

Responsible Father Engagement: A Systematic Approach

4th Edition

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Table of Contents

Training & Technical Assistance Services’ Commitment to Responsible Father Engagement.....	1
Principles of Family Engagement in Head Start	2
The PFCE Framework with A Fatherhood Lens.....	3
Head Start Parent and Family Engagement Outcomes	4
The Purpose of Responsible Father Engagement	5
Systematic Support of Responsible Father Engagement	6
Head Start Management Systems	7
Training, Information & Engagement Opportunities for Fathers	15
The Parent Committee: Father Engagement Opportunities	17
The Parent Committee: Tips for Effective Father Engagement	18
The Parent Committee: Reviewed, Revisited and Revised for Father Engagement.....	20
Policy Council Membership: Leadership and Governance Opportunities for Fathers	21
Ensuring the Father-Friendliness of the Head Start Program Environment – How Do You Rate?	22
Responsible Father Engagement in Family and Community Engagement and Family Partnership Services	24
Opportunities for Father Engagement and Support Through the Program Year	25
Family Scenario #1	27
Family Scenario #2	27
Family Scenario #3	28
Family Scenario #4.....	28
Family Scenario #5.....	29
Essential Skills for Building Partnerships with Fathers and Families	30
Staff Awareness: How Well Do Staff Relate to and Interact with Men?	31
Engaging & Supporting the Significant Adults in a Child’s Life	35
Responsible Father and Male Engagement: Their Different and Positive Impact on Head Start Programs, Children, and Families.....	36
Engaging Fathers in Early Head Start	37
The Woman’s Role in Responsible Father Engagement	38
The Walker Family Story	39
Engaging Incarcerated Parents in Head Start	41
Responsible Father Engagement at All Levels	42
Child Health Services	42
Education and Child Development Services	43

Health and Safety Practices	43
Child Nutrition.....	44
Child Mental Health and Social and Emotional Well-Being	44
Transportation	44
School Readiness	45
Early Literacy.....	45
Engaging Fathers of Children with Special Needs	45
Responsible Father Engagement in Early Childhood Education: The Unique and Irreplaceable Role of Fathers.....	46
Multicultural Principles for Head Start Programs Serving Children Ages Birth to Five.....	48

Training & Technical Assistance Services' Commitment to Responsible Father Engagement

There is a substantial body of research documenting the positive benefits fathers bring to the lives their children. Fathers play an important and irreplaceable role in healthy child development. Having a loving and nurturing father is as important for a child's happiness, well-being, and social and academic success as having a loving and nurturing mother.

Fathers have a unique impact on children's positive outcomes. Studies conclude that children with highly engaged fathers tend to be more cognitively and socially competent, more empathetic, and psychologically better adjusted. It is clear that children have different experiences when fathers are missing from their lives.

Head Start recognizes that both mothers and fathers play an essential role in the healthy development of children and believes a healthy family is a child's best and most powerful resource. However, many Head Start programs face significant challenges in promoting the positive engagement and interaction of fathers with their children.

To support Head Start's father engagement efforts, Training & Technical Assistance Services has developed the **Responsible Father Engagement Training** designed to help programs increase the ability of fathers to meet the social, emotional, financial, medical and educational needs of their children.

Training & Technical Assistance Services was guided in the development of the **Responsible Father Engagement Training** by the belief that Head Start programs can support and achieve long-term positive outcomes for children and families with the responsible engagement of fathers.

THE RESPONSIBLE FATHER ENGAGEMENT WORKBOOK is intended to accompany the **Responsible Father Engagement Training** designed to fit the specific needs of Head Start and Early Head Start programs.



Principles of Family Engagement in Head Start

- Head Start recognizes that both mothers and father play an essential role in the healthy development of children.
- Head Start recognizes that children benefit from a strong, cooperative relationship between mother and father.
- Head Start helps both mother and father become effective in helping their children become life-long learners.
- Head Start helps mothers and fathers understand and appreciate the vital and unique roles they play in their child's healthy development.
- Head Start recognizes, appreciates, and wants to learn about both parents, as fully as possible, regardless of whether the parents reside in the same home.
- Head Start strives to invite mother and father, by name and in their primary language, to Head Start programs and functions.
- Head Start seeks to make both mothers and fathers feel welcomed and supported.
- Head Start seeks to offer programs that are meaningful to both mothers and fathers.



The PFCE Framework with A Fatherhood Lens

The Head Start Parent, Family and Community Engagement (PFCE) Framework Promoting Family Engagement and School Readiness from Prenatal to Age 8 with A Fatherhood Lens



Adapted from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start, National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement. (2018). *Head Start Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework*.

Head Start Parent and Family Engagement Outcomes

1. FATHER WELL-BEING	Fathers are safe, healthy, and have increased financial security.
2. POSITIVE FATHER-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS	Beginning with transitions to parenthood, fathers develop warm relationships that nurture their child's learning and development.
3. FATHERS AS LIFELONG EDUCATORS	Fathers observe, guide, promote, and participate in the everyday learning of their children at home, school, and in their communities.
4. FATHERS AS LEARNERS	Fathers advance their own learning interests through education, training and other experiences that support their parenting, careers, and life goals.
5. FATHER ENGAGEMENT IN TRANSITIONS	Fathers support and advocate for their child's learning and development as they transition to new learning environments, including EHS to HS, EHS/HS to other early learning environments, and HS to kindergarten through elementary school.
6. FATHER CONNECTIONS TO PEERS AND COMMUNITY	Fathers form connections with peers and mentors in formal or informal social networks that are supportive and/or educational and that enhance social well-being and community life.
7. FATHERS AS ADVOCATES AND LEADERS	Fathers participate in leadership development, decision-making, program policy development, or in community and state organizing activities to improve children's development and learning experiences.

Adapted from the U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start, The National Center on Parent, Family & Community Engagement.

The Purpose of Responsible Father Engagement

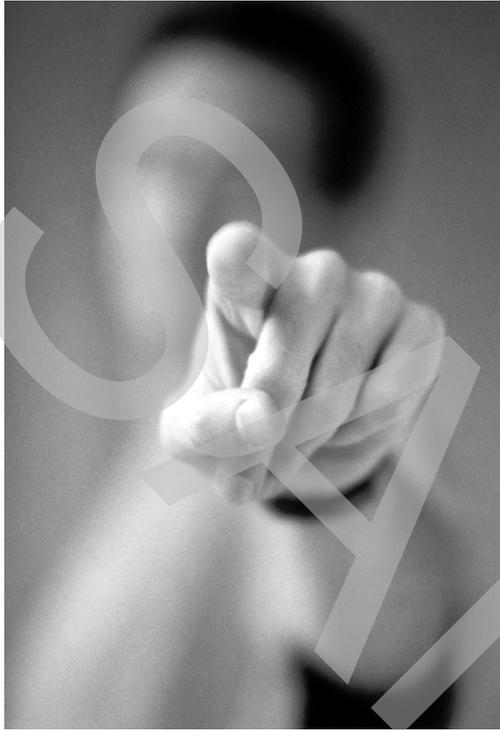
The purpose of Responsible Father Engagement is to promote the positive engagement and interaction of fathers with their children and increase the ability of fathers to meet the social, emotional, financial, medical, and educational needs of their children. In Head Start programs, this purpose is demonstrated through establishing and implementing efficient and effective management systems, and developing well-defined goals and a coherent set of activities and services to attain them. Responsible Father Engagement activities and services should include:

- **Parenting Skills Development** – Head Start programs should provide opportunities for fathers to learn the principles of effective parenting including child development, positive guidance, and educational engagement. Programs should ensure that fathers have the opportunity to develop skills and strategies for co-parenting and connect fathers with resources within the community that will enhance their capacity to nurture their children.
- **Personal and Social Skills Development** – Head Start programs should provide opportunities for fathers to develop personal and interpersonal skills and strategies that enable them to grow as individuals, and relate to others more effectively. Programs should facilitate access to therapeutic group interventions that promote the development of positive behavioral patterns. Programs should offer information and education on men’s health, pregnancy prevention, mental health, life skills, violence prevention, anger management, money management, and substance abuse prevention. Programs should provide opportunities for fathers to join support groups and develop supportive networks within the community.
- **Workforce and Academic Skills Development** – Head Start program should provide opportunities for fathers to develop the skills, knowledge, and competencies required in the workforce. Programs should provide opportunities for fathers to connect successfully with employers and employment resources within their community.
- **Father Support Services** – Head Start programs should provide access to legal assistance and court advocacy services, and information and assistance with paternity establishment, visitation, and child support responsibilities. Programs should facilitate client participation in housing and transportation services and supports. Programs should ensure translation services and supports. Programs should practice case management to monitor client progress, coordinate services, and provide additional support as necessary.

It is important to note that, for our purposes, the term “fathers” is always used as an inclusive term. When we speak of fathers, we naturally are talking about biological fathers, and we understand the nature of the biological relationship. But we are also talking about “social fathers.” Social fathers are relatives or unrelated males who help parent children other than their own. Relative social fathers might include grandfathers, uncles, cousins, or older brothers. Non-relative social fathers can include stepfathers, the mother’s boyfriend, or male friends of either biological parent.



Systematic Support of Responsible Father Engagement



“Father engagement is your responsibility; go forth and involve.”

Is this the message staff hear when the program decides to get more intentional about involving both parents?

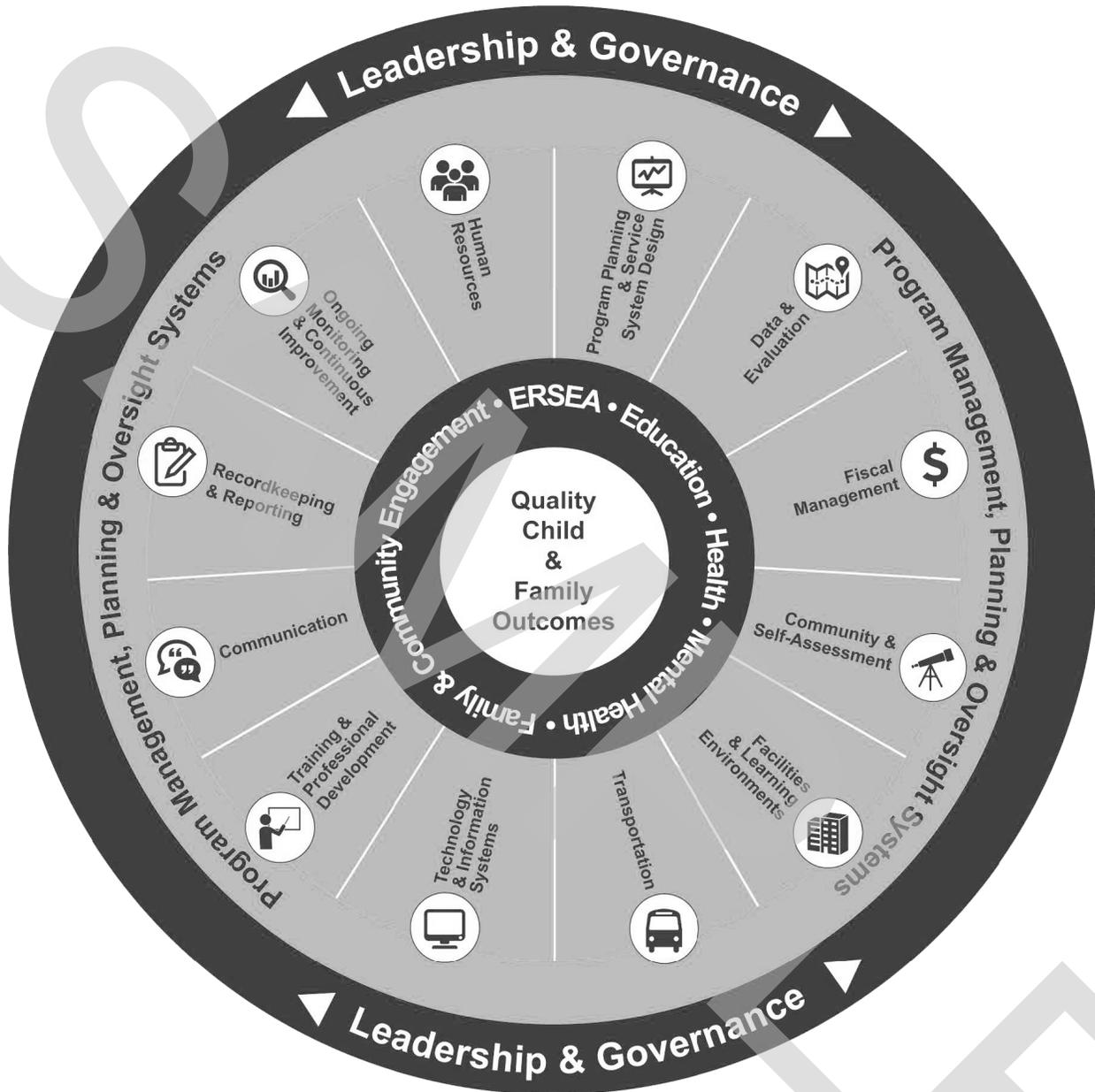
Mandating the engagement of fathers is more than just saying it. It involves taking a close look at the program to ensure that all systems, and procedures are in place to support appropriate father engagement services and activities. As for all Head Start Services, quality services to families do not occur in a vacuum. Quality services require a solid foundation for support.

Head Start regulations mandate that programs establish dynamic and cohesive management systems that support continuous improvement and foster a commitment to providing the highest level of services to fathers and families. Quality management systems and procedures are part of each program's ongoing and organized approach to managing Head Start services and allow programs flexibility in designing the father engagement approach that will work best for them.

Effective Head Start management systems are all connected and interrelated; each is impacted by the others, and all influence and are influenced by program services. With all of these systems, the emphasis is as much on the process involved in their implementation as it is on the product that may come from implementation. Through designing and implementing effective systems each Head Start program is better able to integrate the various functions of Head Start and provide high quality services to fathers and families.

Review the next page that shows the Head Start Management systems wheel. The core of the wheel is quality child and family outcomes or in other words father outcomes.

Head Start Management Systems



ADMINISTRATION FOR
CHILDREN & FAMILIES



NATIONAL CENTER ON
Program Management and Fiscal Operations