



Building Strong Father Programs:

Foundations for Fathers

- Fathers regularly interact with their children (60%+)
- Fathers have a strong desire for their child to succeed
- Fathers have strengths to offer (distinct & important)
- Programs that strengthen fathers strengthen kids

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Building Strong Father Programs:

Obstacles to Father Involvement

- Father's fears of exposing inadequacies
- Ambivalence of program staff members about father involvement
- Gatekeeping by mothers (and female staff)
- Inappropriate program design and delivery

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Building Strong Father Programs:

Father's Fear of Exposing Inadequacies

- Actual fear of being hammered
- Why expose what I already deal with?
- Programs don't know strengths exist so they don't "expose" those.
- Fathers don't need more drama since they already have mama.
- Programs are stronger if they focus on strengths of constituents.

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Building Strong Father Programs:

Ambivalence of staff toward fathers

- Issues with the father of their children
- Issues with their own father
- View father involvement as short term
- Fail to see the focus on positive child outcomes
- Don't understand the culture of fathers

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Building Strong Father Programs:

Gate-keeping by mothers (& staff)

- Views herself as the "true" parent
- Fails to see his strengths in terms of child development
- Uses child as currency in relationship (interaction decrease value)
- Feels the need to approve interaction
- Is threatened by father involvement in regards to her own role

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Building Strong Father Programs:

Inappropriate program design & delivery

- Program is feminized (views father as second string mom)
- Program is deficit based (fails to view fathers as competent)
- Program is not focused on outcomes (fails to understand program goals)
- Program is culturally insensitive (fathers culture and father's culture)
- Program is an afterthought

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Building Strong Father Programs:

1. Be Specific About Goals

- FOCUS on child outcomes
- Build on inherent strengths of fathers and father figures
- Set goals for child outcomes, father development, and participation
- Communicate your goals to staff, mothers, and fathers
- Be flexible in your goals and outcomes

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Building Strong Father Programs:

2. Acknowledge Resistance to Initiative

- Ask for input from all stakeholders
- Use viewpoints to build program components
- Build a flexible framework for program (able to withstand pressure)
- Promote child outcomes as basis for program
- Personalize your efforts with staff

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Building Strong Father Programs:

3. Identify significant male role models

- Role models first, then males
- Do not assume or delegate actual leaders
- Allow champions to develop on their own
- Build leadership development into program goals and practices
- Identify role models in all facets of programming

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Building Strong Father Programs:

4. Provide Training and Support for Staff

- Train EVERYBODY
- Focus training on child outcomes then program details
- Allow champions to develop on their own
- Keep support as a high priority
- Train from the roots up

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Building Strong Father Programs:

5. Train female facilitators to accept male involvement

- Redefine the world view of program "families"
- Work on abundance mentality
- Focus on weaving male involvement into daily fabric of your program
- FOCUS ON CHILD OUTCOMES
- Address personal and professional issues early and often

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Building Strong Father Programs:

6. Don't neglect mothers

- Work from abundance viewpoint
- Promote the goal of positive child outcomes
- Continually validate mom's role
- Bring mom into program for support
- Seek out moms as program promoters

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Building Strong Father Programs:

7. Go Slowly

- Develop an annual plan, a three year plan, and a five year plan
- Begin with organizational culture (top to bottom)
- Develop a strong site culture for father and father programs
- Develop a program regardless of funding
- Look at your annual calendar for natural opportunities

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Building Strong Father Programs:

8. Don't Reinvent the Wheel

- Use what you have, keep it simple
- ASK the fathers
- Look for "natural" opportunities
- Steal, Steal, Steal! Ideas, programs, handouts, etc.
- Look for successful programs and practices

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Building Strong Father Programs:

See Fathers as Their Own Culture

- A Culture of Grown Boys
- Seek to Understand Their Common Language
- Understand Their Common Priorities
- Understand Their Mutual Playfulness
- Understand their rituals (all fathers and subgroups)

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Building Strong Father Programs:

Expect Success with Fathers

Understand That:

- Fathers CARE deeply about their children
- Fathers WILL ATTEND the right programs
- Fathers WILL share insights and concerns
- Fathers are WIRED & READY to TAKE ACTION (meetings 1:20 and 20:1)

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Building Strong Father Programs:

Design programs built FOR FATHERS:

Understand That:

- Fathers should be invited AS FATHERS (not “parents” or “families”)
- Fathers place an importance on work (work around work hours)
- Get the word out early (A month in advance, remind them often)
- Get a count two weeks out (Don’t Count on Your Count)

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Building Strong Father Programs:

Have the kids do the recruiting:

- THEY KNOW WHERE DAD IS
- They know their “father options”
- They will SEEK OUT their fathers
- They are relentless, insightful, and adorable (i.e. walking commercials)

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Building Strong Father Programs:

Enlist Your Front Line Educators:

- They control the propaganda flow of flyers
- They know the kids and the family situations
- They have the best rapport with parents (especially “fringe” parents)
- They are a strong set of volunteers (for the right purpose)

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Building Strong Father Programs:

Develop Programs with the End in Mind:

- Fathers need way more relevancy than fluff
- Fathers help kids develop skills and resiliency
- Fathers can aid in the development of community
- Father programs can be great “equalizers” in centers & communities

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Building Strong Father Programs:

Expect Your Program to Make a Difference:

- Build Assessments and Agreement for Change
- Expect change from dads
- Expect to deal with change

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