



## FATHER'S BEST PRACTICE

The Engagement of Fathers  
Involved in Child Protection  
Services

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## Minnesota Requirements

Rules & Statutes  
Clear & Precise + Vague & General  
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Agency Interpretation



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## Minnesota Requirements

### ■ Child in Placement

(Minnesota Rules 9560.0228 & Minnesota Statute 260C.201)

- Identify, locate and where appropriate, offer services to both parents
- Non-custodial father is willing & capable to provide day-to-day care of the child-could be a placement resource (temporary or permanent).



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## Minnesota Requirements

### ■ Children Not In Placement

(Minnesota Rules 9560.0228 & Minnesota Statute 260C.201)

- Involve the “Family Unit” (Rule 9560.0214 subp.11) **or** “Family or Household Members” (Statute 260C.007 sub 17)
  - Assessing Needs
  - Developing The Case Plan
  - Planning for Services
  - Visiting with the Agency Social Worker



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## Policy Development

### ■ Do workers know when they are required to involve non-custodial or absent fathers?

- Assessments
- Child Protection Case Management
  - CHIPS with Children in Placement
  - CHIPS with No Children in Placement
  - Services with No Court Involvement
  - Services with a Voluntary Placement (court & non-court involvement)



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## Why Involve Fathers?

- Children with involved fathers are significantly more likely to...
  - Do well in school
  - Develop healthy self-esteem
  - Experience less financial hardships
  - Avoid high-risk behaviors

(National Fatherhood Initiative)



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## Why Involve Fathers...

- Besides the Statute & Rule Guidance, Agencies are understanding the impact of father's involvement for children and developing strategies (such as FGDM) to ensure their involvement.



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## Gate Keeping

What are the barriers to involving fathers?

### • Mothers

- Explore why resistant
- Agency Policy requirements
- Who can verify what mom is telling worker
- Opportunity to discuss benefits to child of father involvement

### • Agency & Partners

- Explore with workers their beliefs and practices
- Develop Agency policy to improve father's involvement
- Provide clear expectations to workers
- CJI Topic



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## Identify Fathers

- Inquire at the early stages of meeting the family
- Strategies
  - Ask mothers, relatives, kin, child, & tribe
  - Complete Genogram
  - Birth Certificate
  - Child Support
  - MAXIS



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## Status of the Father

- Determine the level of involvement the father has in the life of the child
  - Legal Definition
  - Location
  - Frequency of contact
  - Nature of relationship



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## Locating Fathers

- Strategies:
  - Ask mothers, relatives, kin, child & tribe
  - Phone book/on-line directory
  - Child Support- MAXIS-SWINDX
  - Father's Adoption Registry  
([www.health.state.mn.us/divs/cbsr/registry/top.htm](http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/cbsr/registry/top.htm))
  - Court Records
  - Department of Corrections



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## Assessment of Father's Needs

- Direct
- Comprehensive
- Early & On Going



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## Assessment of Father's Needs

- Strategies of Assessment
  - SDM Tools
  - Genogram
  - Ethnographic Interviewing
  - Explore Protective Factors
  - What does the father need to parent his child?



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## Services

- Accessibility-When does the agency offer services to the father?
- Affordability-Who Pays?
- Availability-When & Where
- Appropriate-Cultural Considerations



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## Visitation

### Myths & Assumptions

- No contact with father because he is a "bad character" vs. contact with mother is allowed even when she admits to maltreating the child.
- The child has little to no relationship with the father vs. the agency often places a child with non-related foster parents



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## Visitation

- Practice
  - Consider needs of the child to see/interact with his father
  - Consider Father's current life situation & his desire to see/interact with his children)
- Other factors: court orders, location...



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## Visitation

- Strategies
  - Policy Development about agency expectations for visits between fathers & children
  - Develop clear plans for fathers
    - Frequency, duration, circumstances, location
    - Role of SW - transport, set/cancel schedule...



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## Paternal Relative Searches

- Who has the information?
  - Mothers, Fathers, Children
- When do you get the information?
  - Early stages of the case (placement)
  - On-Going
- Strategies:
  - Genogram
  - Document efforts (letters, case notes, court reports)
  - Court Order (to obtain relative info or relieve agency of requirement)



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## Relationship with Father

- Document Agency Efforts to Promote &/or maintain the Father/child relationship
- Strategies to create those opportunities
  - Visits
  - Involve Child in family rituals (holidays, birthdays, celebrations...)
  - Involve the Father with the Child's
    - Medical, Dental, Mental Health, School meetings



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## Case Planning

- Policy Development as to agency expectations for workers to engage fathers in case planning
- Strategies:
  - Invite/engage fathers to participate in developing the case plan
  - Action steps for fathers documented in the case plan
  - Invite Father & his family to FGDM conferences



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## Worker Visits with Fathers

- Develop & Communicate Agency Policy for worker contacts with father
  - Type of Case
  - How to document efforts (letters, naming conventions in SSIS...)



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## Worker Visits with Father

- Frequency
  - How often workers need to meet with the father is based on the needs of the Father **and** also consistent with the needs of the children
- Content
  - Explore Father's needs & strengths
  - Develop case plan
  - Discuss services & barriers to engage services
  - Progress on case plan goals
  - Key decision points in the case



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## Supervisory Tips

- Policy Development
  - Consult with Agency Administration and Workers to develop clear expectations for father involvement
    - Type of case
    - Effort for contact
    - Visitation expectations
    - Case planning
    - Provision of services
    - Relative Searches



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## Supervisory Tips

- Document worker efforts
  - Naming conventions in SSIS
  - Copies of letter(s) sent to Father
  - Language in case plan about father's involvement in case plan development activities.
- Explore Agency Expectations for Efforts
  - More than one contact effort (explore barriers as to why no response by the father)



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## Supervisory Tips

### ■ Case Reviews

- Group supervision/case reviews-designate someone in the staff to always ask about involving the father
- Individual supervision/case reviews-the next round of supervision-focus on the worker efforts to involve the fathers
- Watch out for “notorious dads” and “folklore”- important not to make assumptions, but directly engage to inform the worker



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## Supervisory Tips

### ■ Clinical Consultation with Workers

- Explore any bias, comfort level and philosophy of workers to engage with adult males/fathers
- Provide a safe and supportive atmosphere for workers to discuss current practices to engage fathers...recognizing strengths and ways to make improvement



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## Supervisory Tips

### ■ Children's Justice Initiative (CJI)

- Discuss the topic of father involvement
  - Types of cases-when does the agency become involved
  - Assessment of Needs and provision of services
  - Case Planning
  - Visits
  - Relative Searches
  - Unique circumstances of the father (incarceration, geographically separated, # of different fathers)



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## Supervisory Tips

- Assess community service array to meet the needs of fathers
  - Are service providers “father friendly”?
  - Become familiar with fatherhood projects to serve the needs of the fathers
  - Become familiar with employment and training providers in your county
- \* Skilled providers could also provide training to agency staff to increase the engagement of fathers



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## Involvement of Fathers

- Final thoughts....  
Begin having the discussion with your staff about the involvement of fathers in child welfare cases.
- This presentation may provide guidance, but also raise questions for which the agency must answer themselves.



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## Resources

- Case Review & Consultation Guide (based on the MnCFRS) on DHS Supervisor's Web Site:  
[http://www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/groups/countyaccess/documents/pub/dhs\\_id\\_00308.hcsp](http://www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/groups/countyaccess/documents/pub/dhs_id_00308.hcsp)
- Father's Adoption Registry:  
[www.health.state.mn.us/divs/chs/registry/top.htm](http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/chs/registry/top.htm)
- National Child Welfare Resource Center - Father Involvement; Summer 2002: <http://www.cwresource.org/publications.htm>
- Minnesota Father and Families Network: <http://www.mnfathers.org/>
- Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare (CASCW). *The Fatherhood Factor in Permanency Planning*. Issue No. 15. March 2004. <http://ssw.che.umn.edu.cascw>
- Being a Legal Father: Parentage information for mothers and fathers  
[http://www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/groups/children/documents/pub/dhs\\_id\\_003703.hcsp#P25\\_1533](http://www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/groups/children/documents/pub/dhs_id_003703.hcsp#P25_1533)



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