**Did You Know?**

WIC staff can make small changes to the physical environment that will make your WIC office feel more “Dad-friendly!”

1) **Make the Office Look Welcoming to Dads**

To better include Dads, WIC staff can:

- Display positive and nurturing images of men with their children in the office.
  - Hang posters that talk about the importance of fathers and fatherhood.
  - Display pictures of breastfeeding where Dad is included.
  - Consider having a “Dad” bulletin board where clients can post pictures of children with their Dads.
  - Be mindful of posters about child support or domestic violence. These messages are important but should not overpower positive images of Dads.
- If you have magazines in the waiting area, include ones that men would feel comfortable reading.
- Put resources, booklets, and pamphlets that deal with issues Dads may face in waiting areas.
- If you make materials advertising your WIC office or special events, include images of Dads on those materials.
- Have neutral colors and furnishings in the office.
- Provide chairs that are large enough for men in waiting areas and have two chairs stationed at each counseling desk.
- Offer books for children to read that feature male characters in nurturing roles.
- Be sure to have a men’s restroom or a co-ed restroom and ensure that it has a diaper changing station.

“Feeling **welcome**, feeling **accepted**, feeling **invited**... I think that’s the most important thing. Acknowledging that fathers do matter, that we want them involved, is the first clear step.”

-Samuel Nuñez, Fathers and Families of San Joaquin
2) **HAVE MEN PRESENT IN THE OFFICE**

Research has shown that men and Dads feel more comfortable if there are other men at the WIC office. The current WIC staff could consider:

- Hiring male staff
- Inviting men to be peer counselors or group facilitators
- Looking to community partners for men who may be interested in being involved
- Asking board members or other stakeholders who may be able to help out
- Approaching partners of staff who may be able to step into the role of facilitator
- Finding Dads who are committed and consistent in the program to volunteer and reach out to other Dads
- Making a list of different ways that Dads can volunteer if they want to be involved in the program

3) **THINK ABOUT DAD’S TIME CONFLICTS**

Research done by the Minnesota Fathers and Families network (linked in Resources below) found that the largest perceived barrier to father involvement in early childhood programs was fathers’ lack of time. WIC staff can:

- Try to schedule appointments at times when the father or father figure can attend.
- Have flexible or extended hours when possible.
- Offer evening or weekend classes and activities or explore early morning (before Dads go to work) as a possibility.
- When planning a special event, send out a brief survey or poll to see when would be the best time so more Dads can attend. Offer three different time and date options.
  - If your Dads are computer savvy, use a website like Doodle or NeedToMeet to find a good time for the event.
- Let families know of special events well in advance so Dads can schedule around them if they have any flexibility in their work schedules.

4) **BE CREATIVE!**

If your WIC site wants to take things a step further, consider trying some of these innovative ideas:

- Put in a shelf in the waiting room where people can donate or borrow books. Provide space for Dads to read to their children while they wait for their class or appointment.

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**Checklist for a Dad-Friendly Office**

- **Walls:** Do the walls contain positive images of Dads?
- **Reading materials:** Are there fliers and magazines that Dads can read?
- **Chairs:** Are the chairs big enough for Dad? Are there two chairs at every counseling desk?
- **Restroom:** Is there a men’s restroom with a diaper changing station?
- **Men:** Are men present in the office in some capacity—other Dads, staff, facilitators or community partners?
- **Scheduling:** Do you offer flexible times so that Dads can attend appointments? Do you get Dads’ input when planning special events?
Offer “Stay and Play” or “Dads Time” if your office has the capacity. Have days when children can stay and play and make sure you specifically invite Dads.

If you have the space and an extra computer, consider offering a Career Corner where Dads can search for jobs.

Have an open house for Dads or a Father-Child event where you provide food and refreshments. Consider reaching out to community partners for the food.

Have a special orientation event for men and Dads in the lives of your WIC families.
  - Ask Dads for ideas on how they would like to be involved.
  - Ask Dads about what might prevent them from being involved at WIC and what would support them. Conduct a brief survey.

Go beyond acknowledging Father’s Day: have a Dads’ month where the focus is positive father-child relationships.

(See the Community Partnership section of this toolkit for more fun and innovative ways to reach out to Dads.)

**ACTION ITEMS FOR WIC STAFF:**

- Make the WIC office “Dad-friendly” by including pictures, books and reading materials that show Dads in a positive light.
- Make sure that the office is comfortable and accessible for Dads.
- Encourage the presence of men at the office by hiring men or having men as facilitators and volunteers.
- Plan around Dads’ schedules when possible.
- Be creative when reaching out to Dads and try different kinds of events.

**Resources:**

- [Key Concepts: Including Dads in a WIC Setting](#) from Texas WIC
- [WIC Watch: Preparing Men to be Fathers](#) from California WIC Association
- [Involving Fathers](#) from National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)
- [Dedicated to Dads: Lessons from Early Head Start](#)
- [Fatherhood First](#) (Register for the site to access lots of resources)
- [Step by Step: Engaging Fathers in Programs for Families](#) from Best Start Resource Centre
- [Sector Analysis: Linking Fathers: Father Involvement in Early Childhood Programs](#) from Minnesota Fathers & Families Network
- [Involving Men in Nurturing](#) from Prevent Child Abuse Vermont
- [Fathers Matter](#) from Preschool Learning Alliance
- [Fathers in Sure Start](#) from Sure Start (UK)
- [Promoting Father Involvement in Early Childhood](#) from FRIENDS National Resource Center