



**305:
Engaging Absent Fathers**

A Training Outline

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**For the
Pennsylvania Child Welfare
Training Program**

**University of Pittsburgh
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305: Engaging Absent Fathers

An Overview of the Curriculum

Rationale:

Fathers play a critical role in the development and growth of their children. Far too frequently, however, fathers are a missing piece in a child's life. The current focus on involving fathers in their child's life is supported by research, which points out the critical importance of a father's involvement with his children. In order for Child Welfare Professionals to seek a greater involvement of fathers in their child's life they must know the resources available to locate the father and then be able to facilitate the father's engagement in the permanency process.

Competency:

305-1: The Child Welfare Professional is familiar with models of effective parenting, and can teach parenting strategies to parents by explaining and demonstrating parenting techniques, can support parents in trying new strategies, and can refer parents to formal training classes or groups when needed.

Learning Objectives:

Participants will be able to:

- ✓ Recognize the need and importance of locating and engaging absent fathers;
- ✓ Identify the five step process for locating absent fathers;
- ✓ Identify formal and informal support services for absent fathers;
- ✓ Determine an absent father's appropriateness as a permanency resource for the child; and
- ✓ Demonstrate the ability to locate and engage absent fathers.

Length of Workshop:

12 Hours

Materials Needed to Present Workshop:

- ✓ Name tents
- ✓ Idea Catchers
- ✓ Masking tape
- ✓ Two flip chart stands
- ✓ Two blank flip chart pads
- ✓ Blank flip chart paper
- ✓ TV/VCR
- ✓ Index cards
- ✓ Color markers and/or crayons
- ✓ Paper for drawing

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An Overview of the Curriculum (continued)

Materials Needed to Present Workshop (continued):

- ✓ Overhead projector/screen
- ✓ Curriculum and transparencies
- ✓ Blank overhead transparencies with markers (optional)
- ✓ Handouts for participants
- ✓ Sentence strips
- ✓ Fatherhood posters
- ✓ Fatherhood pamphlets and resources
- ✓ Table Copies of SWAN Diligent Search Package
- ✓ Table Copies of PA Risk Assessment form
- ✓ Table Copies of Safety Assessment Worksheet & Instructions
- ✓ Table Copies of Juvenile Act
- ✓ Table Copies of Indian Child Welfare Act
- ✓ Table Copies of Adoption and Safe Families Act
- ✓ Table Copies of Child Protective Services Law
- ✓ **Video (*Field of Dreams* (1989). Universal)**
- ✓ **Video (*Evelyn* (2002). Metro Goldwyn Mayer)**
- ✓ **Video (*The Great Santini* (1979) Bing Crosby Productions)**
- ✓ **Video (*Father's Day* (1997) Warner Brothers)**
- ✓ Extra copies of Pre-Training Activity

Target Audience:

Child Welfare Professionals who have completed their 120 hours of Direct Service Certification through Child Welfare Professional CORE or Charting the Course towards Permanency for Children in Pennsylvania.

Summary:

Fathers play a critical role in the development and growth of their children. Far too frequently, however, fathers are a missing piece in a child's life. The current focus on involving fathers in their child's life is supported by research, which points out the critical importance of a father's involvement with his children. In order for Child Welfare Professionals to seek a greater involvement of fathers in their child's life they must know the resources available to locate the father and then be able to facilitate the father's engagement in the permanency process. This two day workshop explores methods to locate and to engage absent fathers.

Expectations of the Trainer:

The trainer of this curriculum should have a strong knowledge base in working with fathers, particularly absentee fathers, and engaging them into their child's life. Secondly, it is preferable if the trainer has experience communicating with families when the father has initially been absent from their child's life.

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An Overview of the Curriculum (continued)

Expectations of the Trainer (continued):

The trainer must also have at least five years experience in the Child Welfare system and a strong knowledge base of the permanency process. Finally, the trainer should have experience knowing how to initiate contact between an absent father and his child, and how to assist fathers in developing appropriate parenting skills.

PA Standards:

IB: Assessment: Conduct Risk Assessment
IE: Assessment: Produce Family-Focused Assessment
IF: Assessment: Assess Interrelationships of Critical Issues
IIG: Service Planning: Include Formal and Informal Resources
IIH: Service Planning: Involve Extended Family as a Resource
IIID: Service Delivery: Assure Service Needs
IIIL: Service Delivery: Incorporate Kin
IIIN: Service Delivery: Conduct Outreach to Parents
IVF: Monitoring and Evaluation: Collaborate with Family

CFSR Issues:

Permanency 1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.

Item 9: Adoption

Permanency 2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.

Item 13: Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care

Item 16: Relationship of child in care with parents

Well-Being 1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.

Item 17: Needs and services of child, parents, foster parents

Item 20: Worker visits with parent(s)

Diversity/Social Work Values

Social work values address supporting parents through the process of caring for a child from a collaborative and strengths focused way. The Child Welfare Professional's role is one of advocate, mentor, resource person, and support person to both parents of the child. This sometimes becomes a challenge when the father of the child is absent from the home, and his location is unknown. The Child Welfare Professional must be able to locate the father and engage him and to assist him with building a relationship with his child to the best of his ability.

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An Overview of the Curriculum (continued)

Interactional Skills:

Tuning in to Self

Tuning in to Others

Identifying Next Steps

Displaying Belief in the Potential of the Work

Tuning in to the Phase of the Helping Process You're in

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Agenda for a Two-Day Curriculum on Engaging Absent Fathers

Estimated Time	Content	Page
45 minutes	Section I: Welcome and Introduction	7
3 hours	Section II: The Importance of Fathers	10
1 hour	Section III: Locating Fathers	24
1 hour	Section IV: Identifying Formal and Informal Support Services	28
1 hour, 30 minutes	Section V: Identifying a Father's Strengths and Needs	35
4 hours	Section VI: Engaging Absent Fathers	39
45 minutes	Section VII: Closing and Evaluations	53

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Section I: Welcome and Introduction

Estimated Length of Time:

45 minutes

Learning Objectives:

Participants will be able to:

- ✓ Identify the trainer and other participants.
- ✓ List their learning needs and expectations for the workshop.

Method of Presentation:

Individual activity, large group discussion

Materials Needed:

- ✓ Name tents
- ✓ Idea catchers
- ✓ Two flip chart stands
- ✓ Two blank flip chart pads
- ✓ Color markers and/or crayons
- ✓ Sentence strips
- ✓ Masking tape
- ✓ Overhead projector/screen
- ✓ **Overhead #1 (Learning Objectives)**
- ✓ **Overhead #2 (Agenda)**
- ✓ **Handout #1 (Learning Objectives)**
- ✓ **Handout #2 (Agenda)**

Resources Used:

None

PA Standards:

None

CFSR Issues:

None

Interactional Skills:

None

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Section I: Welcome and Introduction

Outline of Presentation:

The trainer will:

- ✓ Welcome participants to the training.
- ✓ Introduce self and other workshop participants.
- ✓ Have participants identify their learning needs and expectations of the training.
- ✓ Review the learning objectives for the workshop.
- ✓ Review the agenda for the training day.
- ✓ Ask participants to construct name tents.
- ✓ Facilitate a group discussion.
- ✓ Have participants identify their learning needs and expectations of the training.
- ✓ Identify and highlight various resource materials displayed throughout the training room.

Step 1:

Trainer welcomes participants to the training, introduces self, and shares relevant background information pertaining to the engaging absent fathers training. They will take a few moments to complete name tents. Review the rules of the training program, i.e. 15-minute rule, sign-in sheet, and evaluation. Briefly point out the various fatherhood resources displayed in the training room. Indicate to participants that one concept that will be examined in the training is the concept of creating “father friendly” services and interactions. The room is designed to convey that fathers are valued and important. To successfully, engage absent fathers the child welfare professional must be able to convey to fathers that they play an important role in their children’s lives.

Remind participants that because of confidentiality issues, anything they hear in the training room regarding cases should not leave the training room.

Step 2:

Distribute one sentence strip to each participant. Have participants individually write down something they hope to learn in the workshop. Have each participant introduce themselves, identify their position in the agency, and share their learning objective with the large group. As each participant shares their learning objective, tape the strip to the wall to be displayed throughout the workshop. Tell participants the topics that will and will not be covered in this workshop. Those topics (sentence strips) specifically not a part of the training will be moved and placed in the “parking lot.” Where feasible, the trainer will follow up with the participant offering to address his or her concerns during breaks or by providing resources and information after the training.

Trainer’s Note: Trainer should monitor time closely throughout this two-day training. It is important to keep track of time during each section of the training so participants have ample time to practice the engagement process in **Section IV: Engaging Fathers**.

305: Engaging Absent Fathers

Section I: Welcome and Introduction (continued)

Step 3:

Distribute **Handout #1 (Learning Objectives)**. Display **Overhead #1 (Learning Objectives)** and discuss the learning objectives addressed in the workshop.

Step 4:

Distribute **Handout #2 (Agenda)**. Display **Overhead #2 (Agenda)** and discuss the topics that will be covered in this workshop.

Step 5:

Remind participants that they should have received a pre-training activity when they got their confirmation letter (have additional pre-training worksheet handouts available).

Explain that they will be addressing the pre-training activity questions throughout the training. Survey the group to determine:

- ✓ Who reviewed and brought their agency's diligent search policy?
- ✓ Who identified formal and informal resources and support services for fathers?
- ✓ Who can list three consequences of not locating or engaging absent fathers?

Ask if they have any immediate questions about that activity and briefly address them. Again, remind participants that the training will focus on the items in their pre-work assignment.

305: Engaging Absent Fathers

Section II: The Importance of Fathers

Estimated Length of Time:

3 hours

Learning Objectives:

Participants will be able to:

- ✓ Recognize the need to locate absent fathers;
- ✓ Recognize the need to engage absent fathers; and
- ✓ Recognize personal biases about absent fathers.

Method of Presentation:

Lecture, individual and small group activity, large group discussion

Materials Needed:

- ✓ Index cards
- ✓ Color markers and/or crayons
- ✓ Paper for drawing
- ✓ **Overhead #3 (Impact of Father Absence)**
- ✓ **Overhead #4 (Pennsylvania's CFSR and Child Welfare Work with Fathers)**
- ✓ **Overhead #5 (Bias Definition)**
- ✓ **Overhead #6 (Fatherhood Definitions)**
- ✓ **Overhead #7 (Definitions of Aggravated Circumstances)**
- ✓ **Handout #3 (Impact of Father Absence)**
- ✓ **Handout #4 (Pennsylvania's CFSR and Child Welfare Work with Fathers)**
- ✓ **Handout #5 (What Are My Filters?)**
- ✓ **Handout #6 (Research Findings About Father Involvement)**
- ✓ **Handout #7 (Fatherhood test)**
- ✓ **Handout #8 (Trends in Fatherhood)**
- ✓ **Handout #9 (Fatherhood Definitions)**
- ✓ **Handout #10 (Father's Legal Rights as a Parent)**
- ✓ **Handout #11 (Definition of Aggravated Circumstances)**
- ✓ **Video (Field of Dreams)**
- ✓ Copies of Juvenile Act, Indian Child Welfare Act, Adoption and Safe Family Act, and Child Protective Services Law

Resources Used:

Blankenhorn, David. *Fatherless America, Confronting Our Most Urgent Social Problem*, New York, NY: Basic Books, 1995.

Daniel, B., & Taylor, J. (2001). *Engaging with fathers: Practice issues for health and social care*. Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley.

Halle, T., Moore, K., Greene, A., & LeMenestrel, S. M. (Dec. 1998). *What policymakers need to know about fathers*. In Policy & practice.

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Section II: The Importance of Fathers (continued)

Resources Used (continued):

Horn, W.F., & Sylvester, T. (2002). *Father facts (4th ed.)*. Gaithersburg, MD: National Fatherhood Initiative.

Myers-Drew, Jane. *Where Were You When I Needed You Dad?, A Guide for Healing the Father Wound*. Newport Beach, CA: Volcano Press, 1989.

The Pennsylvania Child Welfare Training Program. (2001). *Considering the diversity factor in training: A trainer's handbook*. Mechanicsburg, PA: University of Pittsburgh.

PA Standards:

III.L: Service Delivery: Incorporate Kin

IV.F: Monitoring and Evaluation: Collaborate with Family

CFSR Issues:

Permanency 2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children

Interactional Skills:

Tuning in to self

Tuning in to others

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Section II: The Importance of Fathers

Outline of Presentation:

The trainer will:

- ✓ Explain the impact of father absence on children's well-being.
- ✓ Facilitate an activity on personal biases about absent fathers.
- ✓ Facilitate an individual activity and small group discussion on participants' relationships with their fathers and father figures.
- ✓ Lead a large group discussion on the father's role and importance of father involvement.
- ✓ Identify a father's legal rights.

Step 1:

Explain to participants that research indicates the critical importance of a father's involvement with his children. All too often, in the child welfare system, the father is a missing piece in children's lives. Studies cited by the National Fatherhood Initiative's *Father Facts* indicate that:

- ✓ 24 million children live absent their biological father (Source: *The Living Arrangement of Children, Fall 1996*, U.S. Census Bureau, 2001).
- ✓ Children living in single-parent households double the risk that they will suffer, physical, emotional, or educational neglect (Source: *America's Children: Key Indicators of Child Well-Being*, Child and Family Statistics, 1997).

Study after study shows that children from disrupted families are at a much higher risk for physical or sexual abuse.

When fathers are not involved, their children's well-being is impacted. According to the National Family Preservation Network, children who lack contact with their biological father are (Display **Overhead #3 (Impact of Father Absence)**):

- ✓ Five times more likely to live in poverty.
- ✓ More likely to bring weapons and drugs into the classroom.
- ✓ Twice as likely to commit crime.
- ✓ Twice as likely to drop out of school.
- ✓ Twice as likely to be abused.
- ✓ More likely to commit suicide.
- ✓ More than twice as likely to abuse drugs or alcohol.
- ✓ More likely to become pregnant as teenagers.

Distribute **Handout #3 (Impact of Father Absence)**.

Results of the Pennsylvania Child and Family Service Review (CFSR) indicates that there is a need for improvement in locating and engaging absent fathers and then determining if and/or how to involve them when considering children's safety, permanency, and well-being.

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Section II: The Importance of Fathers (continued)

Step 1 (continued):

Tell participants that there are several CFSR items that can be addressed by locating and engaging fathers and having them involved in their children's lives. Distribute **Handout #4 (Pennsylvania's CFSR and Child Welfare Work with Fathers)** and display **Overhead #4 (Pennsylvania's CFSR and Child Welfare Work with Fathers)**. Make sure the following information is included in the discussion:

- ✓ Not locating absent fathers led to delays in adoption;
- ✓ Fathers were far more likely not to have visits with their children while in placement; and
- ✓ Fathers were less likely to receive services to improve their parenting skills and strengthen the parent-child relationship.

Introduce to the participants the concept of WIIFM (What's in it for me?). Allow time at their tables to discuss how locating absent fathers and engaging them more effectively can assist them in achieving desired outcomes. Have a person at each table report to the large group. Make sure that the following points are made:

- ✓ Fathers are a possible permanency placement;
- ✓ Other paternal relatives can be utilized in permanency planning;
- ✓ Locating non-custodial fathers accelerates the process of termination of parental rights when necessary;
- ✓ Locating fathers is important to the adoption process (child's background, medical history, etc.); and
- ✓ Locating absent fathers facilitates concurrent planning allowing them to pursue more than one goal for the child.

Point out to the participants that one of their pre-work assignments was to identify the consequences of not locating and engaging absent fathers. Ask if anyone identified points not covered in this discussion. Ask participants to share those points.

Trainer Note: The focus of this curriculum is on absent fathers. For the purposes of this training, an absent father will be defined as any father not living with the mother under the same roof. This includes single unwed, separated, and divorced fathers. According to information provided through the National Fatherhood Initiative, approximately 40 percent of today's children are living in father-absent homes.

Step 2:

Ask participants to tune into themselves and think of a male from television, movies, books, news, or from personal experience (past or present) that they would like to have as a father and write the name on an index card. Under the name have them list why they would like this person as their father.

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Section II: The Importance of Fathers (continued)

Step 2 (continued):

Tell participants to turn their card over. Then have them think of a male from television, movies, books, news, or personal experience (past or present) that they would not want as a father and write this name on the back of their card. Under the name have them list why they would not want this person as their father.

Explain to participants that this activity is designed to involve them in the Shulman Interactional Skill of Tuning in to Self, which is the worker's effort to get in touch with potential feelings/concerns/beliefs that the worker may personally bring to the helping encounter. In addition, through this activity, the worker will become aware of personal biases, which may reflect on the way they view parenting skills in their male clients.

The trainer should tell participants that they will be engaged in an activity that will assist them in tuning in to their personal beliefs and value system. By identifying a person as a role model father, they can begin to get it touch with their personal beliefs regarding what a father's role might look like as he interacts with his children. Connecting with their personal beliefs helps them understand their biases about a father's role, after which they can begin to separate these personal beliefs from the beliefs others might have.

Step 3:

Break participants into small groups. Have them share their two names as well as the reasons they would or would not want this male as a father with the rest of their small group. (Note: Trainer may want to advise those participants who choose real-life "father figures" to share only what they feel comfortable disclosing with the group to avoid re-experiencing "father wounds," the negative consequences children experience as a result of father-loss or inadequate fathering. It is important to be sensitive to potential issues of hurt and pain. Many adults in training settings may have experience abusive, disengaged, absent, or judgmental fathering as they were growing up).

Remind participants that this activity involves Tuning in to What Others Think, which might differ from their beliefs. These different beliefs reflect the diversity of ways people view a father's role. In addition, remind participants that the media fathers are what our society views as role models for what to expect in a father; and not all of these role models are positive, or even realistic.

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Section II: The Importance of Fathers (continued)

Step 3 (continued):

Trainer Note: The former activity has participants involved in the Interactional Skill of Tuning in to Others, which is the worker's effort to get in touch with potential feelings and concerns that the client may bring to the helping encounter. In addition, through this activity the worker will become aware of the way others view parenting skills by fathers, which may differ from their own views. The trainer should remind participants to be prudent about inflicting their own personal beliefs onto others. By truly listening to what others believe about parenting, they can give a more open-minded approach to the way they deal with clients, especially non-custodial fathers.

Allow a few minutes for participants to discuss this activity in their small group and then ask a few participants to share with the large group.

Step 4:

Point out to the participants that all societies and cultures have expectations regarding the father's role. In fact, many view fathering as more of a cultural phenomenon. There are few biological reasons for a father to parent his children. Trainer will then trace an outline of a male on the flipchart and ask participants to brainstorm the various "jobs" or responsibilities fathers have. In other words, what does the good father do? List inside the outline the tasks the group identifies.

Facilitate a large group discussion. Explain that historically fathers have fulfilled four critical roles in the lives of their children. They are (list either along side of father outline or on the other flipchart):

- ✓ Provide (fathers provide for their children financially)
- ✓ Protect (fathers keep children safe from harm and danger)
- ✓ Nurture (fathers provide their children with love and stability)
- ✓ Teach (fathers prepare children for entry in to the world)

While there may be differences in emphasis on these tasks, these father roles are reflected in all cultures. Remind participants that the process of locating and engaging fathers should start from the initial intake. It is also critical that all steps and efforts be documented.

Step 5:

To introduce this section, tell participants that biases are opinions that are influenced by personal experiences from which people have formed prejudices. They are personal and sometimes unreasonable judgments that can involve prejudiced thinking about how someone views a father's participation or nonparticipation in his child's life. Biases also vary from person to person and situation to situation. Display **Overhead #5 (Bias Definition)** and distribute **Handout #5 (What Are My Filters?)** and ask the participants to answer the questions.

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Section II: The Importance of Fathers (continued)

Step 5 (continued):

Tell them there is no right or wrong answers so they should answer quickly with the first thought that comes to their mind. Explain that no one else will see their answers, so they should answer as truthfully as they can.

After participants have answered the questions on the handout, ask the group how they felt about answering these types of questions. What emotions ran through their minds as they saw the questions and thought about the answers? The trainer should explain to the participants that they should not be ashamed or embarrassed about being biased about certain issues. Everyone has biases/filters about many issues, which differ in severity from person to person.

As Child Welfare Professionals; however, they need to be very careful about not allowing their personal biases about fathers to interfere with the work they do with families. Worker bias against father involvement is one of the most widely researched obstacles to a father's participation in case planning. A caseworker's attitude does make a difference. The first step in overcoming biases is to identify them. Tuning in to one's Self (Shulman Interactional Model) will make you more aware of your biases. It is only after identifying them that the Child Welfare Professional can make an effort to put these biases aside and keep an open mind when working with families and especially noninvolved fathers.

Step 6:

Distribute **Handout #6 (Research Findings About Father Involvement)** and allow a few minutes for participants to read over the data about fathers that are listed on the handout.

Then ask if any of the findings surprised them and briefly discuss these with the large group. Be sure to include the following points in the discussion:

- ✓ Some of the beliefs people have about father involvement may actually be fact, not biases.
- ✓ The Child Welfare Professional should be aware of personal biases about father involvement and be careful that these biases do not interfere in their work toward engaging fathers.
- ✓ Cultural issues may interfere in a father's involvement with his children.
- ✓ Fathers and mothers often differ in the amount of time spent parenting, but it is usually more advantageous to the children if both parents participate in childcare.
- ✓ Social standards and expectations might play a role in determining our behaviors towards absent fathers.
- ✓ Some theorize that, because it is women who give birth, men are not as biologically connected and involved in the daily care of their children. For this reason, fathers often need additional support systems.

305: Engaging Absent Fathers

Section II: The Importance of Fathers (continued)

Step 6 (continued):

- ✓ A man of any age who fathers a child without intending to is less likely to embrace the parenting role than a man who intends to become a father.
- ✓ Children with involved, loving fathers are significantly more likely to do well in school, have healthy self-esteem, exhibit empathy and pro-social behavior, and avoid high risk behaviors such as drug use, truancy, and criminal activity compared to children who have uninvolved fathers.

Step 7:

Distribute **Handout #7 (Fatherhood Test)** and have the participants complete the true and false test. The test compares fatherhood practices across various socioeconomic levels and cultures as well as providing other significant information on fathers. Allow time for the participants to share and discuss their answers at their tables.

Tell participants that in terms of cultural issues, there are more similarities than differences across racial/ethnic groups with regard to fathers' attitudes and behaviors toward their children. Distribute **Handout #8 (Trends in Fatherhood)** and discuss the following research trends (according to Child Trends) in the discussion:

- ✓ National studies have consistently found a link between strong socioeconomic status and father involvement. For instance, fathers with higher levels of education are more accessible to and engaged with their school-age children.
- ✓ Fathers who are able to provide economically for their children are more likely to stay invested in their marriages or partner relationships, and are more likely to be engaged with and nurturing of their children – even if they live apart from their children.
- ✓ Conversely, fathers who are unemployed or underemployed are more likely to limit their involvement with their families. This may be due in part to the high societal value placed on fathers as economic providers; some men may feel that if they are not able to provide financially for their family they should not (or cannot) be involved in other ways.
- ✓ Unemployed fathers are less likely to form families or assume responsibility for their children born outside of marriage.
- ✓ Research has revealed variations in the amount and type of father involvement based on the racial/ethnic background of the father.
- ✓ Several national surveys have found that African American fathers who do not live with their children are more likely than their white or Hispanic counterparts to share in housework or childcare tasks, participate in childrearing decisions, and visit their children.
- ✓ African American fathers have been found to be less likely than white fathers to read to their children, but are more likely than white fathers to play with them.

305: Engaging Absent Fathers

Section II: The Importance of Fathers (continued)

Step 7 (continued):

The following information is taken from *Father Facts* published by the National Fatherhood Initiative:

- ✓ About 40 percent of children in father-absent homes have not seen their fathers at all during the past year; 26 percent of absent fathers live in a different state than their children; and 50 percent of children living absent their fathers have never set foot in their father's home (Page 15);
- ✓ The United States is now the world leader in fatherless homes (page 24);
- ✓ Half of black children (49 percent) live with single mothers, compared to one in four Hispanic children (25 percent), and 1 in 6 white children (17 percent). (Page 26);
- ✓ Of the 24 million children living in father-absent homes, 64 percent are white, 32 percent are black, and 15 percent are Hispanic (persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race). (Page 26);
- ✓ 20 percent of non-residential fathers are estimated to earn less than \$6,000 a year (Page 84);
- ✓ Fathers with jobs and education are more likely to be involved with their children after divorce or a non-marital birth (Page 89);
- ✓ The typical male inmate grew up in a single parent home and had at least one family member who has been incarcerated (Page 91);
- ✓ African-American children are nearly 9 times more likely to have a parent in prison than white children. Hispanics are 3 times more likely to have a parent in prison than white children (Page 91);
- ✓ Ten million children have parents who have been incarcerated at some time in their lives (Page 91);
- ✓ The overall rate of child abuse and neglect in single-parent households is 27.3 children per 1,000, whereas the rate of overall maltreatment is 15.5 per 1,000 (page 103); and
- ✓ The poverty rate for children under age six living in single-mother families was 50 percent in 1999 (Page 131).

After reviewing the information, participants will be free to change any test answers they wish to. The answers are:

1. False
2. False
3. True
4. False (the answer is 50 percent)
5. False
6. True
7. True
8. True
9. False
10. True

305: Engaging Absent Fathers

Section II: The Importance of Fathers (continued)

Step 7 (continued):

Remind participants they should not stereotype people based on these cases. Then ask them if they would like to share any feelings, they may have about the information provided.

Step 8:

Instruct participants that they will be doing an art activity designed to have them examine the impact fathering from their fathers and father figures have had on their lives. Ask that they not begin the activity until all of the directions have been given.

Then provide the following directions:

Draw a picture of you and your father using the various art materials available on the table. It can be of any memory or experience you choose and at any stage of your growth and development. If you were raised without a father in your home, you may choose to draw a picture of you and another father figure such as a grandfather, uncle, stepfather, foster father, or mother's boyfriend. If you have difficulty identifying an alternative father figure, you may draw a picture of you and your fantasy father. Before, you begin there is just one more instruction. Please draw your picture using your non-dominant hand. Utilizing your "other" hand gives you less conscious control, putting you more in contact with the basic emotions you had as a child.

Allow ample time for participants to complete their drawings.

Step 9:

In small groups, have participants share their artwork. It is suggested that the trainer may want to model the sharing by have a drawing prepared of their own and sharing it with the large group prior to their beginning this activity. The drawing could be prepared on an overhead transparency. After all have completed sharing their stories, facilitate a discussion on their experience. Make sure that the following points are shared:

- ✓ Fathers have had a significant impact on our own lives either positively or negatively;
- ✓ The impact fathers have on their children is ongoing and can impact the next generation of children;
- ✓ Many children suffer from "father hunger" because their fathers were absent and/or not engaged in their lives;
- ✓ Children with disengaged fathers suffer "father wounds" as previously outlined in the training, i.e. poverty, poor academic performance, behavior problems; and
- ✓ Many fathers suffer from issues of father loss. Without help and support, this can negatively impact their commitment and ability to parent.

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Section II: The Importance of Fathers (continued)

Step 10:

To conclude this activity, the trainer will show two scenes from the **Video (Field of Dreams)**. In the first scene (clip starts at 1:12:16 and ends at 2:52), while riding in a van, farmer Ray Kinsella discusses his relationship and the falling out he had with his father as a teenager to novelist Terrance Mann. The second scene (to be shown immediately after the previous scene concludes) is the movies ending when Ray is reunited with his father and the father wound is healed. (Second clip starts at 1:32:40 and ends at 8:26) Trainer can introduce the movie scenes using some variation of the following:

“If you build it, he will come.” Thus begins the 1989 movie, **Field of Dreams**. Supported by his wife Annie, Iowa farmer Ray Kinsella listens to the mysterious voice and builds a ball field in the middle of his cornfield. In spite of the ridicule, he receives from relatives and community, Ray holds onto his dream. The ghosts of baseball players Shoeless Joe Jackson and his teammates, who can be seen only by Ray and his family, appear and play baseball on Ray’s field.

Trainer’s Note: It is suggested that if you as trainer have not previously seen this video, to watch the entire movie prior to this training to have a better understanding of Ray’s conflict and the troubled relationship he had with his father. This will better prepare you as the trainer to share background information and discuss the importance of the father/child relationship.

After the movie has concluded, allow a brief moment or two of quiet reflection. Entertain any comments the participants might want to share. If we are to engage fathers in the lives of their children, we must help them see the significant impact they have. Share that, in this activity, the participants once again practiced the Shulman skill of Tuning in to Self to examine their own father/child relationships and their impact.

Step 11:

Explain to participants that we will be looking at the rights of fathers as it relates to the child welfare system. Fathers can be defined legally in different terms. Display **Overhead #6 (Fatherhood Definitions)** and review the following definitions with the participants:

- ✓ **Legal Fathers** refer to biological, adoptive, or fathers established by court order after testing.
- ✓ **Putative Fathers** are fathers named by the mother (could or could not be listed on the birth certificate) but not proven by any court. If paternity is established, he becomes the legal father.

305: Engaging Absent Fathers

Section II: The Importance of Fathers (continued):

Step 11 (continued):

- ✓ **Presumptive Fathers** are fathers presumed by the law to be the fathers. The father or husband not in an intact family can rebut this. Presumptive fathers are usually the husband of the mother at conception or birth or a father named by the court after a default paternity (paternity test scheduled but father does not show).
- ✓ **Presumptive Legal Fathers** is the same as above.

Inform participants that it is also important to note that stepfathers in certain circumstances can be awarded custody rights. Fathers covered under all of these definitions are afforded the same rights. Distribute to the group **Handout #9 (Fatherhood Definitions)**.

Step 12:

Divide participants in a small group and have them generate a list on flip chart paper of what they feel are a father's legal rights while participating in the child welfare system. Have available copies of the Child Protective Service Law, the Juvenile Act, the Adoption and Safe Families Act, and the Indian Child Welfare Act. Each group will present their list. After a brief large group discussion, trainer will distribute **Handout #10 (Father's Legal Rights as a Parent)** and review with the group pertinent information.

Explain to participants that fathers have certain rights within ASFA such as to be involved in the development of the Family Service Plan. This is also a Commonwealth regulatory requirement as per Title 55, Pa. Code, Chapter 3130 (Administration of County Children and Youth Social Service Programs). The trainer should facilitate a large group discussion about the legal rights of a father under Title 55, Pa. Code Chapter 3130, Title 23, Pa. C.S. Chapter 63 (Child Protective Services Law), and 42 Pa. C.S. (Juvenile Act). The Indian Child Welfare Act (Section 1915 Foster care or adoptive placements part b) states that any child accepted for foster care or pre-adoptive placement shall be placed in the least restrictive setting which most approximates a family and in which his special needs, if any, may be met.

Assuring a father's rights is the legal responsibility of the Child Welfare Professional. Be sure to include the points listed on the handout in the discussion of father's rights.

Ultimately, fathers are afforded the same rights as mothers. Remind participants that the CFSR review indicated that Child Welfare Professionals needed to improve in locating fathers, engaging them in their children's lives and the child welfare process, and ensuring that they are afforded all of their rights as dads.

305: Engaging Absent Fathers

Section II: The Importance of Fathers (continued)

Step 13:

Ask participants if there might be times when a father should not be involved with his children and write these on a flip chart. Stress the following points in the discussion: Father Involvement is not a good idea when the emotional or physical well-being of the child might be at risk, and the father is physically or mentally abusive. In addition, Child Welfare Professionals may need to review court proceedings to find out if there is an existing agreement, contract, or court order, which may prohibit the father from seeing his children. This does not mean, however, that they should “write off” the father.

With an appropriate amount of support and services, there may be an opportunity for some fathers to develop a relationship with their children, as long as safety can be guaranteed when the child is in his care/company. The child’s safety will be paramount when considering reunification with the father. Even though a child can be safe in the father’s company for a short period of time, having custody of the child full-time as a single parent can be very stressful and may impact your decision to reunify.

Explain to participants that, as professionals, they must constantly weigh safety and risk factors against a father’s rights to see his child. If child safety or risk of harm is of concern, the Child Welfare Professional must establish a means of balancing the father’s right of engagement with his child against assuring the child’s safety and reducing the risk of harm. There is also a balancing act between the law (laws, policies, regulations) and best practice standards (Pennsylvania Standards for Child Welfare Practice, research). For example, the law says the father has the right to participate in the Family Service Plan, however, the extent to which this happens, and how it is documented, is agency policy.

Step 14:

Again, remind participants that, as Child Welfare Professionals, they must constantly weigh risk factors against a father’s rights to see his child. Child Welfare Professionals will, at times, encounter circumstances where engaging the father is not permissible (Section 63-02) of the Juvenile Act describes Aggravated Circumstances where the father is not to be involved. Ask participants their understanding of aggravated circumstances. Have the group generate a list of circumstances where the father should not be engaged. List on flipchart and discuss

Display **Overhead #7 (Definitions of Aggravated Circumstances)** and distribute **Handout #11 (Definitions of Aggravated Circumstances)**. They are:

- ✓ The child is in the custody of a county agency and either
 - i. The identity or whereabouts of the parents is unknown and cannot be ascertained and the parent does not claim the child within three months of the date the child was taken into custody; or

305: Engaging Absent Fathers

Section II: The Importance of Fathers (continued)

Step 14 (continued)

- ii. The identity or whereabouts of the parents is known and the parents have failed to maintain substantial and continuing contact with the child for a period of six months.
- ✓ The child or another child of the parent has been the victim of physical abuse resulting in serious bodily injury, sexual violence or aggravated physical neglect by the parent.
- ✓ The parent of the child has been convicted of any of the following offenses where the victim was a child:
 - i. Criminal homicide under 18 Pa.C.S. Ch. 25 (relating to criminal homicide);
 - ii. A felony under 18 Pa.C.S. §2702 (relating to aggravated assault), 3121 (relating to rape), 3122.1 (relating to statutory sexual assault), 3123 (relating to involuntary deviate sexual intercourse), 3124.1 (relating to sexual assault) or 3125 (relating to aggravated indecent assault).
 - iii. A misdemeanor under 18 Pa.C.S. §3126 (relating to indecent assault).
 - iv. An equivalent crime in another jurisdiction
- ✓ The attempt, solicitation or conspiracy to commit any of the offenses set forth in the above paragraph
- ✓ The parental rights of the parent have been involuntarily terminated with respect to a child of the parent

After reviewing this information with participations, point out that it is possible for the court to find Aggravated Circumstances yet still order reunification services. It is the child welfare agency's job to file the petition and bring it to the court's attention. The court, however, will render the decision.

Step 15:

Summarize this section by reminding participants that it is the Child Welfare Professional's responsibility to locate and involve fathers while ensuring the child's safety. Findings presented from the Pennsylvania Child and Family Service Review indicated that this is an area needing improvement. While workers may naturally harbor biases about certain people and situations, they must use extreme caution about not letting their biases interfere in case practice and their work with children and families. Regardless of our perceptions and biases towards fathers, the Child Welfare Professional must ensure that fathers are provided the same rights and services as our mothers. Fathers play a crucial role in the lives of children. Understanding that role can lead to better casework practice.

305: Engaging Absent Fathers

Section III: Locating Fathers

Estimated Length of Time:

1 hour

Learning Objectives:

The participants will be able to:

- ✓ Identify the five-step process for locating absent fathers.
- ✓ Identify how to establish paternity.

Method of Presentation:

Lecture, large group discussion

Materials Needed:

- ✓ SWAN Legal Service Initiative Diligent Search Package (1 per table)
- ✓ **Overhead #8 (Process of Locating Absent Fathers)**
- ✓ **Handout #12 (Process for Locating Absent Fathers)**
- ✓ **Handout #13 (Establishing Paternity)**

Resources Used:

None

PA Standards:

IIIN: Service Delivery: Conduct Outreach to Parents

CFSR Issues:

Permanency 2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.

Interactional Skills:

None

305: Engaging Absent Fathers

Section III: Locating Fathers (continued)

Outline of Presentation:

The trainer will:

- ✓ Facilitate a discussion about the steps to use for locating absent fathers.
- ✓ Facilitate a discussion about how to establish paternity.

Step 1:

Remind the participants that engaging a father is not only the best practice it is also the law. The Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) required Child Welfare Professionals to involve the parents (including fathers) in the case process.

Also, inform the participants that in addition to ASFA, The Administration of County Children and Youth Social Services Programs §3130.67 (relating to Placement planning) requires Child Welfare agencies to search for the least restrictive most family-like setting. When considering placement for the child, the father must be considered as a permanent placement option. Remind participants that they spent time in the previous section on the Importance of Fathers regarding the law and a father's rights.

Trainer Note: The information in this section may be a review for most participants. If this is the case, quickly review the information about how to locate fathers and establish paternity.

When it is in question whether the child can be returned to the biological mother, the biological father or the legal father can be considered for reunification. In some cases, the child may have both. The law is clear, however, that the father considered for reunification with the child should be the person who would serve the best interests of the child. In these cases, the agency can make a recommendation to the court.

Concurrent planning for the child's permanency needs to start the day the agency receives the case. Concurrent planning is working intensively toward reunification of a child with his or her family of origin while, at the same time, developing an alternative permanency goal for the child if he/she cannot return home. This practice allows Child Welfare Professionals to pursue more than one goal for the child. During the Intake process, Child Welfare Professionals can simultaneously attempt to locate a permanent or adoptive home for a child while they seek to preserve or reunite the child with his/her family. If efforts to locate a non-custodial father have been successful, and the child's mother is not being considered for reunification, the Child's Permanency Plan may need to be amended to reflect the father as an option for reunification.

Step 2:

Remind participants that one section of their pre-work assignment was to bring with them their agency's diligent search policy. Ask participants for the strategies they have used from their policy to successfully locate a missing father. Record these on a flip chart, then facilitate a discussion around the following questions:

305: Engaging Absent Fathers

Section III: Locating Fathers (continued)

Step 2 (continued):

- ✓ How easy was it to find people using these methods?
- ✓ Do you rely on some strategies more often than others?
- ✓ What is your comfort level using this type of detective work?

Step 3:

Explain to participants that there is a process to follow when trying to locate fathers. The process to locate a father goes from the least restrictive to the most restrictive. The process can be initiated by asking the mother or members of the extended family as to the whereabouts of the father. Sometimes, discovering a father's location comes about by checking the phone book. Distribute **Handout #12 (Process for Locating Absent Fathers)** while displaying **Overhead #8 (Process for Locating Absent Fathers)**.

Explain to participants that finding an absent father sometimes requires them to be a detective. In some cases, different techniques must be employed before successfully locating a father.

Step 4:

Point out the last point on page 2 of **Handout #12 (Process for Locating Absent Fathers)** that describes Diligent Search. Distribute *SWAN Legal Service Initiative Diligent Search Packet* (1 per table). Allow time for participants to review the packet. Survey the group to determine their level of familiarity with this tool. Inquire as to who has used it before in searching for absent fathers. Compare the steps outlined to the list generated by the group listed on the flip chart.

Step 5:

Distribute **Handout #13 (Establishing Paternity)** and discuss how to establish paternity and explain that if an application is made for cash assistance with the Income Maintenance Office for a dependent child living in a household, the applicant must agree to cooperate with paternity and child support requirements, unless there is good cause for not seeking support. Cooperation includes: providing information on the absent parent; participating in efforts to locate the absent parent; establish paternity and a child support order; remitting all child support payments to the state after cash assistance is authorized.

If there is an absent spouse, the applicant/recipient must cooperate in seeking financial support from the absent spouse, unless good cause exists for not seeking support. Persons who may be granted good cause for not cooperating with paternity and child/spousal support requirements include victims of Domestic Violence. If a man denies he is the father, or if the mother is unsure who the father is, blood or genetic tests can be completed to determine paternity.

305: Engaging Absent Fathers

Section III: Locating Fathers (continued)

Step 5 (continued):

The information sheet, *Establishing Paternity for Your Child at any Age*, can be obtained at <http://www.dpw.state.pa.us/child/childsupport/003670426.htm>. Once paternity has been established, a contact must be made to the biological father about his child. Explain that often times the biological father may not know he is a “father.”

Also, explain to participants that on occasions the man listed on the child’s birth certificate is not the biological father. If this is the case, the court identifies the name listed in the birth certificate and considers him to be the legal father. If the name on the birth certificate is determined not to be the biological father, the Child Welfare Professional must attempt to locate the biological father.

The law requires Child Welfare Professionals to attempt to locate both parents, which includes the father if he is not in the home. Any time “parent” is referred to in policy, it means both parents. Once a father is located and identified as a potential resource, the Child Welfare Professional must assure safety for the child when the father and child are together – especially when there may have been past issues of abuse or neglect, drug and alcohol, mental health, domestic violence, etc. by the father. A risk assessment must be completed before any attempts to reunite a child with their father. Additionally, a father’s strengths and needs must be assessed.

305: Engaging Absent Fathers

Section IV: Identifying Formal and Informal Support Services

Estimated Length of Time:

1 hour

Learning Objectives:

The participants will be able to:

- ✓ Identify formal and informal support services for absent fathers

Methods of Presentation:

Lecture, small and large group discussions, small group activity

Materials Needed:

- ✓ Index cards for matching game
- ✓ **Overhead #9 (Effective Father Programs)**
- ✓ **Overhead #10 (Resources and Support Services)**
- ✓ **Overhead #11 (Questions About Resources)**
- ✓ **Handout #14 (Resources and Support Services)**
- ✓ **Handout #15 (Defining Fathers' Growth Toward Self Improvement)**
- ✓ **Handout #16 (Activities for Fathering)**
- ✓ **Handout #17 (Fathers and Child Development)**
- ✓ **Handout #18 (Bibliography)**
- ✓ **Handout #19 (Computer Sites)**

Resources Used:

Levine, James A. with Edward W. Pitt. *New Expectations, Community Strategies for Responsible Fatherhood*. New York, NY: Families and Work Institute, 1995.

Roulet, M. (no date available). Fatherhood programs and domestic violence. Center on Fathers, Families, and Public Policy.

Sylvester, K., & Reich, K. (2000). Restoring fathers to families and communities: Six steps for policymakers. Baltimore, MD: The Social Policy Action Network.

PA Standards:

IIG: Include Formal and Informal Services

IIH: Service Planning: Involve Extended Family as a Resource

IIID: Service Delivery: Assure Service Needs

IIIN: Service Delivery: Conduct Outreach to Parents

CFSR Issues:

Well Being 1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.

Interactional Skills:

None

305: Engaging Absent Fathers

Section IV: Identifying Formal and Informal Support Services

Outline of Presentation:

The trainer will:

- ✓ Facilitate a small group activity for participants to list resources available in their area.
- ✓ Facilitate a discussion about community resources and support services available to fathers.
- ✓ Facilitate a discussion about collaborating to coordinate services.
- ✓ Distribute and discuss handouts on resources for participants and to share with fathers.

Step 1:

If absent fathers are to successfully engage their children, they can benefit from a variety of both formal and informal support systems and resources. Fathers may be lacking in parenting skills, knowledge about their children's stages of growth and development, and appropriate activities to do with their children. Fathers may also have a variety of personal issues they must address such as issues of anger, past domestic violence, lack of employment, or drug and alcohol issues. It becomes the Child Welfare Professional's responsibility to assess a father's strengths and needs, connect fathers with the appropriate services, have necessary releases signed, and communicate with the agencies providing these services.

Inform the participants that referrals should be made to programs that are "Father Friendly." Ask participants what comes to mind when they hear the term "Father Friendly?" List on a flip chart and lead a large group discussion. Make the following points. Father friendly services:

- ✓ Value fathers and the role they play;
- ✓ Address a fathers needs;
- ✓ Are supportive; not punitive;
- ✓ Are respectful of gender differences in parenting;
- ✓ Where possible, provide positive male models;
- ✓ Provide services at times and locations that are accessible to fathers;
- ✓ Provide an environment that is inviting to fathers (note that the training room is set up to be father friendly).

Step 2:

From their pre-work assignment, ask participants to share the three examples of services they refer absent fathers to. Based on the factors previously listed, do they consider these programs friendly to fathers? Have these support services proven to be effective?

305: Engaging Absent Fathers

Section IV: Identifying Formal and Informal Support Services (continued)

Step 2 (continued):

Share with participants that James Levine in his book, *New Expectations, Community Strategies for Responsible Fatherhood* assesses the quality of fatherhood programs using the following criteria and display **Overhead #9 (Effective Father Programs)**:

- ✓ **Prevent.** Effective fatherhood programs emphasize male responsibility. The importance of delaying fatherhood until a man feels ready to be a dad is emphasized. If a young man is already a father, emphasis is placed on not having additional children until he feels ready.
- ✓ **Prepare.** Programs and services are geared towards teaching new and perspective fathers the responsibilities of fatherhood. This includes financial, legal, and emotional responsibilities.
- ✓ **Establish.** Effective programs promote establishing paternity at childbirth so that every father has, at the very least, a legal connection to his children.
- ✓ **Involve.** Programs reach out to men regardless of their relationship with the mother and foster an emotional connection and financial support of their children.
- ✓ **Support.** Effective programs support fathers in an ongoing fashion as they develop connections with their children. Linking fathers with other dads and support groups once a specific program is completed is important.

Explain to participants that resources and support services for fathers can be multifaceted. All potential resources should be assessed for father friendliness and effectiveness. Also, emphasize, that father programs can be more informal in nature. For example, using the members of the father's extended family or introducing him to older, experienced dads who can play a mentoring role has proven to be a highly effective strategy. As a dad increases his level of contact and parental responsibility with his children, he will experience a variety of issues and stressors that he will have to contend with and he can benefit from ongoing support.

Distribute **Handout #14 (Resources and Support Services)** and display **Overhead #10 (Resources and Support Services)**.

The trainer should facilitate a large group discussion about accessing services between various support systems with which the father may be involved. Be sure to include the following points in the discussion:

- ✓ Fatherhood programs should address domestic violence within the context of all of the other issues they address.
- ✓ Have the "sign-off" forms available for the father to sign permission for discussion between the various service providers. Remind them that they will not be able to give or receive information from a service provider without the father's written permission. It is important that the Child Welfare Professional communicate freely and frequently with the service providers.
- ✓ Offer employment assistance that might address issues other than just finding employment.

305: Engaging Absent Fathers

Section IV: Identifying Formal and Informal Support Services (continued)

Step 2 (continued):

- ✓ Support – or start – an alumni group of dads who have successfully engaged with their child.
- ✓ Provide an environment that encourages learning and will address identified barriers to effective fathering.
- ✓ First and foremost, help to ensure the protection of children and families.

Remind participants that the Child Welfare Professional should document – in writing – what they have done for the father in terms of accessing services, everything should be listed. It is better to have too much information than not enough.

Step 3:

We provide services to children. The Child Welfare Professional may be in a position to recommend services to fathers they are trying to engage especially if reunification with the father is the child's permanency goal. As a review, display **Overhead #11 (Questions about Resources)** and have the groups discuss the following questions:

- ✓ What kinds of services/agencies might need to be recommended for fathers trying to engage more actively with their children?
- ✓ What resources are available in their areas?
- ✓ Are there programs in your community specifically for fathers such as a dad's group?

Trainer Note: The next four steps contain information that is resource material for the participants as they work toward engaging fathers more fully into their child's life. The trainer should distribute the handouts and give a very brief description of what is on the handouts. The trainer should not try to teach all of the information that is on each of the handouts. Explain to the participants that they can either provide a father with a copy of the handout or relate to him the information that would be helpful.

Step 4:

Distribute **Handout #15 (Defining Fathers' Growth Toward Self Improvement)** and explain to the participants that this handout contains information that might be useful for them to share with fathers and is meant to be a resource that they can use as they work to engage fathers. Briefly explain that the handout includes resource services they might recommend to a father, which would increase his self-esteem, and would then hopefully give him a better view of himself as a parent. Do they know what agencies they would refer fathers to in their communities to address these areas of need?

305: Engaging Absent Fathers

Section IV: Identifying Formal and Informal Support Services (continued)

Step 4 (continued):

Distribute **Handout #16 (Activities for Fathering)** and **Handout #17 (Fathers and Child Development)** and explain that these handouts contain information that might be useful for them to share with fathers and are meant to be resources that they can use as they work to engage fathers. Briefly explain that the first handout includes ideas of activities they could recommend to a father. Remind them that appropriate activities should be based on the child's age and development. Also, point out, the majority of these activities have no or minimal cost. Finances are frequently a problem for absent fathers. As fathers engage in activities with their children, they need to have a realistic view of what their children are and are not capable of doing both mentally and physically. The second handout includes age appropriate activities a father can engage in with his child.

Optional Activity

The following activity is designed to emphasize the importance of fathers having a basic knowledge of child growth and development. *If time permits*, the trainer may want to conduct this activity. Prepare 7 index cards per set with the following ages:

- ✓ Newborn
- ✓ 1 to 4 months
- ✓ 4 to 8 months
- ✓ 8 to 12 months
- ✓ 12 to 18 months
- ✓ 18 to 24 months
- ✓ 2 to 3 years old

The next 7 index cards contain titles and descriptions of children at each of these stages. They are:

- ✓ **Heads –Up.** I'm new to the world and need time to adjust. I sleep a lot. I need love and care. I need to be held, fed, and comforted when I cry so that I can learn to trust that people will take care of me.
- ✓ **The Looker.** I'm beginning to look around and explore with my eyes in a new way. I move my body from stomach to back. I'm beginning to put objects in my mouth.
- ✓ **The Creeper-Crawler.** I'm sitting up with little or no support. I'm beginning to creep and crawl. I crawl to objects and explore them by putting them in my mouth or shaking them.
- ✓ **The Cruiser.** I pull myself up to a standing position and use furniture to support myself while I walk around the room. I may begin to walk during this time. I like to try new things like turning the knobs on the TV, stereo, or pulling on the handles of the cabinets.
- ✓ **The Walker.** I can walk and spend most of the time trying to push and pull things around the room. I can reach for an object that is in a high place by pushing a chair close to the object, then I climb on the chair, and then reach what I want.

305: Engaging Absent Fathers

Section IV: Identifying Formal and Informal Support Services (continued)

Step 4 (continued):

- ✓ **The Doer.** I am exploring everything. I'm getting into cabinets and drawers. I am dumping containers. Sometimes I put things I dump back into the containers. I like playing in water and being messy. I sometimes play in the toilet bowl.
- ✓ **The Tester.** I like to ask questions that start with how come, why, and what for. I like to do things for myself. I repeat everything I hear.

Lay out the 7 age-range cards in chronological order. Mix up the 7 description cards and give them to each group. See if the groups can successfully match the correct cards.

After the activity is completed, generate a discussion on why they think it is important for fathers to have a basic understanding of their children's growth and development (i.e. realistic expectations, appropriate discipline, choosing play activities). Inform the participants that fathers can more effectively fill their roles of provider, protector, nurturer, and teacher when they have a better understanding of their children's developmental needs.

Step 5:

Distribute **Handout #18 (Bibliography)** and explain that this handout lists resources for the Child Welfare Professional. Many of them include advice for working with fathers as well as activities fathers can participate in with their children.

Step 6:

Distribute **Handout #19 (Computer Sites)** and point out that this site lists many of the electronic links that may be helpful for themselves as well as computer savvy fathers. A brief description of the type of information fathers can access at these sites is provided. Also, by performing a "search" they can access literally thousands of sites that may contain additional helpful information.

Step 7:

Using the handouts provided, instruct participants to identify three or four resources from the handouts that they could use with a father on their caseload. Ask one or two volunteers to share the resources they selected and the reasons for their selections.

Summarize this section by telling participants that they should encourage the father to participate in as many activities and services as he can. It may take some time. Some fathers may be ready to jump into everything, while others will be reluctant to do anything. Also, some fathers may need more support than others when they consider the responsibility of reunification with their child.

305: Engaging Absent Fathers

Section IV: Identifying Formal and Informal Support Services (continued)

Step 7 (continued):

Again, if the father has a financial hardship, the Child Welfare Professional can assist him in finding activities that he can do with his child that are free or inexpensive. A good place to start is with the school. For school age children, involvement in helping them with their homework is a good way for a father to connect to what is happening in his child's academic life. An added benefit is that research has shown that children whose parents are involved in their schooling are more successful academically.

305: Engaging Absent Fathers

Section V: Identifying a Father's Strengths and Needs

Estimated Length of Time:

1 hour, 30 minutes

Learning Objectives:

Participants will be able to:

- ✓ Assess an absent father's strengths and needs using the risk assessment and safety assessment
- ✓ Determine an absent father's appropriateness as a permanency resource

Method of Presentation:

Lecture, large group discussions, individual and small group activity, video

Materials Needed:

- ✓ Flip chart paper
- ✓ Markers
- ✓ TV/VCR
- ✓ **Handout #20 (Desmond Doyle Case Study)**
- ✓ **Handout #21 (Video Questions)**
- ✓ **Handout #22 (Pennsylvania Risk Assessment Form)**
- ✓ **Handout #23 (Risk/Severity Continuum)**
- ✓ **Handout #24 (Safety Assessment Worksheet and Instructions)**
- ✓ **Video (Evelyn)**
- ✓ Pennsylvania Model Risk Assessment Forms
- ✓ Safety Assessment Worksheet and Instructions

Resources Used:

Rycus, J. S., & Hughes, R. C. (1998). *Field Guide to Child Welfare*. Washington, DC: CWLA Press.

Brosnan, P., St. Clair, B., & Ohoven, M. (Producers), Beresford, B. (Director). (2002). *Evelyn* [Motion Picture]. A Republic of Ireland-United Kingdom Co. Production: Metro Goldwyn Mayer (MGM).

PA Standards:

IB: Assessment: Conduct Risk Assessment

IE: Assessment: Produce Family-Focused Assessment

IF: Assessment: Assess Interrelationships of Critical Issues

CFSR Issues:

Permanency 2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.

Well-Being 1: Families Have enhanced capacities' to provide for their children's needs.

Interactional Skills:

Tuning in to the phase of the helping process you're in

305: Engaging Absent Fathers

Section V: Identifying a Father's Strengths and Needs (continued)

Outline of Presentation:

The trainer will:

- ✓ Show a video that demonstrates how to assess a father's potential parenting ability.
- ✓ Facilitate an individual activity about the video.
- ✓ Facilitate a small group activity on recognizing a father's strengths and needs.
- ✓ Facilitate a discussion about documenting efforts to engage fathers.

Step 1:

Explain to the participants that there might be times when it may not be safe for a father to be alone with his child in an unsupervised setting due to safety concerns. In the beginning, it may be appropriate, however, to have a father meet with his child in a controlled, supervised setting for short periods of time with the purpose of gradually increasing visits over time as long as safety can be assured.

The trainer should then remind participants that, throughout the engagement process they should continuously assess the father's areas of strengths, needs, and potential for safely parenting. Explain to the participants the difference between a deficit model (an assumption that deficit traits and behaviors are permanent conditions, immutable and unchangeable) and a developmental model (it recognizes the importance of environmental context, and suggests that with the proper interventions and support, most people can learn new and different ways of behaving and rearing their children) of assessment. In public Child Welfare, best practice is to work from a strengths focused developmental model.

Trainer may choose to share that in his book, *The Strengths Perspective in Social Work Practice (1997)*, Dennis Saleebey articulates that in a strengths-based approach:

- ✓ All persons possess strengths they can marshal to address problems.
- ✓ Client motivation is increased by an emphasis on client-defined strengths.
- ✓ Discovering strengths require a collaborative effort between clients and helpers.
- ✓ Focusing on strengths turns helpers away from the temptation to judge or blame clients for their difficulties and toward discovering how they have managed to survive.
- ✓ All environments, even the most bleak, contain resources.

The risk assessment identifies strengths, as well as factors that put a child at risk of future harm. Areas of deficit require services so that the father can reach his potential as a parent. The Child Welfare Professional should then incorporate these identified areas into the Family Service Plan for the child. If the father is suitable as a permanent living arrangement for his child, the child's permanency plan should reflect the goal of reunification with the father – especially if reunification with the mother is not possible. If the father is not a suitable permanent living arrangement for the child, the Child Welfare Professional, and the father together need to determine how the father can best support the child's permanency goal.

305: Engaging Absent Fathers

Section V: Identifying a Father's Strengths and Needs (continued)

Step 1 (continued):

Likewise, the Safety Assessment process is an ongoing assessment designed to identify protective factors and threats to a child's safety. Where safety issues are noted, the Child Welfare Professional seeks to identify protective factors that mitigate the threat to the child's safety. Inform participants that they will have the opportunity to make use of the Pennsylvania Risk Assessment Form and the Safety Assessment Worksheet. Have participants brainstorm some strengths they have seen in families and write their responses on a flip chart. The purpose of this activity is to enable participants to think about strengths prior to watching the clip.

Step 2:

Explain to participants that they will be viewing a portion of a video that portrays a true story of a father's fight for visitation and custody rights to his children. The clip they will see is about assessing a father's ability to have his children returned to him. The film is entitled "***Evelyn***." Prior to viewing the **Video (Evelyn)**, provide the participants **Handout #20 (Desmond Doyle Case Study)** and allow time for each participant to individually read the handout. Then, provide time for the participants to share their initial reactions to Mr. Doyle. Solicit comments from the group prior to watching the video clip.

Step 3:

Distribute **Handout #21 (Video Questions)** before watching the video. Show the first clip from the **Video (Evelyn)**. (Clip begins at 1:07:18 and runs until when the judges render their decision.) Following the video clip, allow a few minutes for participants to individually answer the questions on the handout if they have not already done so.

Step 4:

Divide the room into two groups (Additional groups can be formed if the group is quite large). Provide each group copies of **Handout #22 (Pennsylvania Risk Assessment Form)**, **Handout #23 (Risk/Severity Continuum)** and **Handout #24 (Safety Assessment Worksheet and Instructions)**. Using their case study handout, information they gathered viewing the video, and the risk and safety assessment forms as guides, each group will identify the father's major strengths and risks. A spokesperson will be identified to share their findings to the entire group.

Step 5:

Provide the groups some flip chart paper and instruct them that they will be preparing for court. Each group should identify a recorder and a "lawyer." Tell one group they are the "pro" group and will list all the things they learned in the case study and saw in the testimony that could be reasons why the father should be reunified with his children.

305: Engaging Absent Fathers

Section V: Identifying a Father's Strengths and Needs (continued)

Step 5 (continued):

The second group will be the "con" group and should list all the reasons they identified as to why the father should not get his children back. Allow 10-15 minutes for the groups to make their lists. Then have each side hang their flip chart paper and present their arguments. Again, trainer may choose to have additional groups and allow multiple presentations if the group is large.

Step 6:

As a large group discussion, have the participants go back through the lists for both sides of the argument and discuss the listed points that would not likely be accepted in a court of law. Summarize this section by reminding participants that it is extremely important for them to document everything they do when working to engage a father with his children. It is better to have too much information rather than not enough. Also, remind them that they should view the father's relationship with his child as a process, not an event.

Step 7:

Trainer will then show the next scene from the movie as the judges render their decision. (Clip starts at the end of the previous clip.) After the scene is completed, facilitate a large group discussion on the video and this activity emphasizing the following teaching points in the discussion:

- ✓ Fathers historically have not been considered for custody.
- ✓ The third judge considered emotional points as well as other relevant decisions prior to making his statement and decision.
- ✓ We, as Child Welfare Professionals, need to understand the bonding that takes place with a parent if we are to engage fathers.

Step 8:

Conclude this section by once again emphasizing the importance of identifying a father's strengths. The identification of a father's strengths will be a key step as participants look at the engagement process in the next session.

305: Engaging Absent Fathers

Section VI: Engaging Fathers

Estimated Length of Time:

4 hours

Learning Objectives:

Participants will be able to:

- ✓ Develop strategies to engage fathers in the casework process
- ✓ Apply strategies to locate absent fathers
- ✓ Develop strategies to assist absent fathers in being involved with their children

Method of Presentation:

Lecture, small and large group discussions, individual activity, small group activity, video

Materials Needed:

- ✓ Blank flip chart paper
- ✓ Markers
- ✓ TV/VCR
- ✓ **Overhead #12 (Barriers to Father Involvement)**
- ✓ **Overhead #13 (Strategies for Enlisting Mothers and Resource Family Support)**
- ✓ **Overhead #14 (Phases of the Shulman Helping Model)**
- ✓ **Overhead #15 (Shulman Helping Skills)**
- ✓ **Overhead #16 (Tips for Fathers – Pennsylvania Family Support Alliance)**
- ✓ **Overhead #17 (Father/Child Reunion Tips)**
- ✓ **Handout #25 (Engaging a Specific Father)**
- ✓ **Handout #26 (Barriers to Father Involvement)**
- ✓ **Handout #27 (Thompson/Jacobs Script Part I)**
- ✓ **Handout #28 (Thompson/Jacobs Script Part II)**
- ✓ **Video (The Great Santini)**
- ✓ **Video (Father's Day)**

Resources Used:

Blumenthal, K., & Weinberg, A. (1984). *Establishing parent involvement in foster care agencies*. New York: Child Welfare League of America.

Bryan, Mark. *The prodigal father, reuniting fathers with their children*. New York, NY: Three Rivers Press, 1997.

Flatter, C., Herzog, J. M., Tyson, P., & Ross, K. *The father's role. Sesame workshop*. (<http://www.ctw.org/parents/advice>)

Halle, T., Moore, K., Greene, A., & LeMenestrel, S. M. (1998). *What policymakers need to know about fathers*. Policy & practice.

305: Engaging Absent Fathers

Section VI: Engaging Fathers (continued)

Resources Used (continued):

Kivel, Paul. *Men's work, How to stop the violence that tears our lives apart*. Center City, MN. Hazelden Education Materials, 1992.

Levine, James A. with Edward W. Pitt. *New expectations, Community strategies for responsible fatherhood*. New York, NY: Families and Work Institute, 1995.

Pennsylvania Family Support Alliance Parenting Brochures (Parenting from a Distance, Help for Parents with Children in Placement; Parenting from the Inside, Help for Incarcerated Parents; Parenting with Hope and Health, Help for Parents with Mental Illness; Parenting One Day at a Time, Help for Parents in Recovery) Harrisburg, PA. 2005. (<http://pennsylvaniafamilysupportalliance.org>).

Shulman, Lawrence. *The skills of helping individuals, families, groups, and communities* (4th ed.). Belmont, CA. Brooks/Cole.

PA Standards:

IIIN: Service Delivery: Conduct Outreach to Parents

CFSR Issues:

Permanency 1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.

Permanency 2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.

Well-Being 1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.

Interactional Skills:

Tuning in to Self

Tuning in to Others

Clarifying Purpose

Reaching for Feedback

Reaching for Feelings

Providing Relevant Data

Displaying belief in the potential of the work

Identifying next steps

Transfer of the Learning

305: Engaging Absent Fathers

Section VI: Engaging Fathers

Outline of Presentation:

The trainer will:

- ✓ Facilitate an individual activity identifying a father from the participant's agency.
- ✓ Assist participants in identifying barriers to father involvement.
- ✓ Facilitate a discussion about a continuum of involvement for fathers.
- ✓ Facilitate a discussion about strategies for engaging fathers in the case planning process.
- ✓ Demonstrate engagement skills utilizing a practice interview.
- ✓ Provide the opportunity for participants to practice engagement skills and receive motivational and corrective feedback from trainer and participants.
- ✓ Facilitate an activity using a case study to identify strategies for re-engaging absent fathers in their children's lives.

Step 1:

Inform participants that they will be looking at engagement in two settings. The first setting will focus on the engagement process that takes place between the Child Welfare Professional and the father. Using the phases of the helping process and skills from the Shulman Interactional model, trainer will explain the engagement process and then demonstrate how the process might look. Participants will first observe, then practice the skills needed to facilitate the engagement process with fathers and receive feedback.

The second setting will focus on how the Child Welfare Professional can help facilitate the father's engagement with his children. No matter how much a father may want to connect with his children, he may find the task challenging, particularly if he has been absent for some time.

Step 2:

Allow participants enough time to complete **Handout #25 (Engaging a Specific Father)**. After all have finished, allow time for small group sharing and discussion. Trainer may choose to remind participants of the rule of confidentiality and the importance of not disclosing anything shared during this discussion outside of the training room. Participants in the group should be encouraged to offer their thoughts and suggestions as each participant has an opportunity to share their case example.

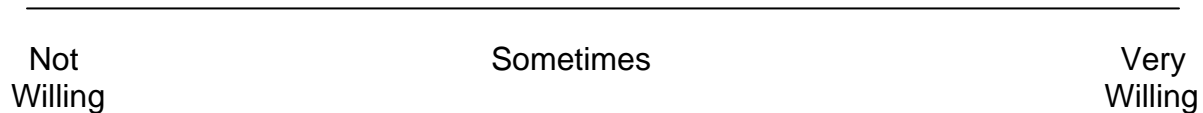
After the groups have finished their discussion, solicit one or two cases that were discussed and the strategies that were shared. Inform participants that they will be using this identified father in upcoming activities designed to apply the skills of engagement.

305: Engaging Absent Fathers

Section VI: Engaging Fathers (continued)

Step 3:

The trainer should draw a line on flip chart paper to signify a continuum. Write the words “Not Willing” on the left of the line, “Sometimes” in the middle, and “Very Willing” on the other end. See the figure below.



Using the father they identified, ask participants individually to identify where they would place this father regarding his readiness and willingness to be involved in the case planning process and the lives of his children. Ask for a volunteer from the group to share where he or she has placed that father and marked it on the continuum written on the flip chart.

Then ask the participants to mentally place this father on the continuum at the place they see him in six months. Have the volunteer share where he or she anticipates the father to be in six months and mark it on the continuum.

Tell participants that even if a father is presently at the “Not Willing” end of the continuum and achieves very small goals such as sending his child a birthday card, there is hope for reunification if he has moved forward on the continuum. They should view the father’s relationship with his child as a process, not an event. Even if they do not see this father as a viable option for reunification at the present time, the father can still be a part of his child’s life as long as safety is not compromised.

Ask participants if they have fathers in their caseload that, they feel, are not making progress on this continuum. What do they see as the barriers? Generate a brief large group discussion to transition to the next activity.

Trainer Note: The trainer should explain to the participants that using a continuum to view what they believe are the chances of having a successful reunion of the father into his child’s life, will assist them in thinking about the actions they might need to take to reach this success. If they see the father’s success rate toward the right end of the continuum, the Child Welfare Professional may have a successful reunion between father and child with minimal input on their behalf. However, if they view the father’s success rate toward the left end of the continuum, they may need to work harder at assisting the father with engagement strategies, and for a longer period of time, before a successful engagement may be achieved. Viewing success on a continuum will also assist the Child Welfare Professional in feeling less frustrated in those cases they view as a challenge from the beginning. This activity focuses on the Shulman skill of identifying next steps. Again, engagement needs to be viewed as an ongoing process as opposed to an event.

305: Engaging Absent Fathers

Section VI: Engaging Fathers (continued)

Step 4:

In their small groups, provide participants either flip chart paper and markers or overhead transparencies with appropriate markers. Have the groups generate a “Top Ten List” of the reasons fathers give for being absent, not being involved, or not being more involved in their children’s lives. Each group will then give a presentation to the larger group using the lists they developed.

After the presentations are completed, ask participants to identify the reasons fathers give which they feel are valid and the reasons that they view as “excuses.” Facilitate a large group discussion on the group’s perceptions. The trainer should challenge excuses, encouraging the participants to look at them more closely to determine if there is degree of truth in what the father is saying. Point out difference of opinions that are expressed as well as the reasons for these differences. Make the following points:

- ✓ There can be many barriers to father engagement;
- ✓ We may have differences of opinion as to how valid these barriers are; and
- ✓ The Child Welfare Professional must anticipate and address barriers to male involvement if they are to effectively engage the absent father.

Share with the group the following barriers to father involvement noted in various resources using **Overhead #12 (Barriers to Father Involvement)** and **Handout #26 (Barriers to Father Involvement)**:

- ✓ Child Welfare Professional and systemic bias;
- ✓ Overburdened workers may be hesitant to involve non-custodial fathers;
- ✓ Mothers’ gate keeping;
- ✓ Characteristics of non-custodial fathers (i.e., incarceration, homelessness, significant impairment by substance abuse, military, unable to contribute emotional or mental support to the mother or children);
- ✓ Child Welfare Professional’s reluctance to involve a male perpetrator;
- ✓ Domestic violence;
- ✓ Father does not know he is a father;
- ✓ Father has a new family to think about;
- ✓ Geographic mobility;
- ✓ Remarriage of either parent;
- ✓ Inability to establish a workable childrearing arrangement with the mother;
- ✓ Lack of access due to actions of the mother;
- ✓ Psychological pain at not being able to see his children in the same manner as before may cause the father to remove himself entirely to reduce the pain;
- ✓ Inadequate financial resources;
- ✓ Father’s lacking confidence in their parenting skills;
- ✓ Lack of appropriate male models for dads;
- ✓ Lack of support and encouragement from the father’s extended family;
- ✓ Ambivalence in society over the father’s role (viewing fatherhood as optional and not a necessity to wellbeing of children); and
- ✓ Fathers’ frustration in dealing with the legal system and various bureaucracies.

305: Engaging Absent Fathers

Section VI: Engaging Fathers (continued)

Step 4 (continued):

Have participants share their reactions to this list. Do they view these barriers as valid? Note that some of these barriers can be directly related to the child welfare system such as staff bias regarding a father's involvement. Others may be caused by the demands placed on the Child Welfare Professionals (i.e. too many cases, not enough time, lack of support from the agency around the issue of father engagement). Still other barriers are reflective of the father's environment and issues he brings to the helping intervention.

Trainer Note: The trainer should be aware of timing during this section. While it is important to adequately cover the barriers to father involvement, trainer should be cautious of time and avoid allowing group discussion to go on too long.

Step 5:

Provide each table a piece of flip chart paper. Using barriers identified from the previous activity and discussion, have participants brainstorm strategies to engage a father who has been reluctant to involve himself in the case planning process and spend time with his child, and write the ideas on the flip chart paper. Have a spokesperson from each group present their list to the larger group.

Remind participants that in the *Section on Identification of Formal and Informal Support Services* they reviewed James Levine's criteria for assessing the effectiveness of father programs (prevent, prepare, establish, involve, and support. His criteria can be used as an effective tool in categorizing strategies to addressing the barriers to father involvement. For example, effective father programs:

- ✓ **Prevent.** Although already fathers, it is important to emphasize to men their responsibility as fathers. Fathers need to understand the importance of father involvement and the negative consequences children experience through father-loss and inadequate fathering. Fatherhood is not to be taken lightly. It is important for them to realize that, though provision for one's children is important to their children's wellbeing, they must also do the job of protecting, nurturing, and teaching their children.
- ✓ **Prepare.** Fathers must have the knowledge, skills, and financial resources available to adequately care for their children. Studies indicate that a very high percentage of so-called "deadbeat dads" are, in reality, dead-broke dads lacking the skills and education to acquire meaningful employment. In addition to job training, many dads can benefit from referral to housing assistance programs, parenting classes, specialized co-parenting programs for single and divorced fathers, programs for incarcerated and previously incarcerated fathers, and programs to address mental health, substance abuse, anger management or domestic violence programs.
- ✓ **Establish.** The training has previously addressed the issue of establishing paternity. Fathers may need guidance through this process. Referral to Domestic Relations and legal aide services can greatly aid fathers.

305: Engaging Absent Fathers

Section VI: Engaging Fathers (continued)

Step 5 (continued):

- ✓ **Involve.** The Child Welfare Professional can facilitate the engagement process by setting the stage for fathers to effectively connect with their children. They can help accomplish this by addressing barriers, particularly ones that may exist between the father and the biological mother or the father and the Resource Family (i.e. foster family, kinship care). If they are to be effective, the agency must provide them the opportunity to develop the skills needed to successfully engage fathers. Again, programs and services need to be “Father Friendly” conveying to fathers that they are valued and respected.
- ✓ **Support.** Fathers need ongoing support. As their involvement increases, so will their responsibilities and stress level. Child Welfare Professionals can aid fathers by helping them identify supports that will continue to be available beyond the “life” of this case. Helping fathers enhance their problem-solving and decision-making capabilities that they can continue to utilize will also prove a definite plus. It is also critical that the Child Welfare Professional feels supported by their agency in their efforts to locate and engage fathers.

Step 6:

Tell participants that, depending on past history, the child’s biological mother or Resource Family may be interfering in the engagement process of the child and his father. The biological mother can play the role of “gatekeeper” either allowing or hindering access to the children. Likewise, the Resource Family can play that role. Without either’s cooperation, the father, no matter how willing, can be frustrated in his attempts to connect with his children. The Child Welfare Professional may need to work with the mother or Resource Family in order to engage the father. After establishing that there is no court order denying the father visitation with his child, parameters may have to be established with the mother or Resource Family, who might not want the children to see their father, even in cases where reunification with the mother is not an option.

Ask participants if anyone has had to approach this issue with either the biological mother or Resource Families and how effective they felt their efforts were taken. List the various strategies offered by the group and discuss. Display **Overhead #13 (Strategies for Enlisting Mothers and Resource Family Support)** and make sure the following strategies that can be used with reluctant mothers or Resource Families are included in the discussion:

- ✓ Explain that the father has legal rights to see his children.
- ✓ If the mother is suffering from a mental health disorder or substance abuse, she needs support to get the help she needs.
- ✓ Educate the mothers and Resource Families in understanding that children have a right to get to know their father.
- ✓ Be sure to listen to what the mother is saying about the father. Sometimes what mothers are not disclosing is as important as what they are saying in terms of the father’s relationship with his children.

305: Engaging Absent Fathers

Section VI: Engaging Fathers (continued)

Step 6 (continued):

- ✓ Assure them that safety for the children will always be a priority, although the Child Welfare Professional will not relay everything that is discussed with the father. Some things must be confidential.
- ✓ Do not assume everything a mother says about the father is true. The Child Welfare Professional should establish a separate set of facts by contacting the father.
- ✓ Point out the important role Resource Families play in the reunification process.
- ✓ Do not expect things to be perfect – by the Child Welfare Professional, the Resource Family, the mother, the father, or the children. This is real life, not television!
- ✓ Supervised contact may be needed at first in order to ensure child safety.

Step 7:

The trainer has the option to use the following activity if time permits and it is felt to be relevant to the issues raised during the course of the training. Inform participants that many fathers lacked positive father models while growing up. This creates another barrier to male involvement by creating a distorted view for how men should behave. The following activity is frequently used in domestic violence programs to help men tune in to themselves and identify how they define manhood.

Inform participants that they will be participating in an activity called, “*Act Like a Man*”. To prepare for this activity, participants will view a clip from the **Video (The Great Santini)**. (Scene starts at 1:02:59 and ends at 8:50) Introduce the movie clip by sharing some variation of the following:

Bull Meechum (played by Robert Duvall), a colonel in the Marines rules the family with a heavy hand. He demands complete obedience from his wife and four children. He attempts to run the family like the military. He even has the children line up for inspection before they are permitted to leave for school. Colonel Meechum is an alcoholic. At times, he has been physically abusive towards his wife and his discipline has been “inappropriate.” After losing a game of one-on-one basketball to his oldest son, in a fit of rage, he behaves in a threatening fashion towards his wife and other children. He then refuses to accept defeat and attempts to force his son to continue the game. When he refuses, Meechum repeatedly bounces a basketball off his son’s head calling him a momma’s boy as his son attempts to get away from him. The scene you will view centers around the father attending his son’s high school basketball game. While watching this clip, think about what the father is modeling to his children and lessons they are learning.

After a few moments of reflection, encourage participants to share their observations and reactions to what they watched.

305: Engaging Absent Fathers

Section VI: Engaging Fathers (continued)

Step 8:

Draw a large square on the flip chart and title the square the *Act Like a Man box*. In either small groups or a large group activity, participants will be asked to fill in the box by coming up with as many answers as they can by completing the following four statements:

- 1) Men are supposed to be...
- 2) Men are supposed to do...
- 3) Men are supposed to have...
- 4) Men are not supposed to...

Facilitate a discussion on this activity asking participants the consequences of these messages on young men as they grow up and become fathers. What happens to men if they step outside of the box and behave in different ways? Share the following points:

- ✓ Many of the behaviors identified do not translate in to positive parenting and fathers being actively involved in childrearing;
- ✓ Many fathers may have to go through a relearning process if they are to effectively parent their children;
- ✓ Men take risks when they decide to step outside of the box. Their manhood can be challenged and they can even be subject to physical danger; and
- ✓ Men with a past history of violence and abuse need to have their expectations of male and female behaviors challenged if they are to change their abusive ways

Step 9:

Participants will now have the opportunity to observe the engagement process using the **Handout #27 (Thompson/Jacobs Interview Script: Part 1)**. Reading the script, the trainer will read the lines of Child Welfare Professional Isaac Thompson. A volunteer from the group will play the dad, Chuck Jacobs (for the purposes of this practice either male or female trainers and participants can do the reading for the Child Welfare Professional and the father).

After the reading of the script is completed, ask participants to share their observations and reactions. How effective do they feel the Child Welfare Professional was at engaging the father? How confident are they that the dad will make progress on the continuum of involvement presented previously in the training?

Briefly point out that this interview was based on the Shulman Interactional Helping Model and reflects the four phases of the casework process. Display **Overhead #14 (Phases of the Shulman Helping Model)** and explain that these phases can be identified in each interview as well as throughout the life of the case. The four phases are the:

305: Engaging Absent Fathers

Section VI: Engaging Fathers (continued)

Step 9 (continued):

- ✓ **Preliminary Phase.** This is the stage of work prior to the worker. This stage involves developing empathy for what the client may be experiencing, planning the presentation, identifying hoped for outcomes, and identifying factors that help or hinder the interview process.
- ✓ **Beginning Engagement Phase.** This is the phase when the worker contracts with the client by clarifying the purpose of the agency involvement or the reason for the meeting, the role he or she will play, and by reaching for feedback regarding the content of the work.
- ✓ **Middle/Work Phase.** This phase focuses on the issues raised during the contracting phase as well as any new issues that have emerged.
- ✓ **Ending/Transition Phase.** This marks the end of the work phase where the worker prepares to end the interview or the relationship. The client is prepared for future interviews or transitions to new workers or experiences. Evaluation of outcomes and documentation are key components of this phase.

Also reflected in the interview are the Shulman Interactional Skills. Display **Overhead #15 (Shulman Helping Skills)**. They include:

- ✓ **Tuning in to Self.** It is the worker's efforts to get in touch with the feelings, concerns, and beliefs the worker brings to the helping intervention.
- ✓ **Tuning in to Others.** This is the worker's efforts to get in touch with potential feelings and concerns the client may bring to the helping encounter.
- ✓ **Clarifying Purpose.** This is the statement of helping professional's role or function and how it relates to the issue at hand. It includes a jargon-free statement regarding the purpose of the meeting.
- ✓ **Reaching for Feedback.** The client is encouraged to respond to the helping professional's explanation of the why the meeting is occurring.
- ✓ **Reaching for Feelings.** Using empathy, the Child Welfare Professional draws out the client's feelings.
- ✓ **Providing Relevant Data.** The client is provided information he needs to consider while decisions and plans are being made.
- ✓ **Identifying Next Steps.** Future actions are identified for the purposes of achieving success.

Trainer's Note: The trainer can choose to provide information to greater or lesser degree based on the skill level of the group. If the group is knowledgeable, the trainer may choose to merely remind participants of the phases and skills of the Interactional Helping Model. Other groups may require a more detailed explanation of the process. The Pennsylvania Child Welfare Training Program curriculum, "*Effective Interviewing Skills for Promoting Engagement and Change*" developed by Daniel Kirkston provides a clear and concise explanation of this helping model.

305: Engaging Absent Fathers

Section VI: Engaging Fathers (continued)

Step 10:

Using **Handout #25 (Engaging a Specific Father)**, participants at each table will identify scenarios that they will use to practice the process of engaging absent fathers. Depending on the scenarios selected, engagement might occur around a variety of circumstances (i.e. Gentleman does not know he was the father, incarcerated father, father who lost contact with his family). To best prepare for the practice, the participants should discuss these situations prior to the role-play. One person from the group will play the role of Child Welfare Professional. Another will play the father. The remainder of the group will serve as observer and coach. The two participants will demonstrate the first face-to-face contact utilizing the Interactional Model. The trainer should move back and forth from table to table to be available should there be any concerns or difficulties. Participants in the demonstration can request a “time-out” at anytime to request coaching from the group or trainer.

After the demonstrations are completed, the remainder of the group will provide feedback both motivational (what went well) and corrective (suggestions for improvement). This will be followed by a large group discussion. Trainer should solicit from participants their own suggestions on how these skills can be used to effectively engage fathers in their caseloads.

If time permits, a second demonstration can be conducted in the groups by two different participants. Follow the same procedure as the first demonstration.

Step 11:

In addition to engaging the father, the Child Welfare Professional must be able to help the father successfully engage his children. This can be a frightening and stressful experience. Both father and child are typically uneasy and on edge. No one is quite sure what to expect. How the child might react or questions that he or she may ask the father are unknowns.

Trainer will then show a brief clip from the **Video (Father’s Day)** starring Robin Williams and Billy Crystal. (clip starts at 10:00 and ends at 10:38) In the movie, Robin Williams has been contacted by a former girlfriend and told that he had fathered a child many years ago. The son has recently run away. In this scene, Williams is practicing how he plans to introduce himself to his son once he finds him. Entertain comments from the group after viewing this brief scene.

Ask the question, “What are some strategies a Child Welfare Professional can suggest to fathers that they can use to improve their relationship with their child when they are with him/her?” List responses generated by the group.

305: Engaging Absent Fathers

Section VI: Engaging Fathers (continued)

Step 11 (continued):

Share the following suggestions by displaying **Overhead #16 (Tips for Fathers – PFSA)** provided through the parenting brochures that are available through the Pennsylvania Family Support Alliance located in Harrisburg (www.pennsylvaniafamilysupportalliance.org):

- ✓ Remind the father that “this is an exciting time, but it is important to reunify your family slowly, as you and your children get to know each other again.”
- ✓ Be consistent – Follow the rules that the children are familiar with from foster care. Find out what time they go to bed, what they eat for breakfast, any fears they have, and other crucial details about their lives. Maintain these routines when the children are with you.
- ✓ Get support – Everyone is overwhelmed with the changes in their family – you, your children, your extended family, your partner. Get support to deal with the stress you are under. Reach out to a clergy member, neighbor, friend, or a Pennsylvania Family Support Alliance group when you need to talk about the stress you are experiencing. Seek professional counseling before things begin to spiral out of control.
- ✓ Learn as much as you can about child development, communication skills and discipline techniques. Your child may have entered a new stage while you were away from him/her and you need to know how to deal with him/her effectively. If you took parenting classes, review the materials you received, or take another class. Libraries have lots of books on parenting that you can borrow. (Listen to your children – Make time to give each child attention every day. Resist the urge to substitute giving “things” for giving “time.”
- ✓ Start with today – You cannot change the past, so start today as the new and better parent you are NOW.
- ✓ Take care of yourself. Pay attention to your own needs for rest, proper nutrition, adult relationships, and respite from your children.
- ✓ Give yourself and your children time to adjust. You are forming a new family, with healthier lives than you had before your children were placed in foster care. It takes time, love, and patience to put all the pieces together.
- ✓ It is important that you remain involved in parenting through visits with your children. Be on time and consistently attend your visits. If your child is in placement, ask if you can write or call your child, speak to his foster parents, or have other types of interactions with your child.
- ✓ Reassure your child but be honest about what the future may hold. Don’t make promises you are unable to keep.
- ✓ Show your child he is important to you. Listen to what your children are telling you during the visits – take an interest in their school, friends, and activities.
- ✓ Be positive. Visits with your children are not a time to talk to caseworkers, criticize services or foster parents, or react negatively to the situation. Use the time to talk with, read to, and play with your children.
- ✓ A father can be psychologically available to his child, whether or not they live in the same household.

305: Engaging Absent Fathers

Section VI: Engaging Fathers (continued)

Step 12:

- ✓ Fathers are important in providing children with a sense of their culture and history – with their genealogical connectedness.
- ✓ Be a good role model for your child.
- ✓ It is the quality of the relationship you have with your child, whether you physically live with your child or not, that is important to them. They want to be loved and valued by you.
- ✓ Take the opportunity to hug your children.

Remind participants that the Pennsylvania Family Support Alliance is one of the resources identified as an excellent referral source for fathers. Most counties have local chapters and provide a range of support programs such as parenting classes, weekly support group meeting, a parenting helpline, and reading material on parenting.

In his book, *The Prodigal Father*, Mark Bryan, himself a once absent dad, shares suggestions that fathers can use in reconnecting with their children. Display **Overhead #17 (Father/Child Reunion Tips)**. These include:

- ✓ Stay relaxed. Your child will be curious and most likely will want to get to know you.
- ✓ Choose a comfortable setting for your first contact (when possible).
- ✓ Keep the meeting simple. Have minimal expectations. First meetings should not be too long.
- ✓ Listen. Be open to what your child has to say. Avoid getting defensive.
- ✓ Think ahead. What do you want to say to your child?
- ✓ Plan a next visit. This will be reassuring to the child.
- ✓ Don't bad mouth your children's mother. Avoid this at all costs.
- ✓ Move Slowly! Don't rush the relationship.
- ✓ Don't expect to be treated like a returning hero. Your child needs time to deal with the situation and feelings.
- ✓ Be careful what you promise. The relationship needs to be rebuilt. It takes time to establish trust.
- ✓ If the child is old enough to understand, address your absence but avoid attempting to justify it. Do not blame others for not being there. Reassure your child that you will be there for him or her.

Step 13:

Trainer and a volunteer from the group will demonstrate a Child Welfare Professional preparing dad for a contact with his child using the **Handout #28 (Thompson/Jacobs Script: Part 2)**. In this interview Child Welfare Professional Isaac Thompson is preparing Mr. Jacobs for a scheduled visit with his child. After the discussion, the trainer will then facilitate a discussion on how the Child Welfare Professional prepared Mr. Jacobs for his reunion with his child.

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Section VI: Engaging Fathers (continued)

Step 14:

Using their identified father in **Handout #25 (Engaging A Specific Father)**, in triads this time participants will have the opportunity to practice preparing a father for an upcoming session with their children. The roles will be that, once again, of Child Welfare Professional, father, and observer/coach. Allow each triad time to prepare for the practice session. Again, trainer should make him or herself available to the participations during this activity.

After the practice is completed, observer will provide constructive and corrective feedback. Trainer will then facilitate a large group discussion around this activity again focusing on how participants can use this information in their work with fathers. Time permitting, different participants from the groups may practice another scenario and process the activity.

Trainer Note: During these practice activities participants used the Interactional Skill of Displaying Belief in the Potential of the Work which means the Child Welfare Professional is conveying a belief that professional intervention can be helpful. The trainer should constantly be reminding the participants that they need to be thinking of a father's strengths rather than his deficits. In searching for strengths, the professional will be much more likely to be optimistic about a father's successful engagement with his child.

This activity also allows participants to use transfer of learning, which facilitates the opportunity for someone to discuss and/or plan how he/she will actually use what has been learned or "gained" from the formal work that has been done to date. By asking the participants to engage in an activity that involves a client in their current case load, they are tying the information they are learning in this workshop directly to their case practice. It makes the training more relevant for participants when they can see connections.

Step 15:

Summarize this section by reminding participants that engaging fathers should be viewed as a continuum of engagement. If engagement is to be successful, the Child Welfare Professional must identify and address the various barriers to father involvement. Utilization of the Shulman Interactional Helping Model by the worker can effectively facilitate the engagement process between worker and father as well as father and child. The Child Welfare Professional should also keep in mind that it really does not matter if the permanency goal is reunification with the father or adoption, the child and the father still have the right to get to know each other.

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Section VII: Closing and Evaluation

Estimated Length of Time:

45 minutes

Learning Objectives:

Participants will be able to:

- ✓ Review key learning points of the training.
- ✓ Evaluate the training.

Method of Presentation:

Lecture, small and large group discussion, individual activity

Materials Needed:

- ✓ **Overhead #1 (Learning Objectives) (revisited)**
- ✓ **Handout #29 (Transfer of Learning)**

Resources Used:

None

PA Standards:

None

CFSR Issues:

None

Interactional Skills:

Transfer of the learning

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Section VII: Closing and Evaluation (continued)

Outline of Presentation:

The trainer will:

- ✓ Facilitate a discussion about the key learning points of the day.
- ✓ Facilitate a transfer of learning activity.
- ✓ Have the participants fill out the evaluation form for the training.

Step 1:

Revisiting **Overhead #1 (Learning Objectives)** discuss the learning objectives for the workshop and confirm that they have been met. Ask the participants if they have any additional thoughts or questions.

Step 2:

Distribute **Handout #29 (Transfer of Learning)** and have participants answer the questions. Allow a few minutes for them to do this individually and then have them discuss in their small groups some of the ways they expect to transfer their learning from the training to their everyday work. Then ask a few volunteers to share their plan with the large group.

Trainer Note: This activity has participants involved in the Interactional Skill of transfer of learning, which involves the trainer facilitating the opportunity for someone to discuss and/or plan how he/she will actually use what has been learned, or “gained” from the formal work that has been done to date. It is important for the trainer to point out to participants that information learned is only useful if it is used. By incorporating the information they have learned in this workshop to successfully engage fathers and children, they will find children on their caseload will have greater success with safety, permanence, and well-being.

Step 3:

Have participants complete the evaluation forms for the workshop and thank them for coming.

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