



# Family Engagement in Early Care and Education

## Engaging Fathers



## Overview

This module will focus on:

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

## The Head Start Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework

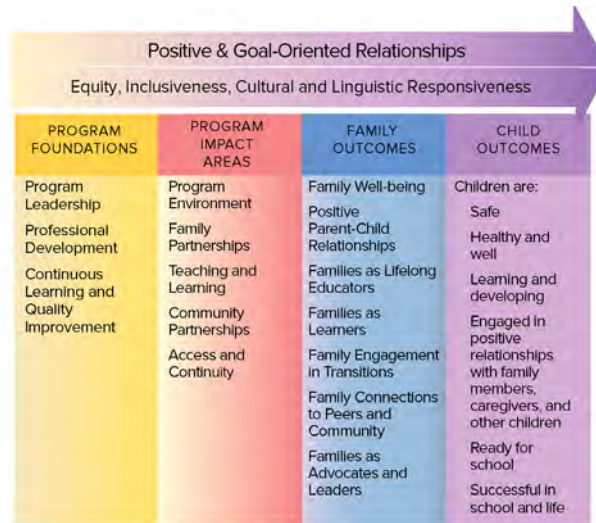


Image credit: Office of Head Start



### DISCUSSION

## Where Does It Fit?

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

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



## A Program-Wide Approach

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



### OBJECTIVES

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

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



### LEARNING ACTIVITY

## Children's Interactions with Fathers and Mothers



Image credit: Office of Head Start

# Relationships Between Fathers and Their Children



## DISCUSSION

## Fathers Matter

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



Image credit: EarlyEdU

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

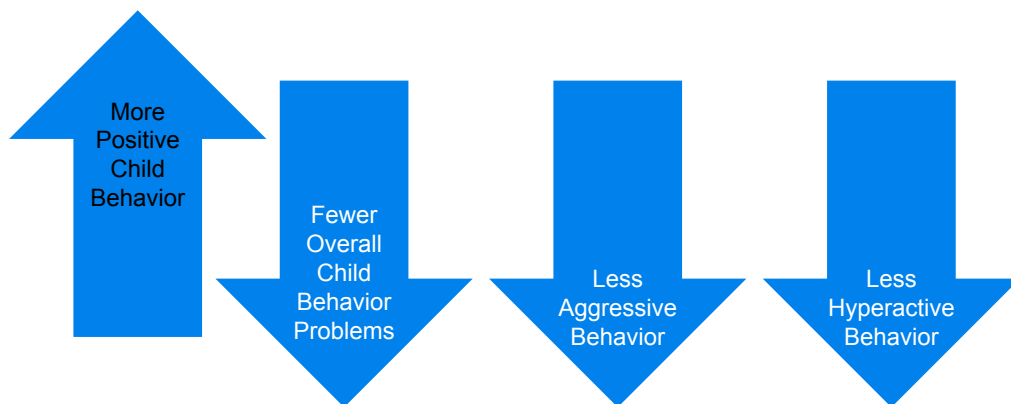
## Fathers' Unique Roles

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

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



## When Fathers Are More Involved . . .



## Impacts on Father-Child Interactions

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

## Recognizing and Encouraging



Image credit: EarlyEdU

### Educators can:

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



## Ways to Support

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

## Creating a Welcoming Environment for Fathers

## Engaging and Welcoming Fathers



Image credit: Office of Head Start

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

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

## Messages Matter

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



REFLECTION

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



Image credit: Office of Head Start

## How Can You Welcome Fathers in Everyday Routines?



Image credit: EarlyEdU

- Arrival
- Departure
- Volunteer opportunities

## Arrival and Departure

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

## Volunteer Opportunities



Image credit: EarlyEdU

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

## Images of Fathers



Image credit: EarlyEdU

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

- Posters
- Flyers
- Artwork

## Inviting Program Spaces

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

## Classroom Images



Image credit: EarlyEdU

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

## Books and Learning Materials



Image credit: EarlyEdU

Look at the learning materials in your environment

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

## Program-Wide Practices

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

## Bringing It All Together

## The Head Start Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework

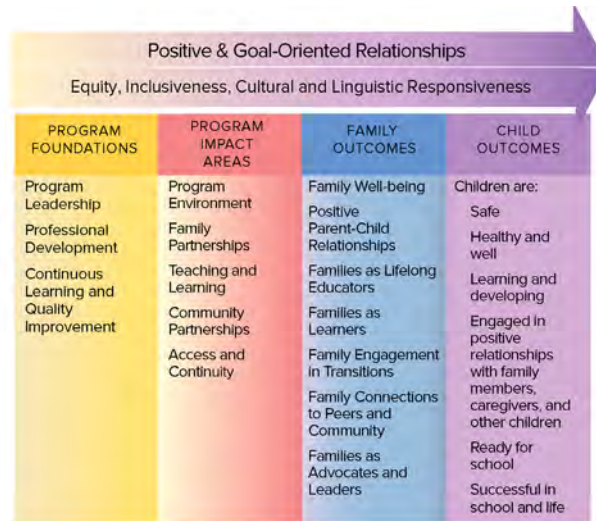


Image credit: Office of Head Start



### DISCUSSION

## Revisiting “Where Does It Fit?”

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

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**SESSION  
SUMMARY**

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



ADMINISTRATION FOR  
**CHILDREN & FAMILIES**



**NATIONAL CENTER ON**  
Parent, Family and Community Engagement

For more information about this resource, please contact us:  
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