


WORKING WITH FATHER WHO HAVE BARRIERS TO MEETING SUPPORT OBLIGATIONS



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WELCOME & OBJECTIVES

- ✦ Discuss and examine the challenges of working with the fathers.
- ✦ Discuss the importance of being aware personal perceptions and beliefs that may become an additional barrier.
- ✦ Discuss specific strategies, resources and approaches that work with the fathers.

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CHILD SUPPORT STATISTICS AND TRENDS

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- ✦ About 1 in 6 custodial parents were fathers (17.8 percent).
- ✦ Most custodial parents had one child (57.2 percent).
- ✦ Over one-quarter (28.3 percent) of all custodial parents had incomes below poverty.
- ✦ Child support represented 62.6 percent of the average income for custodial parents below poverty who received full support.
- ✦ 10% of fathers not paying ordered child support are resisting, 66% lack the financial resources.

- ✦ 95% of fathers having no employment problems for the past five years pay regularly; 81 percent pay in full and on time.
- ✦ 90% of fathers with joint custody pay the ordered child support.
- ✦ 79.1% of fathers with visitation rights pay the ordered child support.
- ✦ 44.5% of fathers with no visitation rights pay the ordered child support.



PAYMENTS RECEIVED BY CUSTODIAL PARENTS

HIGHER RATES OF PAYMENT

- ✦ 40 years or older (47.4 percent)
- ✦ Married (45.7 percent)
- ✦ Attended some college (45.2 percent)
- ✦ Divorced (43.5 percent)
- ✦ Worked either full-time (42.4 percent) or part-time (42.1 percent).

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LOWEST RATES OF PAYMENT

- ✦ Below poverty level (36.1 per-cent)
- ✦ Never married (34.7 per-cent)
- ✦ Black (33.2 percent)
- ✦ Less than a high school education (30.2 per-cent)

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PATERNITY ESTABLISHMENT

- ✘ Establishing paternity is an issue for unmarried families, particularly when mothers seek formal child support or public assistance.
- ✘ Poor mothers are unlikely to seek paternity.
- ✘ A lack of information about the process of establishing paternity.

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CHILD SUPPORT SYSTEM

- ✘ Distrust of unmarried fathers
- ✘ Father involvement is seen in terms of the ability to pay.
- ✘ Some research reveals that unmarried fathers who fail to make child support payments are interested in their children's welfare and make in-kind contributions.

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CHILD SUPPORT SYSTEM

- ✘ Family courts tend to hand down custody and child support decisions in a punitive manner.
 - + Many fathers, particularly young fathers of color, associate family court with criminal court.
 - + Many fathers (and mothers) distrust these institutions, approaching them only as a last resort.

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SOCIAL SERVICE AGENCIES

- ✦ A bias against fathers and in favor of mothers
- ✦ Family agencies and programs ignore the significance of fathers
- ✦ Many fathers, particularly teen and unmarried fathers, appear interested, but uninformed about child development, custody rights and child support.
- ✦ African American men have been shunned in family services.

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ADDITIONAL BARRIERS

- ✦ Cultural or situational (incarceration, # of children, past violence, etc.) bias.
- ✦ Multiple problems such as financial insecurity, unstable housing, employment or substance abuse.
- ✦ Multiple children with multiple partners.
- ✦ Quality of relationship between Custodial Parent/child

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URBAN FATHERS REALTY

- ✘ Average real income for African American males ages 20 to 24 has fallen by 50 percent since 1988.
- ✘ The average urban dad is relatively uneducated and has limited options.
- ✘ African American men attribute extreme underemployment and prison records associated with illegal work activities as impediments to marriage and stable parenting.

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SOME CHARACTERISTICS

- ✘ **Between the ages of 16 to 35 and many times African American or person of color**
 - + attachment issues
 - + Lack healthy parenting skills
 - + lack of healthy male role models
 - + have little or no work experience
 - + have poor emotional regulation, fear/shame inducement violence
- ✘ Raised in a single parent female demanded home and female dependent

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SOME CHARACTERISTICS

- ✘ Their identity many times is tied to hyper-masculine:
 - + Living the Hip Hop stereotypes, making it part of their identity.
 - + the fear of being perceived as weak or being hard
 - + emotional numbness
 - + sexual prowess or Pimp attitude
 - + misogyny – don't like women
 - + Incarceration seen as a rite of passage that seals hyper-masculine identity.
- ✘ There is increasing evidence that urban fathers want to be (and are) involved with their children and may not always include financial support.

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YOUNG FATHERS

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- ✦ Paternity is harder to determine than maternity. It is harder to reach teen fathers than teen mothers.
- ✦ Young fathers, and many times their families', initial reactions may be denial, fear, and a desire to escape.
- ✦ Young fathers frequently face limited contact with the child and mother due to family and grandparents rejection.
- ✦ There is increasing evidence that young fathers want to be (and are) involved with their children and this may not always include financial support.

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AGGRESSIVE FATHERS

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- ✦ Conducting meetings or interviews in the agency office or in a public place.
- ✦ Notifying coworkers or a supervisor that the client is visiting the office. Provide the time and place of the interview.
- ✦ Skills in working with aggressive fathers: style, patience, timing and a thick skin.
- ✦ Avoid attempting to verbal confrontations or debates.

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- ✦ Refraining from giving the perpetrator the sense that one is afraid.
- ✦ If you feel threatened should try to de-escalate the situation and then immediately end the interview or visit.
- ✦ If escalated father, posing a risk to the Custodial parents (victim) or the children. Inform the Custodial parents (victim).
- ✦ Receiving training that include non-confrontational interview skills.

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- ✦ Avoid a highly confrontive approach.
- ✦ Be willing to educate about the system.
- ✦ Don't Lose sight of the objective
- ✦ When you can be flexible & creative
- ✦ Explore with him his hopes and dreams for his children.
- ✦ Be aware of the fathers cognitive abilities.

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ADDITIONAL TIPS

- ✦ When working with fathers involves try to make your early conversations warm and friendly.
- ✦ Greet him with a firm handshake and a reassuring smile.
- ✦ Address any negative biases you might have about fathers.
- ✦ Be aware of additional services, such as job placement, substance abuse or counseling either through other agencies or community.

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ADDITIONAL TIPS

- ✦ Request in-service workshops on fathers which promote awareness, knowledge and skills, that may include:
 - + awareness-raising activities designed to explore possible father, cultural or situational (incarceration, # of children, past violence, etc.) bias that affect the work.
 - + diversity training
 - + domestic violence
 - + ways to work incarceration and reentry fathers.
 - + the characteristics, hardships and needs of fathers.

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Remember, despite the stereotypes, there is increasing evidence that most fathers want to be (and are) involved with their children and this may not always include financial support.



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