



# Department of Children and Families Fatherhood Engagement Practice Guide



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FATHERHOOD  
ENGAGEMENT  
PRACTICE GUIDE

2025

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## Foreword



“***“A father is neither an anchor to hold us back nor a sail to take us there, but a guiding light whose love shows us the way.”***”  
— Unknown

*Fathers play a vital role in child development and family well-being. This Fatherhood Practice Guide, developed for the Connecticut Department of Children and Families, is a key resource built on best practices to enhance our approach to father engagement and inclusion.*

*Its creation reflects our shared commitment to continuously improving how we work with fathers. By equipping staff with strategies and tools to better support and involve fathers, we strengthen not only individual families but also the broader community.*

*Let this guide serve as a practical, insightful resource—one that empowers us to create lasting, positive impacts in the lives of fathers, children, and families.*

# Mission Statement

At the Department of Children and Families, we are committed to recognizing and empowering fathers as vital contributors to their children's well-being. We strive to actively engage fathers in the child welfare process and provide staff with the tools to support their positive involvement. By uplifting fathers, we strengthen families and build resilient communities where every child can thrive.

## Purpose

This practice guide supports child welfare professionals at the Department of Children and Families in effectively engaging fathers. Recognizing the vital role fathers play in their children's development, the guide offers practical tools, research-based strategies, and insights to strengthen father-child relationships and improve family outcomes. It serves as a living resource to guide ongoing efforts to promote meaningful father involvement in child welfare practice.

## Core Values

As an agency committed to child well-being, we recognize the vital role of fathers and strive to ensure they are treated with respect, equity, and inclusion across all services. We promote informed decision-making by fully involving fathers in assessments, case planning, legal processes, and clinical consultations.

We aim to equip staff with the tools, knowledge, and cultural awareness needed to engage fathers in a respectful, strengths-based manner. We acknowledge and address systemic barriers to father involvement and are committed to building a more inclusive and effective child welfare system where fathers are valued partners in strengthening families.

# Father Defined



The department defines a father or father figure is an individual who plays a significant and positive role in the emotional, social, and/or practical upbringing and support of a child or children. This role can encompass biological fathers, psychological, adoptive/foster fathers, stepfathers, grandfathers, uncles, mentors, guardians, or any other person who assumes the responsibilities and provides care, guidance, love, and protection to a child in a nurturing and supportive manner. A father or father figure may or may not be biologically related to the child but is characterized by their commitment to the child's well-being and development."

We should recognize the importance of the emotional and practical aspects of fatherhood and acknowledge for a child there can be a diverse range of individuals who can fulfill this role in a child's life.



# Fatherhood Engagement Leadership Team (FELT)



The overarching purpose of DCF's fatherhood focus- Improve outcomes for children and families by effectively engaging fathers as equal caretakers in case planning and service delivery Strategies- Establish agency culture of father importance, practice development to improve father engagement, service system realignment ensuring father **inclusion**.

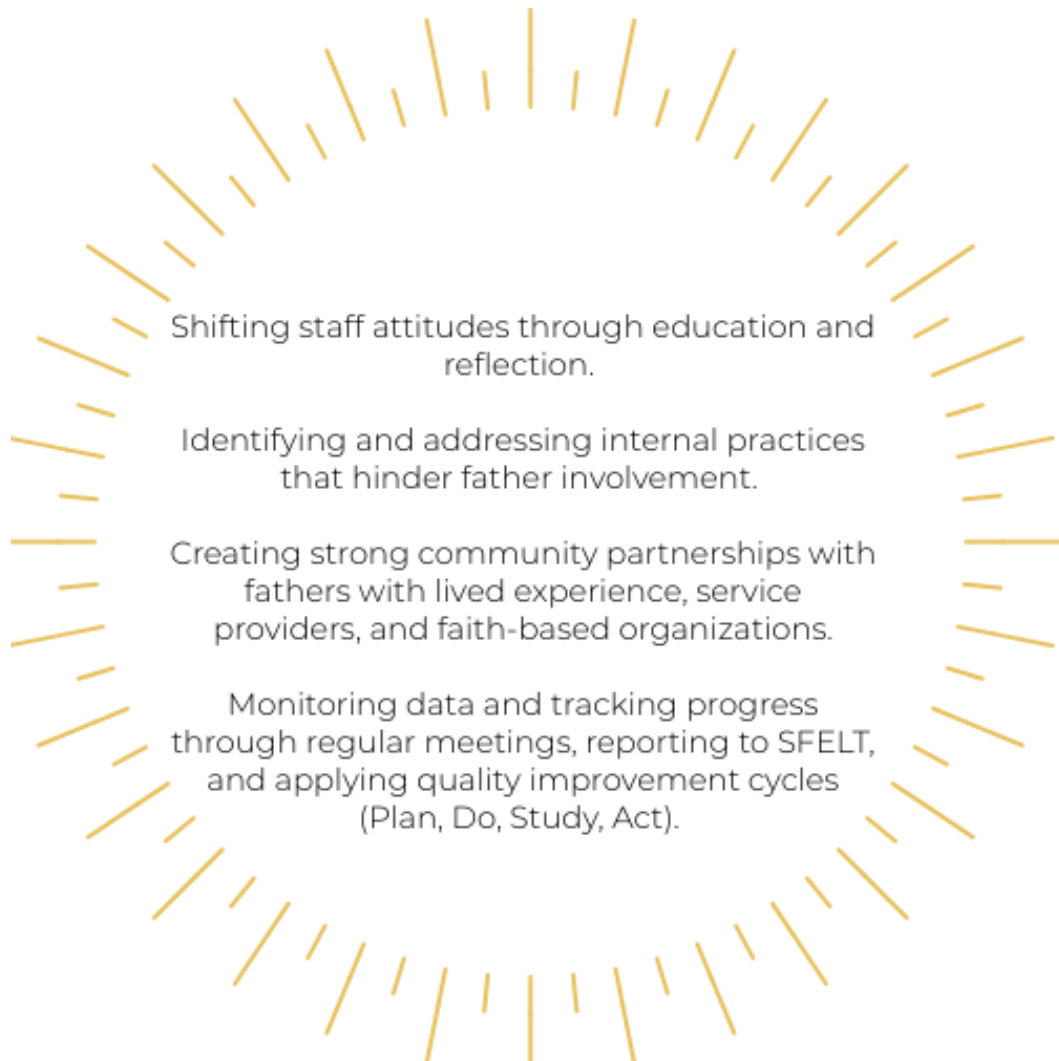
## **Fatherhood Engagement Leadership Teams Summary**

The Department of Children and Families is committed to improving outcomes for children by ensuring fathers are treated as equal and essential partners in their children's lives. Through the **Fatherhood Engagement Leadership Team (FELT)** and the **Statewide Fatherhood Engagement Leadership Team (SFELT)**, we work to align father-focused practices with our mission to raise resilient children through strong community and family partnerships.

These teams support agency-wide efforts to promote equity, challenge systemic barriers, and strengthen father inclusion in case planning, service delivery, and decision-making. Their work upholds the Department's vision that Connecticut's children are safe and sound within loving and supportive families.





## FELT Overview

FELTs operate within each region to address local needs and promote cultural change that prioritizes fatherhood engagement. They focus on:



Over the past decade, FELTs have played a pivotal role in advancing father inclusion and promoting equitable treatment across systems. They focus on equality for all fathers and emphasize fathers' rights within the child welfare system, helping to reduce unnecessary system involvement and increase positive outcomes for children.



<h2>Fatherhood Engagement Leadership Team</h2>  <p>State of Connecticut <b>Department of Children and Families</b></p>	<h2>Facts About Fatherhood</h2> <p> 22% of American children live in father-absent homes</p> <p>Research shows that children with involved fathers are less likely to be mistreated </p> <p> Children with involved fathers are 39% more likely to earn A's in school</p>	<h2>Our Mission</h2> <p>The Fatherhood Engagement Leadership Team (FELT) is dedicated to improving for children and families by engaging fathers as equal partners in case planning, service delivery, and decision-making. We promote a strengths-based, inclusive approach that values the unique contributions of fathers.</p> <h2>Get Involved</h2> <p>For more information about FELT or to learn how to participate, please contact:</p> <p><b>Anthony Gay (DCF Fatherhood Director)</b></p>
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# Statewide Fatherhood Engagement Leadership Team (SFELT)

## SFELT Overview

SFELT ensures consistency, quality, and alignment of regional efforts with agency priorities. Led by Tri-chairs Anthony Gay (DCF Fatherhood Director), Dr. Dakibu Muley (Child Welfare Director), and Abdul Rahman Muhammad (My People Community Services).

## SFELT:



SFELT serves as the bridge between local FELTs and the DCF Executive Team, ensuring all fatherhood-related activities reinforce the Department's goals around safety, permanency, prevention, and well-being.

For current FELT leads and contact information, please refer to the internal directory or reach out to the DCF Office of Fatherhood Services.

## Careline Division



★ The Careline serves as the Department's initial point of contact with the community and represents a critical opportunity to gather comprehensive fatherhood-related information at the earliest stage of a family's involvement with the Department.

<b>Screeners (SW)</b> <b>Responsibilities:</b>	Social Workers (SWs) are to make concerted efforts to obtain, and document detailed demographic information regarding all fathers, including biological, psychological, stepfathers, and/or father figures, as well as their current level of engagement and involvement.
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Request and document the name, date of birth, address, and phone number of each father identified by the reporter. Review case record for any historical information on the father when not provided by the caller; document findings.

If the caller does not know the identity or demographic details of the father, clearly document as "Unknown to caller"—do not leave fields blank.

- Clarify which child(ren) are connected to each father.
- Document legal and physical custodial arrangements.
- Record the household composition, specifying where the father resides.

When speaking with school personnel or service providers, inquire about whether the father listed on emergency contact forms. Ask whether a birth certificate, school record, or provider documentation is readily accessible. If not, advise that the assigned investigator may follow up to request the information.

For online reports lacking father information, email the mandated reporter to request this data for all accepted reports.

**Supervisor (SWS) Responsibilities:** The Social Work Supervisor (SWS) are to ensure that all accepted reports include identified fathers and document their level of engagement and involvement.

Confirm screeners are consistently asking appropriate questions and reviewing case record history to identify fathers.

Ensure the Primary Investigating Social Worker (PISW) engages all fathers by addressing:

- Information reported by the mother regarding the father.
- Information shared by the child(ren) about the father.
- Whether a LexisNexis search was completed.
- Efforts made by the PISW and/or SWS to locate and engage the father.
- Verify that Quality Improvement (QI) reviews include assessments of both custodial and non-custodial parents.

Ensure father engagement is a regular topic in supervision and is documented in the supervisory agenda.

**Program Supervisor  
(PS) Responsibilities:**

The Program Supervisor (PS) is responsible for monitoring and reinforcing fatherhood engagement at the supervisory level.

During supervision with SWS staff, intentionally discuss fatherhood engagement efforts. Review both telephonic and written reports to ensure consistent documentation and engagement practices by SW staff.

Evaluate PISW reports and adherence to protocols to confirm that engagement efforts with fathers are well-documented by both SW and SWS staff.

**Primary Investigating  
Social Worker (PISW)  
and On-Call Social  
Worker (OCSW)  
Responsibilities:**

The Social Work Supervisor (SWS) are to ensure that all accepted reports include identified fathers and document their level of engagement and involvement.

- Make diligent efforts to interview all fathers, regardless of alleged perpetrator status, living arrangement, or perceived involvement with the child(ren).
- Document all actions taken to identify and engage fathers.
- Document outreach efforts to paternal relatives when assessing placement or relative resources.

Independently interview mothers and children to obtain information about father(s), when possible.

# Special Investigations Unit (SIU)

The Special Investigations Unit (SIU) investigates complex and sensitive cases involving foster homes, DCF-licensed facilities, and situations in which the alleged perpetrator or household member is a DCF employee, police officer, or legislator.



## **Investigation Social Worker (ISW) Responsibilities:**

Engage all foster fathers and/or male caregivers actively involved in the life of the child(ren), including the biological/psychological father when applicable.

Conduct face-to-face interactions with adult males residing in the home and make attempts to communicate with non-resident but involved father figures.

If the father is the reporter of allegations and the report is accepted, make direct contact to assess and clarify his concerns.

In cases involving children under an Order of Temporary Custody (OTC), attempt to contact both parents to obtain consent for information gathering, including signed Releases of Information (ROI).

Ask victim children developmentally appropriate, father-related questions to understand their perspective on their relationship with their father or father figures.



Clearly document all efforts to identify, locate, and engage fathers in the Investigation Protocol, including:

- Consultation with the assigned CPS team.
- Direct conversations with the family.
- Any additional steps taken to identify or locate the father.

### **Supervisor (SWS and PS) Responsibilities:**

Ensure completion of the fatherhood section in every Investigation Protocol.

Inquire about and document father involvement and engagement, including all types of fathers (biological, psychological, foster, and male role models), during supervision.

The PS will review Investigation Protocols and Supervisory Narratives and meet regularly with SWS staff to ensure that efforts to engage fathers are documented and prioritized.

## Education Professional Investigation Unit (EPIU)

The Education Professional Investigation Unit (EPIU) investigates reports involving educational professionals or settings, including schools, daycares, Board of Education transportation providers, and camps.





### **Investigation Social Worker (ISW) Responsibilities:**

Attempt to identify and engage the father of each alleged victim.

Contact both parents to:

- Notify them of the allegations.
- Request permission to speak with their child(ren).
- Collect relevant concerns or context, ensuring both parents' voices are included.

Initiate father contact via phone calls, home visits, or mailed correspondence, depending on the information provided in the report. Recognize that in cases where neither parent is an alleged perpetrator, both mother's and father's perspective are equally important. Document all efforts to identify, locate, and engage the father in the Investigation Protocol.

### **Supervisor (SWS and PS) Responsibilities:**

Confirm that Social Workers have attempted to identify and engage the father in all EPIU cases.

Document all attempts to identify and engage fathers within the Supervisory/Managerial Narrative.

The PS will review Investigation Protocols and Supervisory Narratives and in supervision and regularly held meetings with SWS ensure that fatherhood engagement and location efforts are appropriately documented.

# Core Components of Father Engagement at Intake



## 01

### **CPS History Review**

Review all available case history to:

- Confirm the father's identity and/or attempts to establish paternity.
- Identify prior Department involvement with the father and any other relevant parties (i.e household members, paternal kin).
- Include any CPS history related to the father's other children.
- Document previous strategies used to engage the father and assess their effectiveness.

This information must be clearly documented in the Investigation or FAR protocol. Engagement expectations apply equally to custodial and non-custodial fathers.

## **Criminal History Checks (004s)**

Complete all required criminal history checks for each father, including:

02

- Connecticut and State and Local Police records,
- National Crime Information Center (NCIC),
- Restraining Order (RO) and Protective Order (PO) searches.

## **Structured Decision Making (SDM) Safety & Risk Assessments** **In accordance with policy:**

03

SDM Safety Assessments are to be completed for each required household.

An SDM Risk Assessment must be completed for every investigation, including an assessment specific to the father's household, even if he resides separately from the mother.

## **Placement Resource Tab**

04

Upon case assignment, review the Placement Resource Tab for previously identified paternal resources.

Identify, document and update all extended paternal kin as potential placement or support resources.

Narrative should include name(s), DOB, address and contact number.

When safety planning and/or removal occurs, assess paternal kin for possible placement or safety support. If paternal resources are not utilized for placement, a narrative should be entered to include reasons why.

## **Collateral Contacts**

Contact all known providers involved with the father for relevant information.

Ask providers about the father's engagement and involvement. Determine if father has been assessed and whether he is receiving direct services from a provider.

When providers working with the child(ren) or with family have not included fathers in their services or outreach, remind them to include the father in case planning and service delivery.

Discuss with provider whether father needs any additional referrals to address any identified needs not currently being addressed.

## **Home Visits and Interviews with Father**

Make and document efforts to conduct a home visit with the father. If this is unsuccessful, this should be documented in the case record.

During interviews or visits, gather and document the following elements as reported by the father:

- Create space for the father to speak openly about his needs and the behaviors and needs of his children.
- Description of the father's household and any other residents.
- Observe and assess the father's home environment as part of a comprehensive evaluation of his parental capacity.
- Assessment of the father's needs, current service providers, parenting role, and interaction with his children.
- Father's understanding of his child(ren)'s needs and overall circumstances for the Department's involvement.
- Father's experiences and current involvement with service systems, providers, and the courts.

- Inquire about and gain an understanding of the father's cultural, familial, or religious values as they pertain to parenting. Document along with father's primary language.
- Ask the father about any current or historical engagement with family court, including the existence of standing court orders related to parenting, visitation, custody, or child support.
- Assess and document the co-parenting dynamics, if applicable. Determine with father if additional supports are needed in this area.
- Father's employment and educational status.

### **Service Recommendations and Referrals**

Maintain regular communication with the father regarding:

- Identified needs
- Service recommendations and referrals
- Collateral findings concerning him or his child(ren)

Discuss with father if his needs are being met by the provider(s) appropriately.

If the father is identified as a perpetrator, referrals to appropriate services are to be made to address all identified needs.

### **Disposition**

Engage the father in ongoing conversations regarding the outcome of the investigation or Family Assessment Response.

Upon case closure disposition letters are to be sent to father. If the investigation results in a substantiation or Central Registry finding:

- Send the letter via certified mail
- Include the appropriate appeal information and documentation.

# Ongoing Services

Following case transfer from Intake to Ongoing Services, ensure fathers are meaningfully and consistently engaged throughout the life of the case. Assigned Ongoing Services Social Workers will make concerted efforts to contact and meet with all fathers in accordance with DCF Visitation and Contact Standards



[Refer to \(Visitation\) Policy 25-5](#)

If DCF is seeking legal intervention and a father has stated that he does not wish to communicate directly with the Department, all case-related communication is to be directed to the father's assigned legal counsel.

- **If the father is in default due to failure to appear or participate in court proceedings**, the Department should continue efforts to locate and engage him unless parental rights have been terminated.
- If the father's identity or whereabouts remain unknown, the assigned Ongoing Services Social Worker must conduct and document ongoing Diligent Search efforts throughout the duration of case planning.
- All efforts must be made to determine and establish legal paternity.

# Ongoing Services Program Supervisors

Program Supervisors are instrumental in setting expectations and leading culture change within their units. To ensure consistent and meaningful engagement of fathers, Program Supervisors should implement the following strategies:



## **Establish a Culture of Inclusivity**

- Clearly communicate expectations that engaging fathers is a core priority in every case.
- Support staff in engaging fathers from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

## **Embed Father Engagement in Supervision**

- During supervision, father focused conversation and directives should occur on all cases.
- Model inclusive supervision practices and support problem-solving around challenging father engagement scenarios.



### **Promote a Strengths-Based Approach**

- Encourage staff to view fathers through a strengths-based lens—emphasizing capacity, resilience, and potential contributions to child safety and well-being.
- Recognize and highlight successful father engagement efforts by staff.

### **Monitor Practice and Promote Accountability**

- Review ACRI and QI data regularly during supervision and unit meetings to assess progress on father engagement efforts.
- Identify practice trends and areas for improvement.
- Encourage staff to attend fatherhood-specific trainings and professional development opportunities.

### **Lead by Example**

- Actively participate in agency initiatives focused on father engagement.
- Share success stories that illustrate the impact of engaging fathers on case outcomes.
- A thorough assessment of father should be made of all at critical decision-making points in the case.

# Ongoing Services Social Work Supervisors



Social Work Supervisors play a key role in case oversight and in reinforcing consistent father engagement practices among their assigned workers.

## **Transfer and Initial Case Review**

- Participate in the transfer conference and thoroughly review the case record to determine the Department's efforts to identify, locate, and engage fathers.
- Utilize the ABCD paradigm model when reviewing father's case history.

## **Ongoing Oversight and Support**

- Ensure that the assigned worker makes all required efforts to locate, contact, and engage each father on their caseload.
- Use supervision to provide clear directives and expectations regarding father engagement.
- Ensure these directives are documented in the Supervisory Conference Note.
- In preparation for legal consultations, supervisors should ensure that social workers have made concerted efforts to engage, assess and offer services to fathers.

### **Tool and Referral Oversight**

- Confirm that all applicable assessment tools (e.g., SDM tools) are used with fathers.
- Ensure referrals are made to services aligned with each father's identified needs.
- Consultation with RRG and ESC should be considered when assessing father's needs and identification of services.

### **Address Implicit Bias**

- Use supervision as a forum to explore and address how implicit bias may impact staff efforts to engage fathers, particularly fathers of color or those with complex histories.

### **Data and Continuous Improvement**

- The Department should collaborate with fathers on the development of initial and subsequent case plans.
- Monitor ACRI and QI data during supervision to discuss strengths and resolve Areas Needing Improvement related to fathers.

### **Promote Training and Learning**

- Encourage workers to participate in training that supports skill-building in father engagement, cultural competence, and trauma-informed practices.

## **Ongoing Services Social Worker**

Ongoing Services Social Workers are the primary point of contact for fathers and are responsible for ensuring their ongoing inclusion in case planning and service provision.

Fathers are to be kept informed, engaged, and encouraged to be active participants in case planning development, identification of needs and services. Fathers should be provided with appropriate resources and services that support their progress toward safely maintaining their children in the home and/or achieving timely legal permanency.



### **Initial and Ongoing Contact**

Meet with fathers according to DCF Visitation and Contact Standards.

Engage fathers in all phases of case planning, including the development and revision of case plans.

### **Assessment and Service Planning**

Conduct comprehensive assessments, including the FSNA, to identify fathers' strengths, needs, and service gaps.

Offer services consistent with identified needs and tailored to the father's schedule, location, and ability to participate.

### **Service Matching and Referral**

Consider RRG/ESC consultation to determine eligibility for Evidence-Based Services (EBS), contracted providers, or father-specific community-based programs.

For resistant fathers, assess the appropriateness of a referral to **Fatherhood Engagement Services (FES)**.

If the father is incarcerated and expected to be released within 12 months, consider a referral to **FES – Incarcerated**.

Both FES and FES-Incarcerated referrals should be made through the ESC.

### **Child in Placement Cases**

Implement a visitation plan that supports the development and maintenance of the father-child relationship. Partner with the **Foster Care Division (FCD)** to facilitate **Quality Parenting Initiative (QPI)** efforts between fathers and foster caregivers.

Consult with the RRG and ESC's when consider referrals to QPC, TFT, RTFT etc.

### **Meeting(s) and Participation in child-specific appointments**

Ensure that fathers are invited to:

- All related QPI focused practices,
- All Family and CIP Administrative Case Reviews (ACRs),
- All scheduled Considered Removal Team Meetings (CRTM),
- Any family planning or permanency-related meetings.

- School related meetings (inclusive of Progress Report review, PPTs, 504 meetings, etc.)
- Medical appointments (dental, pediatrician, specialist)

### **Diligent Search and Documentation**

If a father's identity is unknown, make ongoing efforts to obtain identification.

If a father's whereabouts is unknown, conduct and document monthly search and engagement efforts.

If a father resides outside the U.S., consult with a supervisor to determine next steps. [Refer to DCF Immigration](#) and [DCF Office of Multicultural Affairs](#)

### **Case Closure/Transfer**

Ensure that all reasonable and documented efforts to engage fathers are completed prior to case transfer or closure.

Follow procedure for case closure

[Refer to \(closing Policy\) 23-1](#)

# Considered Removal

## Child and Family Team Meetings (CR-CFTMs)

### **Father Engagement in CR-CFTMs**

Fathers, including those who are incarcerated, must be invited to participate in the CR-CFTM specific to their child(ren). Their involvement is essential, and they should be encouraged to bring supportive individuals—such as family members, friends, or mentors—who can contribute to planning and stability.

### **Purpose and Overview**

Considered Removal – Child and Family Team Meetings (CR-CFTMs) are a core practice in the Department's efforts to meaningfully engage families prior to a decision regarding the removal of a child from the home. These meetings support a trauma-informed, family-centered approach and emphasize the importance of joint decision making, inclusion, community-based planning to ensure child safety and family stability.

The primary objectives of CR-CFTMs are to:

- ☐ Engage family and natural supports
- ☐ Facilitate collaborative planning
- ☐ Expand access to community-based supports
- ☐ Develop specific Safety Plans

### **Paternal Family Involvement:**

The Department should emphasize the importance of involving the paternal side of the family in the CR-CFTM process.

Including paternal relatives in planning ensures that all viable family resources are considered and that the best interests of the child(ren) are supported.

When paternal relatives' express willingness to be a support, DCF should make ongoing efforts to maintain contact with them. Engaging paternal family early on may help mitigate challenges throughout the life of the case.



**CRTM Participation:**

If the father's whereabouts are unknown, information should be gathered from the mother, children, and/or paternal relatives to help locate him.

For incarcerated fathers, DCF should utilize DOC liaisons to facilitate participation. Liaisons can help coordinate father involvement via phone or video conferencing. Flexibility in scheduling may be required to accommodate facility constraints and ensure meaningful participation.

All efforts to engage the father, including outreach and planning for his participation in the CR-CFTM, must be documented in the supervisory note.

[Refer to \(CRM\) Policy 25-3-1](#)



# Administrative Case Review (ACR)

The presence and active participation of all fathers during **Administrative Case Reviews (ACRs)** is critically important, allowing for well-informed, child-centered decisions regarding safety, permanency, and well-being. In ensuring a comprehensive and holistic assessment of family needs. Fathers offer valuable insights into family dynamics, strengths, and challenges.



## Best Practices for Preparing for ACRs with Fathers

To ensure that fathers are fully engaged and supported in the ACR process, the following considerations and strategies should be applied:

### Early Engagement and Communication

- Communicate the importance of ACR participation to fathers early in the process.
- Clearly explain the purpose and goals of the ACR, emphasizing how their involvement supports positive outcomes for their child(ren).
- Formally invite fathers and convey the value of their input in shaping the case plan.
- *Ensure Teen, SPM, and Incarcerated fathers are invited to the ACR.*

### Accessibility and Inclusion

- Consider fathers' work schedules, transportation, and other commitments when scheduling ACRs.

- For incarcerated fathers, collaborate with DOC liaisons to arrange participation via phone or video.
- Provide advance access to a copy of the case plan and related documents so fathers and fathers attorneys have time to review and prepare.
- Ensure fathers have an opportunity to contribute to the Family **Feedback Section** of the case plan.

### **Cultural Responsiveness**

- Be aware of and sensitive to the father's cultural background, values, and parenting style.
- Respect and incorporate the father's cultural and familial context into the ACR process.
- Utilize interpreters or translation services when necessary to ensure understanding and comfort.

### **Supportive Meeting Environment**

- Create a welcoming, respectful, and collaborative atmosphere during the ACR.
- Acknowledge the unique and important role fathers play in the lives of their children.
- Involve fathers in decision-making around the case plan and service goals.
- Encourage partnership between fathers, mothers, paternal relatives, and other stakeholders.
- Build upon areas where the father is already positively engaged or demonstrating growth.
- Identify and address any service barriers for fathers.

### **Feedback and Follow-Up**

- Gather feedback from fathers about the ACR process.
- Review outcomes and decisions.
- Clarify expectations and next steps.
- Reinforce the father's continued involvement and progress in the case.



## Incarcerated Fathers

Engaging incarcerated fathers is ethically responsible—it is also a critical opportunity to support a child’s well-being and maintain vital family connections. Research shows that positive engagement with incarcerated parents can enhance a child’s emotional stability, support permanency planning, and strengthen reunification outcomes.

The following best practices are designed to guide Department staff in supporting the engagement of incarcerated fathers across all stages of child welfare involvement:



01	<p><b>Establish Communication Channels</b></p> <p>Collaborate with the correctional facility and DCF's designated DOC Liaisons to determine available and approved communication methods (e.g., phone calls, letters, video conferencing).</p> <p>Ensure the father is informed about his options for contact and that logistics are coordinated in a timely manner.</p> <p>Discuss any restrictions, facility rules, or visitation guidelines to promote compliance and reduce communication barriers.</p> <p>Utilize interpreters or other accommodations as needed to support meaningful participation.</p>
02	<p><b>Build a Relationship of Trust</b></p> <p>Approach the father with empathy, consistency, and transparency.</p> <p>Acknowledge his strengths, his identity as a parent, and his value to the child(ren)'s lives.</p> <p>Demonstrate cultural humility and be mindful of any past trauma, incarceration-related stigma, or systemic barriers he may have experienced.</p>
03	<p><b>Educate the Father About DCF and Expectations Provide the father with clear information about:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Department's role in the case</li> <li>• The current status and well-being of his child(ren)</li> <li>• The importance of his involvement throughout the life of the case.</li> <li>• Ensure the father knows how to contact his attorney and is informed of his legal rights related to him and his child(ren).</li> <li>• Provide relevant legal or educational resources before and after release to support informed decision-making.</li> <li>• Explain the child welfare process, timelines, and legal expectations in an accessible format and language, including ACR, case updates and other documents.</li> </ul>
04	<p><b>Facilitate Regular Case Updates</b></p> <p>Provide routine updates to the father regarding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The child(ren)'s progress and well-being</li> <li>• Court hearings, outcomes, and case planning milestones</li> <li>• Service referrals and school or medical updates (as appropriate)</li> </ul> <p>Obtain and discuss any programming related to father while incarcerated.</p>

05	<p><b>Involve Father in Decision-Making</b></p> <p>Actively seek the father's input on his needs, services and progress.</p> <p>Seek the father's input on case decisions, especially regarding placement, education, health, and services for the child.</p> <p>Include the father in the development of the <b>Family Case Plan</b> and ensure his voice is reflected in identified goals, action steps, and timelines.</p>
06	<p><b>Support Participation in Programs</b></p> <p>Identify and encourage participation in programs available within the correctional facility.</p> <p>Support the father's enrollment in educational or therapeutic offerings that build parental capacity and readiness for reentry.</p> <p>Collaborate with facility staff to gather documentation of participation and progress, when available.</p> <p>Advocate for continuity of care upon release and consider aligning services with case plan goals and FSNA findings.</p>
07	<p><b>Coordinate Visits (For Children in Out-of-Home Care)</b></p> <p>Work with DOC liaisons and facility staff to facilitate meaningful and age-appropriate visits between the father and his child(ren), either in person or virtually.</p> <p>Provide preparation with father to ensure a positive experience.</p>
08	<p><b>Plan for Reentry</b></p> <p>Begin reentry planning in advance of the father's release and continuity of relationship with their child(ren); including any permanency planning.</p> <p>Referral to <b>Fatherhood Engagement Services – Incarcerated</b> should be considered to support case planning and transition work.</p> <p>Connect the father to reentry resources in the community, including those identified during the <b>FSNA</b> or through <b>Specific Steps</b>.</p>

# Permanency

The Department of Children and Families is committed to the vital role fathers play in the lives of their children. Every child deserves the opportunity to maintain or restore a safe, secure, and lifelong relationship with their father.

Our goal is to create a model child welfare system that prioritizes father engagement from the earliest point of involvement. Ensuring children's permanency planning options include reunification with father or kin placement with paternal family.



## Intake/Ongoing Phase

- Initiate efforts to establish paternity early, using available records such as birth certificates and Family Court orders.
- Contact DSS to verify paternity and locate fathers or paternal relatives.
- Conduct case reviews to gather any previous or existing information about potential fathers.
- Begin case mining immediately to explore all kin resources with the use of the Placement Resource Search and **Permanency Specialist**.

[Refer to Intake Policy 22:2.](#)



## Ongoing Services Phase and Court-Ordered Specific Steps

- Consult with AAGs/Principal Attorneys to ensure Specific Steps for fathers are appropriate and tailored to their individual needs and circumstances.
- When applicable in the Court-Ordered Specific Steps document, check the “Other” box and include specific language such as:

“ *Make DCF aware of non-custodial parent. Provide any information available on the non-custodial or putative father, including names, dates of birth, last known addresses, and identifying information.* ”

- Conduct quarterly collaborative meetings to track fathers’ progress toward achieving his steps.
- Create and utilize a family-friendly permanency chart that allows fathers to contribute their perspective on what they believe is in the best interest of their child(ren).

### Key Strategies for Father Inclusive Permanency Planning



#### Empower and Communicate

- Notify fathers of their rights, responsibilities and expectations. The child protection process, general legal procedures and legal timelines.
- Inform father about each permanency planning option.
- Provide updates on court hearings, case developments, and child status.
- Offer opportunities to share input and ask questions.
- Document and highlight the father's progress toward permanency goal include participation in services and visitation.
- Recognize that fathers may have experienced trauma that affects their engagement.



## Engagement Cultural Competence

- Understanding and respecting their beliefs, values, and cultural parenting practices,
- Tailoring engagement strategies accordingly.
- Identify father's primary language preference and ensure all communication (written and verbal) meets father's needs.

## Early Assessment and Inclusion

Follow visitation standard and supervisory guidance pertaining to ongoing visitation of fathers on all active cases. [Refer to \(Visitation\) Policy 25-5.](#)

- Accurate completion of Structured Decision Making (SDM) and collateral contacts.
- Provide trauma-informed approach and consider how past experiences influence behavior and decision-making.
- Utilization of RRG and ESC should be considered to strengthen assessment and/or identify appropriate services.
- Assess the father's strengths, support systems, and potential barriers to involvement in the case.
- Immediately include father in planning and decision-making.
- For children in out-of-home care, facilitate regular visitation and document meaningful interactions between father and child(ren).
- Highlight and celebrate the father's commitment, growth, and positive contributions to their child(ren)'s lives.

- Encourage fathers to advocate for themselves and child(ren) during court hearing, any scheduled meetings and throughout case planning process.



## Services



- Refer fathers to services aligned with their (includes self-identified) needs, SDM FSNA and/or Court Ordered Specific Steps.
- Partner with community-based fatherhood programs to enhance engagement.
- Partner with collaterals (such as Probation/Parole) to ensure father is receiving appropriate services based on his needs and to minimize duplication of services.
- Collaboration with father's attorney to ensure engagement and participation in identified services should occur throughout the life of the case.

## Involvement in Case planning

Follow case planning policy by ensuring fathers are part of:

- Developing and updating the case plan,  
[Refer to \(Case Planning\) Policy 20-1](#)
- Family Team Meetings,
- Court proceedings, ACRs, and CRTMs.

Collaborate on setting achievable and realistic goals focused on reunification and sustained involvement.



## Foster Care Division (FCD)



The [Foster Care Division \(FCD\)](#) plays a vital role in ensuring children in care experience stability, safety, and continuity of care. As part of the Department's commitment to inclusive family engagement, foster fathers must be recognized and supported as central figures in a child's caregiving environment. Ongoing Services staff and FCD staff must work collaboratively to engage, support, and empower foster fathers from initial placement through to permanency.

# Engagement of Foster Fathers



## **FCD Staff Interactions with Foster Fathers:**

- During routine visits, FCD staff should engage foster fathers directly to discuss current foster child(ren), needs/supports of the family and/or any concerns.
- Maintain regular contact through monthly phone calls with foster fathers.
- Coordinate routine visits to accommodate the foster father's schedule, recognizing his equal caregiving role.

## **Assessment of Foster Father Needs**

Both FCD and Ongoing Services staff must be intentional in assessing and addressing foster fathers' involvement and well-being.

- Ask specific, open-ended questions to determine what the foster father believes he, his partner, or family may need from DCF.
- Identify areas where he feels confident and explore areas where additional support might be welcomed.
- Assess the foster father's **direct childcare role**, including tasks such as:
  - Assisting with hygiene, hair care, nutrition, daily routines,
  - Engagement in educational activities and attending school events,
  - Participated in extracurricular activities (science, sports, music, art, etc.),
  - Establishing trust, routines, expectations, boundaries, open communication,



- Social and emotional activities (to include visitation/contact with parents, siblings, family, friends and engagement in therapy).



### **Support for Foster Fathers**

FCD staff should ensure foster fathers are equipped with tools, resources, and networks that promote their success in their role.

- Support inclusion of foster fathers in planning and decision making.
- Connect foster fathers to:
  - Regional and local support groups for foster and adoptive fathers,
  - Online parenting resources, including father-specific activities and events,
  - Experienced foster or adoptive fathers for peer mentorship.
- Routinely forward information on fatherhood and/or community events for foster fathers.
- Encourage other household caregivers to support the foster father's role and active involvement.
- Invite foster fathers to join Regional FELT teams to increase their visibility and voice in shaping foster care policies and practices.

## **Foster Fathers as Mentors**

The Department should promote opportunities for foster fathers to serve as mentors and role models to biological fathers, new foster fathers, and youth—especially adolescent males and teen fathers.

- Facilitate intentional connections between foster fathers and biological/psychological fathers to support co-parenting, relationship modeling, and shared parenting strategies.
- Encourage foster fathers to support and guide new foster fathers, offering encouragement and tips based on lived experience.
- Identify foster fathers willing to mentor teen boys or young fathers, helping to build life skills, confidence, and a positive male identity.



## **Staff Engagement with Foster Fathers**

Staff are to maintain routine contact with foster fathers and engage them in case planning, visitation, and decision-making. Interaction should be scheduled in coordination with the foster father's availability and should reflect a respectful, inclusive approach.





### **Best Practices for Engagement:**

- Coordinate Child in Placement (CIP) visits and calls to the foster home with consideration for the foster father's schedule.
- Use alternating phone and in-person visits to ensure both caregivers (Parent 1 and Parent 2) are included.
- During CIP visit(s), begin by asking the foster father about:
  - The child's progress,
  - How the home environment or co-parenting dynamics have shifted,
  - The child(ren)'s daily routine and schedule,
  - Recent or upcoming medical appointments, school events, or daycare-related concerns.
- Discuss the foster father's cultural background and explore ways the Department can respect and honor those practices.
- Ensure/Encourage the foster father is:
  - Aware of and invited to all ACRs and court proceedings,
  - Child's medical appointments, school meetings and/or behavioral health appointments,
  - Included in case planning conversations and team meetings.

# Adolescent and Transitional Aged Fathers



Engaging young fathers especially teens or those just entering adulthood, requires intentionally, respect and support. Staff can play a powerful role by creating a welcoming, nonjudgmental environment that affirms the father's importance in their child's life. This means speaking directly to fathers, inviting them into conversations about parenting and recognizing their unique strengths and challenges. By offering flexible opportunities for involvement, providing resources tailored to young dads, and celebrating their efforts, staff can help fathers build confidence and deeper connections with their children.

Young fathers can face unique challenges, particularly young fathers of color, as they navigate parenthood while simultaneously transitioning into adulthood. These challenges may include:

- Disconnection from school or employment,
- Relational struggles with coparenting,
- Emotional immaturity or lack of readiness for parenting,
- Exposure to trauma, and
- Limited support systems or positive male role models.

## **Encourage Involvement from the Beginning**

Motivate young fathers to be involved from pregnancy forward by reinforcing their importance and the role they play.

Share benefits of early involvement:

- Better academic performance,
- Increased emotional security,
- Reduced the likelihood of early sexual activity or delinquency,
- Improved behavior and self-control,
- Greater success in life and leadership.



## **Prepare Young Fathers for Fatherhood**

Explain what to expect at prenatal appointments, how to be engaged, and how to support the mother during pregnancy.

## **Support/Strengthen Parenting Role**

Discuss options/barriers (transportation, work/school schedule, etc.) to ensure father's participation medical visits and child visitation.



## **Support Paternity Establishment**

Explain the importance of establishing legal paternity:

- Strengthens identity and belonging for the child,
- Provides access to medical history, benefits, and legal rights,
- Enables fathers to pursue custody or visitation legally,
- Allows the father's name to be added to the birth certificate.



## Resources for Young Fathers

Resource	Contact/Website	Services
<b>National Fatherhood Initiative (NFI)</b>	<a href="http://fatherhood.org">fatherhood.org</a>	Free online parenting courses and webinars
<b>Fatherhood.gov – National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse (NRFC)</b>	<a href="http://fatherhood.gov">fatherhood.gov</a> Support Line: 1-877-4FATHER (1-877-432-3411)	National resource and support line for all fathers
<b>National Teen Parenting Helpline</b>	Helpline: 1-800-672-2296	Counseling, parenting advice, and referrals
<b>Love Is Respect – Teen Dating &amp; Parenting Hotline</b>	<a href="http://loveisrespect.org">loveisrespect.org</a> Helpline: 1-866-331-9474 Text: “LOVEIS” to 22522	Healthy relationship and co-parenting support
<b>Child Welfare Information Gateway</b>	<a href="http://childwelfare.gov">childwelfare.gov</a>	Legal resources, parenting guides, and child development info
<b>National Parent Helpline</b>	<a href="http://NationalParentHelpline.org">National Parent Helpline</a> : 1-855-4A-PARENT (1-855-427-2736)	Emotional support and parenting strategies

<b>Parents as Teachers (PAT)</b>	<a href="https://parentsasteachers.org">parentsasteachers.org</a>	Home visits, parenting education, and referrals
<b>Text4Baby</b>	<a href="https://text4baby.org">text4baby.org</a>	Free texts with pregnancy and early parenting tips

## Appendix A

Here are five tips to help fathers enjoy reading with their children and find other creative ways to support early literacy development through daily activities:

### **Help fathers understand their importance in promoting early literacy development**

Provide examples of fathers interacting with children and how children look up to them as models for behavior. Children look to their fathers for approval of their interests and activities. When fathers listen and pay attention to their children's interests, they can explore these interests together by reading or looking up information to help answer questions. A children's book like *Night Driving* is a wonderful example of how a father can support literacy during a long car ride.

### **Share information about typical development of early literacy skills in young children**

Provide information about how young children learn to talk, read, and write through interactive experiences. Examples of this type of information are available from the [Centers for Disease Control Child Development website](#), Zero to Three ([Early Literacy](#)), and Iowa Library Services ([Six Early Literacy Skills](#)).

### **Talk with dads about ways to make reading fun and instructive**

Programs can share general tips or create tip sheets for specific books. For example, the Dads and Kids Book Club in Minnesota created a [tip sheet](#) that dads could refer to before reading the book *Night Driving* with their children. Tip sheets like this can help fathers focus on four important goals related to early literacy: enjoying reading; following the story sequence of events; understanding the story; and, learning new words through reading.

### **Introduce fathers to good books for young children**

This can be done in a variety of ways. Programs can share books with dads as part of a regular group session, display examples of picture books at parent events, give away books at father-child events, or provide a list of books appropriate for different age and ability levels. For a list of books to consider, see Minnesota Humanities Council's [A Book List for Reading With Dad](#), which was developed by a group of librarians, early childhood teachers, and fatherhood practitioners to highlight positive father involvement.



Additionally, program staff can model reading aloud and encourage dads to follow their example. Some programs have invited professional story-tellers to participate in father-child or family events to provide additional examples and encouragement.

**Introduce the idea of simple, everyday activities that support literacy skills and are related to father's interests.**

Help fathers identify everyday activities that provide opportunities for boosting literacy skills. For example, reading newspapers and talking about the cartoons, following sports teams by looking at pictures and talking about specific players, telling stories in the car or at bedtime, fixing something around the house, preparing a meal or snack together, playing games with letters, or talking about signs while walking in the neighborhood.

*Glen Palm, Ph.D., Professor Emeritus of Child and Family Studies, St. Cloud State University, National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse*

## Appendix B

### Fatherhood Engagement Services (FES)

The purpose of this DCF-contracted program is to enhance the level of involvement of fathers in their DCF case planning and provision of services, strengthen fathers' positive parenting skills and to assist DCF with refining best practices working with fathers. DCF data highlights insufficient engagement of fathers resulting in unmet standards for assessment and needs met. While the department's family strengthening practices are inclusive of fathers, intentional focus is needed to ensure that fathers are encouraged and supported to be as involved as mothers.

There are six contracted FES providers, one for each region, covering the entire state. Capacity is 290 fathers per year, with each father participating for approximately 6 months. Fatherhood Engagement Services ("FES") provides intensive outreach, case management services and 24/7 Dad© group programming. Case management services will help to mitigate barriers to more effective engagement through assessment of needs, advocacy and linkage to supports and services, while 24/7 Dad© services will teach skills and characteristics to strengthen the father's parenting relationship. There is an additional FES team providing outreach to incarcerated fathers designed to link them to their local FES provider.



**Case Management:** Fathers will be provided one-on-one case management, not less than once per week, as needed to address needs emerging during the course of intervention. Essential services include:

- Assessment of basic needs and parenting capacity.
- Linkage and advocacy to assist fathers with achieving basic needs (housing, employment, supplies, etc.).

- Attendance with and support of fathers in meetings with DCF social work staff and at DCF required meetings: ACR; Permanency Teaming; Considered Removal; Juvenile Court.
- Assistance in improving parenting capacity, co-parenting mechanisms, active participation in their child's life and skill development through teaching, coaching, modeling, and supporting fathers.
- Assistance and support to fathers in building and utilizing natural supports with extended family and non-familial community members.



**24/7 Dad©:** The Contractor will provide a minimum of one 24/7 Dad© group per DCF Area Office. Evening and weekend hours will be offered as needed to meet fathers' scheduling needs.

Each group session shall run at least once per week. The 24/7 Dad© curriculum is twelve 2-hour sessions and will focus on teaching the 24/7 Dad© program to up to 12 fathers participating in the group at a time, with rolling open enrollment. Contractors may adjust delivery of the curriculum to meet fathers' needs, such as providing makeup in one-on-one sessions or combining sessions to shorten the length of the program. Such modifications will be documented by the contractor and reported to DCF.

# Fatherhood Engagement Services (FES)

## DOC Team



### **Program Overview**

The Fatherhood Engagement Services (FES) DOC Team is a collaborative initiative between the Connecticut Department of Children and Families (DCF) and the Department of Correction (CTDOC). It provides outreach, advocacy, and linkage to fatherhood services for incarcerated fathers with open DCF cases. The goal is to strengthen parenting skills, reestablish relationships with children, and increase father involvement in case planning before and after reentry.

### **Target Population**

The program serves incarcerated fathers with children involved with DCF. Priority is given to those within a year release or already in CTDOC-supervised residential/community programs, particularly those returning to the referring DCF region. Eligibility may be assessed flexibly based on reentry planning status.

### **Referral Process**

Referrals are initiated by DCF social workers using the Universal Referral Form (URF), sent to the DCF Regional ESC and forwarded to Community Resources for Justice (CRJ). Referrals are prioritized based on fathers' release circumstances, and the contractor confirms eligibility with CTDOC.



## Core Services

Services include:

- Holistic assessment of parenting needs, barriers, and supports.
- At least three in-person visits pre-release.
- Advocacy for child contact and visitation (including family furloughs).
- Support during DCF case meetings (in person or remotely).
- Linkages to housing, employment, behavioral health, and parenting services.
- Reentry guidance and support navigating child welfare and criminal justice systems.
- Written reentry assessments and warm handoffs to community FES providers.

## Objective

To prepare fathers for successful reintegration into their children's lives and enhance their participation in the child welfare process—ultimately improving family outcomes.



# Intimate Partner Violence

## Why It's Important to Engage Fathers Who Are the Perpetrator of IPV:

Engaging fathers who have used violence is essential to promoting safety, accountability, and healing. While their actions must be addressed with urgency and seriousness, excluding them from the process can leave harmful behaviors unchallenged and prevent meaningful change. Thoughtful engagement creates opportunities for fathers to understand the impact of their behavior, take responsibility, and access support to become safe, emotionally present, and non-violent parents. When done safely and with clear boundaries, engagement can interrupt cycles of abuse, support child well-being, and strengthen long-term family outcomes.



## Key Considerations:

1. Restrictive Masculinity Norms and Intersectionality
2. Trauma Informed Care
3. Impact on Children
4. Safety Planning
5. Collaboration

### **Restrictive Masculinity Norms and Intersectionality:**

- Traditional, restrictive expressions of masculinity promote anger as 'the appropriate' emotional reaction for men.
- Anger often masks emotions like sadness, frustration, fear, and anxiety, which men may struggle to express.
- The intersection of race, class, disability, and immigration status shapes how men are perceived and how they engage with services.
- Fathers from marginalized communities face challenges such as racism, over-policing, and overrepresentation in child welfare, often resulting in mistrust of systems.
- Social workers must recognize that reluctance or emotional reactivity may stem from unacknowledged pain, mistrust, or lack of emotional tools rather than noncompliance.
- Building rapport with fathers in IPV contexts involves addressing individual behaviors and considering harmful masculine norms and structural barriers.



### **Trauma Informed Care:**

- Many men who use violence have extensive trauma histories, including parental incarceration, childhood physical abuse, or homelessness.
- Trauma increases risk factors for IPV, such as substance use, emotional dysregulation, and relationship difficulties.
- Traumatic experiences can lead to heightened reactivity, misperceiving threats, and responding with aggression or withdrawal.
- Many men have never had therapeutic opportunities to process grief, shame, or fear.
- Problematic behaviors, including violence, may be used to assert control or shield emotions.
- A trauma-informed approach views violence and disengagement within the context of lived experiences.



- Building rapport involves creating opportunities to explore trauma histories, emphasizing accountability, and promoting healing.
- Responses should avoid retraumatizing or reinforcing shame and powerlessness while not excusing harmful behavior.



### **Impact on Children:**

- Fathers who use violence often care deeply about their children and desire to be good parents.
- Engagement begins with validating this desire while offering accountability and opportunities for change.
- Fathers may not realize the impact of their behavior on children's development.
- Exposure to IPV can lead to anxiety, emotional regulation issues, academic struggles, and relational difficulties in children.
- Helping fathers connect their actions to their child's well-being can motivate change.
- Accountability should be framed as an opportunity to become a safe, emotionally available, and consistent father.

### **Safety Planning:**

- Use the father's role as a motivator in developing meaningful and realistic safety plans.
- Explore compliance with protection orders and the consequences of violations.
- Clarify expectations regarding contact and visitation.
- Identify a trusted support person, develop coping strategies, and select a safe space outside the home for de-escalation.

- Safety planning should involve ongoing monitoring, co-parent collaboration, and coordination with community supports like batterer intervention or fatherhood services.
- Reinforce that safety planning builds trust and fosters safer environments for all family members.

**Collaboration:**

- A coordinated approach is essential for supporting families impacted by IPV.
- Partner with the Intimate Partner Violence Specialist (IPVS) in the Regional Resource Group (RRG) for risk assessment, training, and case planning.
- The IPVS may offer access to community-based interventions.
- Maintain communication with service providers such as IPV programs, batterer intervention services, and trauma counseling.
- Engage safe and supportive extended family or community members to reinforce positive behavior.
- Ensure all supports align with the family's safety plan.
- Conduct regular case reviews and stakeholder meetings to assess progress and update safety plans.

When faced with a father who appears resistant, remember that being guarded may be a reasonable response to trauma, shame, or fear. Keeping these five key considerations in mind can help build trust, foster engagement, and support long-term safety and healing.



# Appendix C

## 211 resources

[Becoming a Parent](#)

[Care 4 Kids Child Care Subsidy Program](#)

[Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit](#)

[Child Custody](#)

[Child Support in Connecticut](#)

[Child Tax Credit – 2023](#)

[Divorcing Parents Parenting Education Programs \(PEP\)](#)

[DNA Testing](#)

[Earned Income Tax Credit \(EIC/EITC\) / Federal Earned Income Tax Credit / Connecticut](#)

[Earned Income Tax Credit](#)

[Family/Juvenile Court – Connecticut](#)

[Help for Children with Learning Disabilities](#)

[Parentage Establishment](#)

[Support Groups](#)

[Truancy Laws – Connecticut](#)

## Appendix D

### CT Fatherhood initiative Quality Parenting Initiative (QPI)

The agency implemented [the Quality Parenting Initiative \(QPI\)](#) to enhance foster care by promoting excellent parenting, strong relationships, and child-centered collaboration. At its core, QPI emphasizes the importance of consistent, nurturing care and the vital role that both foster and biological parents play in a child's development.

#### How QPI Supports Father Engagement:

- **Promotes Co-Parenting:** QPI encourages collaboration between foster caregivers and biological parents—including fathers—to ensure continuity of care and connection for children.
- **Builds Relationships:** The initiative recognizes the importance of maintaining and strengthening relationships between children and their biological fathers, even while in placement.
- **Normalizes Contact:** Through tools like Quality Parenting Centers and enhanced visitation spaces, QPI creates more natural, supportive environments for fathers to interact with their children.
- **Inclusive Approach:** Fathers are viewed as essential members of the care team and are actively involved in case planning, visitation, and decision-making whenever safe and appropriate.
- **Training and Support:** Licensed caregivers are trained to support the role of the father, while staff are equipped with strategies to promote positive co-parenting and father inclusion.

Refer to [Quality Parenting Initiative](#)

# Appendix E

## Diligent Search Efforts Tool

Diligent Efforts Tool to Locate Absent Parents (to be completed once a month in all states parents may reside using all names and aliases)

Date Search Completed \_\_\_\_\_

(All yellow can be completed by OA)

(All Gray to be completed by SW)

Parents Name		Link #		Last known address	
Alias's		DOB			
States to be completed		SW			
Diligent efforts	Results Found	If yes, information located i.e. address, phone number	Date SW followed up	How (i.e. home visit to address, phone call, etc)	
Judicial Website Crim Case	Yes No				

Judicial Family Case	Yes No			
Judicial Housing Cases	Yes No			
Call Probation	Yes No			
Call Family Court Clerk	Yes No			
Call Criminal Court Clerk	Yes No			
DMV search	Yes No			
DSS search	Yes No			
Locate Plus	Yes No			
Military Website	Yes No			
Sexual Offender search	Yes No			



Inmate registry	Yes No			
Yellow Pages or 411.com	Yes No			
connecttoourkids.o rg	Yes No			
Criminalsearches.c om	Yes No			
Social Media	Yes No			
Local hospitals	Yes No			
Child support Enforcement	Yes No			
Health Dept	Yes No			
Call probate court	Yes No			

Call City Hall / Assessment Office / tax collector	Yes No			
Check Facebook	Yes No			
Call Post Office	Yes No			
Vital Statistics	Yes No			
IRS	Yes No			
Link search	Yes No			
Send letter to last known address (certified)	Yes No			
Send letter to last known address	Yes No			
Check marriage licenses	Yes No			

Check Birth certificates	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			
Contact Attny's	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			
Speak with mother	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			
Speak with children alone about father	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			
Speak with paternal family	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			
Speak with neighbors	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			
Call (Last Known) Employer	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			
Call Schools	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			
Call MD's	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			

Speak with community providers	Yes No			
Speak with landlords	Yes No			
Home visit to last known address	Yes No			

# Appendix F

## Strategies to Engage Gatekeeping Mothers

There can be multiple reason a mother may choose to gatekeep her child from the father. As social workers getting underneath mother's motivation to gatekeep is critical. Once we determine the issue and if no safety concerns exist, we should work with mother to mitigate her concerns. Some of mother's concerns may be past relationship conflicts, distrust, resentment, fear of losing control, father's parenting capabilities or lifestyle differences. Recognizing and acknowledging these concerns is essential so you can create interventions that address mothers' concerns and promote a collaborative parenting approach for the benefit of the child.

Helping mothers see the benefit of coparenting can have a pivotal impact in shaping positive outcomes for the child as it can enhance the child's overall well-being and development. This collaboration can contribute to the child emotionally, financially, stability, increase the child's social support and fosters a sense of security and belonging from both parents.

### Open Communication

- 01 Acknowledge mothers' concerns, perspective, fears, or reservations she may have about involving the father. At the onset of the case let mother know father will be a part of the decision-making process throughout the life of the case.

### Highlighting Father's Positive Qualities

- 02 Ask mother to recall or identify any strengths or positive attributes father may possess and show mother how those qualities can be a benefit to her child's well-being and development. If the child speaks positively about his interactions with father highlight that if safety factors do not exist

### Education on Fatherhood Benefits

- 03 Provide mother with the fatherhood benefits resource materials provided in this guide and any other, articles, or success stories that demonstrate positive outcomes associated with active fatherhood.

### Collaborative Case Planning

- 04 Make attempts to bring mother and father together to work collaboratively on the development of the case plan and other decision-making points during the life of the case. Doing this show's mother, the agency see's value in both parent's perspectives.

### Parenting Classes

- 05 If both parents are amenable make a referral to a co-parenting classes or workshops that provides effective strategies to co-parenting strategies.

### Therapeutic Support

- 06 Identify a therapist (counseling) or expert in conflict resolution to help mother untangle any issues or disputes that may be the cause of the gatekeeping, and help mother establish a foundation for collaboration with father.

### Gradual Contact

- 07 If safety factors previously existed slowly reintroduce father in a controlled environment to build trust and ensure the child's well-being.



### Clear Expectations

- 08 Clearly communicate everyone's expectations and common goal throughout the life of the case and beyond. Sharing this and giving them voice to setting the parameters helps reduce anxiety and increase cooperation.

### Recognizing Shared Goals:

- 09 Help them categorize the common goals they identified i.e., their child's safety, physical and emotional well-being, and development etc., Help them establish how collectively and independently they can both share the responsibility.

### Cultural Sensitivity

- 10 Be culturally sensitive and respectful of the mother's values and beliefs. Tailor your approach to consider cultural nuances and preferences, ensuring that interventions align with the family's cultural context.

By approaching the situation with empathy, respect, and a focus on shared goals, social workers can work collaboratively with mothers to enlist their support in involving fathers in child protective services cases by trying the following.

# Appendix G

## Father Friendly Letter (English)

Date:

Mr. \_\_\_\_\_

Address

City, Town, Zip Code

Re: (child's name)

Hello Mr. \_\_\_\_\_,

I recently had the opportunity to meet with your son/daughter, \_\_\_\_\_. I wanted to inform you of the Department of Children and Families' involvement with \_\_\_\_\_, and was hoping to set up a time to meet with you to discuss information about him/her. It would also be helpful to learn more about you, your relationship with \_\_\_\_\_ and to discuss ways you can aid him/her.

The Department of Children and Families is committed to working with fathers and families to ensure that children are safe and thriving in Connecticut communities.

Research has shown that children with involved, caring fathers are significantly more likely to:

- Succeed in School
- Have a healthy self-esteem, and relationships.
- Avoid drug use, and criminal activity.
- Have greater employment and financial potential.

Please contact me upon receipt of this letter. I am available Monday-Friday from 8:00am until 5:00pm. My telephone number is: \_\_\_\_\_. If I am unable to take your call please leave a contact number and good time to call you to set up a time to meet. I look forward to hearing your perspective and discussing how we can work together in the best interests of \_\_\_\_\_.

Sincerely,

Name of SW, title

Address

Phone number

## Father Friendly Letter (Spanish)

Señor/a: \_\_\_\_\_

Dirección:

City, Town, Zip Code

Re: (child's name)

Estimado Sr./Sra. \_\_\_\_\_,

Recientemente tuve la oportunidad de conocer su hija/hijo. Quisiera informarle que El Departamento de Niños y Familias esta trabajando con \_\_\_\_\_, y queríamos saber si usted podría sacar de su tiempo para reunirse con nosotros y dialogar acerca de su hijo/hija. También sería de mucha ayuda poder conocerle a usted mejor, y entender su relación con \_\_\_\_\_ para poder dialogar acerca de maneras para poder ayudarlo a el/ella.

El Departamento de Niños y Familias esta comprometido para trabajar con padres y familias para asegurarse que los niños estén seguros y prosperen en nuestras comunidades en Connecticut.

Los estudios muestran que los niños que tienes la oportunidad de crecer con sus padres son significativamente más propensos a tener lo siguiente:

- Tener un éxito en sus estudios
- Tienen alta estima saludable
- Evitan usar drogas y estar fuera de la criminalidad
- Tienen mejor empleo y un potencial financiero.

Por favor pónganse en contacto conmigo al recibir esta carta. Estoy disponible de lunes a viernes desde las 8:00am hasta las 5:00pm. Mi número es: \_\_\_\_\_. Si no puedo contestar su llamada, por favor deje un número de contacto con un mensaje indicando la hora disponible para dialogar y establecer un tiempo para reunirse. Espero con interés escuchar su punto de vista y dialogar en como podemos trabajar juntos en el mejor interés de \_\_\_\_\_.

Sincerely,

Name of SW, title

Address

Phone number

## Monthly Update

Dear Mr./Mrs.

I am providing you with a monthly update regarding your child/ren \_\_\_\_\_

A PPT 30-day review was recently held on 00/00/0000 at which time the recommendation was made that \_\_\_\_\_ received .75 hours of individual therapy with the school therapist to address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ continues to engage in the Extended Day Treatment (EDT) program at \_\_\_\_\_ where he receives afterschool therapeutic support 5 days a week. As a result of his involvement in the program they have been able to address his \_\_\_\_\_. As a result of his engagement in the service we have seen a reduction in his aggressive behavior at home and in the school.

The Department recently made a referral to the MDFT Substance Abuse Program through Wheeler Clinic. An Intake is scheduled for 00/00/0000. If you would like to participate in the intake please let me know and arrangements for transportation can be arranged.

Mother Ms. \_\_\_\_\_ and Ms. Smith from FCA continue to assess the best way to assist your son in taking his medications as prescribed. \_\_\_\_\_ is able to manage his behavior more appropriately when he is taking his medication as prescribed.

The Department also received a call from \_\_\_\_\_ School reporting they have seen a decrease in his outburst but still raise concerns about his inappropriate peer interactions.

Overall \_\_\_\_\_ is doing well and no other concerns are present at the time that has not been mentioned in the latter.

If you would like to discuss further. Meet in person or set up visitation please do not hesitate to call me at 111-222-333

Thank You

Name of SW, title

Address

Phone number

# Incarcerated Father Letter

Dear [Father's Name],

I hope this letter finds you well. My name is [----- -----], (position) from DCF. Although your current circumstances may be challenging, we truly appreciate your attention to this important matter regarding (Child name).

At DCF, we recognize how vital contribution from fathers are to the well-being of their children, and we believe that your active participation in all aspect of the case is essential in achieving the best outcomes for your child's future.

## Your Involvement Matters:

1. **Perspective and Input:** Your unique perspective as a father is invaluable. We are committed to considering your thoughts, opinions, and insights to ensure that your child's needs are met effectively. Your engagement in the case planning process is crucial for creating a plan that addresses the well-being, safety, and permanency of your child.
2. **Connection with Your Child:** Despite the challenges posed by your current situation, your involvement allows for the maintenance and development of a meaningful connection with your child. Studies consistently show that children benefit significantly from maintaining positive relationships with their fathers.

## How You Can Contribute:

1. **Regular Communication:** Keep open lines of communication with your assigned social worker, updating them on any changes or relevant information i.e., familial resources. Your perspective is an essential part of the decision-making process.
2. **Participation in Meetings:** Attend scheduled meetings, such as Administrative Case Reviews (ACRs), or court proceedings if applicable.

Despite your current circumstances, we are committed to partnering with you to ensure your child has the support needed while they are involved with the Department and beyond. Your input helps us tailor our services to meet the unique needs of your family.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me directly. We value your commitment to being involved in your child's life and I look forward to working together to create a positive and supportive environment for your child's growth and development.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

[Your Full Name]

[Your Position]

Connecticut Department of Children and Families

# Appendix H

## Benefits of Father's Involvement

Statistics Related to the Benefits of Father Involvement:

Oftentimes fathers are not aware of the importance of their presence in their child's life or lack thereof. Below you will find a few key statistics highlighting the benefits of a father being involved. It is also important to note that these statistics provide a general overview, and individual circumstances can vary. Nevertheless, they highlight the positive influence fathers can have on various aspects of their children's lives and various developmental domains. Use this information to help fathers understand their potential impact and influence on their children's well-being.

### 20 Benefits of Active Father Involvement



#### **Academic Achievement:**

Children with involved fathers are 43% more likely to earn A's in school. (Source: National Fatherhood Initiative)



### **Emotional Well-being:**

Children who feel a closeness to their fathers are twice as likely as those who do not to enter college or find stable employment after high school. (Source: U.S. Department of Education)

### **Behavioral Adjustment:**

Children with involved fathers are 70% less likely to drop out of school. (Source: National Fatherhood Initiative)

### **Mental Health:**

Children who live with their fathers are more likely to have good mental health, exhibit empathy, and avoid high-risk behaviors. (Source: U.S. Department of Health & Human Services)

### **Reduced Criminal Activity:**

Children from father-absent homes are more likely to be involved in crime, with a higher likelihood of incarceration. (Source: U.S. Department of Justice)

### **Social Skills:**

Children with involved fathers are more likely to have better social skills and enjoy long-term positive friendships. (Source: National Fatherhood Initiative)

### **Educational Attainment:**

Kids with actively involved fathers are 98% more likely to graduate from college. (Source: National Center for Fathering)

### **Emotional Intelligence:**

Fathers contribute uniquely to the development of emotional intelligence, fostering empathy and understanding in their children. (Source: Psychology Today)

### **Reduced Substance Abuse:**

Adolescents with involved fathers are less likely to engage in substance abuse. (Source: U.S. National Library of Medicine)

**Financial Stability:**

Children with involved fathers are more likely to have higher levels of economic and educational attainment later in life. (Source: U.S. Department of Commerce)

**Cognitive Development:**

Children with involved fathers are more likely to have higher IQ scores and better cognitive abilities. (Source: U.S. National Library of Medicine)

**Resilience:**

Father involvement has been linked to greater resilience in children, helping them cope with stress and life challenges. (Source: Journal of Family Psychology)

**Health Outcomes:**

Children with engaged fathers are more likely to experience better health outcomes and lower rates of childhood obesity. (Source: Pediatrics Journal)

**Self-Esteem:**

Adolescents with involved fathers tend to have higher levels of self-esteem and exhibit greater self-efficacy. (Source: Journal of Marriage and Family)

**Language Development:**

Children with actively involved fathers often demonstrate enhanced language development and communication skills. (Source: U.S. National Library of Medicine)

**Parental Involvement Correlation:**

Fathers' involvement is positively correlated with mothers' involvement, leading to a more comprehensive parental support system. (Source: Journal of Marriage and Family)

**Father-Child Bond:**

A strong bond between fathers and their infants is associated with fewer behavioral problems in the child's early years. (Source: National Institute of Child Health and Human Development)

**Educational Aspirations:**

Teens with involved fathers are more likely to have higher educational aspirations and a greater likelihood of pursuing post-secondary education. (Source: Journal of Marriage and Family)

**Delayed Sexual Activity:**

Adolescents with involved fathers are less likely to engage in early sexual activity, leading to reduced rates of teen pregnancy. (Source: Child Development)

**Maternal Mental Health:**

Father involvement is associated with better maternal mental health and reduced parenting stress. (Source: U.S. National Library of Medicine)

## Appendix J

### **Academy for Workforce Development: Fatherhood Engagement Summary**

The Academy for Workforce Development supports the Department's commitment to fatherhood engagement by embedding related practices into all levels of staff training—pre-service, in-service, and community partner education. These trainings address staff attitudes, values, implicit bias, and the impact of systemic disparities on children of color and their fathers.

Key objectives include:

- Strengthening staff competencies in locating, engaging, and supporting fathers.
- Teaching practical skills like assessing father strengths, conducting diligent searches, and using effective interviewing strategies.
- Promoting shared parenting, kinship connections, and meaningful visitation.
- Highlighting the connection between father engagement and improved child safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes.

Trainings are aligned with DCF's *Safe and Sound* culture, rooted in respect, trust, and equity. Role-playing, storytelling from fathers with lived experience, and collaboration with local providers and FELT teams help ensure that learning is grounded in real-world practice.

The Academy's work ensures that all staff, including community partners, are equipped to support fathers as active participants in the child welfare process—strengthening families and improving outcomes for children.

## Appendix K

### Sample questions supervisors can ask workers during supervision to engage and be inclusive of fathers

- 01      What efforts have you made to understand the unique challenges and perspectives that fathers may face in child protective services?
- 02      How can we ensure that our interactions with the father are respectful and non-judgmental, while still addressing any concerns regarding the safety and well-being of the child?
- 03      What strategies have you used or can you implement to actively involve the father in the decision-making process regarding his child?
- 04      Have you considered any cultural or community factors that may influence the father's involvement? How can we take those into account to promote inclusivity?
- 05      How can we create a supportive environment that encourages the father to share his thoughts, concerns, and suggestions regarding his child's welfare?
- 06      What resources or services can we connect the father with to support his parenting skills and overall involvement in his child's life?
- 07      Are there any communication or language barriers that we need to address to ensure effective and inclusive engagement with the father? How can we overcome them?

- 08 How can we actively involve the father in developing and implementing the case plan, considering his input and strengths as a parent?
- 09 What steps can we take to ensure that the father feels heard, respected, and empowered throughout the process?
- 10 How can we collaborate with other professionals or agencies involved to promote a more inclusive and holistic approach to engaging with the father and addressing his needs?

These questions can help guide your worker's thinking and actions, fostering an inclusive and engaging approach when working with fathers involved in child protective services.



# Appendix L

## Key Elements to Building and Sustaining a Strong FELT

### **1. Team Development & Leadership**

- Recruit cross-functional DCF staff (Intake, Ongoing, FASU, Adolescent, Permanency, Case Aides, QI, Clerical).
- Ensure managerial support and appoint Area Office/Regional FELT Co-Leads.
- Form subcommittees to delegate tasks (e.g., training, community engagement).
- Engage fathers with lived experience, including foster fathers and father figures.

### **2. Community & Stakeholder Engagement**

- Recruit external stakeholders: local police, schools, courts, DSS, FES providers, faith-based organizations, and others.
- Invite community providers to present during FELT meetings and events.
- Collaborate with CFI and Racial Justice Committees for cross-agency strategies.

### **3. Staff Awareness & Practice Improvement**

- Survey staff perceptions on father inclusion – use data to identify themes and implement strategies i.e., strategic plan or logic model to reduce disparities.
- Share monthly case practice data and father engagement statistics.
- Provide staff with tip sheets, diligent search resources, and father engagement tools.

### **4. Training & Learning**

- Incorporate presentations or learning (Training) activities in each FELT meeting.
- Coordinate with FES, DOC, and fathers with lived experience to provide hands-on staff learning.
- Organize prison tours for staff to understand the incarcerated father experience.

### **5. Supervision & Case Consultations**

- Develop engagement and inclusion questions supervisors can ask during supervision
- Offer FELT consultations for complex cases.
- Promote shared accountability for father engagement across units and leadership.

## **6. Communication & Resources**

- Distribute bi-monthly or quarterly fatherhood newsletters and father-focused communications.
- Develop and maintain an updated FELT brochure and tip sheets in English and Spanish.
- Create and distribute non-custodial parent letters.
- Regularly share fatherhood tools, updates, and success stories internally and externally.

## **7. Community Events & Visibility**

- Host regional fatherhood panel discussions featuring Steering Committee or FES participants.
- Plan and execute annual events such as Fatherhood Community Days and recognition campaigns.
- Create activity bags for fathers to use during visits with their children.

## **8. Ongoing Evaluation & Maintenance**

- Conduct annual SWOT analyses to identify new opportunities and barriers.
- Schedule periodic “case cleanup up days” to update resources.
- Create Fatherhood Engagement Month through targeted outreach and staff engagement efforts.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Dear Fatherhood Practice Guide Committee

On behalf of the Statewide Fatherhood Engagement Leadership Team Tri-Chairs,

We would like to extend a heartfelt thank you for your invaluable contributions in developing the CT DCF, Fatherhood Practice Guide. Your dedication has made this resource a testament to our agency's commitment to effective father engagement.

Your dedication, expertise, and collaborative spirit made this resource a comprehensive and invaluable tool for our organization. Your collective efforts have not only shaped the document but have laid the foundation for a culture of inclusivity, equity, and effective father engagement within our agency.

As we embark on this journey to enhance our fatherhood practices, let us celebrate the strength that lies in our unity and the positive impact our collective efforts will have on the lives of fathers and children.

Once again, thank you for your outstanding contributions. Your dedication to this project speaks volumes about your passion for the well-being of families, and the agency is truly grateful to have such a remarkable team.

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