

## Handout 4: Tip Sheet on Increasing Male Involvement

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### 1. **Be specific about goals.**

Before taking on any projects to increase male involvement in your Head Start program, ask yourselves why it is important. How will it enhance the services being provided to children and families?

### 2. **Build Support.**

Support from staff, administrators, mothers, and community leaders is critical to the success of parent involvement initiatives designed for men. Therefore, you will need to build a strong case for your plan, and you will need to be prepared to present this case in order to gain support.

Not everyone may initially be committed to the concept of increasing male involvement. You may need support to persuade them it is important.

### 3. **Reach out to all father figures, not just fathers.**

Children growing up in low-income and single-parent homes often have a regular and consistent relationship with a father figure who is not necessarily their biological father. If you focus your involvement efforts on biological fathers, you will exclude a large number of men who play significant roles in the lives of the children at Head Start. Instead, identify the men who are in the lives of the children. Make these men the target of your efforts.

### 4. **Provide training and support services for staff.**

If your efforts are to be successful, staff will need in-service training experiences. Many early childhood educators have received little, if any, formalized education and training in the area of male involvement.

### 5. **Choose leaders who are committed to male involvement.**

Ideally, having men as the leaders of projects to increase male involvement is most helpful. However women can be successful leaders of efforts to involve men. However, they must be sensitive to the differences in how men and women approach parenting and interact with young children.

## Handout 4: Tip Sheet on Increasing Male Involvement (Continued)

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### 6. **Don't neglect mothers.**

For male involvement to be successful, you need the support of mothers. Tell them why male involvement activities are important and how they will benefit the children. Consider offering involvement opportunities that are inviting to both men and women.

### 7. **Go slowly.**

The key to success is a male-friendly environment that encourages and supports male involvement in the program. This is a long-term process, and you shouldn't expect too much, too soon. Start slowly and build upon your successes. For example, be sure you include pictures of both men and women in your brochures or media coverage. Make a special effort to personally invite fathers and significant males to events.

### 8. **Don't reinvent the wheel.**

Your program already provides some parent involvement activities. However, they may be targeted mainly at mothers. Look at what you already are doing to encourage involvement. Then, explore how these efforts might be adapted to reach out to men.

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Adapted from *Father/Male Involvement in Early Childhood Programs* by Brent McBride and Thomas Rane, ERIC Digest EDO-PS-96-10, October 1996