Include Dads in Evaluation Efforts

**THIS SECTION INCLUDES TIPS ON:**
1. Assessing the needs of Dads.
2. Creating a tool to evaluate Dad-inclusion efforts.
3. Implementing your evaluation tool.
4. Continuing to provide opportunities for feedback.

Remember:
It is important to evaluate your efforts to include men and Dads. This will allow you to see what is working and what could be improved!

1) **ASSSESS THE NEEDS OF DADS BEFORE STARTING YOUR DAD-INCLUSION EFFORTS**

Ideally, WIC staff will assess the needs of men and Dads before implementing efforts to see what they would find the most helpful.

- You can make a survey addressing some (or all) of the following questions:

  **Understanding the Needs of Fathers in the Community**
  - What is the geographic area being served, and what are the racial and ethnic groups in the community? What attributes of the community make it easy or difficult to address fathers’ needs?
  - What are the fathers’ cultures? Are they newcomers to the United States?
  - What are fathers’ attitudes and perceptions of the WIC program? What are fathers’ beliefs about their fatherhood role?
  - What activities or services might interest or benefit fathers? What services are needed by fathers and father figures in the community that the community lacks?
  - What kind of work opportunities are there for fathers?
  - How many fathers are struggling with special issues, such as substance abuse, domestic violence, depression, probation and parole, and relationship problems?
  - Do the fathers have literacy concerns?
  - What would fathers like the program to do better? What support is needed to further engage fathers and father figures in the program?

- Adapted from “Father Engagement Assessment Questions,” Head Start Father Engagement Guide

- You can also gather demographic information from local and state databases to get information about Dads in your area.
- Having information about the men and Dads in your community can help you choose activities that might be most effective in getting them involved!
2) **Create a Tool to Evaluate your Dad-Inclusion Efforts**

After implementing some of the father-friendly strategies described in this toolkit, it is important that you evaluate to see how they are going. This type of assessment can give you insight into what may work best for your community and how best to improve your program.

- WIC staff can conduct a survey to evaluate the office for successful outreach to Dads.
  - You can use questions such as those to the right or from additional resources linked below.
- Think about surveying both staff members and parents, with a special focus on men and Dads.
  - You can also ask Dads and staff members for suggestions on how the program could be improved.
- After you choose your questions, decide how to get responses. This may include:
  - Phone calls
  - In person interviews
  - Written survey
  - Online survey

3) **Implement your Tool to Evaluate how your Dad-Inclusion Efforts are Going**

- **Survey the staff.** Assess how staff members feel that the father-friendliness effort is going.
- **Evaluate staff on their work with fathers.** This sends a clear message to your staff that involving Dads is an important part of their jobs.
- **Pursue verbal and written feedback from Dads.**
  - Have focus groups or meetings with men to listen and see how they perceive your inclusiveness efforts.
- **Keep feedback from Dads anonymous and confidential.** Establish procedures to protect the confidentiality of a Dad’s feedback such as using a written form or having one-on-one meetings.
- **Use the data** you have collected to fine-tune your father inclusion and outreach efforts.
  - Review and update plans based on feedback from Dads.
  - Monitoring should be ongoing or occur at key points during the year.

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**Evaluation Questions to Consider**

1. Does the entire staff have an understanding of the role men play in children’s lives?
2. Do fathers believe there is value to using the program?
3. Is there a male staff member that fathers are able to connect with? Is there a male volunteer or representative who is the point man for fathering activities?
4. Is the physical environment welcoming to fathers?
5. What biases may be influencing your efforts to engage men?
6. Are there resources available that speak to fathers?
7. Do promotion materials reflect fathers in the wording and images?

- Adapted from “Assess Your Father-Friendliness” Step by Step
4) **PROVIDE CONTINUED OPPORTUNITIES FOR EVALUATION**

- When you have an event for or including Dads, set aside 10 minutes for fathers and staff to share ideas and get feedback. Staff can listen to how Dads would like to be involved.

- Create brief, easy-to-use forms or questionnaires asking men and Dads their feelings about the program environment, and their thoughts about how well they are relating to staff (See sidebar for an example).
  - Offer these forms to Dads periodically or whenever they want to give feedback.

**Potential Questionnaire to Dads:**
- Do Dads feel that the letters/notices that go to children’s homes are aimed at them – as well as at their children’s mothers?
- How comfortable do Dads feel when talking with staff members when they come for appointments or when they participate in activities?
- How successful is the office/program in engaging Dads?
- What could the program do to encourage more Dads to get involved?

- Adapted from *Involving Fathers in Early Years Settings*

**ACTION ITEMS FOR WIC STAFF:**
- Think about and assess the needs of Dads before beginning your inclusion efforts.
- Consider the goals of your program and create a tool to evaluate those goals.
- Use your evaluation tool to question staff and parents, especially Dads.
- Incorporate feedback into future planning.
- Provide ongoing opportunities for Dads to give feedback on the program.

**Resources**

- **Head Start Father Engagement Birth to Five Programming Guide**: Father Engagement Assessment Questions (p.50)
- **Dedicated to Dads: Lessons from Early Head Start**
- **Creating Paths to Father Involvement: Lessons from Early Head Start**
- **Involving Fathers: Getting Fathers Involved** by National Childbirth Trust
- **Involving Fathers in Early Years Settings: Evaluating Four Models for Effective Practice Development** from Department for Education and Skills (UK)