeofdad.com)
- [dad-camp.com](http://dad-camp.com)
- [dadditudes.com](http://dadditudes.com)
- [fodder4fathers.com](http://fodder4fathers.com)

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*See also: <http://fatherwork.byu.edu/generativeFramework.htm>*

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