

Handout 6: Family Scenario: The Hardy Family

Instructions

Appoint a group facilitator/reporter. Read the vignettes, designed to put you in the shoes of each Hardy family member, and discuss the questions raised at the end of the handout.

The Hardy Family: Tina Hardy, age 18, Head Start parent
Lester Hardy, age 40, Tina's father
Eva Hardy, age 30, Tina's stepmother
Alex Hardy, age 12, Tina's brother
Charles Hardy, age 3, Tina's son
Sam Wise, age 21, Charles' father

Tina Hardy

You have just turned 18 and have a three-year-old son named Charles, recently enrolled in Head Start. You and Charles live with your father, your stepmother, and your brother in a small home on the outskirts of town. You stay in touch with Sam, Charles' father, but are dating other men. You are a high school senior and will graduate in six months, if you keep your grades up. You want to be a veterinary technician after you finish high school, but also would like to marry, have your own home, and settle down as a housewife. Your best friend is your Aunt Flo, who listens to your problems. You would like to feel closer to your mom, who lives in another state and rarely talks to you because she's still "mad" about your decision to keep Charles. Your relationship with your stepmother is filled with arguments about the best way to raise your son.

You want to provide a good and stable home for Charles, but don't know how you are going to be able to do that without a job, a husband, or more education. You're glad that Charles is in Head Start, but you have no interest in getting involved in parent activities.

Lester Hardy

You are Tina's and Alex's father and Charles' grandfather. You remarried a year ago and find your new wife's constant complaints about Tina and Charles very upsetting. You're starting to think that the only way to a happy marriage is for Tina and Charles to move out of the house. However, you are close to your grandson and want him to live with you. You find yourself caught in a terrible bind and don't know what to do. You find yourself staying at work, even when you don't have to be there, to escape the problems at home.

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Eva Hardy

You are Tina's stepmother and Lester's new wife. You have a demanding night job as a police dispatcher and resent having to take care of Charles in the afternoons when Tina is in school. On top of that, Tina often stays out all night on weekends and you're left with Charles again. Although you think Tina wants to be a good mother, she leaves most of the daily chores of child-rearing up to you. If Lester doesn't make Tina move out with Charles soon, you're going to leave.

Alex Hardy

You are Tina's only brother, in the 7th grade at school, and find life at home to be one of constant arguments between your dad and stepmother. Plus, Charles always follows you around the house, wanting you to do things with him. You've given Charles some hard punches to let him know you want to be left alone. Staying away from home is your only escape, but you're experiencing a lot of pressure when you're away to do drugs with your friends. You miss your mother every day and don't understand why she left you.

Charles Hardy

You are Tina's three-year-old son, go to Head Start in the morning, and spend the afternoons alone watching TV. Other than your mom, the most important person in your life is your grandpa. You wish your grandpa didn't have to work all the time and could play more often with you. Alex, your uncle, is always telling you to "bug off" and your Grandma Eva yells at you a lot. Your dad stopped visiting you, after he and your grandpa had a big fight. All in all, you find yourself sad and lonely, except when you're at Head Start.


Sam Wise


You are Charles' father, live in the same town, and recently lost your job in construction. You are still in love with Tina, even though you know she's dating other men. You think if you could get a good-paying job and stop drinking, Tina might be willing to marry you. You would like to be able to spend more time with your son. However, the last argument between you and Lester Hardy about not paying child support for Charles ended in disaster, with Lester saying you couldn't see Charles again. You know that Charles is going to Head Start, but you know nothing about the program.


Handout 6: Family Scenario: The Hardy Family (continued)


Discussion Questions


As a group, brainstorm ideas for carrying out the building block strategies proposed in each question. There are no right or wrong answers to the questions. In calling out your ideas, do not feel limited to the way you work with families now or the availability of current resources. You have 40 minutes to complete your task.


-  One family support building block is to *initiate relationships with families through conversations, not interviews*. In supporting the Hardy family, how would you initiate the conversation?

-  A second building block is to *make the family the senior partner in setting priorities*. What would you say or do to encourage Charles' family to take the lead role in setting priorities?

-  Another building block is to *help families recognize and build on their strengths*. What strengths do you see in the Hardy family? How would you help the family build on its strengths?

-  A fourth building block is to *involve all family members, as well as key players, in activities to support the family*. How would you encourage such involvement in the Hardy family?

-  *Helping the family acquire new competencies or skills* is yet another building block to family support. How would you encourage members of the Hardy family to acquire new skills for dealing with the demands of life? For achieving their hopes for the future?

-  One of the most important family support building blocks is to *encourage families to expand their networks of support*. What are some potential sources of support for the Hardy family? How would you help the family make connections to those sources of support?