



FATHER-FRIENDLY PRINCIPLES IMPLEMENTATION TOOL

The Case for Father Engagement

Social worker Rufus Sylvester Lynch, chair of The Strong Families Commission, Inc., which advocates for the inclusion of fathers into child, youth, and family policies, notes that “we as a nation are primarily centered on children’s development through the lens of mothers” and that “children have a right to access all possible resources in the world, including those of their father, which gives them a shot forward in life” (profile by Greg Wright, NASW News, January 2018).

Lynch points out that “children who are involved with their fathers, even when they don’t live in the same residential setting, typically have more access to benefits like health insurance, have improved emotional development, and are less likely to be abused and/or neglected.”

Wright, Greg. “Father Involvement Enhances Child Well-Being.”
www.socialworkers.org. NASW News, Volume 63, No.1, January 2018.

Alameda County Fathers Corps: Expanding the Lens

Since 2013, the Alameda County Fathers Corps (ACFC) has been a collaborative effort of First 5 Alameda County, Alameda County Health Care Services Agency, and Alameda County Social Services Agency. The ACFC is a team of male service providers with the mission and goal to support fathers, and father figures, to be meaningfully engaged and supportive of their children. To this end, the ACFC has adopted a set of Father-Friendly Principles to be implemented throughout Alameda County’s public systems and community-based organizations.

Through enhancing fathers’ engagement, service providers and their agencies are affirming their commitment to improving the life outcomes of children in Alameda County. As one ACFC member states, “Through the work of the Fathers Corps, many lives are and will be changed in a very positive way.”

✦ **Voices of Fathers and the Providers Who Serve Them:**
Supporting Father Engagement in Alameda County
Alameda County Fathers Corps, 2017



Furthering Alameda County's Progress in Supporting Family Health and Well-Being

Alameda County's public agencies and community-based organizations (including Department of Child Support Services, Health Care Services Agency, Probation Department, and Social Services Agency) have been instrumental in supporting the health and well-being of children across various systems. However, since children's development is customarily viewed through a maternal lens, the needs and roles of fathers may inadvertently be left out of service delivery models. Additionally, providers and agencies may feel ill-equipped to meet the evolving needs of fathers in our ever-changing society.

Through its collaborative work, training opportunities, and creation of the Father-Friendly Principles, the ACFC offers Alameda County providers the opportunity to intentionally incorporate fathers' needs into their service delivery models.

By implementing the Father-Friendly Principles, systems and community-based organizations are demonstrating their commitment to the well-being of children, to addressing the needs of fathers, and to supporting the professional growth of their staff.

Alameda County's public agencies and community-based organizations can assess their level of readiness to implement the Father-Friendly Principles by completing the Organizational Self-Assessment of Father Friendly Services. The self-assessment is intended to be used together with the Father-Friendly Principles Implementation Tool—with the Organizational Self-Assessment of Father Friendly Services completed first.

The Organizational Self-Assessment tool measures father friendly practices across the following criterion: Include Needs of Fathers, Provide Father-Friendly Services, Portray Positive Father Images, Create Positions that Serve Fathers, Train Staff on Fatherhood Issues, Expect Father Participation and Design Programs for Fathers. The self-assessment tool also encourages agencies to identify short-term and long-term action steps.

Subsequently, the Father-Friendly Principles Implementation Tool provides ideas and suggestions on ways to incorporate the Father Friendly Principles in agencies and community-based organizations.

Father-Friendly Principles Implementation Framework

The Father-Friendly Principles Implementation Tool below is designed to equip service providers and agencies with a framework to apply the Father-Friendly Principles. This implementation framework adopts three separate categories: Client and Practice Implementation, Staff Capacity-Building Implementation, and System and Policy Implementation. These categories are applicable across various systems and community-based organizations.

Client and Practice Implementation

Client and practice implementation refers to direct services provided to individuals, community groups, and families. At this level, the implementation goal is to reflect and to incorporate the Father-Friendly Principles into all levels of client interaction and service delivery. Counseling and parenting workshops illustrate examples of Client and Practice Implementation.

Staff Capacity-Building Implementation

In staff capacity-building implementation, the focus is on building staff's and leadership's capacity to adopt and implement the Father-Friendly Principles. There is an intentional effort to create cultural change within the community-based organization.

Providing professional development on father-specific topics is an example of Staff Capacity-Building Implementation. Completing the Organizational Self-Assessment of Father-Friendly Services at your agency or community-based organization is Staff Capacity-Building Implementation.

System and Policy Implementation

System and Policy implementation involves intervening in systems and institutions that impact large groups or entire communities. This type of implementation occurs on a larger scale and is intended to support the Client and Practice and Staff Capacity-Building levels of change.

An example of System and Policy implementation is advocating for large-scale social policy change. Creating an inter- or intra-agency Fatherhood Advisory Council to monitor the application of the Father-Friendly Principles is another example of System and Policy Implementation.

IMPLEMENTING THE FATHER-FRIENDLY PRINCIPLES

Below are suggestions and ideas for implementing the Father-Friendly Principles, organized by principle. Some of the suggestions, if implemented, can support more than one principle.

Principle 1

That fathers and the needs of fathers be included in the structure and delivery model of all family services in Alameda County agencies and organizations.

Client and Practice Implementation

- Administer client satisfaction surveys to fathers and father figures currently accessing services to identify areas of needed improvement.
- Facilitate a *Focus Group* with fathers to identify their needs and solicit their opinions about how the agency can include fathers' needs in service delivery.
- Create a *Fathers' Needs Assessment Survey* for fathers who currently utilize agency services.
- Service providers voice father-focused perspectives, collected from survey feedback and client interactions, in department and agency meetings to ensure that fathers' needs are being included.
- Add father-specific programming; host father-specific events/workshops/programs to accommodate fathers' availability (e.g., evenings and weekends).

Staff Capacity-Building Implementation

- Present and discuss the Father-Friendly Principles with all staff.
- Present and discuss the Father-Friendly Principles with agency leadership.
- Agency staff creates a specialized *Father-Friendly Work Group* dedicated to identifying fathers' needs, designing father-specific programs, and building agency's buy-in.

System and Policy Implementation

- All family services include a father-specific component.
 - Identify and include father specific language on agency forms and documents.
 - *Father-Friendly Work Group* to meet with agency leadership quarterly, to identify and affirm progress, identify needed improvements, and strategize on how to support staff in program implementation.
 - Assess how the agency's mission, vision, and/or value statements could be altered to make clear the importance of including fathers in service delivery.
 - Create an agency specific *Fatherhood Advisory Council*, including fathers in the community and individuals outside of the agency, to guide and plan the implementation of the Father-Friendly Principles.
 - Collaborate with local city council members to advocate for the needs of fathers to be included in city-wide programming.
 - Ensure that funding for father-specific programming is consistent and ongoing.
-

Principle 2

That Alameda County programs, agencies, and organizations be open, supportive, helpful, and inclusive towards the needs of fathers and provide father-specific services and/or programs, all of which further the goal of increasing fathers' involvement in their children's lives.

Client and Practice Implementation

- Host events based on feedback from the *Fathers' Focus Group* and *Fathers' Needs Assessment Survey*, including events on evenings and weekends (see Principle 1).
- Provide childcare services at father-specific programs.
- Design parenting groups with both mothers' and fathers' issues in mind.
- Have a "Father Liaison" present to welcome fathers at all events and serve as agency point-person who will follow up with fathers after the events.
- Send "thank you" correspondence to fathers after attending events.
- Services for fathers include a balanced approach focusing on assets fathers bring as well as challenges fathers face.

Staff Capacity-Building Implementation

- Agency invests in staff professional development by having service providers attend Fathers Corps trainings series to better equip service providers in addressing fathers' needs.
- Complete the *Fathers Corps Organizational Self-Assessment of Father-Friendly Services* annually.
- Establish short-term and long-term goals aligned with the implementation of the Father-Friendly Principles.
- Secure separate line item in agency budget to ensure funding for fathers is consistent and ongoing.

System and Policy Implementation

- Consolidate father-specific services into existing informational and referral data bases.
 - Collaborate to co-host father-focused/father-friendly events (e.g., Free Legal Aid workshop, Father-Child Communication workshop, “Daddy and Me” activities).
 - Create an inter-agency network to promote father-friendly events and share referrals (e.g., manhood development, housing assistance, legal assistance, mental health, substance abuse, etc.).
 - Build relationships with key people in Alameda County agencies so staff can effectively refer and support fathers and father-figures.
 - Formally adopt Alameda County’s Father-Friendly Principles in each agency.
 - Use father-specific data when designing and/or making program decisions.
-

Principle 3

That outreach materials, illustrations, posters, brochures, and other collateral materials include positive and diverse images of fathers being fathers, and that facilities provide father-friendly environments with materials consistent with the needs and interests of men and fathers.

Client and Practice Implementation

- Agency lobby/waiting areas display images of diverse fathers and father-figures in parenting roles.
- Access [Diversity Of Fatherhood Photo Bank](#) to select images of fathers to include in agency collateral materials.
- Replace current images on documents with multi-ethnic, multi-age, families headed by two fathers, single father group.
- Host photography shoots with male clients and their children (obtain photo release forms) and build a photo library of father engagement images on display.
- Agency lobby/waiting areas include a “Father’s Corner” bulletin board highlighting father-friendly resources/events.
- Books, journals, articles, videos, and other materials directed toward fathers are available to look at or borrow.
- Ensure that fathers who come in receive the *Men’s and Fathers’ Resource Guide*. (See Principle 7.)

Staff Capacity-Building Implementation

- Display Fathers Corps Father-Friendly Principles poster at all county agencies.
- Display Fathers Corps calendar and photos in all Alameda County shared office spaces.
- Community-based organizations provide staff with an opportunity to create a countywide *Men’s and Fathers’ Resource Guide*, to highlight services addressing men and fathers’ needs. (See Principle 7.)
- Leadership to provide staff opportunities to assist in developing literature for advertising and marketing to fathers, mothers, and children. (See Principle 7.)

System and Policy Implementation

- Create an agency specific *Father Welcome Packet*.
 - Redesign agency bathrooms to include at least one “single stall/family style” bathroom for fathers to use when their child is with them, and add a changing table to all men’s restrooms.
 - Include a father-specific component into all grants and family engagement applications.
 - As a funder, require that father-specific components are included in all RFPs (requests for proposal).
 - Add a social media presence for your agency, highlighting parenting and father-focused events.
-

Principle 4

That Alameda County family service programs, agencies, and organizations create positions that serve fathers, and actively recruit men to fill those positions in order to better address the needs of fathers. To facilitate recruitment, we recommend development of a career track for father services, e.g., active recruitment of young men into social services with scholarships, internships, and explicit advertising that “men are strongly urged to apply.”

Client and Practice Implementation

- Ensure job postings explicitly state “men are strongly urged to apply.”
- Identify agency items that should include images of men and fathers.
- Post jobs in areas and spaces utilized by men (e.g., “Manhood Development” programs, male fraternity houses, college and community college re-entry programs, barber shops, etc.).
- Set up a booth at job fairs, with focused outreach specifically to male attendees.
- Fathers that have completed programs are asked to work as mentors, recruiters, and group facilitators.

Staff Capacity-Building Implementation

- Create conditions so that male staff feel comfortable, valued, and respected within the agency.
- Create positions to serve fathers’ needs and actively recruit men to fill those positions (e.g., Father Engagement Specialist, Men’s Mental Health Specialist, Fathers’ Advocate/Mentor, Fathers’ Parenting Liaison, etc.).
- Include the Father-Friendly Principles in new hire orientation materials.
- Assign a Father-Friendly Principles mentor to all new hires.

System and Policy Implementation

- Male staff is in place at all levels of leadership, program design, program delivery, and recruitment of clients and staff.
- Partner with local two-year and four-year colleges for outreach, job shadow, and information sessions with male students on careers in the social services.

- Partner with local university counseling and social work departments (e.g., UC Berkeley, CSU East Bay) to become approved internship sites for male service providers in training.
 - Create incentives for contracted agencies to hire more men for family/parent support programs.
-

Principle 5

That Alameda County programs, agencies, and organizations working with families strive to provide training for all staff on working with men and on fatherhood issues.

Client and Practice Implementation

- Share feedback collected from Fathers' Needs Assessment Survey (Principle 1) to create topics for staff training.
- Invite staff from local community-based organizations to present on their existent father and men-focused services/programs.

Staff Capacity-Building Implementation

- Provide agency staff with the time to attend intra-agency collaboration meetings that support father-friendly programming and initiatives.
- Agency invests in staff professional development by having service providers attend Fathers Corps training series to better equip service providers in addressing fathers' needs. (See Principle 2.)
- Staff currently attending Fathers Corps training series to present the benefits of Fathers Corps during agency's staff meeting.
- Alameda County agencies send staff to attend Fathers Corps' trainings and learning communities.
- Train agency staff on engaging fathers, fathers' assets, and the challenges fathers face.
- Specific training dedicated to female staff to increase their comfort and skills in working with fathers.
- Train agency staff on recognizing and respecting father-mother differences in parenting styles.
- Train agency staff on recognizing and respecting the needs of LGBTQ parents.

System and Policy Implementation

- Fund Fathers Corps Ambassadors to attend professional development opportunities outside of Alameda County (e.g., child development, parenting topics, male empowerment).
- Establish Fatherhood Advisory Council to monitor professional development needs and identify current topics impacting fathers.
- Evaluate staff members on their awareness of, sensitivity and responsiveness to issues faced by fathers.

Principle 6

That Alameda County programs, agencies, and organizations develop program policies that include a clear expectation that fathers should and will participate.

Client and Practice Implementation

- Educate fathers on the importance of their presence as it relates to their child's health and well-being (e.g., fatherhood classes, support groups).
- Host father-specific events/workshops/programs to accommodate fathers' availability (e.g., evenings/weekends). (See Principle 1.)
- Identify barriers to fathers participating in agency's programs (e.g., survey service providers, gain client feedback, survey fathers).
- Identify specific incentives to increase father participation (e.g., free father-child portraits, free Uber/Lyft passes, free father-son haircuts, gift cards, cash stipends, when possible).
- All agency literature explicitly states the importance and expectation of fathers' participation in agency events.
- Provide reminder phone calls and/or text messages to fathers prior to events.
- Encourage fathers accessing services to refer other fathers to the program.

Staff Capacity-Building Implementation

- Share the critical and unique role fathers play in child development with staff and parents accessing agency services (including mothers).
- Provide incentives and opportunities for service providers to participate in father-friendly professional development.

System and Policy Implementation

- Require fathers receiving services to engage in agency programs for N amount of hours per quarter.
- Create and incentivize a father-to-father referral system in your agency.
- Create a program where fathers who have completed programs are hired to work as mentors, recruiters, and group facilitators.
- Agency leadership secures funding for father-friendly staff training.

Principle 7

That Alameda County agencies and organizations make every effort to create the image that its programs are designed for fathers, as well as for mothers and children.

Client and Practice Implementation

- Administer Father Satisfaction Survey to fathers accessing services.
- Post “fathers matter” quotes in agency spaces to highlight the critical role of fathers in their children’s development.
- Market and advertise programs/events directly to fathers, mothers, and family.
- Display images from [Diversity Of Fatherhood Photo Bank](#) in agency spaces.
- Encourage family-centered programs to include a focus on parents working collaboratively.
- Parenting programs should highlight the importance of co-parenting when parents are separated (except in cases of intimate partner violence or abusive situations).
- Efforts are made to interact with fathers who accompany mothers to agency programs.
- Contact information is routinely collected from both parents.

Staff Capacity-Building Implementation

- Community-based organizations provide staff with an opportunity to create a countywide Men’s and Fathers’ Resource Guide to highlight services addressing men’s and father’s needs.
- Leadership to provide staff opportunities to assist in developing literature for advertising and marketing to fathers, mothers, and children.

System and Policy Implementation

- Assess whether the agency’s name and/or webpage conveys language and imagery that is inclusive or exclusive of fathers. Make changes as indicated.
- Intake and all data collection methods are standardized for both parents.
- Secure funding for father-specific programming.
- All fathers with children born at Alameda County hospitals receive the Men’s and Fathers’ Resource Guide (mentioned above).
- Develop services and community-based programs with titles specifically inclusive of fathers, as well as for mothers and children (e.g., “Daddy and Me Movie Night” or a “Diapers and Dads” event).
- The agency or community-based organization is recognized by community members as a resource for fathers.