Section 3
Focus on Fathering: One-Hour Group Parent Education Sessions

Head Start Programs have the opportunity to collaborate with local Parents as Teachers Parent Educators to offer Focus on Fathering group sessions designed to build fathers' parenting skills. The one hour, stand alone sessions cover a variety of topics of interest to fathers including:

Places to Go	Child Development
Discipline	Ways to Play
Reading with Your Child	Parenting Apart
Siblings and Friends	Healthy Relationships Choosing Childcare
Self-Esteem	Helping Your Child Deal with Feelings
Connecting with Your Child	Choosing Childcare

In addition to group sessions, some fathers with children under the age of five may request the opportunity to participate in individual sessions with a parent educator to learn about their child's development and to plan activities for playing with their child.

Choosing a Facilitator

Focus on Fathering curriculum are designed to be facilitated by Parents as Teachers Parent Educators. In some states, Parents as Teachers is operated through local school districts. To locate Parents as Teachers representatives that may be interested in providing these sessions refer to the National Parents as Teachers web site, www.parentsasteachers.org. In the absence of Parents as Teachers parent educator participation, individuals with a background in early childhood can serve as facilitators.

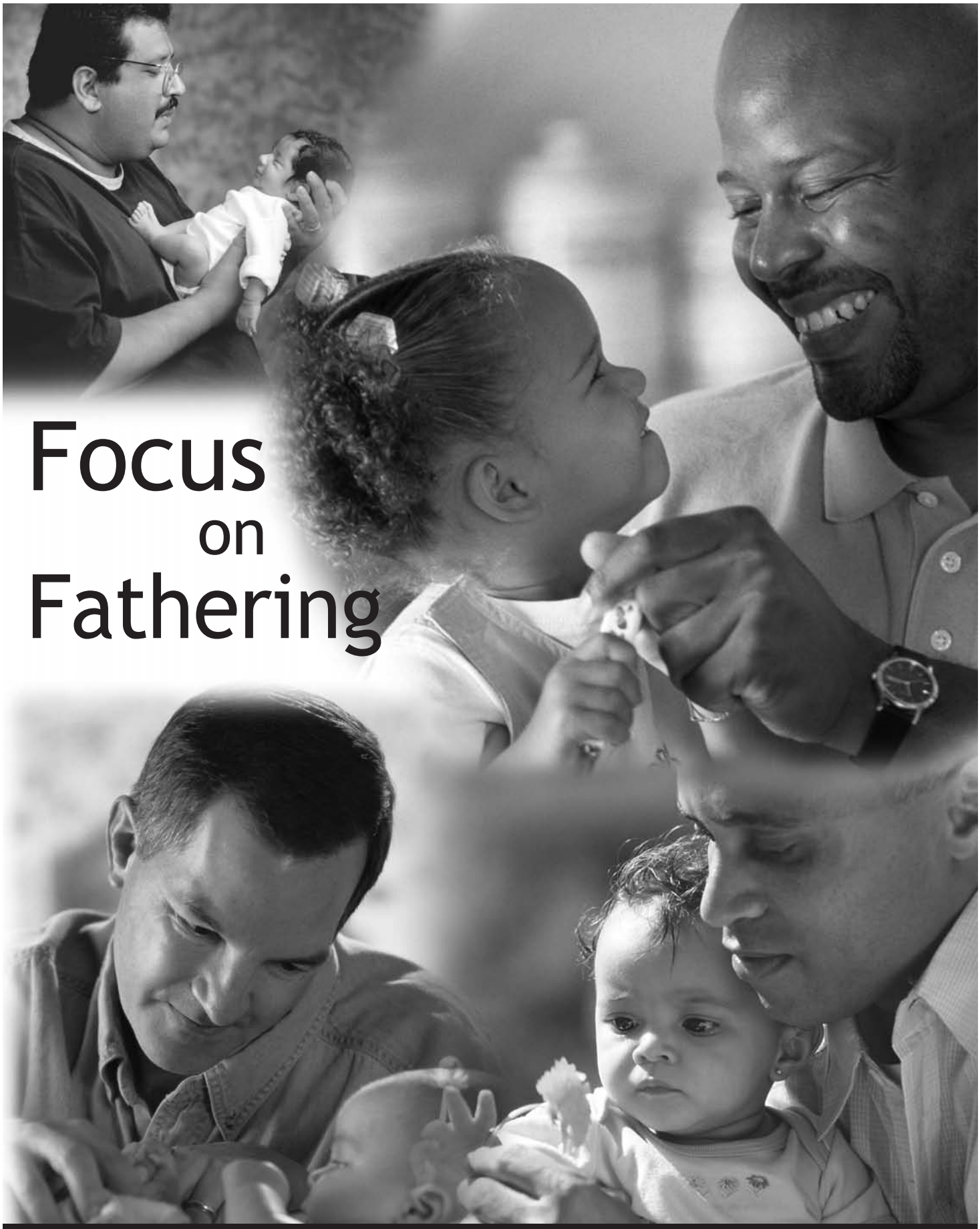
Implementation Tips

- Encourage Parents as Teachers Parent Educators to publicize these sessions in their newsletters.
- Consider hosting one of these sessions during existing events, such as Parent Night at the schools.
- Host a session in conjunction with a father/child activity, such as "Playtime at the Park" or "Fishing with Dad." Including children may allow more parents to attend.

Resources/Tools

The tools listed below are shown on the following pages and included on the CD attached to the inside front cover of the Fathers for Life Technical Assistance Manual.

- Post Session Evaluations



Focus on Fathering

Acknowledgements
Focus on Fathering

Developed for the state of Missouri by Parents as Teachers National Center

Curriculum Writers
Kerry Caverly, Parents as Teachers National Center

Jane Kostelc, Parents as Teachers National Center

Editors/Reviewers
Kathy LeFebvre, Grant Coordinator, Family Support Division, Missouri Department of Social Services

Dr. Kathryn L. Fuger, Research Associate, Institute for Human Development, University of Missouri-Kansas City

Stacey Owsley, Director, Missouri Head Start State Collaboration Office

Carolyn Stemmons, Assistant Director, Missouri Head Start State Collaboration Office

Marnie Morgan, Project Coordinator, Head Start Innovation and Improvement Grant Project

Lana Brooks, Early Childhood Education, Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Evaluation Form Writer
Kathryn L. Fuger, Ph.D, Director of Early Childhood Programs
University of Missouri-Kansas City Institute for Human Development

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Child Development

Focus on Fathering

Group Plan Meeting
Child Development

Goal

- Fathers will gain basic information on how children grow and develop.

Key Points

- Birth through six years of age is a time of amazing growth and change in both physical development and in brain development.
- Children grow and develop in four areas: physical, language, social-emotional, and intellectual.
- Children need loving, responsive parents and care providers to help them grow and develop to the best of their potential.

Materials
Parent Handouts

- *Did You Know? Tidbits on How My Child Develops*
- *How My Child Grows and Develops*

Supplies for Presentation

- Chart paper, large dry erase board, or chalk board
- Appropriate writing instruments (markers, chalk, etc.)

Supplies for Activity

- Chart paper
- Appropriate writing instruments
- Activity Handout: *Child Development Lotto*

Procedure
Welcome/Icebreaker

- Introductions and announcements

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Introduce Topic

Ask fathers to share with the group their definition of development.

- What areas do you think children develop in?
- What helps children develop to the best of their potential?
- How can you help your children develop to the best of their potential?

Discussion Points. Incorporate throughout the meeting.

Birth through six years of age is a time of amazing growth and change in both physical development and in brain development. Use handout, *Did You Know?... Tidbits on Child Development*, as appropriate.

Conversation starters:

- What were the changes in your child's development that amazed you the most?
- How much does the human brain develop in the first years of life?

Discussion:

- Conception through six years of age is a time of amazing growth and change in the brain.
- While many organs in the body change in size after birth, the brain is the only organ that actually changes in structure.
- All children are unique but research has found that human development proceeds in an orderly fashion.
- The sequences are predictable, although the timetables vary depending on individual children.

Children grow and develop in four areas: physical, language, social-emotional, and intellectual. Use handout, *How My Child Grows and Develops,* as appropriate.

Conversation starters:

- What are ways you can help your child develop in each area?

Discussion:

- When we talk about development in children, we need to consider the whole child.
- All areas of development overlap in a child.

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- Most activities that children engage in can enhance all areas of their development.

Children need loving, responsive parents and care providers to help them grow and develop to the best of their potential.

Conversation starters:

- What is your role in helping your child develop to their best ability?
- How does being a loving and responsive adult help children grow and develop?

Discussion:

- Children enter this world dependent on the adults in their lives to meet their basic needs.
- Parents and care providers, responding sensitively to children's needs, build strong, nurturing relationships, resulting in secure attachments.
- Positive relationships between parents and children tell children much about how to view the world. They also lay the foundation for self-concept, self-regulation, and connections to other people throughout life.

Practical Application

Rationale:

- Understanding how your child grows and develops can influence your interactions with him/her.

Activity:

- Give each father the Activity Handout *Child Development Lotto* sheet and writing instrument.
- Read each of the 16 statements (listed below), one at a time. Ask fathers to write the **bolded word** from the statement in <u>any</u> box they wish. Facilitator will need to repeat the **bolded word** to the fathers. Facilitator will also need to write the word on the chart to model for fathers with low-literacy skills.
- After facilitator finishes reading the 16 statements, each father should have every square on their sheet filled in with a word.
- Next, the facilitator will read just the **bolded words** in any order. As each word is called out, instruct the fathers to put an "X" on that word on their lotto sheet. Facilitator should place an "X" on the appropriate word on the chart paper.

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- When a father has four “X’s” in a row, they win. The winner can have a moment to brag about their child or their child’s accomplishments.

Statements:

Attachment is the emotional connection between you and your baby.

Your child and you each have a personal style for dealing with the world. This is called your **temperament**.

Physical development moves from top to bottom, or from the head to the feet and from in to out.

Babbling is the early talking of babies and it sounds the same in babies all over the world.

Without words, babies **communicate** in many ways: they cry, coo, squeal, and smile.

Small muscle development comes later than large motor development. That’s why children learn to walk long before they’re able to control the muscles in their hands and fingers enough to write or cut with scissors.

When first learning to talk, children **understand** more than they can say.

Sometime between 18-36 months, children seek more **independence**. This is a common stage in child development and can be frustrating for parents.

Separation anxiety happens when a child’s primary caregiver leaves him/her. This is a common milestone and can be frustrating for parents.

Children develop their **large muscles** by moving around while playing.

Conception through six years of age is a time of amazing growth and change in the **brain**.

Play is the primary task of childhood and the most important way children learn and develop.

Infants spend about 14 to 16 hours per day **sleeping**.

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By the age of two, **eating habits** have already begun to be established. That's why children need to have exposure to plenty of healthy foods.

Singing, reading and playing rhyming games with your child helps him/her learn the sounds of speech and the rhythms of **language**.

The first stage of writing is called **scribbling**.

Debrief

Ask fathers to reflect on the group meeting and report one piece of the information they found helpful or interesting or that they think they will share with their child's other caregivers.

Summary

Summarize the goals and key points of the parent meeting.

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Parent Handout

Did You Know? ... Tidbits on How My Child Develops

My child needs loving, responsive parents and care providers help him/her to grow and develop.

There are four areas of development: motor, language, intellectual, and social emotional.

Children typically develop in a predictable sequence. My child's timetable for development is unique to him/her.

At six months, my child's brain was half the size of the adult brain. By kindergarten, the brain is almost full grown.

Much growth and change happens in the first six years of life.

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Parent Handout

How My Child Grows and Develops

Take a minute to think about your child's development. If you don't have the answer, ask your child's caregiver.

My child is doing the following in each area of development:

Language _____

_____

_____

Motor _____

_____

_____

Intellectual_____

_____

_____

Social Emotional_____

_____

_____

I want to tell my child's caregivers that:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

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Activity Handout

Child Development Lotto

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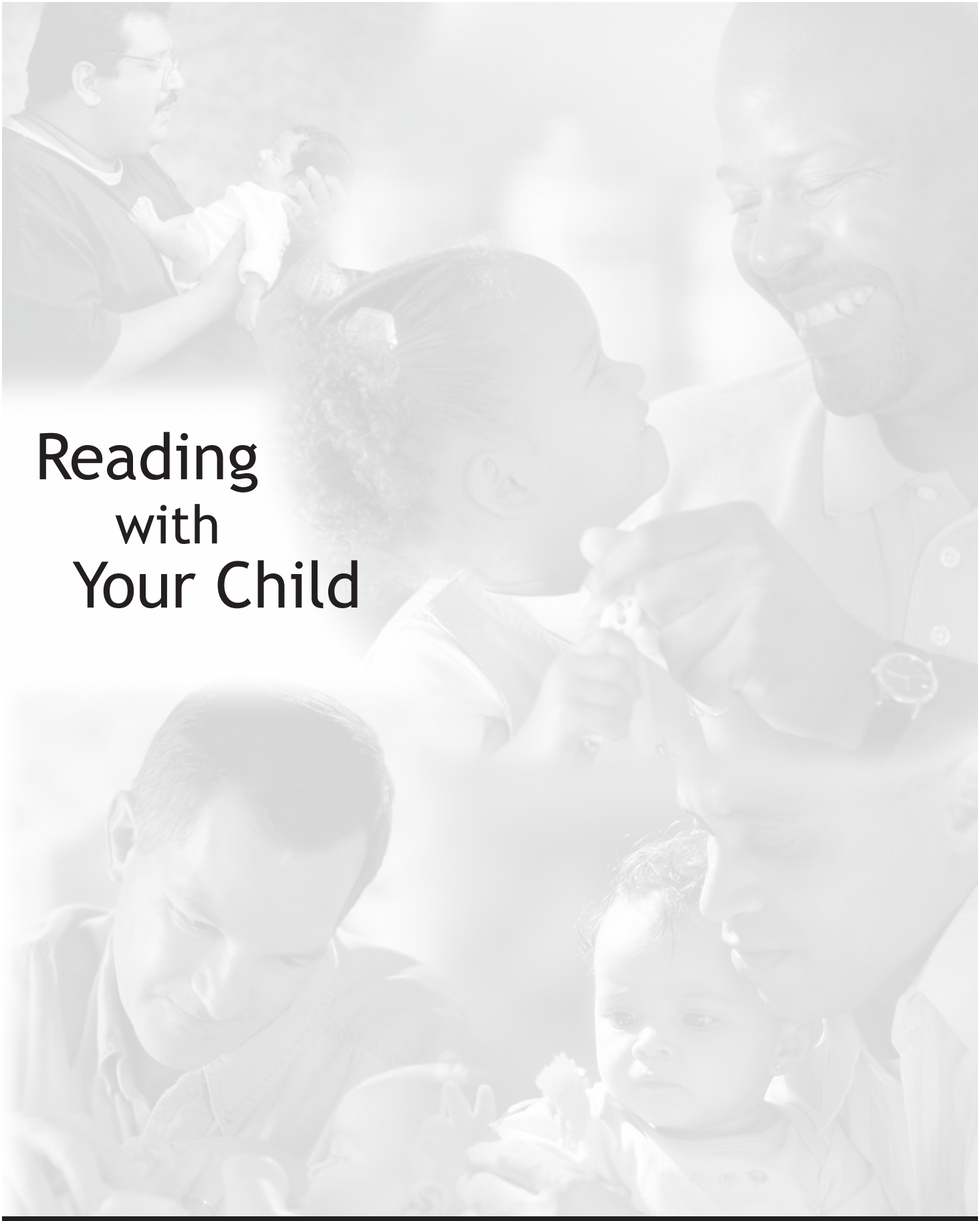

Reading with Your Child

Focus on Fathering

Group Meeting Plan
Reading With Your Child

Goal

- To help fathers understand the important role reading plays in their children's language development and thus, later school success.

Key Points

- Why read to young children
- Tips for reading aloud
- Choosing books

Materials

Educator Resources

- *Fathers Encourage Early Literacy*

Parent Handouts

- Reading Together
- *Choosing Good Books*

Supplies for Presentation

- Chart paper, large dry erase board, or chalk board
- Appropriate writing instruments (markers, chalk, etc.)

Supplies for Activity

- A variety of young children's books, reflecting diversity (at least one per father in attendance, three per father if possible)
- Activity handout: *Check Out a Book*

Procedure

Welcome/Icebreaker

Introductions and announcements

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- At the start of the group meeting, have fathers select a book that they may want to read to their child. Have them introduce themselves to the person next to them and have a short conversation on why he chose the book.

Introduce the Topic

- Did you have a favorite book when you were a child?
- What are the qualities you think are important in books for children? (Record responses on chart paper or board.)

Discussion Points. Incorporate throughout the meeting.

Why read to young children.

Conversation starters:

- Why do you think it is important to read to young children?
- How do you think reading impacts how your children grow and develop?
- How can reading to children now, help them when they get to school?

Discussion:

- When children are read aloud to they hear the sounds of speech. They must hear these sounds before they are able to speak them and later read them.
- Reading aloud to children helps fathers form attachments with their children.
- Reading aloud introduces children to new ideas and concepts and exposes them to proper sentence structure, which is not always used in everyday language.
- Research has found that children who are parented by adults who enjoy reading generally grow up to enjoy reading themselves.

Tips for reading aloud. Use handout, *Reading Together,* as appropriate.

Conversation starters:

- What is most challenging about reading to your child?

Discussion:

- Holding children close while reading to them is important. When parents snuggle with their children the children will associate reading with pleasure.

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- Reading with expression and enthusiasm will draw children into the book.
- Books should be appropriate for the child. For example, infants/toddlers should have sturdy books to look at, touch and hold.
- Talking about the pictures in the books is fine, too. If fathers are struggling with reading themselves, encourage them to talk about the pictures on the pages with their children.
- If a father is going to be away from his child, he may want to tape record himself reading his child's favorite book. The child can listen to the tape when separated from her father.

Choosing books. Use handout, *Choosing Good Books*, as appropriate.

Conversation starters:

- Do you think that your child is being exposed to books appropriate to her age?
- Does your child have access to books in her home environment? How would you bring this topic up with your child's caregiver?

Discussion:

- Quality children's books should: be free from stereotypes and bias; represent a variety of cultures; have bright, simple photographs or illustrations; have rhyme, rhythm, or repetition; have an engaging, simple plot.
- Remember that children and adults view books differently because of their developmental levels. A book that is appealing to a young child may seem too simple to an adult. A book that an adult finds appealing may be too complex for the child.

Practical Application

Rationale:

- By having an opportunity to view a variety of children's books and critically evaluate them for their strengths and weaknesses, fathers will be more empowered to choose appropriate books for their children.

Activity:

- This activity will involve fathers in evaluating a variety of children's books. Each father will focus on evaluating books for his child.

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- Ask the fathers to find a partner to work with and give each team about three to four books. The books need to vary in content, form and style. There should be books that are considered appropriate children's books for infants/toddlers as well as those considered not so appropriate.
- Use the Activity Handout, *Check Out a Book*, to discuss how to evaluate a book.

Debrief

- Have fathers share their input to generate a discussion. Ask the following questions:
  - What are your thoughts on appropriate books for children after doing this activity?
  - Does every book have to fit all these criteria? Why or why not?
  - Did you find anything that surprised you? Do you feel better informed in selecting books for your child?

Summary

Summarize the goal and key points of the parent meeting.

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Educator Resource

Fathers Encourage Early Literacy

Parents can help their child get ready to read, even while she is very young. When an infant shows excitement over pictures next to her crib, a toddler turns the pages of a board book, or a preschooler recognizes the first letter of her name on a cereal box, each is demonstrating emerging literacy. Reading to a child from birth is the best way to make her a successful reader when she starts school.

Fathers play an important role in their child's early literacy development. When they understand what is happening at each age, they can support their child's development by reading to the child, or by encouraging other caregivers to do so.

Early Stages

Developing language is the first step in learning to read, and it occurs very early in life. Reading out loud to a child from the time she is born provides a rich language environment. The child hears words that may not occur in the normal course of a day, increasing her exposure to a wide variety of speech sounds. When a father cradles his baby and reads to her with inflection, the child learns to associate reading with love, comfort and pleasure — the beginning of a positive attitude which provides motivation for learning to read.

Toddler Years

Toddlers have the reputation for being on the go. Fathers may be discouraged in their attempts to read to their child during this stage of development because the child may wander away while the father is reading. Many adults think this signals inattention, and perhaps a lack of respect for the reader, but neither of these is the case. Toddlers learn important things from reading — they just learn them standing up! If the parent keeps reading when the toddler moves away, the child will soon wander back to listen. She may not remain long, but she will "sample" the experience of reading and gain much from the time she listens to her father reading aloud.

Children this age like books that have photographs of objects and text that names the pictures. They are absorbing words in preparation for speaking and reading. Nursery rhymes and books with rhyming text are important because rhyming promotes the awareness of letter sounds, which is necessary for reading. Toddlerhood is the time to learn how to handle a book, such as holding the book right side up and turning paper pages. Fathers teach these skills naturally while they read to their toddler.

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Preschool

As children enter the preschool years, they develop an appreciation of the plot and characters of a story. They are less interested in just acquiring words and are able to follow a story. Vocabulary building continues to be an important benefit of reading to a preschooler. Exposure to quality picture books increases children's enjoyment of reading and engages imagination. More complex stories build children's comprehension skills and provide a knowledge base for understanding concepts and new ideas. Skills such as identifying the title of a book, tracing text with a finger while it is read, talking about pictures, and speculating about where the plot is going are setting the stage for learning to read in the early years of school.

Preschoolers are forming gender identity and ideas about what men and women do. When fathers read to their preschool children, they provide a powerful example that reading is important for everyone.

Literacy also develops in the preschool years when the child sees printed words in the environment, such as those on signs, lists, menus or labels. When parents read this "environmental print" to their child they show him that reading is important in every day life.

Experts say ...

Susan Hall and Louise Moats sum up the benefits of reading aloud to your children in the early years:

- Children develop background knowledge for more complicated learning.
- Children build their vocabulary.
- Children are exposed to rich language patterns.
- Children learn the structure of a story.
- Children learn how to handle books and become familiar with reading.
- Children identify reading as a pleasurable activity.

Sources

Hall, S. and Moats, L. (Eds.) (2000). *Straight talk about reading*. Lincolnwood, IL: Contemporary Books.

U.S. Department of Education Office of Intergovernmental Affairs (2002). *Helping your child become a reader*. Washington: Department of Education.

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Parent Handout

Reading Together

Did you know that you can help your child get ready to read, even while he is very young? Fathers are important role models for reading. Read to your child from birth. It's the best way to make him a successful reader when he starts school.

Early Stages

Developing language is the first step in learning to read. It occurs very early in life. When you read to your child from the time he is born

- you expose him to spoken language
- he hears words that may not occur in the normal course of a day
- he is exposed to a wide variety of speech sounds
- he learns to associate reading with love, comfort and pleasure because you hold and cuddle him while you read
- as he grows he will like reading

Toddler Years

Toddlers have the reputation for being on the go. But toddlers learn important things from reading — they just learn them standing up! Children this age

- like books that have photographs of objects and text that names the pictures
- learn words in preparation for speaking and reading
- need nursery rhymes and books with rhyming text because rhyming helps them hear letter sounds
- are learning how to handle a book; for example they hold the book right side up and turn paper pages
- will listen for a short while, then move away. Keep reading! Your child will come back.

Preschool

As children enter the preschool years, they are able to follow a story and know the characters in a book. When you read to your preschooler, he will

- learn new words

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- follow complex stories
- build his knowledge of the world around him
- understand concepts such as numbers and opposites
- get new ideas
- begin to notice letters and words on signs, menus, and lists
- be able to find the title and author of the book
- use his finger to underline what you are reading

When you are with him, read to your child each day, no matter how young he is. You will be giving him just the right experiences he needs to become a good reader in the future.

Experts say ...
Susan Hall and Louise Moats sum up the benefits of reading aloud to your child in the early years:

- Your child develops background knowledge for more complicated learning.
- Your child builds his vocabulary.
- Your child is exposed to rich language patterns.
- Your child learns the structure of a story.
- Your child learns how to handle books and becomes familiar with reading.
- Your child identifies reading as a pleasurable activity.

Books I want to read to my child:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

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_____

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Parent Handout

Choosing Good Books

You probably know it is important to read to your child. Many educational studies show the same thing. When children are read to from the time they are babies, they can learn to read earlier and are better readers later in school. But how do you know what books to buy or borrow for your child? Sometimes the variety of books available at the library or book store is overwhelming. Here are some tips for getting good books for young children of all ages.

Where to Get Books

It doesn't have to cost a lot of money to have books in your home that are right for young children. Your parent educator, child's care provider, or librarian may have suggestions for sources of inexpensive or free books in your area. Kids love books. Be a hero and give your child books. Here are some easy-on-the budget ideas:

- Borrow books from the public library.
- Go to garage sales and sales conducted by libraries to reduce holdings.
- Exchange books with other families who have young children.
- Shop "dollar" stores and discount stores.
- Bookstores and Internet book sellers may have bargain sections or run specials.

Where to Keep Books

Children need to have books where they can reach them. Try these ideas:

- a cardboard box that your child is allowed to decorate with art work or scribbling
- a low shelf or a bottom drawer
- a section of a shelf on family bookcases lets your child know his books are important too
- beside your child's car seat in the car
- near the phone so your child can read while you talk
- in the bathroom

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What Makes a Good Book

Good books for young children have some things in common:

- well made and durable; young children carry books around and use them. They like to read a favorite book over and over, so books need to stand up to a lot of use.
- have large, colorful pictures
- have photographs or realistic pictures
- for babies and toddlers, just a few words on the page or ones that label objects
- for preschoolers, good stories with interesting characters and a plot with lots of action. Show people with a variety of cultures, races, physical abilities or occupations.

Good Books for All Ages

Books for Babies to 1 Year have

- thick cardboard pages
- flexible cloth or vinyl pages
- small, chunky format
- simple, bright pictures or photos
- few or no words on a page
- themes that encourage sounds (farm animals, vehicles, etc.)

Books for Toddlers and Twos have

- cardboard or thick paper pages
- repetition of words or phrases
- pictures that tell a story without words
- a story told in a few, simple words
- nursery rhymes or rhyming words
- stories about familiar, everyday things
- simple concepts like colors or shapes

Books for Preschoolers have

- increasingly more complicated stories
- beautiful illustrations or pictures
- stories about different cultures and places
- folktales
- stories about issues children face (fears, separation, starting school)
- rhyming text or poetry
- humorous plots or characters
- non-fiction subjects
- color, letter, or number themes

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Activity Handout

Check Out a Book

Book Titles	Book One	Book Two	Book Three	Book Four
Would this book be interesting to your child?				
What areas of development would this book promote?				
Are there a variety of characters, representing various cultural groups and roles?				
Will this book promote discussion between you and your child?				
Does this book portray a variety of cultures?				
Is this book free from stereotypes?				
Do you feel this book is appropriate for your child?				
Does this book have rhyme, rhythm, or repetition?				
Does this book have a simple plot that will allow your child to become involved?				

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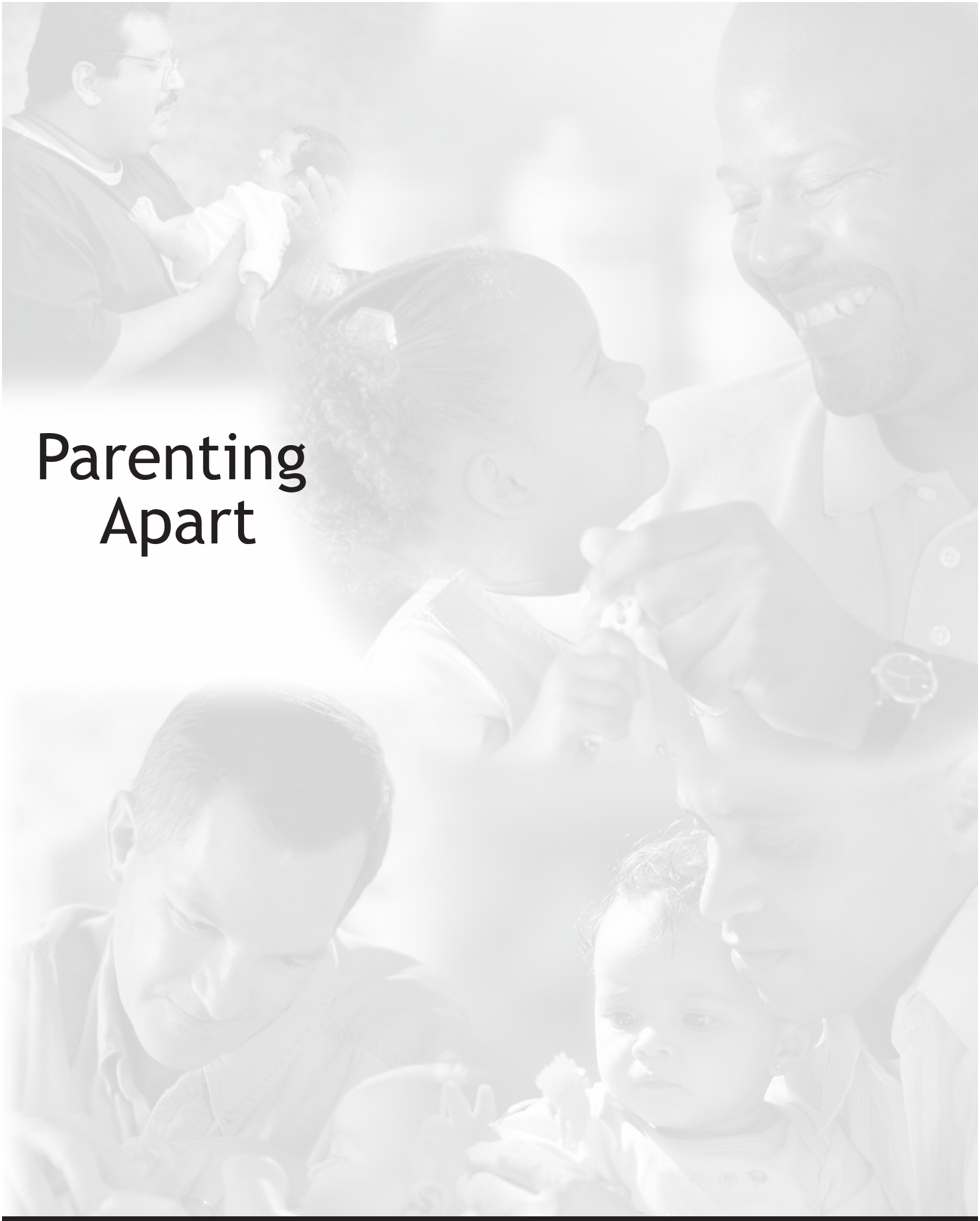

Parenting Apart

Focus on Fathering

Group Meeting Plan
Parenting Apart

Goal

- Fathers will understand the important role they play in the lives of their child.
- Fathers will understand that effective communication with their child's other parent is critical when parenting apart.
- Fathers will understand dynamics that make parenting apart difficult, such as gatekeeping and parental attitudes, expectations, and priorities.

Key Points

- Fathers have an important role in their child's lives.
- Effective communication between parents is critical when parenting apart.
- Gatekeeping and parental attitudes, expectations, and priorities make parenting apart difficult.

Materials

Parent Handouts

- *You are Important to Your Child*
- *Communication Keys*

Supplies for Presentation

- Chart paper, dry erase board, or chalk board
- Appropriate writing instruments (markers, chalk, etc.)

Supplies for Activity

- Cut colored paper into "bricks" about 5-1/2 x 8-1/2 inches. Make enough to build a good sized wall.
- Activity handout: *Ladder Rung Pattern*

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- Make copies of the *Ladder Rung Pattern* Activity Handout so that each dad gets about three to five ladder rungs. Cut them out before the meeting.
- Masking tape and appropriate writing instruments (pencil, markers, etc.)

Procedure

Welcome/Icebreaker

- Introductions and announcements
- Ask fathers to think about one parenting issue that is especially difficult to manage while parenting apart from their child's other parent. After a few moments, ask them to report this issue to another father.
- Write these issues on the chart paper. Now is not the time to problem solve around these issues. That will be done later in the activity section of the meeting.

Discussion Points. Incorporate throughout the meeting.

Fathers have an important role in their child's lives. Use handout, *You are Important to Your Child*, as appropriate.

Conversation starters:

- What do fathers uniquely bring to their children's lives that mothers do not?
- What type of father role model did you have growing up?

Discussion:

- The father's role is an important one that has a profound influence on the social, emotional, and intellectual development of the children.
- A mother's role and a father's role are not equal or interchangeable, but each makes its own contribution to child development.
- The father's role in society has changed during the last 20 years, with a trend towards acceptance of a nurturant father who is more involved in child care responsibilities. However, some research points out that child care involvement for fathers has, in reality, changed little over the years.
- Involvement by both parents, even though in separated households, have shown benefits for parent and child alike.

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Effective communication between parents is critical when parenting apart.
Use the handout, *Communication Keys*, as appropriate.

Conversation starters:

- On a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being not so good, 5 being great, how well do you and your child's other parent communicate? (Ask fathers to raise their hands with the appropriate number of fingers raised.)
- What makes communication between you and your child's other parent difficult?
- Do any of you have a written plan outlining expectations, needs, and responsibilities of how you will parent apart?

Discussion:

- At least one in three children will experience parental separation before the age of 16. Most of these children go through a period of unhappiness; many experience low self-esteem, behavior problems, and loss of contact with part of the extended family. Children are usually helped by good communication with and between both parents.
- The quality of relationships between parents and children and between parents themselves is important in helping children adjust to life after separation.
- A poor relationship between parents who are parenting apart makes it more difficult to establish successful communication.
- It is important for parents not to put their children in the middle of communications that are between the parents. Parents should communicate with each other.
- The focus of communication between parents who are parenting apart should not be on the conflicts with each other, but on supporting, nurturing, and protecting the children.
- It is important to keep a healthy line of communication open with your child's mother regarding parenting practices, expectations for behavior, and other issues related to your child.
- Arguments and tension between parents may make children feel guilty, angry, and alone. Trying to make the children take sides or turn against the other parent creates confusion for the children and places them in the middle of an adult struggle.

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Gatekeeping and parental attitudes, expectations, and priorities make parenting apart difficult.

Conversation starters:

- How has your relationship with your child been influenced by the attitudes and expectations of your child's mother?
- How do others see you as a father? Mothers often do not allow access to their child to someone who is unreliable and not trustworthy.

Discussion:

- The attitudes, expectations, and priorities of the child's mother have enormous influence on the level of engagement that the father has with his child.
- When mothers are angry with the fathers, non-custodial fathers have difficulty gaining access to the children.
- Gatekeeping is the term that describes the mother's attempt to control the father's access to his child.
- A mother's attitudes and expectations about men and fathers have been shaped by her relationship with her father.

Practical Application

Rationale:

- Talking about some barriers to successfully parenting apart will help fathers find solutions for them.
- Being specific about the nature of the barrier is important. Stepping back and taking a look at what seems to be standing in the way of working things out, generally makes it easier to think about how to deal with it.

Activity:

- Pass out a few "bricks" to each dad and tell them that as a group you're going to build a wall representing some of the barriers that can get in the way of making parenting apart work.
- Tell dads to write something on each of their bricks that is a barrier to communication with their child's other parent.

Created by Parents as Teachers National Center Inc., February 2006.

- Suggest dads use the list created during the icebreaker or use something that has happened to them recently. Let them know they only have to put a few words on each brick.
- When dads are finished writing, ask one dad at a time to tape his bricks up on a meeting wall, starting at the bottom. After each dad has taped his bricks up, ask these or similar questions to give him a chance to talk about what he wrote on the bricks:
  - Can you tell us about what you wrote on your bricks?
  - How is what you put on each brick a barrier to making parenting apart work with you and your child's mother?
  - Are there things on the wall that seem to have stirred up feelings in the group more than others?
  - What's so hard about those particular ones?
- Sometimes the barriers to working things out with your children's moms can seem so big and overwhelming that it may be difficult to think clearly about how to get over or around them.
- Pass out three to five ladder rungs to each dad. Ask each dad to pick a few bricks in the wall and think of things they can do to get around the barriers written on them. They do not have to be the barriers they named specifically. Have dads write ideas on the ladder rungs. Then, tape them on the wall to build a ladder to the top. Each dad should come up one at a time and tape his ladder rungs up against the wall of bricks so that the rungs are strung together to resemble a real ladder.
- If some dads aren't sure what to write, offer suggestions such as:

Brick	**Ladder Rung**
She has a lot of anger at me.	Find a neutral third person who can help to work through the negative feelings.
She doesn't respect my rights as a dad.	Declare paternity and set up visitation access.

Debrief

- Going through a problem-solving process like this can help fathers feel a little more confident about working out issues related to parenting apart.

Created by Parents as Teachers National Center Inc., February 2006.

- The guiding principle that should always be considered is, “What’s best for the children?”
- It can be very hard for people to put anger and resentments toward each other aside so they can cooperate on a greater goal. As long as parents stay focused on the needs of children, it’s possible to solve whatever parenting apart issues may arise.

Summary

Summarize the goal and key points of the parent meeting.

Notes to Group Facilitator:

A major barrier to a dad’s ability to establish a functional parenting apart relationship is often his failure to establish either paternity, get visitation access, or both. Even though laws differ from state to state, dads report a dramatic improvement in their efforts at co-parenting after they get legal status as fathers.

Establishing paternity and/or pursuing visitation or shared custody not only proves a dad’s seriousness about his role, but it also gives moms and their families a legal obligation to help him fulfill his role.

Created by Parents as Teachers National Center Inc., February 2006.

Parent Handout

You are Important to Your Child

Did you know?

- You have a BIG influence on the social, emotional, and intellectual development of your child.
- Men bring unique contributions to the parenting role. Your interactions are important for your child's well being and development.
- When you and your child's mother are both involved in your child's life, there are benefits for both you and your child.

What type of father role model did you have growing up?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

I bring these strengths to my parenting role:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

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Created by Parents as Teachers National Center Inc., February 2006.

Parent Handout

Communication Keys

Did you know?

- A poor relationship between parents who are parenting apart makes it more difficult to establish successful communication.
- It is important for your child's health and well being to keep a healthy line of communication open with your child's mother about parenting practices, expectations for behavior, and other issues related to your child.
- Arguments and tension between parents may make children feel guilty, angry, and alone.

Remember these points:

- Do not try and make the child take sides or turn against the other parent. This creates confusion for your child and places them in the middle of an adult struggle.
- Do not put your child in the middle of the communications with your child's mother. Parents should communicate with each other.
- When you communicate with your child's mother, focus on the child, not on your conflicts with her.
- Your child may go through a period of unhappiness, have low self-esteem, behavioral problems when you and your child's mom are parenting apart. Good communication with your child's mother may help.

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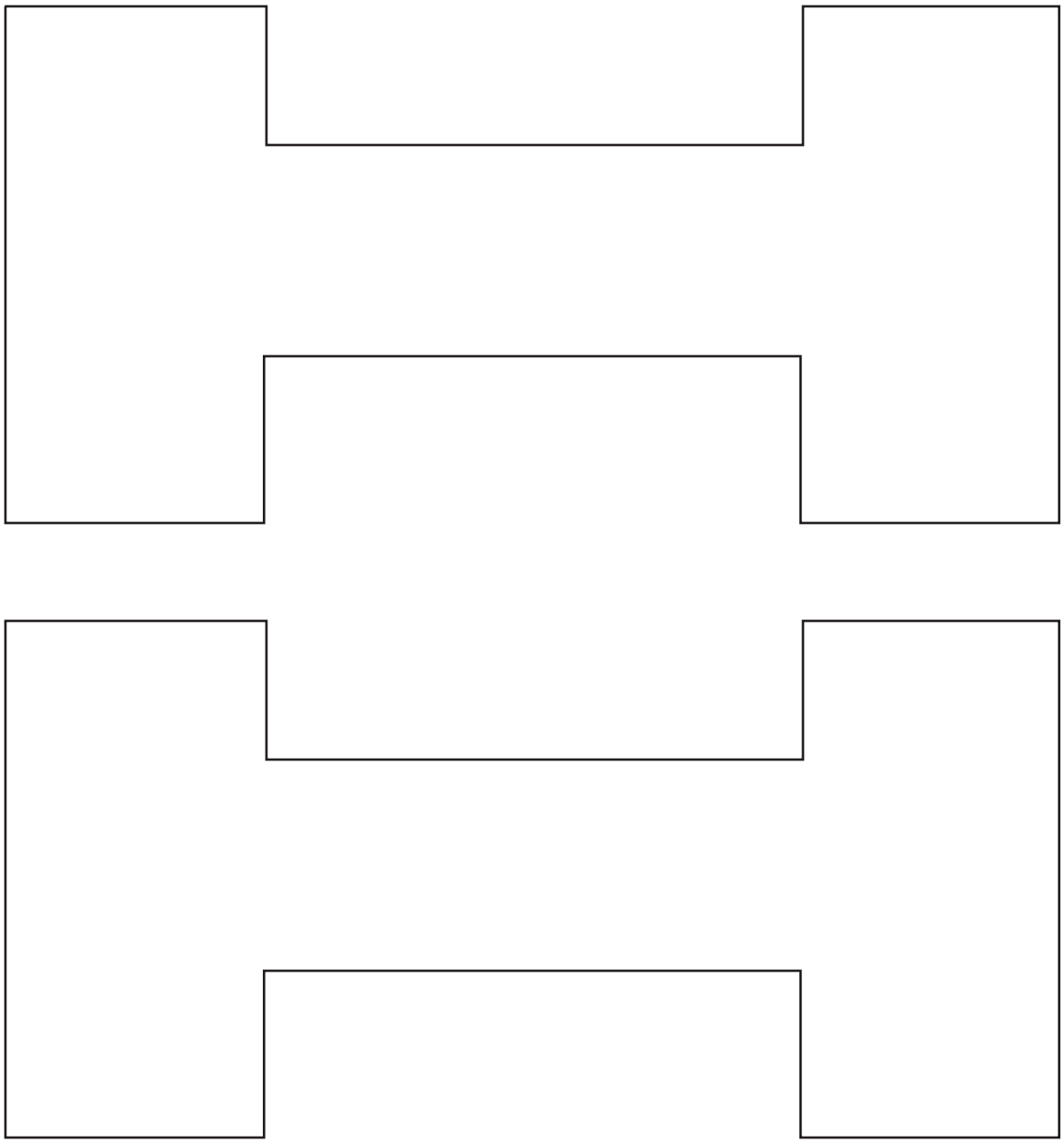
Activity Handout

Ladder Rung Pattern



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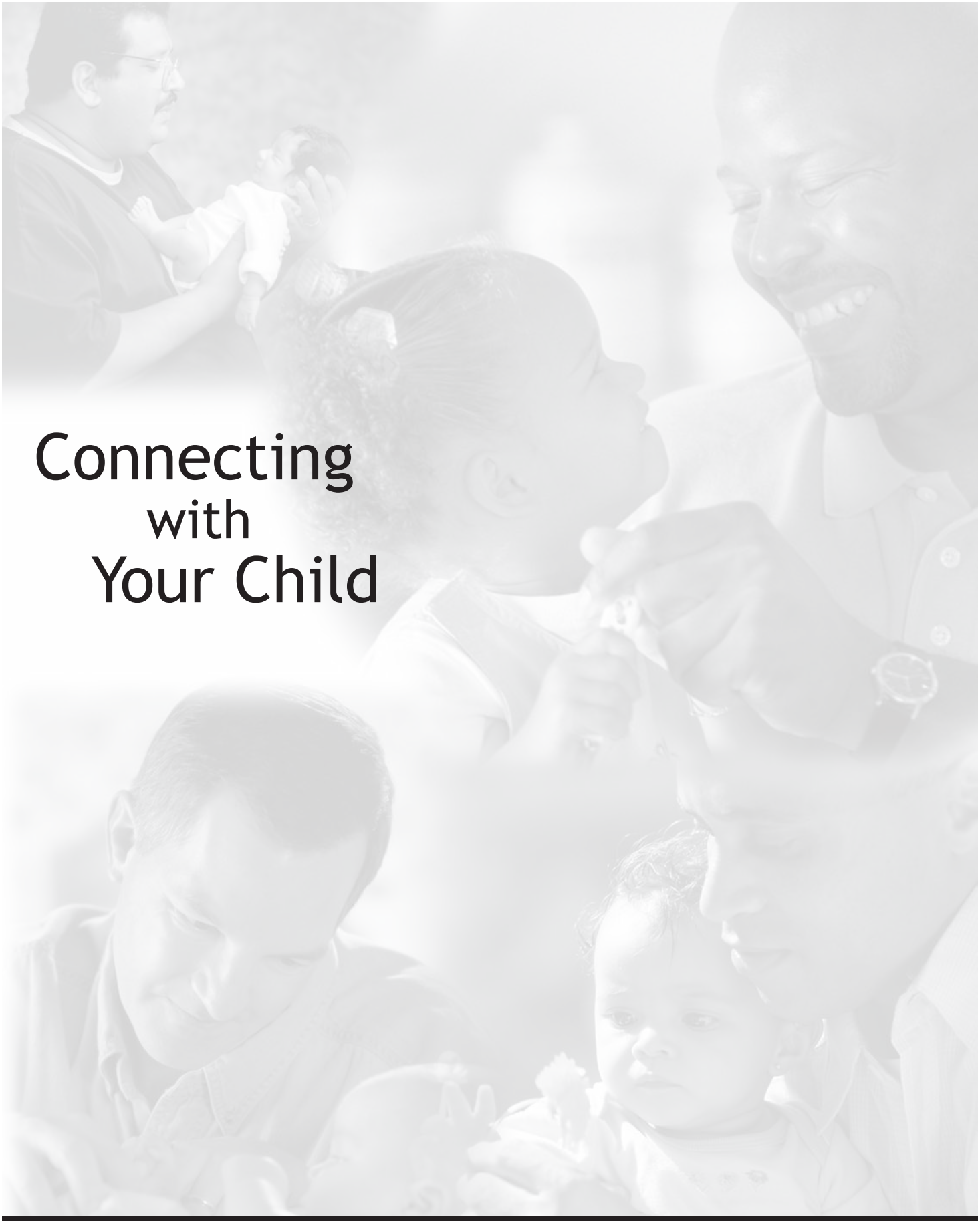

Connecting with Your Child

Focus on Fathering

Group Meeting Plan
Connecting with Your Child

Goal

- Fathers will understand the importance of forming a strong attachment with their children.
- Fathers will learn how strong attachments are the building blocks for healthy social-emotional development in children.
- Fathers will understand how certain behaviors and interactions with their children will either promote or harm their attachment with their children.

Key Points

- Fathers are important in their child's lives.
- Strong attachments are necessary for healthy social-emotional development.
- Hurtful words impact children's self-esteem and attachments.

Materials

Parent Handouts

- *Dads are Important*
- *A Look Back ... Connecting With Your Child*

Supplies for Presentation

- Chart paper, dry erase board, or chalk board
- Appropriate writing instruments (markers, chalk, etc.)

Supplies for Activity

- Pictures of children, either from the Activity Handout, *Children,* or from magazines
- Chart paper, dry erase board, or chalk board
- Appropriate writing instruments (markers, chalk, etc.)

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Procedure

Welcome/Icebreaker

- Introductions and announcements
- Ask fathers to recall a special time in their childhood that they had with their father or with another significant male. If that question does not seem to be appropriate for the group, ask them to take a minute and imagine doing something or going somewhere fun with their child.
- Give fathers the opportunity to report their memories if they want to.
- Restate the goal of the meeting, referring to the activities the fathers mentioned.

Discussion Points. Incorporate throughout the meeting.

Fathers are important in their child's lives. Use handout, *Dads are Important*, as appropriate.

Conversation starters:

- What role did your father play in your life?
- What role do fathers specifically play in their child's development?

Discussion:

- A reliable predictor of youth engaging in criminal activity, alcohol and drug use, school dropout rates, and emotional disturbance is not poverty nor race, but growing up fatherless.
- Many of today's fathers did not have active fathers to teach them how to be involved dads.
- Role modeling is a powerful influence in children's lives. It can be both positive and negative.
- Fathers have different care giving styles than mothers. Children benefit from these differences.
- Children learn both positive and negative lessons from their father's role modeling.

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Strong attachments are necessary for healthy social-emotional development.
Use handout, *A Look Back ... Connecting With Your Child,* as appropriate.

Conversation starters:

- How close were you to your father emotionally?
- How did the lack of a relationship with your father impact you emotionally?

Discussion:

- Children learn from their interactions with people around them and seek the warmth and attention of the significant people in their lives.
- Attachment is the relationship that develops between children and their caregivers.
- The quality of attachment impacts the baby's social, emotional, and intellectual development.
- If a father was unable to trust and form secure attachments in their own childhood, forming a healthy attachment with their own child may be difficult.
- If children's attachment efforts result in warmth, protection, and well-being, they learn that people are valuable and that human relationships are worthwhile.
- The foundation of emotional security occurs early in life.
- Preschooler boys whose fathers offered praise and compliments scored higher on tests of cognitive development than boys whose fathers were cool and aloof.

Hurtful words impact children's self-esteem and attachments.

Conversation starters:

- Do you remember a time when an adult used hurtful words to you? How did that impact your self-esteem?
- Have you considered that the words you use with your children may stay with them for the rest of their lives?

Discussion:

- The way children, teens and adults approach life depends very much on what kind of a person they think they are — how they value and accept themselves.
- Fathers can help their children feel important from the time they are born.

Created by Parents as Teachers National Center Inc., February 2006.

Practical Application

Rationale:

- Fathers need to understand that children pay attention to whatever is said to them and fathers must choose their words carefully.
- The positive and negative words and phrases babies hear make a difference in how children feel about themselves.

Activity:

- Talk to fathers about things that were said to them as a child that they still remember as being painful.
- Ask fathers to make a list of mean or hurtful words or phrases they have heard others use. Write the words on the chart paper.
- Give each father a picture of a baby or child. Pictures on the Activity Handout, *Children*, should be enlarged on a copier for this activity.
- Remind the fathers that children often hear hurtful words from other caregivers as well. Tell them that when adults get angry, they often say mean things to their children.
- As the facilitator reads each hurtful word or phrase from the generated list, ask the fathers to fold their paper children (demonstrate). Continue reading each word or phrase as the fathers fold their papers. Soon, the papers will be folded again and again.
- Next, ask the fathers what positive things might be said to make their "child" feel better. Help them brainstorm words and phrases that are kind and loving. List the responses on the chart paper.
- Then, read the loving phrases, one at a time, from the list. Ask the fathers to unfold their paper children, one fold at a time, as each word or phrase is read. Continue the process of reading and unfolding until the list is exhausted. If there are not enough loving words, ask the fathers to unfold the paper children completely.
- Ask what the fathers observe about his unfolded paper child. Although the children are back to its original size and shape, the negative words and phrases have left marks on the child. Hurtful words often leave scars on a person's self-worth.
- Discuss ways the fathers can avoid speaking to their children in anger.

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Debrief

Ask fathers to reflect on the group meeting and report one piece of information they found helpful or interesting or that they think they will tell their child's other caregivers.

Summary

Summarize the goals and key points of the parent meeting.

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Parent Handout

Dads are Important

You are an important part of your child's life. Whether or not you are able to be with your child every day, you are still play a vital role.

Did you know?

- Children with involved fathers have greater tolerance for stress and frustration, and as a result are more "ready" for school.
- The amount of time fathers spend reading with children is a strong predictor for verbal and thinking skills (especially among girls).
- The more a father is involved in his child's life, the fewer behavior problems are exhibited by children.
- Children whose fathers regularly play physically are more likely to be socially popular with peers than children whose fathers do not play with them.

Klinger, Ronald, Ph.D. (2004). *Preparing for Successful Fathering*. Austin, TX: CSF Publications.

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Created by Parents as Teachers National Center Inc., February 2006.

Parent Handout

A Look Back ... Connecting with Your Child

This is what I remember:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

People who made a positive influence on my life when I was a child:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Negative parenting behaviors and expectations of **my** mom and dad that I do not want to repeat:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Things I want my children to remember about me when they are grown up:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

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Activity Handout
Children

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Discipline

Focus on Fathering

Group Meeting Plan

Discipline: Attitudes and Beliefs

Goal

- To help fathers understand their goals for discipline.
- To have fathers examine their attitudes and beliefs about discipline.

Key Points

- Discipline is teaching
- Discipline beliefs and attitudes
- Discipline strategies

Materials

Parent Handouts

- *Discipline is Teaching*
- *Guiding Your Child's Behavior*

Supplies for Activity

- Two colors of index cards, enough for each father to have one of each color

Procedure

Welcome/Icebreaker

- Introductions and announcements
- Ask fathers to share with the group how they were disciplined as a child.
  - — How do you feel about the form of discipline used?
  - — Do you want to raise your children the way that you were raised?
  - — What changes do you want to make?

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Discussion Points. Incorporate throughout the meeting.

Discipline is teaching. Use handout, *Discipline is Teaching,* as appropriate.

Conversation starters:

- How does discipline teach children right from wrong?
- How might discipline be scary for children?

Discussion:

- Discipline teaches children acceptable behaviors.
- Discipline is long-term. It is not a short term decision or action. It is important for fathers to think about and reflect on their discipline beliefs before they are confronted with an actual situation.
- Understanding their child's developmental characteristics will help fathers set realistic and reasonable expectations for behavior.
- Limit setting is part of discipline. Consistency and predictability are very important for young children. Limits placed on children should be developmentally appropriate, consistent, and predictable.

Discipline beliefs and attitudes. Use handout, *Discipline is Teaching*, as appropriate.

Conversation starters:

- How does the way you were disciplined as a child impact your beliefs about discipline today?
- What are commonalities in how you were disciplined and how your child is disciplined?
- Do you and your child's caregivers agree on how to discipline your child?

Discussion:

- Relate that how parents choose to discipline their children is a very personal and important matter that reflects parents' values, family histories, and cultures.
- Encourage fathers to reflect on their own family histories as they examine their beliefs about discipline. Ask the fathers what they will do if their child's other parent or caregivers believe in forms of discipline that conflict with their own beliefs.

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Discipline Strategies. Use handout, *Guiding Your Child's Behavior*, as appropriate.

Conversation starters:

- What is the most effective way you discipline your child?
- What is the difference between discipline and punishment?
- Is corporal punishment ever ok?

Discussion:

- Ask fathers to explain what these various discipline methods might involve.
- **Verbalizing Feelings.** Communicate to your child what needs to be done while acknowledging their feelings. Example: "I know you are having fun coloring with Daddy, but it's time to get ready to go now."
- **Redirection.** Directing the child's focus to another activity. Example: "Yes, those are the markers but we are going to use the crayons to color with today."
- **Distraction.** Redirecting your child's attention away from what they are doing. Example: "Let's look out the window for a minute. What do you see outside?"
- **Consistency in routine.** Keeping events in the child's life as consistent each day as possible.
- **Verbalizing expectations.** Communicate to your child the behavior you expect in the situation. Example: "When we color together, we will sit on the floor and only use the crayons on the paper."

Practical Application

Rationale:

- It is wise for fathers to think about the matter of discipline well before they are caught off-guard and react impulsively to their children's misbehavior.
- Exploring many beliefs about behavior management will give fathers a number of options to consider when developing their own philosophies on discipline.
- Hearing their peers' opinions about what discipline is and about what methods are, and are not, effective may help fathers in their own decision making.

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Activity:
Read the below statements one at a time out loud. Have the fathers hold up a predetermined color (i.e. green) index card if they strongly agree with the statement or the other color of index card (i.e. red) if they strongly disagree with the statement. Reassure them that there are no correct or incorrect answers. Ask someone who strongly agrees to share why. Next, ask someone who strongly disagrees to share his point of view. Ask the fathers to begin their sharing with the statement "I believe…" or "I think…"

Choose any number (as time allows) of the following statements. Add more as time allows.

- Discipline is teaching.
- Discipline and punishment mean the same thing.
- Safety-proofing a home for a child is a form of discipline.
- Children should be seen and not heard.
- Verbal reprimands, such as yelling and shaming are effective forms of discipline.
- I want to discipline my child as I was disciplined.
- It is important to tell a child why he should not do something.
- Physical punishment, such as spanking or paddling, is an effective form of discipline.
- It is important to have a child treat older adults with respect.

Debrief
Have fathers share their thoughts on the activity(ies). Ask fathers to share some of the problem behaviors they have observed or been advised of in their children. Help fathers think about how their child might respond to new, suggested techniques.

Summary
Summarize the goal and key points of the parent meeting.

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Notes to Group Facilitator

Discipline is a very controversial issue. Remind fathers that each child is different and thus, different discipline strategies may be needed. Remind fathers that it is better to walk away from a situation rather than to become physically aggressive with a child.

Discussions of discipline frequently lead into conversations about child abuse. Explain the definition of corporal punishment. Fathers may discuss the pros and cons of the need to use corporal punishment. As a facilitator it is important to remain neutral and allow the group and individuals to make the appropriate choice.

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Parent Handout
Discipline is Teaching

Discipline is teaching your child how to be safe, how to behave on his own, and how to know the difference between right and wrong. Discipline is guidance and direction, not punishment.

When You Have to Say "No"

Your child wants to find out about everything. That's good!

When your child touches something you don't want him to touch, try the following:

- get down to his level, get his attention, and say "no"
- move him away
- give him something else to play with
- be ready to move him again when he tries this again

Limit the need for NO!

Put away everything that can hurt your child, such as a breakable item or tiny object.

Things I will try when disciplining my child:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

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Parent Handout
Guiding Your Child's Behavior

Being around a young child is never boring! It may seem like your child is always on the move, exploring new things in his world. Your child is learning how to control his behaviors and his emotions. Remember, your child is *learning*. With your help and guidance, he will develop the ability to control his own behavior as he gets older.

What To Do	Why Do It
Read your child's cues to know when he is hungry, tired, sick, or overstimulated.	Your child has less control of his behavior when he doesn't feel well or isn't rested. Meet your child's physical needs before he is out of control.
When you are with your child, give him your undivided attention as much as possible.	Your love and attention will help your child feel important and want to please you. Good discipline begins with a good relationship between you and your child.
Where possible, put away objects that are off limits to him.	As he gets older, your child will be able to resist tempting situations. While he is learning to do this, help him by removing as many "no-nos" in the environment as possible.
Set a few limits for his behavior and enforce them consistently.	The world can be a confusing place for a child. Carefully choose a few rules and enforce them the same way all the time.
Talk to the other people who care for your child and coordinate how your child is being disciplined.	It is easier for a child to learn limits and understand consequences if they are the same when he is with his other parent, relatives, friends, or his child care provider.
Tell your child what to do instead of what not to do.	Telling your child what you want him to do gives him a model for good behavior.

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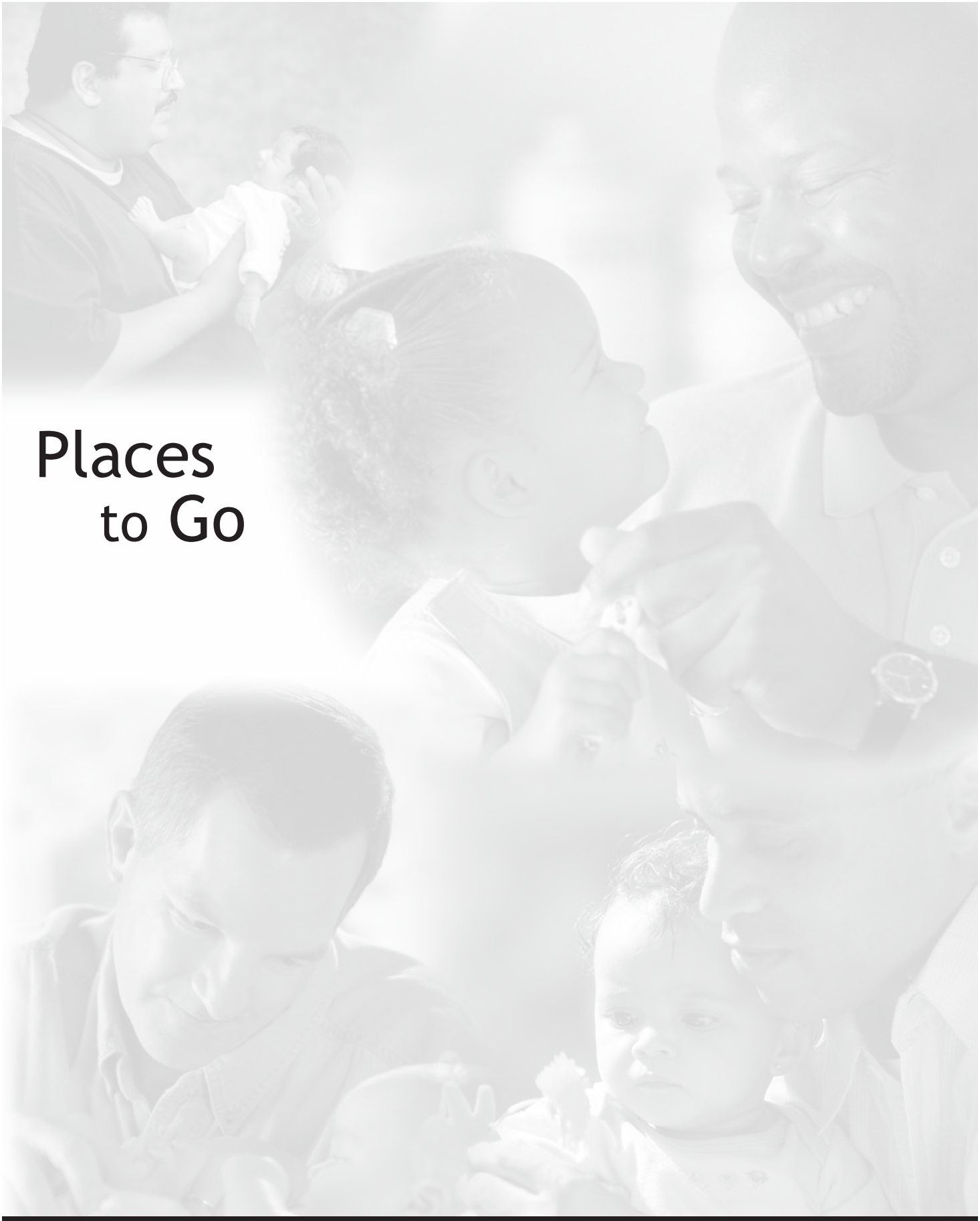

Places to Go

Focus on Fathering

Group Meeting Plan
Places To Go

Goal

- Fathers will gain ideas and strategies for positive parent-child interactions.

Key Points

- Spending quality time with children
- Reconnecting with children
- Planning for fun and positive interaction

Materials

Educator Resources

- *Helping Fathers Plan Activities*

Parent Handouts

- *Places to Go and Things to Do with Your Child*
- *Places to Go and Things to Do with Your Older Child*

Supplies for Presentation

- Chart paper, large dry erase board, or chalk board
- Appropriate writing instruments (markers, chalk, etc.)

Supplies for Activity

- Area maps, guidebooks, and community calendars, etc, that are appropriate for fathers' hometowns (optional)
- Stationary or note cards (one per father)
- Activity Handout: *When We Are together, We Will ...*

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Procedure

Welcome/Icebreaker

- Introductions and announcements
- Ask fathers to recall a place they went or an activity they did with their dad or other grown-up male when they were a child. If that question does not seem to be appropriate for the group, ask them to take a minute and imagine doing something or going somewhere fun with their child.
- Give fathers the opportunity to report their memories if they want to.
- Restate the goal of the meeting, referring to the activities the fathers mentioned.

Discussion Points. Incorporate throughout the meeting.

Spending quality time with children. Use the handout(s), *Places To Go and Things To Do With Your Young Child* and *Places To Go and Things To Do With Your Older Child*, as appropriate.

Conversation starters:

- Is there is anything you find difficult about planning or doing outings or activities with your child(ren)? (Chart answers in a column and leave room to fill in strategies later.)
- What do you think spending "quality time" with your child means? Chart fathers' answers. Create a definition of quality time from answers and from your knowledge/perspective. Record the definition on a new sheet of chart paper and refer to it throughout the meet as appropriate.

Discussion:

- Quality time means time spent in mutually interesting and enjoyable activities, where the parent and child are sharing attention and interacting positively with each other.
- Write the following list of activities on chart paper before the meeting. You can substitute other activities if you wish. Ask "Do these activities involve spending quality time with your child? If not, what could you do to make each one a more positive time with your child?" Encourage fathers to recognize each activity as quality time, or not, depending on what the father did during the activity.

Created by Parents as Teachers National Center Inc., February 2006.

— Watching the Super Bowl on TV

— Taking your child to get an ice cream cone

— Having dinner together

— Running errands

— Fixing something around the home

Reconnecting with children.

Conversation starters:

- Where has your child been living while you were incarcerated?
- How much contact have you been able to have with your child?
- Have you thought about your first visit or time with your child?

Discussion:

- Young children don't have long memories. They need day to day experiences to reinforce the roles people play in their lives.
- Even if you have been able to have frequent contact with your child, you may still feel unfamiliar to him. He may know you're his dad, but not understand what that means, depending on how long it's been since you've lived with your child or been in his life on a regular basis.
- You will have many people you are eager to see and who are significant to you. If your child is not familiar with someone close to you, it might be better to see your child separately the first time or two you get together.
- Focus on having quality time with you child in your first visits. Give your child all your attention. Watch what he does and follow his lead in play without trying to direct him. Your coaching and guidance can come later. Concentrate on getting to know one another again.
- It is difficult and confusing for young children to form relationships with people who may disappear easily out of their lives. Be cautious about introducing your child to new people, even if the person represents a significant relationship in your life.

Planning for fun and positive interaction.

Conversation starters:

- Put yourself in a child's place. What do think makes something fun? (Chart answers)

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- Is there something specific you know your child enjoys doing with you or another adult?

Discussion:

- The things children think are fun may be different than what we adults think — no surprise there! You may like to sit at the table talking to friends, but your child may think that's boring.
- When you spend quality time with your child, your attention is on the child. Successful quality time is child-focused and parent supported; it's your role to set things up and keep the positive interaction going.
- This doesn't mean just giving in to your child to keep them happy. But it does mean you plan and have strategies to make things go smoothly.
- Let's go back and look at the things you said were difficult about having outings or doing activities with your child. (Refer to the list the participants made at the beginning of the session.) Brainstorm strategies to address each concern. Provide encouragement to the fathers for having positive interaction with their child.

Practical Application

Rationale:

- Planning ahead is the first step toward spending quality time with your child.
- When you have strategies in mind, you can overcome things that are difficult when going places and doing things with your child.

Activity:

- Refer to the chart paper with the list of concerns fathers expressed and the strategies they suggested.
- (Optional) Have the fathers turn to a partner. Assign one concern/strategy to each pair. Have the partners discuss times they encountered the concern with their child, what the father did, if their actions were effective, and what they might do in the future when that situation arises. Give partners the opportunity to report if they want to.
- Briefly review discussion points on planning quality time with children. Remind fathers that meaningful activities don't have to be expensive trips or toys.

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- Distribute the Activity Handout, *When We Are Together, We Will …,* and pencils. Have the fathers plan an outing or an activity to do with their child when they see them. If fathers need ideas, have guidebooks or community calendars available (optional.)
- If appropriate, distribute stationary to fathers and give them the opportunity to write to their child about a place they will go or something they will do when they see them. Remind fathers to be realistic and to keep any promise they make their child.

Debrief

Ask fathers to reflect on the group meeting and report one piece of information they found helpful or interesting or that they think they will use in planning activities with their child.

Summary

Summarize the goal and key points of the parent meeting.

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Educator Resource

Helping Fathers Plan Activities

When a father has been incarcerated and is released from confinement, he will be confronted with many challenges to parenting. One of the issues fathers face is developing, or re-developing, a parent-child relationship with his child. Even if the father has been able to experience regular weekly visitation with his child, the child and parent remain somewhat strangers to one another. There are many limitations on planning the activities the father needs to reconnect with his child.

Challenges

Caregivers may be hesitant to allow the child to go with the parent who has been recently incarcerated. The optimal situation would be that the incarcerated parent has had continued ongoing visitation with the child during his or her incarceration. If the caregiver for the child or children is supportive of the reunification between parent and child, the caregiver should be encouraged to share the child's schedule, likes and dislikes prior to the incarcerated parent's release. Upon release, the caregiver invites the formerly incarcerated parent to visit in their home, to become comfortable with the child's routine and behaviors. Short visits of a few hours, progressing into day visits, overnight visits, and weekend visits are often best before the child's return full time to the father's home.

Money is frequently a barrier. Many fathers who are just returning home will not have a great deal of available cash. Help fathers think of opportunities to interact with their child without spending a lot of money. Fathers will need to be reminded that gifts are given with no strings attached. The more often they provide the child with a gift of a toy or special item that the child requests, the more the child will expect the parent to continue to provide material items. Fathers may inadvertently set their child up for disappointment, or stretch their limited resources farther than they should to meet their child's request.

Relationships the father has developed may provide barriers to reconnecting with his children. If the father is in a committed relationship with someone other than the child's mother or caregiver, the child may feel jealous of the relationship or fear that this new person will replace the child in the father's affections. Fathers can reassure their child by making sure they give the child their undivided attention. In the beginning fathers should consider seeing the child without his partner being present. Even if the outing or time

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spent together is short, the child will benefit from having the father alone. Introductions can be made slowly and in a way that makes the child feel comfortable.

Children, especially those who are older, may feel angry at their fathers because of their incarceration. In some cases, the anger may be a result of the child being without the father's presence. The child may feel shame because of the mistake his father made. Family and peer pressure may place barriers between the child and the father. Fathers can be encouraged to know that most children strongly desire a close relationship with their parent, even if they are angry for a time. With patience and good planning, fathers can rebuild the relationship with their child, one step at a time.

Strategies for Planning Successful Outings and Activities

Fathers may be inexperienced or out of practice when it comes to planning child-centered activities. Here are some strategies to share with them.

- Consider the age and developmental stage of the child. What is fun for a child at one age may be too advanced or too simple at another age.
- Try to be patient and look at the experience from the child's perspective. When the parent learns to recognize developmentally appropriate behavior, they are more accepting of what they might otherwise view as misbehavior.
- Young children enjoy and require repetition. Going to favorite places again and again may feel mundane to adults, but may be just what the child wants.
- Listen to and observe the child. When playing, follow the child's lead.
- A routine activity or errand can be exciting for the child. Washing the car together or making a trip to the store is an outing for a young child if the father's attention is devoted to the child, not the task.
- Plan quiet times during the activity. Children who are over stimulated have trouble controlling their behavior.
- Go lightly on the teasing, tickling, and roughhousing. A little goes a long way and may overwhelm a young child. Help fathers develop empathy and judge when their child's feelings are hurt by teasing.
- Plan carefully if children of different ages are included. Fathers need to be ready to manage the interaction or conflict between children with calm, firm leadership.

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- Fathers need to think about what to take along on an outing to care for the needs of the child. Pack a snack and water and take frequent refreshment breaks. Take emergency numbers and a few bandages just in case. Always use car seats, seat belts, bike helmets, and other safety equipment.
- Encourage fathers to take the hurry out of outings and activities. The purpose is to enjoy being together, not to see and do everything. Avoid pushing the child to greet new people; give him time to warm up and he will be friendly. Allow the child time to explore a new place and satisfy his curiosity without hurrying on. Children may need more time than adults who have had such experiences before.
- Be willing to listen to suggestions from the child's mother or other caregiver. Remain positive.
- Plan around a budget. Resist the temptation to go expensive places or provide costly toys if it will cause financial hardship. The thing a child wants most is the attention of a caring parent. Children may get excited by expensive things, but what's really important to them is spending time with their fathers.

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Parent Handout

Places to Go and Things to Do With Your Young Child

Spending time with you is the thing your child wants most. Doing things with your child does not have to cost a lot of money. Just being together and taking advantage of things in your community will provide many memorable outings for the two of you. You will be successful a planning activities and outings if you understand your child's developmental stage, keep in mind the things your child likes to do, follow his or her lead in play, and plan ahead for a fun time. Here are some ideas to get you started.

Places to Go:

- Public library. For the very young child, check into the times for "Story Hour." Get a library card and check out books. Children that have fathers who read to them are more likely to enjoy reading themselves.
- Public parks. Being outside is fun for young kids. Play with your child instead of just watching. Be safe and be sure to watch your child closely.
- Community or recreation centers. Many communities have free or low cost programs for children.
- Airport. Go to a local airport and watch planes take off.
- Fire stations. Call ahead and ask when a good time to visit would be.
- Church or place of worship. In addition to worship services, many faith communities have programs for children.
- Garage sales. Look for "dramatic play" costumes and props and inexpensive books and toys.
- Zoo, children's museum, art or science museum.
- Visit extended family and talk to your child about your family history. Children love to hear the story about when they were born, or when mom or dad was little.

Fun at Home:

- Finger paint with pudding or shaving cream. Use a mirror or cookie sheet to spread the slippery stuff on.
- Cook together. Keep it simple and safe.

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- Visit your child at his child care provider or preschool. Your child will be so proud to introduce his parent to his peers. This is also a good time to observe how your child plays with others, see who his "best friend" is.
- Make play dough. Recipes are available on the Internet or in children's craft books.
- Put water in a spray bottle and spray "paint" the sidewalk or house. A bucket of water and a paint brush works, too.
- Wash a car together. Have your child wash the wheels or wash his own bike or toy car.
- Watch cartoons or a favorite children's show together.
- Rent a children's video and watch it together.
- Color or draw together.
- Blow bubbles together.
- Plant a garden or a small plant that you can keep inside and nurture.
- Go "swimming" in a wadding pool or backyard sprinkler. Many communities offer indoor and outdoor pools at reasonable prices.
- Work a puzzle together.
- Build a snowman.
- Rake leaves.

My Ideas for Things To Do with My Child

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Parent Handout

Places to Go and Things to Do With Your Older Child

Spending time with your older child may seem more of a challenge. Preteens and teens are developing independence, and it may seem that they don't want to do things with their parents. Be patient! Down deep they want your attention. Talk with your child about things they would like to do with you. Let him take the lead in planning activities and you will build their self-esteem.

Tips for Talking to Teens

- When you are trying to engage your child in conversation, try first to get his hands busy. Often times when a child doesn't have to look you in the eye, he will confide in you his thoughts and feelings.
- Sometimes a trip in the car will be the time your child will begin to share.
- Cooking or doing a project together may be good times to talk.
- Be gentle with teasing. Teens have tender feelings and withdraw if they are hurt.
- Leave lots of time for response. Your child might not answer right away. Accept their comments or answers without pressuring them.
- Tune into teen culture. Ask you child what latest trends are. Listen without judging. If you think back to your own teen years, the music and fads you were devoted to may seem a little strange now.

Places to Go and Things To Do

- Cruise the mall or discount store. Stop to listen to the latest CDs at in music stores. Beware of requests that can break your budget.
- Play basketball, football, soccer or whatever sport your child is interested in. If you can't play, be sure to attend your child's games. Offer to coach or help out if that's ok with your child.
- Some older children like to have their parents visit school. Make sure to introduce yourself to your child's teacher. Participate in a service project with your child. Involve your child in helping someone less fortunate. Participate in a service project with your child. Involve your child in helping someone less fortunate.

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Visit the classroom or attend a PTA meeting. Your child's teacher will appreciate your interest, too.

- Participate in a service project with your child. Involve your child in helping someone less fortunate.
- Join a local health club, community recreation center, or YMCA. Use the facilities to swim or work out with your child.
- Watch your child's favorite TV show together.
- Go to the movies together. Let your child choose the movie from a list of those you deem appropriate.
- Enjoy outdoor activities together. Go for walks, hikes or bike rides.
- Play board games or card games.
- Share what each of you know about using the computer. You'll be surprised what your child can teach you.

My Ideas for Things To Do with My Child

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Activity Handout

When We Are Together, We Will …

Who's going? Write down your child's (or children's) name, age, and interests. Write down the name of any one else who's going along.

1._____
2._____
3._____

List three ideas of things to do. Keep in mind your child's age and interests and your budget.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Pick one idea. Write it here. _____

What do you need to know? List any thing you need to find out, such as opening times, cost, location, etc.

_____
_____
_____
_____

Make a list of things to take along or to gather for an at-home activity.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

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Ways to Play

Focus on Fathering

Group Meeting Plan
Ways To Play

Goal:

- Fathers will understand the role of play in their child's development.
- Fathers will know how to encourage and support their child's play.

Key Points:

- Play promotes development
- Parents can encourage play
- Toys and playthings

Materials:

Educator Resources

- *Helping Parents Provide for Creative Play*

Parent Handouts

- *Have Fun With Your Child*
- *Choosing Toys for Your Child*

Supplies for Presentation

- Chart paper, large dry erase board, or chalk board
- Appropriate writing instruments (markers, chalk, etc.)

Supplies for Activity

- Bags containing a toy or household item. (Examples: soft ball, toy truck, stuffed animal, sand pail and shovel, cardboard book, small box, plastic food storage container, flashlight)
- Activity Handout: *What Would You Do With This?*

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Procedure

Welcome/Icebreaker

- Introductions and announcements
- Ask fathers to think of something they played or played with as a child that they really liked (favorite toy, favorite game, etc). Have them turn to a partner and tell each other about it. Make the point that all children play. Not all have fancy toys or play on organized teams, but all play.

Discussion Points. Incorporate throughout the meeting.
Play promotes development.

Conversation starters:

- What do you think of when you hear the word "play." (Responses may be like having fun, goofing off, entertainment, the opposite of work, not serious, just for kids, sports.) List responses on chart paper if desired. Summarize after fathers have contributed.

Discussion:

- As adults, we think of play as recreation, but for young children it is serious work. Children learn through the hands-on experiences they get while playing.
- Playing helps children develop in all areas:

  Language development: Babies practice sounds when they coo with their parents or play peek-a-boo. Older children use words to talk to their playmates, give and receive directions in games, pretend something.

  Intellectual development: Babies learn cause and effect by trying things out, for example playing with a busy box. They begin to increase their memory playing games. Older children discover how the world works by moving, constructing, investigating and solving problems in play. Creativity and initiative are developed through playing.

  Motor development: Babies play using their senses and moving their bodies. It's important to give babies lots of time on their tummy on the floor to help develop muscles. Older children develop strength and coordination through running, jumping, and playing with balls. All children need exercise to be physically fit.

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Social and emotional development: Babies form attachments to their care givers through playing with them. They learn to interact with others. Older children learn how to negotiate, solve problems, and get along with others while they are playing.

- When a child learns through play, he begins to see learning as pleasurable and himself as a successful learner. These things help children love learning when they are in school and throughout their lives.

Parents can encourage play. Use the handout, *Have Fun with Your Child,* as appropriate.

Conversation starters:

- Do fathers and mothers play differently with a child? How?
- Is each kind of play important to a child? Why?
- What do you enjoy about playing with your child and what do you not like so much?

Discussion:

- Mothers and fathers can play differently with children. Fathers are likely to be more spontaneous and more physical when they play. Mothers are more likely to use toys and engage in pretend play. Both kinds of play are important for children's development.
- Parents can make a big difference in their child's play. When a father plays with his child, he is helping the child develop to his greatest potential. Here are some tips:

  Value play. Give the child opportunities and time to play.

  Be playful, but don't over do it. Teasing, tickling and wrestling can get too much for a child. Stop while the child is still having fun.

  Join in, but don't take over the play. Playtime is the child's time. Parents shouldn't give directions or tell him how to play. They can add ideas or give help with problems, but let the child be the director. Follow his lead.

  Be safe. Know the child's physical limits. Provide a safe place to play and safe toys or play materials that are appropriate for the child's age.

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Set limits so no one gets hurt and the play goes smoothly. Be firm but keep your cool. Don't lose your temper.

Toys and playthings. Use the handout, *Choosing Toys for Your Child,* as appropriate.

Conversation starters:

- What makes a good toy?
- Sometimes it seems that kids like the box more than the toy that came in it. Why do think that is?

Discussion:

- Objects and materials are important to a child's play. Some of these things may be commercial toys, but many are things found around the home.
- Characteristics of good playthings include:
  - can be used in many ways
  - are appropriate for the child's age and can grow with the child
  - stimulate a child's curiosity and engage his imagination
  - encourage your child to be actively engaged, physically or mentally
  - are accessible to the child; keep toys where kids can get them
  - are safe, safe, safe!
  - are affordable for parents
  - teach about one's own culture and/or the culture of others
  - do not promote violent play
- Beware of toys that can only do one thing or only be used in one way. When toys tell children what to do and how to do it, creativity and curiosity are not nurtured.
- Play should be active not passive. Limit time spent watching TV or playing video games.
- Parents are a child's favorite plaything. Play with your child and watch his eyes light up and his enthusiasm turn on.

Practical Application

Rationale:

- Adults and children play differently with the same objects
- Taking the child's perspective helps parents develop strategies for playing with their child

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Activity:

- If the group is large enough, ask fathers to get into groups of two or three.
- Give each group a bag with a toy or plaything in it. See suggestions in the Materials section.
- Give each father the Activity Handout, *What Would You Do With This?*
- Ask groups to open the bag and take out the contents.
- Have them discuss how they might use or play with the object, and how their child might play with it. They can record those ideas on the handout.
- Then ask fathers to think of ways they could use the object to play with their child. Fathers can record these on the handout.
- Encourage each group to report their ideas to the larger group.
- Compare what fathers report about how they would play with an object, versus how their child would play with it. What are the differences and similarities?
- Ask for volunteers to report on ideas for playing with their child using the object. Encourage and affirm the fathers' ideas.

Debrief

Ask fathers to reflect on the group meeting and report one piece of information they found helpful or interesting or that they think they will use in playing with their child.

Summary

Summarize the goal and key points of the parent meeting.

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Educator Resource

Helping Parents Provide for Creative Play

Parents often observe how important their child's play is to her development. They may observe their infant strengthen her vision by watching a mobile, their toddler experiment with gravity as he rolled a truck down a board, and their preschooler practice social relationships by playing house with a playmate. Far from being frivolous entertainment, play is the way children master new skills and try out new ideas. Many of the skills perfected during playtime form the foundation for academic success when the child begins school.

The Benefits of Play

Play not only teaches skills, it helps children see learning as exciting, and themselves as successful learners. But not all ways of playing provide the same benefit. In today's world many things have changed that effect children's play. Families have busy schedules that involve organized activities such as lessons or team sports, and there is not always as much time for unstructured playtime. Opportunities for playing in the neighborhood are more limited because many parents work outside the home and children spend long hours in child care. Some parents are concerned about the safety of children playing outdoors in the neighborhoods in which they live.

Children's toys have changed too. Many toys are derived from television shows or movies. They lead children to play according to the show's plot and how the characters behave on the screen. Children may become bored with this type of play because they are not using their creativity and their own experiences to enrich their play. Electronic toys offer some educational benefit, but most encourage rote learning and not creative problem solving. Many electronic toys for infants are overstimulating and frustrating for babies who want to manipulate and mouth them. When toys tell children what to do and how to do it, creativity and curiosity are not nurtured. Children fail to experience the excitement of discovery that grows into a love of learning new things throughout life.

Supporting children's creative play begins early in life. When parents encourage their children to explore and to be in control of their play from the very beginning, they will develop ways to play creatively and independently at each stage in their development. Play that comes from children's own imagination and incorporates the children's life experiences helps the child investigate problems and think critically while practicing skills in a safe environment. Children who can direct their own play are able to initiate

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learning and work independently later on. Also, they are more likely to play longer if creatively involved in play that is appropriate for their age and level of development.

Characteristics of Creative Play

Parents attitudes toward play are instrumental to the benefits their children get from play. Parents can help their children develop play that supports their social, emotional, motor, language and intellectual development. Beneficial play has these characteristics:

- It engages the child's creativity.
- It is appropriate for the child's age.
- It uses toys and materials that are flexible and can be used in different ways during the course of the child's play.
- It uses the child's experience during the play.
- The child has control over how the play develops.

Supporting and Encouraging Creative Play

Here are some ways parents can help their children develop beneficial ways to play.

- **Begin when the child is a baby to encourage exploration and provide play times.** An infant's play is as important to his future success as the play of older children. Parents sometimes think they must wait until their child can "do something" to support her play.
- **Spend time just watching the child play.** Parents should get to know their child's playing style and what interests her. They can get a sense of how much time she spends in passive and active play.
- **Value play and be playful.** Parents can set family priorities that include free time for play. They must put limits on passive activities such as watching television and playing video games that limit creative play. When parents allow their child to see them engaging in leisure activities and pursuits they find interesting and fun, they provide a model for lifelong enjoyment and enrichment.
- **Provide good toys and play materials.** Toys that can be used in many ways allow the child to be creative and flexible in play. They grow with the child's abilities and allow the child to invent new uses as she grows. Avoid having too many toys that create clutter and get in the child's way when she plays. Provide for adequate, convenient toy storage that allows the child to organize, but still reach all her toys. Sometimes the best playthings are not toys; parents can let their child's interests be a guide to provide household objects and "grown-up" materials for her use.

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- **Join in, but don't take over child's play.** Children love to have their parents play with them, but parents need to recognize that the play is the creation of the child. Sometimes parents can become directive or take over the play. They need to let their child direct the course of play, but add expertise to extend and enrich the play experience. It's difficult not to jump in, but the child must wrestle with problems and invent solutions, although those may be different than what the parent would devise.
- **Encourage non-violent, inclusive play.** Parents can help their child avoid racial, gender, and cultural stereotypes when they play. Children sort the similarities and differences between themselves and others through play. Choosing toys and talking to the child about how people are alike and different supports social-emotional development. Redirect play that is violent, or imitates violence viewed on television. When play becomes more creative, it becomes less violent.
- **Work with teachers and other adults in the community to create an environment that supports creative, productive play.** Encourage parents to advocate for community play areas and recreational programs that support creative play. Parents must be certain that the child care where their child spends much of her day provides for play that is beneficial and supports development. Children need a community of people who value and support their creative play.

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Parent Handout

Have Fun with Your Child

You can make a big difference in your child's play. When you play with your child, you are helping him develop to his greatest potential. Here are some tips:

- Value play. Know that play is the way your child learns. Through play, he gains an understanding of the world that is necessary for success in school. Give your child opportunities and time to play.
- Be playful, but don't over do it. Teasing, tickling and wrestling can get too much for a child. Stop while your child is still having fun. Have fun yourself when you play with your child.
- Join in, but don't take over the play. Playtime is your child's time. Don't give directions or tell him how to play. Add ideas or give help with problems, but let your child be the director. Follow his lead.
- Be safe. Know the child's physical limits. Provide a safe place to play and safe toys or play materials that are appropriate for the child's age. Always supervise your child's play to keep him safe.
- Set limits so no one gets hurt and the play goes smoothly. Be firm but keep your cool. Don't lose your temper. Encourage children who are playing together to get along. They are looking to you as role model.

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Parent Handout

Choosing Toys for Your Child

When choosing toys for your child, there are a few basic things to keep in mind:

- **The age and interest of your child.** Is your child able to do the things necessary to enjoy this toy? Does she fall within the age guidelines on the toy's package? Does your child like to do what the toy involves?
- **Adaptability.** Can this toy be used in more than one way? Will it stimulate your child's curiosity? Will your child be able to use her imagination and engage in problem solving while playing with this toy? Can the toy be enjoyed at different ages?
- **Safety.** Is the toy safe for the age of the child? Are there small pieces that might be swallowed by the child or by a younger child in your home? Does the package state that the toy follows guidelines set by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission or the Toy Manufacturers of America? No toy is absolutely safe. You must supervise your child's play.
- **Learning.** What can your child learn by playing with this toy? Is it fun and engaging so it will keep her interest? Will the child actively play with the toy or is it passive entertainment?
- **Budget.** Will this toy allow you to stay within your budget? Is it a good quality toy that can be played with for a long time without breaking? Can you get it cheaper, perhaps from a resale shop or garage sale?
- **Reflect your values.** Will the toy invite your child to play violent games? Does it show something about the child's culture? Will it help her understand other cultures?

Your child may like to play with ordinary household items. Playthings do not always have to be commercial toys. Your child wants to be like you. Think of things you can safely give her that help her be a part of your world.

You are your child's best play partner. No matter what toys you provide her, join her in play. She will learn more and have more fun with you.

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Activity Handout

What Would You Do With This?

Toy or object: _____

How would you play with/ use this toy?	How would your child play with this toy?	Ideas for playing with this toy along with your child.

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Choosing Childcare

Focus on Fathering

Group Meeting Plan
Choosing Child Care

Goal
- Fathers will gain basic information on things to consider when choosing child care options for their children.

Key Points
- Dads can be thoughtful about who is taking care of their children.
- There are many elements to consider when choosing a child care provider. Different families choose different arrangements for a variety of reasons.

Materials
Parent Handouts
- *Deciding on a Child Care Provider*
- *Kinds of Child Care*

Supplies for Presentation
- Paper for each father
- Writing instruments (pencils or pens)

Procedure
Welcome/Icebreaker
- Introductions and announcements.
- Ask each father to reflect on who cared for them when they were small. Think of the different care settings and the different people who cared for you. Are these positive memories? Did you feel safe? Were there multiple caregivers? Share these memories with the father next to you.

Introduce Topic:
Choosing a child care setting for your child is one of the most important decisions you'll make. This decision will impact how your child grows and develops and should be a decision based on a variety of factors. It's

important to think about cost, location, and quality. Different families choose different arrangements for a variety of reasons.

- What is important to you when choosing a child care arrangement for your child?

Discussion Points. Incorporate throughout the meeting.
Dads can be thoughtful about who is taking care of their children. Use handout, *Deciding on a Child Care Provider*, as appropriate.

Conversation Starters:

- What are important qualities you would like in the person who cares for your child when you can not?
- What is one positive memory you have of a caregiver you had as a child?
- What is a negative memory you have of a caregiver you had as a child?

Discussion:

- When you choose a child care arrangement for your child, whether it be just for an evening or a more permanent daily arrangement, you want to choose a care provider and setting that will be the best substitute for you that you can find.
- Child care providers, including family members, should *want* to be caring for your child. This is called **intentionality** and is an important element of a quality care setting.
- The care provider you choose will become an important part of your child's life and will impact your child's development. This can be both positive and negative.
- A care provider should not be chosen based only on convenience, cost or just because they are a relative. It is important to leave your child in the care of a person who will interact with your child, love your child, respect your values and concerns and who will keep your child safe.

There are many elements to consider when choosing a child care provider. Different families choose different arrangements for a variety of reasons. Use handout, *Kinds of Child Care*, as appropriate.

Conversation Starters:

- What types of care settings are available to you and your child?
- What would be the *ideal* care setting for your child?
- Describe the differences between an informal care setting and a formal care setting.

Discussion:

- Different child care options meet needs for different situations. Each type of care has benefits and each choice needs to be considered with the father's and the family's individual situations in mind.
- Consistency of care, quality and attachment to his care provider are factors that influence early development in your child.
- Child care arrangements can differ in cost, location, and quality.
- Informal child care arrangements can include your family, friends, and neighbors. These people know you and know what you want for your baby. This type of care is often chosen when your work or school schedule calls for flexibility.
- Formal child care arrangements include settings such as child care centers where it is their profession and business to care for young children. These settings have set hours of operation. There are varying regulations for monitoring formal child care settings.

Practical Application

Rationale:

- Fathers need to share information with their care provider and the care provider needs to share information with them in order to have a working partnership. Together everyone needs to communicate in order to establish understanding, respect, acceptance, and agreement.

Activity:

- Give each father a piece of paper and writing instrument.
- Ask the fathers to draw a line down the middle of a sheet of paper. Ask them to write down a list of things they think they should consider when choosing a child care arrangement. In the next column, ask them to write down things they would share about their child with a child care provider.

- Ask fathers to pair up. Encourage the fathers to role play with their partner an interview with a child care provider. One father chooses the role of the care provider, one the parent. Encourage the fathers to interview each other based on what they wrote on their paper and learned from the discussion during this group meeting. Change roles.

Debrief

Fathers play an important role in choosing a child care arrangement for their children. Ask fathers to reflect on the group meeting and report one piece of the information they found helpful or interesting or that they think they will share with their child's other caregivers.

Summarize

Summarize the goals and key points of the parent meeting.

Parent Handout

Deciding on a Child Care Provider

What are the child care provider's personal qualities?

There are two ways to find out what kind of personality your potential child care provider has. You can ask other parents whose children he/she cares for. Or, you can bring your child along when you first visit to do an interview with him/her. You can tell some things from his/her interactions with you and your child.

- □ Does this child care provider genuinely enjoy caring for children?
- □ Does this care provider accept your values and concerns? Or is he/she critical and judgmental?
- □ Would this care provider be levelheaded in case of an emergency?
- □ Do you have any clues about how this care provider handles his/her feelings, particularly frustration?
- □ Does this care provider seem willing or able to talk through any questions or concerns you have?
- □ How long has this care provider been at this setting? (It is important for young children to have a primary care provider who will be consistent.)
- □ How much education and training has this care provider had? (When a care provider has had education in child development he/she will know what appropriate behaviors are for different ages and what activities are appropriate.)

How does the child care provider interact with the children?

Here are some questions to ask any potential child care provider:

- □ How will you handle crying at nap time?
- □ How do you deal with temper tantrums and other behavior issues?
- □ How do you comfort a child who is sad when dad or mom leaves?
- □ When do you feel a child can or should be toilet trained?
- □ How often would you play with and talk to my child?

Look at the care setting.

- □ Is the setting childproofed?
- □ Are there:
  - □ Outlet covers on the electrical outlets?
  - □ Gates at stairways?
- □ Are there a variety of toys to play with for different ages of children?
- □ Is the children's area clean? Reasonably neat?
- □ Is the play area bright and cheerful?

Check out costs and payment rules.

- □ Will you pay if the child care provider is ill? When your child is ill and can not come?
- □ Must you pay when you are on vacation and over holidays?
- □ Does the care provider require payment in advance?
- □ Can you pay by check? (This is a good idea because you need cancelled checks for income tax records. Child care is a deductible item.)
- □ Are there extra charges when you are late or must come early?

Other things to look for:

- □ Is food provided? Is so, what types?
- □ Where will your child sleep? Do you need to provide a bed or cot?
- □ Can your child bring toys and personal items (like a blanket) from home?
- □ How much television is watched? (The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends children under the age of two have minimal if any TV viewing. After age two, limit TV watching to one hour or less per day.)
- □ Are there other older children or adults who will be in the care setting during the time your child is present? If so, who are they?
- □ How many other children are in the care setting?

Parent Handout

Kinds of Child Care

When you are looking for child care, you need to find a setting that is comfortable for your child and for you! No one can take your place in your child's life. But, you can't always be the one who is caring for your child. When you can't be there, you want this to be the best substitute care you can find.

Informal child care arrangements

Family, friends, and neighbors

- You know your relatives, your friends, and your neighbors; they know you and know what you want for your child. Your schedule may need to be flexible and informal care usually allows for more flexibility.
- It is important to discuss arrangements and what you want for your child before you leave him in an informal care arrangement. You are the child's parent and you want to be sure that your wishes are carried out when you are not there.
- Respect and open communication is the key to mutual understanding and agreement when making child care arrangements for your child.

Did you know?

You are the decision maker for your child. There are formal arrangements such as child care centers where it is their profession and business to care for children. There are also informal child care arrangements such as your parents or family. Each of these kinds of care has benefits. You need to find the best fit for you and your child.

Formal child care arrangements

This includes care settings that are registered, licensed, or accredited. There are varying regulations for monitoring formal child care settings. The number of children per adult, health and safety rules and procedures, and kinds of activities, curricula and materials are part of the requirements for each level of regulation. The requirements become stricter moving from registered to accredited.

Family child care
A family child care provider operates a small child care business from his/her home. He/She can care for children ages infant up to children who come after school. Children can be part of this home care setting up through elementary school. There are usually different ages of children in this care setting.

Center based care
A center-based child care provider has a staff of teachers and classrooms for children. There is often a curriculum that is followed and it often has a more "school-like" atmosphere. Someone is always available if a teacher is sick or on vacation. With a more school-like atmosphere, many times there are more opportunities for professional development for the teachers and more resources for the children. Children are typically cared for in groups with other children their age.

Qualities I want or need in a child care arrangement are:

_____

_____

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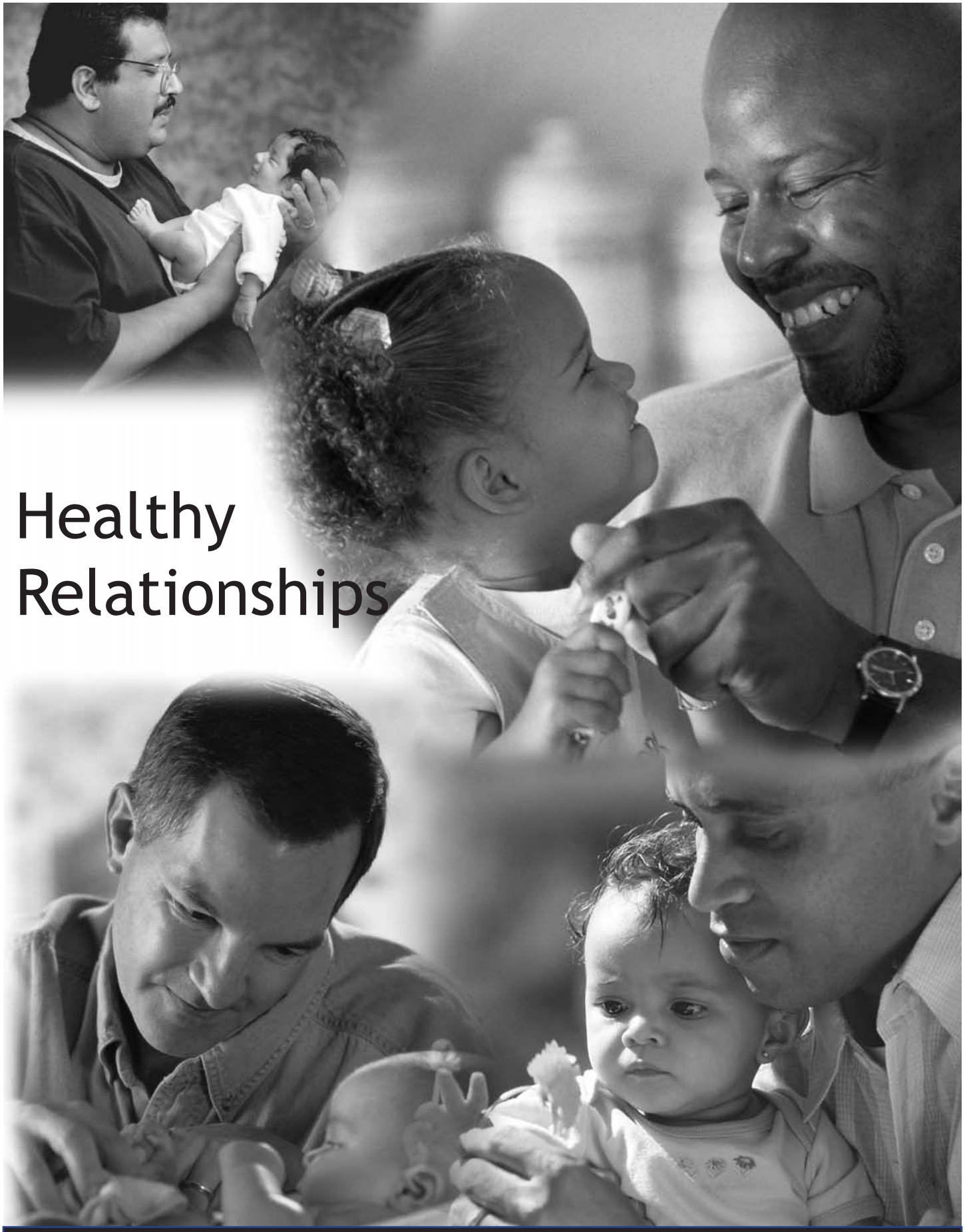

Healthy Relationships

Focus on Fathering

Group Meeting Plan

Healthy Relationships for Me and My Child

Goal

- Fathers will develop an understanding of abuse and neglect and how critical it is to keep a watchful eye for the physical and behavioral indicators.

Key Points

- Dating violence and partner abuse are elements of unhealthy adult relationships.
- There are three kinds of abuse: physical abuse, emotional abuse, and sexual abuse; two kinds of neglect: physical and emotional.
- It is important to find ways to deal with stress in a healthy manner.

Materials

Parent Handouts

- *Dealing with Stress*
- *Reflection Page*

Supplies for Activity

- Chart papers labeled: *Traits of Healthy Relationships for Me* and *Traits of Healthy Relationships for My Child*
- Paper for each father
- Writing instruments (pencils, markers, crayons)

Procedure

Welcome/Icebreaker

- Introductions and announcements.
- As each father joins the group, ask him to stop by the flip charts labeled *Traits of Healthy Relationships for Me* and *Traits of Healthy Relationships for My Child* and write down two or three traits they **have or would like to have** on each chart. When all the fathers have had an opportunity to write on the charts, set the charts aside for later in the meeting.

Introduce Topic

The relationship that you have with your partner (wife, girlfriend, significant other) impacts your relationship with your child and serves as a model for her future relationships. It is important to realize that experiences from your past affect your adult relationships. Healthy relationships do not involve violence, abuse, manipulation, or coercion. Healthy relationships can reduce stress for both you and your child.

Discussion Points. Incorporate throughout the meeting.

Dating violence and partner abuse are elements of unhealthy adult relationships.

Conversation Starters:

- Have the values you look for in a relationship changed over time?
- How did the relationships of the adults in your life impact your current relationships?
- What does the word respect mean as it relates to yourself and your baby?

Discussion:

Note for facilitator: *Some of the fathers may have experienced some type of abuse in their life or have abused someone. They may have grown up in a home where abuse was considered "normal". This subject is very delicate, handle with care.*

- Dating violence and partner abuse have many faces. When a partner first exhibits controlling or manipulative behavior, it is a strong signal that the relationship is in danger and is at risk for violence.
- Eighty percent of girls who are physically abused in a sexually intimate dating relationship continue to date their abuser.
- Choosing a partner that is abusive is a choice one makes. The consequences of that choice will affect self-esteem. Children who witness abuse may grow up to be abusers or victims of abuse.
- Negative behaviors that children witness and experience become the models for all of their other relationships. If violence is a normal part of children's lives, children will group up expecting that violence is a normal part of relationships.
- If you are involved in an unhealthy relationship, it is important to get help……..Do it for your child.

- Some characteristics of a healthy relationship might include the following: trust, mutual respect, mutually enjoyable sexual activity, mutual comfort with each other's company and mechanisms for healthy conflict resolution.

There are three kinds of abuse: physical abuse, emotional abuse, and sexual abuse; two kinds of neglect: physical and emotional.

Conversation Starters:

- Describe the differences between abuse and neglect.
- What should you do if you suspect that your child has experienced abuse?

Discussion:

- Being a parent is a hard job. All parents are pushed to the limits at times with the demands of daily care giving tasks, not enough money and other responsibilities.
- Abused children are often hurt by their own parents or someone close to them. Parents want to be great parents and do what is best for their children, but life becomes overwhelming. Sometimes children are hurt, neglected, ignored or abused.
- It is very important for parents to keep a watchful eye for abuse or neglect in their children.
- There are three kinds of abuse: physical abuse, emotional abuse and sexual abuse.
    - *Physical abuse* is any non-accidental injury to a child. This includes hitting, kicking, shaking, slapping, burning, pinching and paddling.
    - *Emotional abuse* is any attitude or behavior that interferes with a child's mental health or social development. This includes yelling, screaming, name-calling, and shaming.
    - *Sexual abuse* is any sexual act between an adult and child. This includes fondling, intercourse, exploitation, pornography, and exhibition.
- There are two types of neglect: physical and emotional.
    - Physical neglect is not providing for a child's physical needs. This can include lack of supervision, inadequate provision of food, inappropriate clothing, and abandonment.

- Emotional neglect is not providing the affection and support necessary for the development of a child. This can include ignoring or lack of appropriate physical affection.

It is important to find ways to deal with stress in a healthy manner. Use the handout, *Dealing with Stress,* as appropriate.

Conversation Starters:

- What do you do when your stress level rises?
- What are your stress triggers?

Discussion:

- A father's life may be terribly stressful, and his interactions with his child may suffer from his anxiety.
- Choosing a partner that has traits that are supportive is important. When relationships are not filled with conflict, both parents and children benefit from a calm, supportive environment with less stress.

Practical Application

Rationale:

- Describing the character traits of people they most admire helps fathers identify their own values and they see how sound values relate to forming effective relationship and parenting skills.
- If fathers understand the benefits of a healthy relationship to themselves and their children, they are more apt to question their choices of partners.

Activity:

- Ask the fathers to close their eyes and think of a person of the opposite sex whom they know and admire. Ask them to think about words that describe that person. Direct the fathers to open their eyes and take a minute to jot down on the handout, *Reflections of a Healthy Relationship*, several words or phrases to describe their own special person. Ask the fathers to decide how the person they admire has affected their lives.
- Instruct fathers to make a list of adjectives, or descriptor words, describing the special person they each thought of.
- Ask fathers to consider silently the following questions when looking at their lists.

- What traits are you looking for in a mate? In a friend?
- What was it that attracted you to your child's mother?
- Does that person have the same personality as you do? How are you alike and how are you different?
- Does that person remind you of anyone in your family?
- What unique traits do you bring to the relationship?

- Ask fathers to discuss the word *respect.* What are ways they show their partner respect? Their child?

Debrief

Ask fathers to reflect on the group meeting and report one piece of the information they found helpful or interesting or that they think they will share with their child's other caregivers.

Summary

Summarize the goal and key points of the parent meeting.

Parent Handout

Dealing with Stress

It is normal to feel stressed sometimes when dealing with your child. Sometimes, it is hard to figure out what her different behaviors mean. Sometimes it is hard to have enough energy to take care of her.

What can you do to relieve stress?

- Go out for a walk or a run.
- Play a game of baseball or shoot hoops.
- Listen to some relaxing music.
- Get outside and do work in the yard.
- Eat healthy foods and exercise.
- Take several deep, slow breaths.
- Take care of yourself. Have a physical check-up if you haven't had one lately.
- Get plenty of sleep.
- Play with your child.
- Stay away from alcohol and drugs.

Other ways I keep myself calm:

_____
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Parent Handout

Reflection Page

- Think of a person of the opposite sex whom you know and admire. Write down some words that describe that person.

- How did this person affect your life?

- What traits are you looking for in a mate? In a friend?

- What was it that attracted you to your child's mother?

- Does that person have the same personality as you do? How are you alike? How are you different?

- Does that person remind you of anyone in your family?

- What unique traits do you bring to the relationship?

Helping Your Child Deal with Feelings

Focus on Fathering

Group Meeting Plan

Helping Your Child Deal with Feelings

Goal

- Fathers will discuss how to respect their children's feelings and learn ways to help their children express these feelings. Fathers will understand the importance of getting in touch with their own feelings and learn how to express them appropriately.

Key Points

- Children have the same wide range of feelings as adults do.
- To help their children get in touch with their feelings means fathers have to be in touch with their own.
- Once children learn to name their feelings, they can learn ways to control them. Controlling feelings in appropriate ways is a step towards independence for children.

Materials

Parent Handouts

- *Emotional Literacy*
- *Check Out a Book*

Supplies for Activity

- Variety of children's books that deal with feelings, 1 per every 2 to 3 fathers present

Procedure

Welcome/Icebreaker

- Introductions and announcements

Introduce Topic:

- If you did something really nice for a friend and he said to you, "I really love you, man!" how would you feel? How would you *show* your feelings?

- If you did something really rotten to a friend and he said to you, "You really make me angry when you mess with me like that," how would you feel? How would you *show* your feelings?

Discussion Points. Incorporate throughout the meeting.

Children have the same wide range of feelings as adults.

Conversation Starters:

- Think of some feeling words. What are the first ones that come to mind? Now, go deeper, can you come up with 10 more? 15 more? Do you think young children have these feelings?
- Have you ever thought of your child as being "disappointed", "worried", or "nervous"?

Discussion:

Men may not have had a lot of experience showing their feelings. Many may have been told growing up that "big boys don't cry" and to be strong "like a man". In other words, they were expected to leave the soft, tender feelings to girls.

- There are many feelings and emotions that both children and adults may have. They can include: anger, pride, love, joy, fear, jealousy, happiness, surprise, embarrassment, sadness, shame, disappointment, silliness, frustration, loneliness, depression, and worry to name a few.
- Learning to label and express feelings appropriately is a task of early childhood.
- Children show how they are feeling by their actions more than their words. Fathers must pay careful attention to body language and behavior. While parents need not to allow inappropriate behavior, simply punishing these behaviors won't stop them and may actually compound them.
- Families have different cultural frames from which children learn about feelings and learn how to express them. This all makes sense within the family context.

To help their children get in touch with their feelings means fathers have to be in touch with their own.

Conversation Starters:

- Are there some feelings that are easier for you to express than others?
- Are there some people it's easier for you to express your real feelings to?
- Were there people who helped you learn about feelings as you were growing up? Who?
- Were there people who limited the feelings you could have by telling you things like "men don't cry" or "men are strong?"

Discussion:

- When fathers are open about their feelings and talk about how they feel in certain situations, they provide a model for their children.
- There are healthy ways to express feelings and emotions. These can include: artwork, woodworking, poems, talking, writing, drawing, and painting.
- Children and adults who don't learn to use emotional language have a hard time labeling and understanding their own feelings as well as accurately identifying how others feel.

Once children learn to name their feelings, they can learn ways to control them. Controlling feelings in appropriate ways is a step towards independence for children. Use the handout, *Emotional Literacy,* as appropriate.

Conversation Starters:

- How does your child show you when she is mad? Disappointed? Excited?
- What are ways you talk to your child about her feelings? Your feelings?

Discussion:

- Naming feelings and expressing feelings appropriately are important skills for children to learn.

- Emotional literacy is defined as having the ability to identify, understand, and express emotions in a healthy way.
- Children with a strong foundation in emotional literacy:
  - Tolerate frustration better
  - Get into fewer fights
  - Engage in less destructive behavior
  - Are healthier
  - Are less lonely
  - Are less impulsive
  - Are more focused
  - Have greater academic achievement
- It is important that children know that there is no such thing as a "bad" feeling, but there are some ways of expressing feelings that are not appropriate. We cannot help the way we feel; we can help how we act.
- Fathers can try different ways to help their children learn about their feelings. Emotional literacy can happen when fathers show respect for their child's feelings and help them to understand why they feel the way they do.

Practical Application

Rationale: Fathers will understand how children's books can be used to help their children understand, label, and express their feelings.

Activity:

Ask fathers to get into groups of two to three. Each group will be given a book. The group is to review their book (the facilitator may want to be sure one member of each group feels comfortable reading out loud) and then answer the questions found on the handout, *Check Out a Book.*

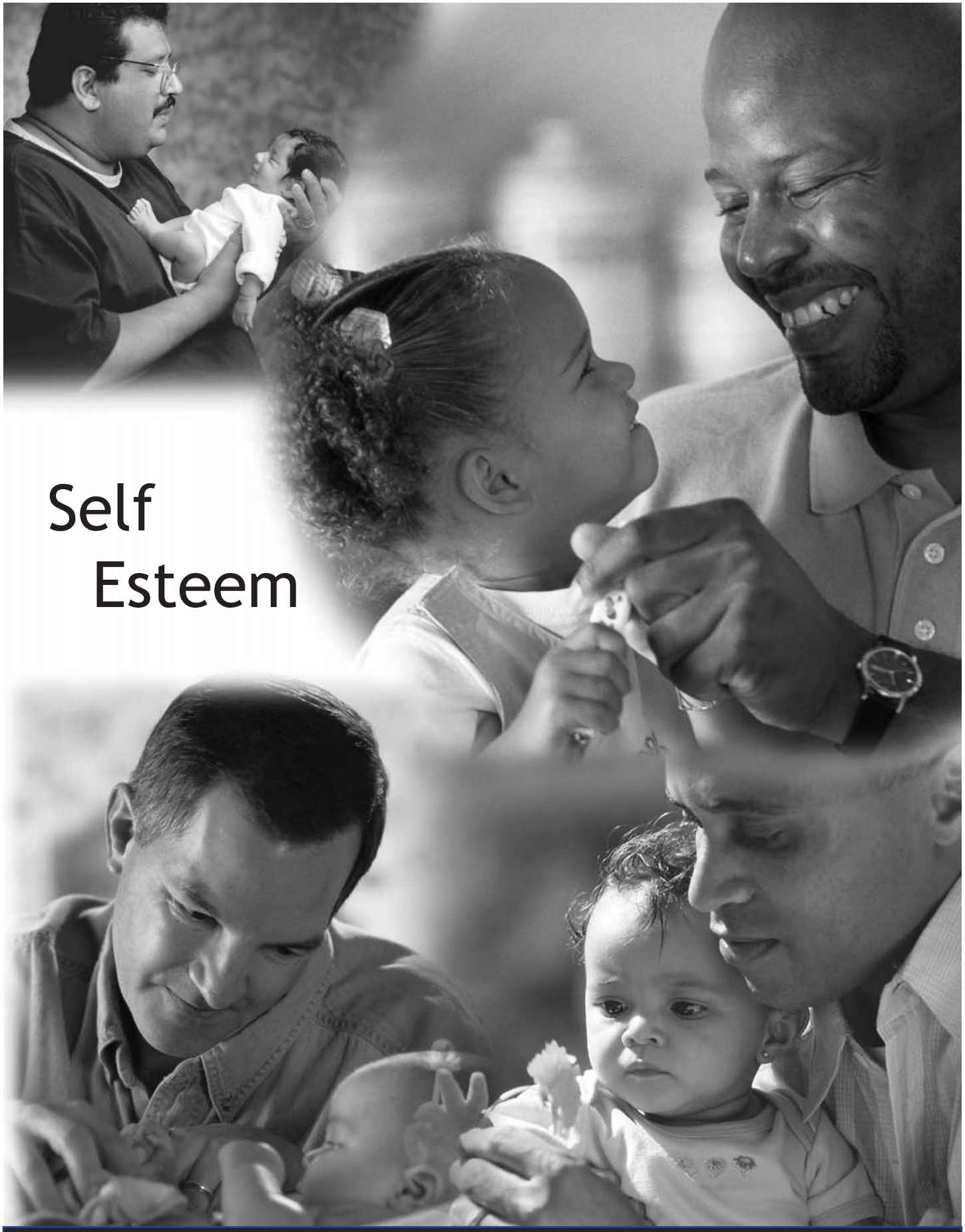
After each group has reviewed its individual book, ask for one father from each group to give the large group a quick review of the book, emphasizing how this book would help their child understand or explore her feelings.

Debrief

Ask fathers to reflect on the group meeting and report one piece of the information they found helpful or interesting or that they think they will share with their child's other caregivers.

Summary

Summarize the goals and key points of the parent meeting.



Self Esteem

Parent Handout

Emotional Literacy

Did you know?

Emotional literacy is defined as having the ability to identify, understand, and express emotions in a healthy way.

Children with a strong foundation in emotional literacy:

- Tolerate frustration better
- Get into fewer fights
- Engage in less destructive behavior
- Are healthier
- Are less lonely
- Are less impulsive
- Are more focused
- Have greater academic achievement

Here are some ways I can help my child's emotional literacy:

Parent Handout

Check Out a Book

Read/review one of the "feelings" books and answer the following questions.

What is the main theme of the book?

How would the book help your child learn about his/her feelings?

Is the book interesting?

What did you especially like about the book?

Are the pictures appropriate? Appealing?

What is one main point you'd like to share about the book with the large group?

Group Meeting Plan
Self-Esteem

Goal
- Fathers will understand how to boost their child's self-esteem at various developmental stages and learn how a dad's self-esteem influences his child's self-esteem.

Key Points
- Fathers can begin building their child's self-esteem at birth and continue this throughout their child's development.
- Self-esteem plays an important role in a parent's life as well as in a child's life.

Materials
Parent Handouts
- *Boosting Your Child's Self-Esteem*

Supplies for Activity
- Paper for each father
- Variety of markers/crayons
- Recording of Negative and Positive Messages

Procedure
Welcome/Icebreaker
- Introductions and announcements.
- Ask each father to take a piece of paper and draw an image of him in the middle (it can be a stick figure or just a symbol with his name). Then, ask each father to list five of his strengths and five of his weaknesses. They can write their strengths and weaknesses in any way that reflects how important each is to them (size, color, etc.) This "image map" will be used later in the meeting.

Introduce Topic:
Our self-picture - how we see ourselves - is called **self-esteem.** If we have high self-esteem, we believe in ourselves and we're more capable of taking on the challenges of the world.

Our children's feelings of self-esteem or self-worth come from us and others around them. They start with how we treat them and show them how much we value and love them. A parent can start helping his/her child develop high self-esteem from the time of infancy.

- When someone gives you a compliment, how do you feel? What do you say?
- What is one way you show your child you love her and value her?

Discussion Points. Incorporate throughout the meeting.
Fathers can begin building their child's self-esteem at birth and continue this throughout their child's development. Use handout, *Boosting Your Child's Self Esteem,* as appropriate.

Conversation Starters:
- How did your father influence your self-esteem as a child? As an adult?
- Think of one person who made you feel worthy and capable. What did they do to make you feel that way?
- How will your child look back and see how you influenced her self-esteem?

Discussion:
- The ways you build your child's self-esteem will vary depending on age.
- Building your child's self-esteem takes more than saying "you are good".
- Taking part in the everyday "care giving" tasks (such as feeding, diapering, and responding to her cries) is a way you can show your child that she is valuable and loved. This is how you begin to build her self-esteem.
- Nobody is born with either high or low self-esteem; it's something that develops over time.

- Self-esteem is based on how our parents treated us - how they showed their love, encouraged our development and included us in their lives.

Self-esteem plays an important role in a parent's life as well as in a child's life.

Conversation Starters:

- How high or low do you think your self-esteem is? How does it change from time to time or from interaction to interaction?
- How do you think your self-esteem affects your child's?

Discussion:

- Self-esteem plays an important role in your life. It influences how you like yourself, how you deal with others and how well you achieve the goals you set for yourself.
- A person may have a strong self-image when thinking of him/herself playing sports, but may not feel so confident when thinking of him/herself in school.
- A person with high self-esteem values him/herself, has self-respect, feels capable and is worthy of being loved. He/She can also trust his or her judgment. He/She knows his limitations. Having high self-esteem doesn't mean he/she has to be perfect.
- A person with low self-esteem feels worthless, unlovable, and feels incapable of making good decisions.

Practical Application

Rationale:

- Understanding how a parent's self-esteem impacts his/her child's self-esteem is important.
- Reflecting on past experiences, fathers will consciously think of things they want to happen to their own children and things they don't want to repeat.
- By understanding and reflecting on their "image maps", fathers can decide which pictures they would like to change for their *own sake as well as their child's.*

Activity:
Ask fathers to look at their "image map". Give them the opportunity to talk about their "image map". Ask them:

- How do you think your strengths developed?
- Did any person in your life help you develop that strength?
- How do you think that weakness developed?
- Did any person in your life help you develop that weakness?

How fathers feel about themselves and the roots of their strengths and weaknesses developed from messages they heard about themselves when they were tiny children.

Play the first half of the recording (negative messages) or read them to the fathers.

Then ask:

- Has anyone gotten any of these messages?
- How old were you? Who sent the message?
- How did you feel?
- Do you think it still affects you?
- What will you do differently with your child?

Then play the second half of the recording (positive messages) or read them to the fathers.

Then ask:

- Has anyone gotten any of these messages?
- How old were you? Who sent the message?
- How did you feel?
- Do you think it still affects you?
- How are you going to be sure your child gets positive messages like the ones you got?

Debrief

Parents play a big part in how children's self-esteem develops. Positive messages tell children how valuable they are. Negative messages tell them what parents and other adults think their weaknesses are.

Everyone keeps these messages in their heads. They can pop up at the most unexpected times - lifting us up or bringing us down.

It's important to start making positive tapes for your children to play in their minds - and you can start erasing some old tapes in your own minds and replace them with some brand new ones that fit who you want to become.

Summary

Summarize the goal and key points of the parent meeting.

Notes to Group Facilitator

This activity can be very painful for some fathers. Let them know that most adults sometimes say negative things to children and it doesn't mean they don't love them. Don't force fathers to share, but tell them that if we remember and talk about what our parents and other adults said to us that hurt us, we can let the pain go. *We can learn from their mistakes.* We now know that children's self-esteem can be damaged when they hear negative messages, so we need to do our best to send positive ones.

Additional Facilitator Information

Make an audio recording that includes both negative and positive messages. Make the first half with negative messages; the second with positive. Have different voices speaking the messages including an older voice, male and female voices, a child's voice, etc. A father who has a sound system might volunteer to make the recording for you or you could make the tape together.

OR

Read the following statements during the activity.

Negative Messages

- I wish you'd never been born.
- You dummy.
- Slob.
- Let me do it. You don't know how to do anything right.
- You'll never amount to anything.
- I don't need anything from you.

- Don’t be such a baby!
- Shut up!
- You’re so stupid.

Positive Messages

- I’m glad you’re my kid.
- You’re a great kid.
- You must really feel proud of yourself.
- That’s a great idea.
- You’re a really good helper.
- I love you!
- What a smart move.
- You are very good at that.
- I like you just the way you are.
- Good thinking.

Parent Handout
Boosting Your Child's Self-Esteem

Did you know?

When you hold your baby close and look into her face as you hold or feed her, you boost your child's self-esteem.

Whenever you do the routine things - diapering, dressing, and bathing - you boost your child's self-esteem.

When you accept your child's temperament (she was born with it) - you boost your child's self-esteem.

When you respond to your child's cries, you boost your child's self-esteem.

When you safety proof your house and allow your child to explore safely, you boost your child's self-esteem.

When you spend special time with your child, you boost your child's self-esteem.

When you play games with your child, you boost your child's self-esteem.

When you see your child doing something the right way and tell her that you liked what she did, you boost your child's self-esteem.

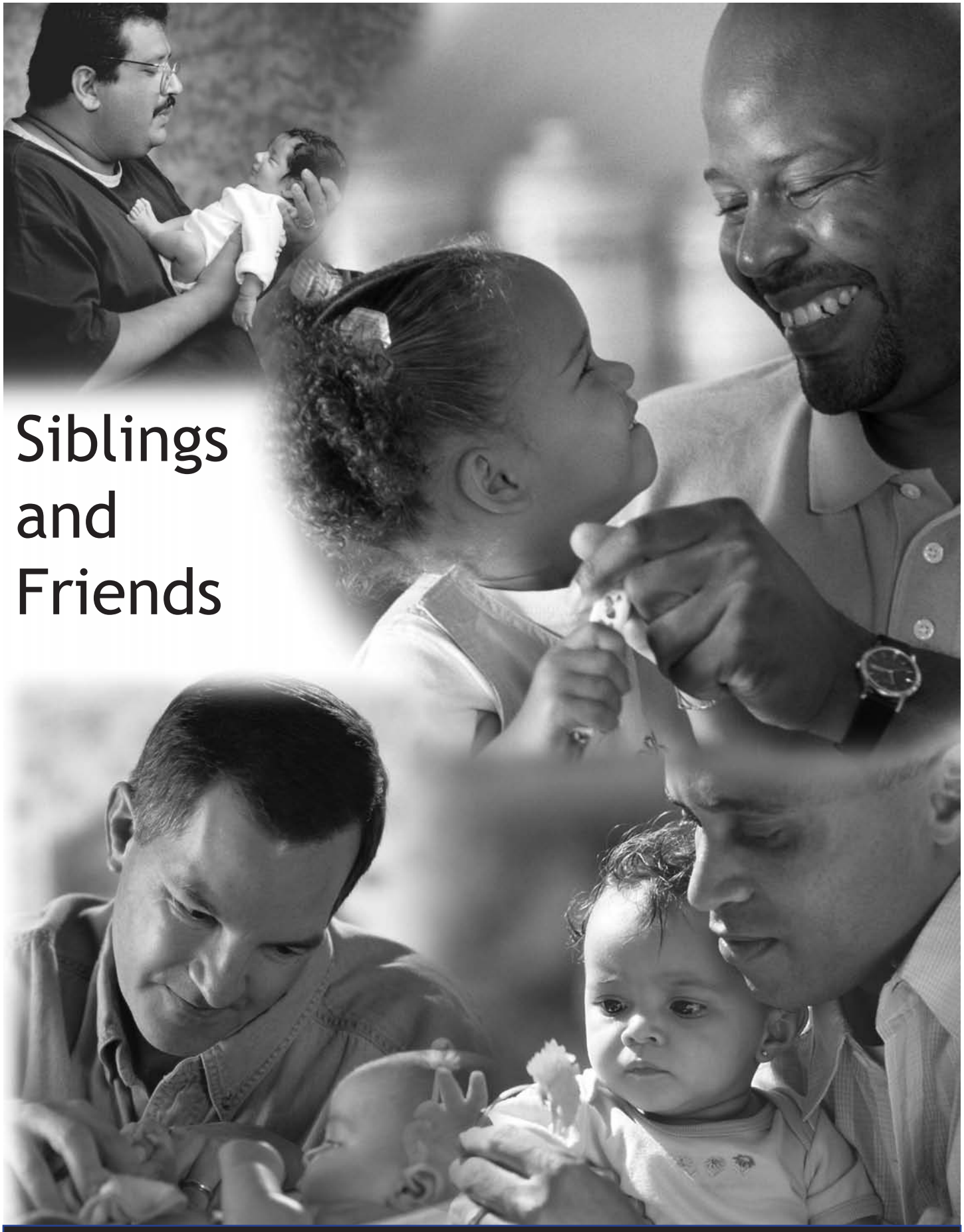
How you discipline will affect your child's self-esteem.

When you have realistic expectations for your child, you boost your child's self-esteem.

When you allow your child to solve problems on her own (or with a little guidance from you), you boost your child's self-esteem.

When you answer your preschool age child's endless questions with respect, you boost your child's self-esteem.

When you show and tell your child you love her, YOU BOOST YOUR CHILD'S SELF-ESTEEM.



Siblings and Friends

Focus on Fathering

Group Meeting Plan
Siblings and Friends

Goal
- Fathers will develop realistic expectations for their children's friendships and gain strategies to help their children develop healthy relationships with each other.

Key Points
- Children's development of friendships follows a consistent pattern, just as other developmental areas do.
- Children's relationships with each other are an important part of their everyday lives.
- Sibling relationships are complex and diverse and children are active in shaping these relationships.

Materials
Parent Handouts
- *Up the Stairs to Friendship*
- *Siblings and Friends*

Supplies for Activity
- *Friends Role Play Cards*

Procedure
Welcome/Icebreaker
- Introductions and announcements

Introduce Topic:
- Do you have a friend that's been there for you longer than you can remember? Why is this friendship so important to you?
- What is special about your relationship with your sibling?

Discussion Points. Incorporate throughout the meeting.

Children's development of friendships follows a consistent pattern, just as other developmental areas do. Use handout, *Up the Stairs to Friendship*, as appropriate.

Conversation Starters:

- What have you noticed when young children play together?
- How do children of different ages play?
- Does your child have a "best friend" or a close friend she prefers to play with?

Discussion:

Fathers need to have realistic expectations about how soon children can make friends and understand how hard it can be for their child to learn to play with someone else, to share and take turns and to be part of a group.

Step 1

- The younger your baby is, the less interested she is in having friends. The most important people in her life are those who care for her and love her; that is YOU!
- Give your baby or toddler the opportunity to be around other children. Playing *along side* other children her age is a good introduction to the friends that are to come.
- An important thing dad can do - starting at birth - is to help his baby develop high self-esteem. If your child expects that people will like her, she has a big jump on being a friend and having friends.

Step 2

- Continue giving your child the opportunity to be around other children even though they don't really play together yet. This is called **parallel play**. That means they play *next* to each other rather than *with* each other.
- In the toddler stage, sharing and turn taking are difficult because toddlers are in the ME stage. It is hard for them to see the world from any view other than their own. Have toys available that are easy for children this age to share - set of blocks, boxes of crayons - whatever has many pieces that are alike.

Step 3

- Between the age of 3 and 6 years, children start to learn empathy. They can begin to put themselves in someone else's shoes and imagining how they'd feel. Dads can help by asking questions like, "How do you think James would feel if you didn't let him have a turn?"
- Dads can help their children realize that their actions have consequences. For example, a dad might say, "Mariah gets upset when you won't share with her. Then she wants to go home."
- Taking turns takes practice. Practice with your child by taking turns being first when you play together.

Step 4

- By age 6, real friendships start to develop. Be sure that your child has the opportunity to meet a variety of children so she has the opportunity to find friends she likes.
- Respect your child's choices and accept that she will like some children better than others. Even though Sari is her cousin, she may like her neighbor Joey better.
- Reinforce your child's good friendship skills and - when it's appropriate - make suggestions that might improve the quality of her friendships.

Children's relationships with each other are an important part of their everyday lives now and into the future. Use handout, *Siblings and Friends, as appropriate.*

Conversation Starter:

- How did the friendships you had as a child impact the man you are today?
- What kind of friends do you want for your child?
- What kind of friend do you want her to be?

Discussion:

- Childhood friendships can be powerful predictors of social adjustment in adulthood.

- Studies have shown that how well children interact with peers is related to later personal adjustment, mental health, and school achievement.
- Experiences in a peer group also can affect a child's self-concept and her later interactions with others.

Sibling relationships are complex and diverse and children are active in shaping these relationships. Use handout, *Siblings and Friends, as appropriate.*

Conversation Starters:

- How have your relationships with your siblings changed over time?
- How have your relationships with your siblings impacted the man you've become today?

Discussion:

- Siblings are an important part of the family dynamic and have a powerful influence within the family.
- Sibling relationships are affected by the particular emotional circumstances and events of the family. For example, siblings may fight more with each other when their parents are not getting along well together, when their parents experience divorce-related conflict, or when a new adult (step father, step mother, girlfriend, boyfriend) joins the family.
- Siblings provide each other with emotional support, communicate with each other, take care of each other, and learn from each other.
- Negative feelings towards each other are sometimes referred to as sibling rivalry. Sibling rivalry is a normal part of family living.
- Sibling rivalry occurs because each child wants all of the parents' love and attention. It actually means that the child has formed a healthy attachment to the parents.
- Sibling rivalry has many positive effects on children, such as:
  - Learning relationship skills like negotiation and compromise
  - Learning problem-solving skills
  - Realizing life isn't always fair
  - Learning how to stand up for themselves

Practical Application

Rationale:

- By understanding how and when children form friendships, fathers will have more appropriate expectations for their children.
- Dads can help their children learn the skills they need to make friends. Learning these skills and practicing them sets the stage for children to have - and to be - friends for life.

Activity:

Children learn friendship and social skills from one another, but parents can also help them learn how to be good friends. We're going to look at a few situations, discuss them and make suggestions about what the fathers in the scenarios might do to help their children with their friendship skills.

Take the *Friends Role Play Cards* and ask a father to select one. Read what roles are needed for the scenario (bottom of the card). Ask for volunteers from the group. Give the volunteers the card and tell them they have a minute or two to decide how they're going to do the role play.

Have the group role play the situation. Then ask them:

- What is the problem here?
- How did what the actors do help the situation?
- What else might the father do?
- Is this a situation when a father shouldn't do anything?

Have another father select another *Friends Role Play Card* and continue the process until everyone has had the opportunity to play both a parent and a child at least once – or until you run out of time.

Debrief

Have fathers share their thoughts on the activity. Ask fathers what they can do *right now* that will help their child have friends? (Build their child's self-esteem.)

Summary

Summarize the goals and key points of the parent meeting.

Parent Handout

Up the Stairs to Friendship

Step 1

(Birth to 18 months)

Babies enjoy looking at one another, smiling and cooing at one another, even imitating each other's sounds, but real friendship is yet to come. Being around others babies is the first step.

Step 2

(18 months to 3 years)

Toddlers will play next to one another, but not with one another. This is called **parallel play**. Children this age will notice each other's needs and reactions. Some **cooperative games** can start at this age, like rolling a ball back and forth. This is the beginning of friendship.

Step 3

(3 to 6 years)

Children now know which playmates are the most fun. They are aware that they prefer some children more than others. Children are learning about sharing, turn-taking, cooperation, fairness, conflicts, and aggression. This is an important stage; life-long social skills are starting to develop.

Step 4

(6 to 9 years)

"Real" friendships start to develop as children realize friends are more than for fun times. Children now seek out friends with common interests.

Parent Handout

Siblings and Friends

Did you know?

Friends are an important part of your child's everyday life both now and into the future.

Your child's early friendships can impact how she interacts with others as an adult.

How well your child interacts with children her same age (peers) is related to how well she will do in school.

Interactions between siblings are a powerful influence within the family.

How well your children get along is affected by:

- Fighting between the adults
- Parents experiencing divorce-related conflict
- New adults (step-father, step-mother, girlfriend, or boyfriend) joining the family

Negative feelings towards each other are referred to as sibling rivalry. **This is a normal part of family living.**

Sibling rivalry can be positive for your children. It can help them:

- Learn skills like negotiation and compromise
- Learn problem-solving skills
- Realize life isn't always fair
- Learn how to stand up for themselves

Activity Page

Friends Role Play Cards

Situation

There's no two ways about it - your friend's son, Marcus, has become a bully. He thinks the way to get what he wants is to use force. Since he is a lot bigger than the other 4-year-olds, it often works, so he keeps doing it. At child care one day, you watched him take away Lou's snack, break Karim's crayon and push another child off the swing. You don't want your child to be next. You go to talk to his dad, your friend, but you don't think he will believe what you say. He says Marcus is just taking care of himself. It's no big deal.

Characters:
Marcus, his dad, your child and you

Situation

You and your favorite cousin often meet with your toddlers for playtime. You are not only relatives, but you and your cousin have been friends for years. The problem is that your children do not get along. No matter where you meet, within minutes the tears start, the fighting over toys begins, and it gets crazy. Up to now, you both have tried to ignore the situation but it seems to be getting out of hand.

Characters:
Your cousin, his toddler, your toddler and you

Activity Page

Friends Role Play Cards

Situation

Your child, who is five years old, seems to have only one or two friends. He really enjoys those two. They get along, have similar play styles, and all in all, are good friends. You always had a lot of friends and you want him to, too. Whenever you suggest he try to make some new friends, he just looks at you.

Characters:
Your child and you

Situation

You have told your child Damon, who is 3 years old, not to hit or bite. You explained that those things hurt others and you cannot allow him to do that. You have told him to use his words if he is angry or wants something. You have assured him that you will not allow others to hurt him either. Just now, Mikey wanted the truck your child is playing with. Damon said, "It's my turn." You are pleased that he told the child and is asserting himself. Then, Mikey grabs the truck and whacks Damon in the head with it, yelling, "I want it!" Mikey's dad is not near by. Damon is understandably hurt and outraged by this behavior. He looks to you. Now what?

Characters:
You, Damon, Mikey and his dad

Focus on Fathering: Child Development

1. How much did you like these things about the class? *(Check one best answer for each item.)*

   a. The leader(s):

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

   b. What the class was about:

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

   c. Handouts, videos, materials:

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

   d. When the class was held:

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

2. How much did this class help you and your child?

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

3. How often will you use what you learned in this class?

   ☐ Never ☐ Not Very Often ☐ Often ☐ All the Time

Please tell how much you agree with the following statements.

4. I know what to expect of my child at this age.

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

5. I know what to do with my child at this age.

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Somewhat ☐ A Lot

6. How would you change the class?

7. What other things about being a father would you like to learn?

8. Other comments:

Thank you for sharing your ideas about this class.

Focus on Fathering: Reading with Your Child

1. How much did you like these things about the class? *(Check one best answer for each item.)*

   a. The leader(s):

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

   b. What the class was about:

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

   c. Handouts, videos, materials:

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

   d. When the class was held:

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

2. How much did this class help you and your child?

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

3. How often will you use what you learned in this class?

   ☐ Never ☐ Not Very Often ☐ Often ☐ All the Time

Please tell how much you agree with the following statements.

4. I know how to help my child enjoy books and things to read.

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

5. I know how to choose books and other things for my child to read.

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Somewhat ☐ A Lot

6. How would you change the class?

7. What other things about being a father would you like to learn?

8. Other comments:

Thank you for sharing your ideas about this class.

Parenting Apart: Partnering to Parent

1. How much did you like these things about the class? *(Check one best answer for each item.)*

   a. The leader(s):

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

   b. What the class was about:

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

   c. Handouts, videos, materials:

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

   d. When the class was held:

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

2. How much did this class help you and your child?

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

3. How often will you use what you learned in this class?

   ☐ Never ☐ Not Very Often ☐ Often ☐ All the Time

Please tell how much you agree with the following statements.

4. I know key features of a resilient child.

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

5. I know some ways to work with my child's mother to help build my child's resilience.

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Somewhat ☐ A Lot

6. How would you change the class?

7. What other things about being a father would you like to learn?

8. Other comments:

Thank you for sharing your ideas about this class.

Parenting Apart: Helping Your Child Grow and Develop Together

1. How much did you like these things about the class? *(Check one best answer for each item.)*

   a. The leader(s):

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

   b. What the class was about:

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

   c. Handouts, videos, materials:

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

   d. When the class was held:

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

2. How much did this class help you and your child?

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

3. How often will you use what you learned in this class?

   ☐ Never ☐ Not Very Often ☐ Often ☐ All the Time

Please tell how much you agree with the following statements.

4. I know some features of my child's development in these four areas: language, motor, intellectual, and social emotional.

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

5. I know some ways to work with my child's mother to foster my child's development in these four areas.

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Somewhat ☐ A Lot

6. How would you change the class?

7. What other things about being a father would you like to learn?

8. Other comments:

Thank you for sharing your ideas about this class.

Parenting Apart: Choices for the Road Ahead

1. How much did you like these things about the class? *(Check one best answer for each item.)*

   a. The leader(s):

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

   b. What the class was about:

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

   c. Handouts, videos, materials:

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

   d. When the class was held:

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

2. How much did this class help you and your child?

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

3. How often will you use what you learned in this class?

   ☐ Never ☐ Not Very Often ☐ Often ☐ All the Time

Please tell how much you agree with the following statements.

4. I know how to evaluate the choices I make as a father.

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

5. I know some ways to make choices that will have a positive effect on my child.

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Somewhat ☐ A Lot

6. How would you change the class?

7. What other things about being a father would you like to learn?

8. Other comments:

Thank you for sharing your ideas about this class.

Focus on Fathering: Connecting with Your Child

1. How much did you like these things about the class? *(Check one best answer for each item.)*

   a. The leader(s):

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

   b. What the class was about:

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

   c. Handouts, videos, materials:

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

   d. When the class was held:

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

2. How much did this class help you and your child?

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

3. How often will you use what you learned in this class?

   ☐ Never ☐ Not Very Often ☐ Often ☐ All the Time

Please tell how much you agree with the following statements.

4. I know the benefits for a child having a strong attachment to a father.

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

5. I know behaviors that help and behaviors that hurt a child's attachment to a father.

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Somewhat ☐ A Lot

6. How would you change the class?

7. What other things about being a father would you like to learn?

8. Other comments:

Thank you for sharing your ideas about this class.

Focus on Fathering: Discipline

1. How much did you like these things about the class? *(Check one best answer for each item.)*

   a. The leader(s):

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

   b. What the class was about:

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

   c. Handouts, videos, materials:

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

   d. When the class was held:

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

2. How much did this class help you and your child?

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

3. How often will you use what you learned in this class?

   ☐ Never ☐ Not Very Often ☐ Often ☐ All the Time

Please tell how much you agree with the following statements.

4. I know how to help my child behave.

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

5. I know what kind of behavior to expect of my child at this age.

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Somewhat ☐ A Lot

6. How would you change the class?

7. What other things about being a father would you like to learn?

8. Other comments:

Thank you for sharing your ideas about this class.

Focus on Fathering: Places to Go

1. How much did you like these things about the class? *(Check one best answer for each item.)*

   a. The leader(s):

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

   b. What the class was about:

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

   c. Handouts, videos, materials:

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

   d. When the class was held:

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

2. How much did this class help you and your child?

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

3. How often will you use what you learned in this class?

   ☐ Never ☐ Not Very Often ☐ Often ☐ All the Time

Please tell how much you agree with the following statements.

4. I know some things to do with my child.

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

5. I know some places to go with my child.

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Somewhat ☐ A Lot

6. How would you change the class?

7. What other things about being a father would you like to learn?

8. Other comments:

Thank you for sharing your ideas about this class.

Focus on Fathering: Ways to Play

1. How much did you like these things about the class? *(Check one best answer for each item.)*

   a. The leader(s):

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

   b. What the class was about:

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

   c. Handouts, videos, materials:

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

   d. When the class was held:

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

2. How much did this class help you and your child?

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

3. How often will you use what you learned in this class?

   ☐ Never ☐ Not Very Often ☐ Often ☐ All the Time

Please tell how much you agree with the following statements.

4. I know good toys to choose for my child.

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

5. I know what to check to see if a toy is safe.

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Somewhat ☐ A Lot

6. How would you change the class?

7. What other things about being a father would you like to learn?

8. Other comments:

Thank you for sharing your ideas about this class.

Focus on Fathering: Choosing Child Care

1. How much did you like these things about the class? *(Check one best answer for each item.)*

   a. The leader(s):

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

   b. What the class was about:

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

   c. Handouts, videos, materials:

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

   d. When the class was held:

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

2. How much did this class help you and your child?

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

3. How often will you use what you learned in this class?

   ☐ Never ☐ Not Very Often ☐ Often ☐ All the Time

Please tell how much you agree with the following statements.

4. I know the qualities I want in others who care for my child.

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

5. I know the things to look for when I want to find child care for my child.

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Somewhat ☐ A Lot

6. How would you change the class?

7. What other things about being a father would you like to learn?

8. Other comments:

Thank you for sharing your ideas about this class.

Focus on Fathering: Healthy Relationships for Me and My Child

1. How much did you like these things about the class? *(Check one best answer for each item.)*

   a. The leader(s):

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

   b. What the class was about:

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

   c. Handouts, videos, materials:

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

   d. When the class was held:

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

2. How much did this class help you and your child?

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

3. How often will you use what you learned in this class?

   ☐ Never ☐ Not Very Often ☐ Often ☐ All the Time

Please tell how much you agree with the following statements.

4. I know what behaviors are considered to be child abuse and child neglect.

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

5. I know healthy ways to deal with stresses that could harm my relationship with my child.

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Somewhat ☐ A Lot

6. How would you change the class?

7. What other things about being a father would you like to learn?

8. Other comments:

Thank you for sharing your ideas about this class.

Focus on Fathering: Helping Your Child Deal with Feelings

1. How much did you like these things about the class? *(Check one best answer for each item.)*

   a. The leader(s):

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

   b. What the class was about:

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

   c. Handouts, videos, materials:

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

   d. When the class was held:

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

2. How much did this class help you and your child?

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

3. How often will you use what you learned in this class?

   ☐ Never ☐ Not Very Often ☐ Often ☐ All the Time

Please tell how much you agree with the following statements.

4. I know healthy ways to express my feelings.

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

5. I know healthy ways to help my child deal with feelings.

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Somewhat ☐ A Lot

6. How would you change the class?

7. What other things about being a father would you like to learn?

8. Other comments:

Thank you for sharing your ideas about this class.

Focus on Fathering: Self-Esteem

1. How much did you like these things about the class? *(Check one best answer for each item.)*

   a. The leader(s):

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

   b. What the class was about:

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

   c. Handouts, videos, materials:

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

   d. When the class was held:

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

2. How much did this class help you and your child?

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

3. How often will you use what you learned in this class?

   ☐ Never ☐ Not Very Often ☐ Often ☐ All the Time

Please tell how much you agree with the following statements.

4. I can name my strengths and my child's strengths.

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

5. I know ways to boost my child's self-esteem now and through all of childhood.

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Somewhat ☐ A Lot

6. How would you change the class?

7. What other things about being a father would you like to learn?

8. Other comments:

Thank you for sharing your ideas about this class.

Focus on Fathering: Siblings and Friends

1. How much did you like these things about the class? *(Check one best answer for each item.)*

   a. The leader(s):

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

   b. What the class was about:

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

   c. Handouts, videos, materials:

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

   d. When the class was held:

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

2. How much did this class help you and your child?

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

3. How often will you use what you learned in this class?

   ☐ Never ☐ Not Very Often ☐ Often ☐ All the Time

Please tell how much you agree with the following statements.

4. I know the steps of building friendships that young children take as they develop.

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Quite a Bit ☐ A Lot

5. I know ways to help my child learn the skills needed to make friends.

   ☐ Not at All ☐ Not Very Much ☐ Somewhat ☐ A Lot

6. How would you change the class?

7. What other things about being a father would you like to learn?

8. Other comments:

Thank you for sharing your ideas about this class.