

Assessment Guide on Father Inclusive Practices

Creating Father-Friendly Environments

Introduction

As more government organizations, social service programs, schools and public and private agencies recognize the importance of recruiting and serving fathers, their staff often find themselves struggling with how to do so effectively

This session will provide a series of statements to consider to assist staff in developing specific strategies to enhance their capacity to serve fathers and men in families

Barriers to Father Engagement

- ▶ **Fathers fear exposing their inadequacies in front of strangers**
- ▶ **Fathers sense ambivalence or reluctance of staff about serving fathers**
- ▶ **Programs are designed for mothers' parenting styles, not both mothers' and fathers'**

Barriers to Father Engagement

- ▶ **Many fathers do not need more drama in their lives, because they already have enough**
- ▶ **Fathers may be reluctant to being seen as suspect by some staff or mothers and females in the program**
- ▶ **Fathers do not want to be seen as heroes or villains, merely parents**

Scoring the Form

- ▶ **Utilizing a scoring system of 1 (never) to 5 (consistently), indicate the readiness and/or capacity of your organization to apply the statements to your operations**
- ▶ **Please place an asterisk (*) next to each statement that you would like to implement soon**
- ▶ **Note: It is not necessarily realistic or necessary to expect that every statement should be applied to your program or agency**

Organizational Philosophy

- ▶ **_____ First impressions are important when people walk in your doors. What is the initial “feel” when someone enters your agency? Is the front entrance and the reception area free of materials or displays that could possible be intimidating to men or fathers?**
- ▶ **_____ Do staff treat males entering your agency differently than they treat females entering?**

Organizational Philosophy

- ▶ **_____ The provision of services to fathers is clearly stated in your mission statement**
- ▶ **_____ A commitment to serving fathers is reflected in your budget priorities, fund allocation and management priorities**

Organizational Philosophy

- ▶ **_____ All staff are expected to share responsibility for inviting and engaging fathers in your programs and activities**
- ▶ **_____ The agency clearly promotes the importance of fathers in programs and services, but NOT at expense of women or mothers**

Organizational Philosophy

- ▶ **_____ Staff promote win/win approaches to problem solving, rather than win/lose. For example, they encourage moms & dads to work together for the benefit of the children**
- ▶ **_____ Program employs a follow-up system to help determine the long-term success of the services provided**

Physical Environment

- ▶ **_____ Materials in the program present positive portrayals of men and children in photos, posters, bulletin boards, flyers, ads and display materials**
- ▶ **_____ Some reading materials (magazines, books, literature) in the common areas are directed toward fathers/men and are readily available and accessible**

Physical Environment

- ▶ **_____ Space is provided for fathers with resources for them to socialize, to seek information, and to calm or soothe their child while waiting for services**
- ▶ **_____ If a diaper changing deck is provided in the women's restroom, a diaper changing deck is provided in the men's restroom**
- ▶ **_____ Furniture is able to accommodate a wide range of sizes**

Program Content

- ▶ **_____ Respect for paternal parenting approaches are held in equal regard with maternal parenting approaches**
- ▶ **_____ Curricula and materials are utilized that reflect the diversity of fathers to be served**
- ▶ **_____ Fathers and men are occasionally surveyed to determine their needs, interests and concerns**

Program Content

- ▶ **_____ Effort is made to recruit and employ male staff, especially in non-traditional roles**
- ▶ **_____ Program provides some services that are man-to man, father-to-father**
- ▶ **_____ Parent lending library and staff resource center contain adequate materials that focus on fathers and paternal concerns**

Program Content

- ▶ **_____ Special events that celebrate fatherhood and strengthen father-child relationships are scheduled throughout the program year**
- ▶ **_____ Groups, programs and classes have been designed and implemented that are based upon respecting paternal instincts and the psychology of men**

Program Content

- ▶ **_____ Terminology, materials and activities weave in action, sporting, mechanical and related references to help appeal to men and fathers**
- ▶ **_____ Groups, classes and materials are structured to reflect and respect men's learning styles**

Staff Orientation and Training

- ▶ **_____ The agency conducts periodic staff training to upgrade new personnel on attitudes and values that are respectful of fathers and men**
- ▶ **_____ Staff are aware of some of the individual, institutional and societal barriers that fathers confront and are open to helping them to try to address them**

Staff Orientation and Training

- ▶ **_____ Staff avoids language that is divisive and stereotyping by gender, race, and culture. (e.g. comments such as fathers are “babysitting” for their children)**
- ▶ **_____ Male and female staff are encouraged and supported to work as a team**

Staff Orientation and Training

- ▶ **_____ Staff are aware of and make referrals to local targeted resources for fathers that are frequently needed: family law, employment, reintegration after deployment or incarceration, grief and loss, anger management and housing**
- ▶ **_____ Staff are skilled in helping fathers address their concerns and needs in positive ways.**

Staff Orientation and Training

- ▶ **_____ Capacity to effectively work with fathers is included in staff performance reviews and in volunteer evaluations**
- ▶ **_____ Staff is open to receiving constructive criticism regarding their personal biases regarding gender, race, and class**
- ▶ **_____ Staff assigned to work with fathers are fully integrated into the organization and its operations**

Policies and Procedures

- ▶ **_____ Services focus on assets of fathers, not their deficits**
- ▶ **_____ Policies and procedures that inadvertently limit father involvement have been eliminated**
- ▶ **_____ Dual mailings or an alternative are offered to parents who do not live together but share their parenting responsibilities**

Policies and Procedures

- ▶ **_____ Intake forms, applications, surveys and employee forms are gender neutral**
- ▶ **_____ Fathers/men are invited to participate in meaningful conversation when program staff contact families by telephone, e-mail or in person**
- ▶ **_____ Interesting, interactive and relational activities are offered to fathers and children**

Policies and Procedures

- ▶ **_____ Policies avoid expectation that fathers' progress in programs and services is to be validated by mothers.**
- ▶ **_____ Male program graduates are recruited to serve in a wide range of advisory and volunteer capacities.**

Marketing Strategies

- ▶ **_____ Agency's marketing plan includes effort to serve fathers and promotes their full involvement**
- ▶ **_____ Fathers and men in families are portrayed positively in agency's marketing materials**

Marketing Strategies

- ▶ **_____ Program literature uses language that attracts and appeals to fathers/men (e.g. is guy friendly)**
- ▶ **_____ Marketing materials are regularly placed in locations that fathers/men frequent**

Outreach Efforts

- ▶ **_____ Outreach staff reflect the clients that they are attempting to recruit.**
- ▶ **_____ Outreach workers visit locations that fathers frequent--auto body shops, gyms, sports bars, basketball courts, hardware stores, bait shops, sporting events, job banks, halfway houses, barber shops, parks, stadiums, ball diamonds, bowling alleys, etc.**

Taking the Next Step

Please review your form and highlight those:

- 1. That you scored a 4 or 5. Congratulations!**
- 2. That you scored with an asterisk. What would you need to do to take this to the next step?**
- 3. Discuss where you want to go from here. Who will help you? How will you proceed?**

Presenter Information

Neil Tift

Outreach Project Coordinator

**Native American Fatherhood and
Families Association**

460 North Mesa Drive

Suite 115

Mesa AZ 85201

480.833.5007

neilt@aznaffa.org