

What Is Father Engagement?

The purposeful inclusion of fathers in human services programs with the goal of improving outcomes for fathers, children, and families.



Fathers can be biological, social, or legal. They may live in the same household or live apart from one or more of their kids.¹






Programs may include fathers in services designed specifically for fathers, such as responsible fatherhood programs, as well as those designed for other family members, such as maternal and child health programs.



Facilitating fathers' involvement with their families can improve health and well-being outcomes across a range of human services programs, including those that historically have focused on mothers and children.

Fathers who want to be involved in their children's lives too often face systemic and/or personal barriers to doing so. Engaging fathers in program services can help address these barriers and open up opportunities for fathers' enhanced involvement with their families.

Programs, organizations, and systems all play a role in father engagement:

 Program	 Organization	 System
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use current and former participants to recruit fathers• Go into the community to reach fathers• Recognize that fathers might have different life experiences but share a common goal of wanting to be good parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Align father engagement with the organization's mission• Hire staff who can connect and relate to fathers• Collect data on fathers and use data for continuous quality improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Align policies across programs to reduce barriers• Identify technical assistance and other resources to promote father engagement• Review intra-agency policies to ensure internal policies are father-friendly

¹ A social father is someone who is not biologically related to their child but still fulfilling the critical father role.