

Family Support NEWS BRIEF

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CENTER FOR SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES



Six Tips and Resources for Engaging Dads

Children thrive when they have caring, responsive adults in their lives – including dads and father figures! Each person in a child's life brings unique strengths that create supportive environments where children learn and grow. In honor of June being the sixth month of the year and a month when many celebrate fathers, read on for six tips and resources for engaging dads in family support programs.

① Know the Facts

Dads and father figures have an important role to play in their child's life. Research shows that children with involved dads show increased school readiness, have higher academic achievement, have increased social and emotional competence, and higher self-esteem.¹

Learn more about the impact of dads and male caregivers on child well-being.

- Explore [Why Father Inclusion Matters](#) with the [National Fatherhood Initiative](#).

- Check out resource briefs and more from the [Fatherhood Research and Practice Network](#).

② Challenge Misconceptions

During our May 2025 Family Support Webinar Series installment: [Absent by Default? Challenging the Myth of the Missing Father](#), presenter Contrell Armor encouraged participants to consider how narratives about absent fathers have been perpetuated not only in popular culture but also in our systems and practices. Many of the myths are rooted in racism and historical inequality. Challenge misconceptions with facts and provide opportunities for fathers to change the narrative.

- Data show that most dads want to be *and* are often involved in the care of their children. A Pew Research Center survey found that 85% of dads say that “being a parent is the most or one of the most important aspects of who they are as a person.”²

- Webinar participants shared various ways that fathers show up for their children that often go unrecognized or unseen. Examples included playing with children, taking them to school, supporting moms, helping with homework, and bringing quiet consistency to their families. What ways do dads show up in your programs?
- Check out [The Blueprint](#) from [Fathers Incorporated](#) which seeks to eliminate stereotypes about and reimagine the narrative of Black fathers.

③ Welcome Dads and Male Caregivers in Your Programs

Did you know that there are more than 72 million fathers in the United States?³ When thinking about all male caregivers the number grows even higher. Thinking about how your program is providing a welcoming environment for dads is an important step. Examine if there are any barriers to dads participating in activities.

- Learn more about the [Stages of Father Inclusion™](#) and complete the free [Father Friendly Check Up™](#) from the National Fatherhood Initiative.
- Check out the [For Programs tab](#) at the National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse. There you will find the Responsible Fatherhood Toolkit as well as tips for programs to engage dads.

④ Ask!

One of the most important things we can do to engage fathers in family support programs is to ask them! Intentionally inviting fathers makes a difference. It is also crucial to ask male caregivers what they need... and want. Maybe dads are looking for connections with other fathers or support with employment or education. Maybe they are searching for fun things to do with their children or ways to learn more about their child's development. You will not know unless you ask!

Listening to dads when they share their stories is also crucial. We can learn so much from listening to their experiences about fatherhood. Hear from dads about their experiences through the [DADication initiative](#) from the National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse.

⑤ Support Coparenting

How caregivers work together to parent their children impacts not only their relationship with one another but also their relationship with their children. Whether parents are living together or separately, family support programs can play an important role in supporting parents as they discuss and strengthen their coparenting relationship. Staff can support coparenting by ensuring

that all caregivers receive information, participate in sessions when possible, and have the opportunity to provide feedback about services.

- Fathers Incorporated has several [guidebooks for dads](#) focused on building a collaborative coparenting relationship.
- Explore coparenting tips, best practices, and resources at the [National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse](#).

⑥ Keep Learning... and Sharing!

Whether you are just beginning to intentionally engage fathers in your program or have been doing this work for many years, there is always more to learn! Check out the sites below to continue your learning.

- National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse has the [DadTalk Blog](#), [archived webinars](#), and you can view sessions from the 2024 Fatherhood Summit in the [videos section](#). Don't forget to check out the [Dad Jokes](#) section!
- The [Institute for Research on Poverty at the University of Wisconsin-Madison](#) has webinars and research briefs on fatherhood under Parenting.
- The [Fatherhood Project](#) has programs and resources for specific groups including parents in recovering, dads going through divorce, and teen fathers.
- The [Fatherhood Resource Hub](#) has resources for dads and programs including resources on building community coalitions to support fathers.
- Child Welfare Information Gateway provides links to a variety of resources at their [Engaging Fathers](#) section.
- [Fathers Incorporated](#) has free resources to download including guidebooks and brochures for dads.

Sources

- 1 Institute for Research on Poverty (2020). "Involved fathers play an important role in children's lives." Retrieved on 5/20/2025, <https://www.irp.wisc.edu/resource/involved-fathers-play-an-important-role-in-childrens-lives/>.
- 2 Pew Research Center (2023). "Parenting in America Today" retrieved on 5/9/2025 <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2023/01/24/gender-and-parenting/>.
- 3 Institute for Research on Poverty (2020). "Involved fathers play an important role in children's lives." Retrieved on 5/20/2025, <https://www.irp.wisc.edu/resource/involved-fathers-play-an-important-role-in-childrens-lives/>.



Parents as Teachers Place

Institute for the Advancement of Family Support Professionals

Have you visited the [Institute for the Advancement of Family Support Professionals website](#)? Maybe you took a few courses. Maybe you are enrolled in a certificate program. As we approach a new program year, it is a good time to think about professional learning opportunities.

Check the [National Family Support Competency Framework](#) endorsed by Parents as Teachers. What intrigues you? Where are you demonstrating competence? What skills could you strengthen?

Parents as Teachers Core Course

[Foundational 2 Course](#)

June 9-13, 9:00 AM

Instructors: Terry Wertman, Bethany Smith

Summer Routines for Happy Kids and Relaxed Parents

It's that time again! Time for summer and all that comes with it. Sunny days, the beach, amusement parks, and picnics. Summer can also bring some changes to family routines which may cause some changes in child behaviors. Summer can disrupt routines due to longer days, changes in schedules, travel, camps, and more. The common challenges for parents are inconsistent bedtimes and wake times, overstimulation for activity filled days, more free time that can increase screen time, and reduced time for learning.

This may cause some chaos for some parents trying to manage all their responsibilities and manage their child's new schedule. Here are some practical tips to help parents manage these summer changes.

- Create a summer routine that has set wake up and bedtime schedules.
- Be sure to prioritize sleep to help with emotional regulation and physical health.
- Balance the number of activities with a mix of physical, social, and rest time. Also, encourage outdoor time for kids to soak up the sunlight.
- Keep learning alive by continuing to read together and create your own books. There are summer reading lists that you can get at your local library or from the [Association for Library Service to Children](#).
- Set boundaries regarding screen time and encourage alternative activities.

Summer should be a time for fun in the sun and relaxing, but kids still need some structure to feel comfortable. Simple routines, prioritizing sleep, and setting boundaries will allow for positive summer experiences.

Children's Trust Fund (CTF) Corner

The [CTF Alliance website](#) has multiple resources. In addition to information about the Strengthening Families Protective Factors and parents as leaders, you will find a compelling article and resources about [preventing child neglect](#).





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Family Support at Center for Schools and Communities provides training and technical assistance to Parents as Teachers providers, Children's Trust Fund grantees, and the Strengthening Families Leadership Team.

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Safe Kids Corner — Pool Safety Checklist

TIPS FOR PARENTS

Watch kids when they are in or around water, without being distracted.

Keep young children within arm's reach of an adult. Make sure older children swim with a partner every time.

Teach children how to swim.

Every child is different, so enroll children in swim lessons when they are ready. Consider their age, development, and how often they are around water.

Make sure kids know how to swim and learn these five water survival skills:

1. Step or jump into water over their head and return to the surface.
2. Float or tread water for one minute.
3. Turn around in a full circle and find an exit.
4. Swim 25 yards to exit the water.
5. Exit the water. If in a pool, be able to exit without using the ladder.

Install fences around home pools.

A pool fence should surround all sides of the pool and be at least four feet tall with self-closing and self-latching gates.

Empty kids' pools after each use.

Store them upside down so they do not collect water.

Know what to do in an emergency.

Learning CPR and basic water rescue skills may help you save a child's life.

Source: Safekids.org