



Family Engagement in Early Care and Education

Engaging Fathers



NATIONAL CENTER ON
Parent, Family and Community Engagement

Overview

This module will focus on:

- Understanding the roles of fathers in children's well-being and development
- Responsive ways to partner with fathers to foster children's development and learning
- Strategies to create welcoming environments for fathers

The Head Start Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework

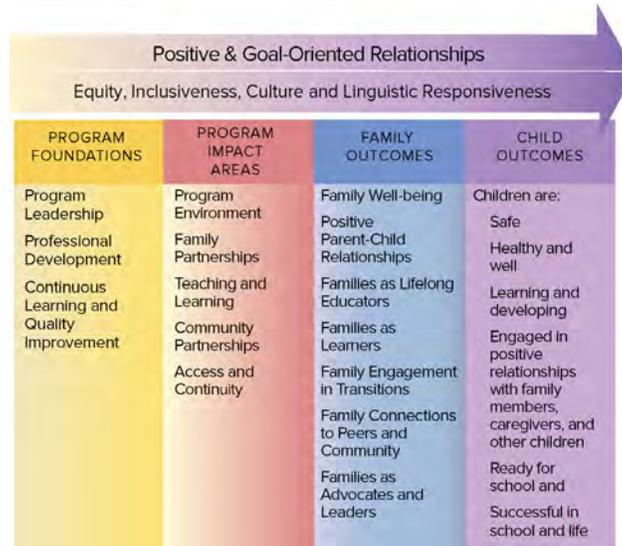


Image credit: Office of Head Start



DISCUSSION

Where Does It Fit?

Which part of the Framework does this module topic, “Engaging Fathers”, relate to?

- Turn to, and exchange ideas with a partner
- Be ready to share your thoughts with the whole group



A Program-Wide Approach

- A focus on the quality of program-wide engagement
- Opportunities for educators and other program staff to further develop competence and confidence in partnering with fathers



OBJECTIVES

By the end of this module you should be able to:

- Describe the impact of active, engaged fathers on their children's lives
- Identify ways to encourage strong relationships between fathers and their children
- Use a variety of approaches to create a welcoming environment for fathers and other important men in children's lives



**LEARNING
ACTIVITY**

Children's Interactions with Fathers and Mothers



Image credit: Office of Head Start

Relationships Between Fathers and Their Children



DISCUSSION

Fathers Matter

- Children can benefit from relationships with fathers by . . .
- Mothers can benefit from relationships with fathers by . . .
- Families can benefit from fathers by . . .
- Programs can benefit from fathers by . . .



Image credit: EarlyEdU

The quality of fathers' engagement with their children is a key factor in promoting their children's development

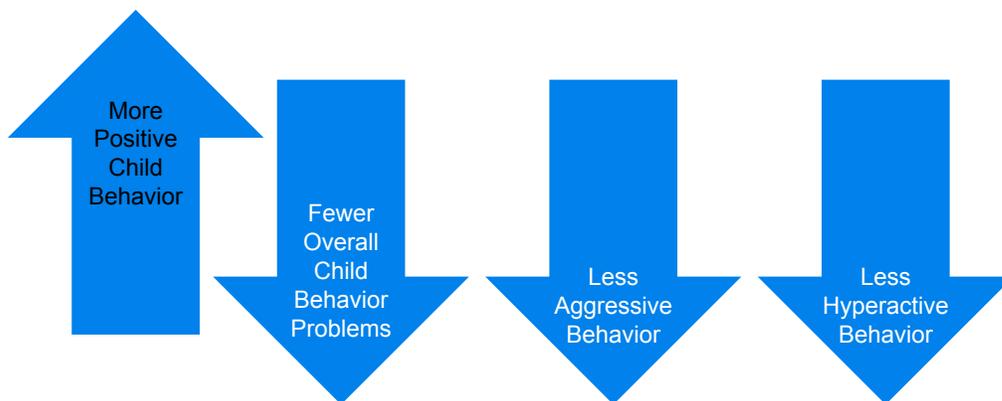
Fathers' Unique Roles

Father and mother parenting styles can overlap, but often have unique differences

- Fathers tend to:
- Encourage more exploration and independent behavior in young children
- Use language that stretches and challenges children's competence
- Use complementary discipline and parenting strategies



When Fathers Are More Involved . . .



Impacts on Father-Child Interactions

- The father's relationship with his own parents and his partner's parents
- His partner's attitude toward his role as a father
- The timing of fatherhood (life stage, career stage)
- The communities of support around the father
- The father's residential status with his children

Recognizing and Encouraging

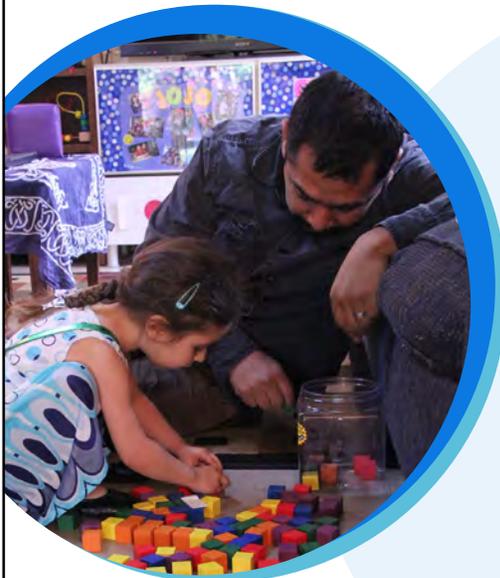


Image credit: EarlyEdU

Educators can:

- Recognize and understand the influence of culture on male and father roles
- Encourage a father's efforts to connect with, nurture, and enjoy his child at each developmental stage

Ways to Support

- Observe and stay curious
- Find out how fathers and their children like to spend time together
- Acknowledge responsive interactions
- Explore which program activities allow fathers to contribute most to their children's learning

Creating a Welcoming Environment for Fathers

Engaging and Welcoming Fathers



Image credit: Office of Head Start

Program staff can engage fathers with welcoming attitudes and approaches to:

- Program environment
- Classroom spaces
- Everyday routines
- Events for fathers

Messages Matter

When mothers, teachers, and others in a child's life show confidence in a father's parenting, a father will feel more **motivated, competent, involved, and satisfied** in his parenting role.



How do you find out how fathers feel when they spend time in your program?



Image credit: Office of Head Start

How Can You Welcome Fathers in Everyday Routines?



Image credit: EarlyEdU

- Arrival
- Departure
- Volunteer opportunities

Arrival and Departure

- Greet fathers by name
- Ask about the child's and father's day
- Invite fathers to share about their children and parenting
- Recognize a father's role as a primary caregiver and lifelong educator of his child
- Address fathers in all types of family structures equally
- When parents arrive together, make equal time for communication with both
- Be sensitive to fathers' needs
- Consider the unique needs of fathers who do not live with their children

Volunteer Opportunities



Image credit: EarlyEdU

- Invite fathers or male volunteers to take on roles they enjoy
- Support active play
- Notice and comment on connections between fathers and children

Images of Fathers



Image credit: EarlyEdU

Ensure that images highlight men in a variety of roles, including ones that are caring and nurturing

- Posters
- Flyers
- Artwork

Inviting Program Spaces

- Open floor space or adult-size furniture
- Decor that is universally appealing to men and women
- Resource library that contains materials of interest to fathers, including books on fatherhood
- Staff includes men and male role models
- Images in environment show fathers favorably in a variety of family structures

Classroom Images

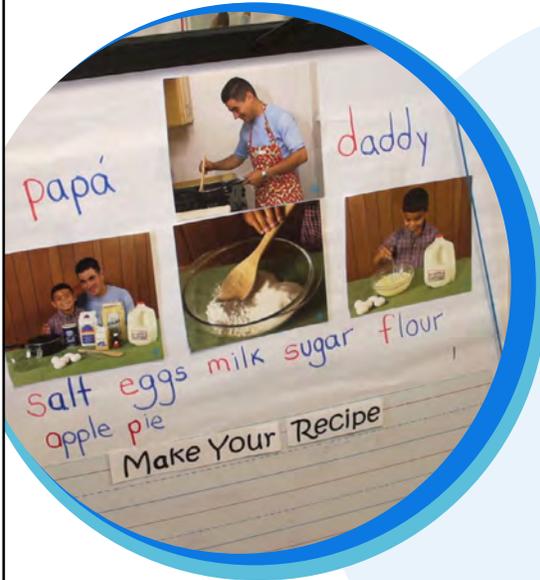


Image credit: EarlyEdU

Include photos of fathers and other important men in children's lives

Books and Learning Materials



Image credit: EarlyEdU

Look at the learning materials in your environment

- In what ways do they represent men?
- How do they represent fathers?

Program-Wide Practices

- Be aware of and avoid stereotypes of men and fathers
- Offer fathers' groups and father-focused workshops
- Explore fathers' needs for services, support, and resources
- Focus on all adults promoting healthy child development and setting goals
- Ensure that staff composition reflects families' cultures and languages

Bringing It All Together

The Head Start Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework

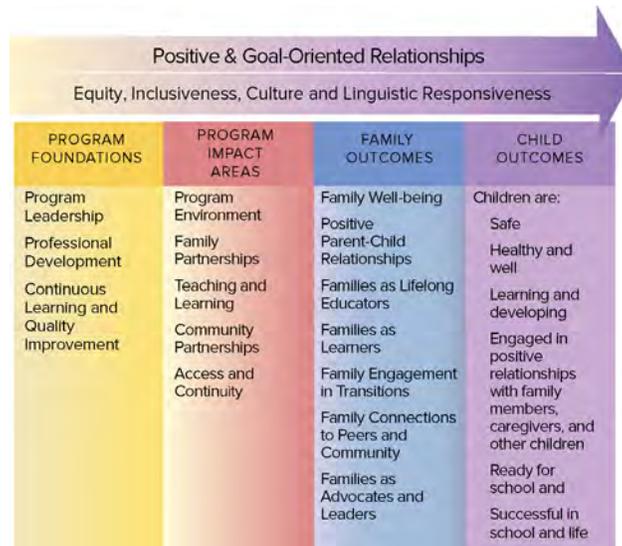


Image credit: Office of Head Start



DISCUSSION

Revisiting “Where Does It Fit?”

Which part of the Framework does this module topic, “Engaging Fathers”, relate to?

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**SESSION
SUMMARY**

- Fathers can play an important role in child development and family well-being
- Early childhood educators and program staff can adopt practices that promote strong father-child relationships
- Programs and educators can create welcoming environments for fathers that foster positive outcomes for fathers, children, and families



ADMINISTRATION FOR
CHILDREN & FAMILIES



NATIONAL CENTER ON
Parent, Family and Community Engagement

For more information about this resource, please contact us:
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