

# Fathers and Father Figures: Their Important Role in Children's Social and Emotional Development



Project funded by the Child Care and Head Start Bureaus in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services



## What Works Brief Training Kit #16



Center on the Social and Emotional  
Foundations for Early Learning  
[www.vanderbilt.edu/csefel/](http://www.vanderbilt.edu/csefel/)

April 2009

The **What Works Brief Training Kits** were developed to help in-service and pre-service providers conduct staff development activities. Each kit is based on one What Works Brief and contains the following items: presenter's PowerPoint note pages, participant handouts, activity ideas, pre-training survey, demographic form, training evaluation, and training certificate.

The What Works Brief Training Kits are grounded in the Pyramid model depicted below which provides a framework for describing the four interrelated levels of practice that address the social and emotional development of all children. The Pyramid is designed to guide practitioners in understanding the importance of children's social-emotional competence in terms of school readiness and the prevention of challenging behavior. This What Works Brief Training Kit relates to the "Nurturing and Responsive Relationships" level of the Pyramid.



We welcome your feedback as you provide professional development activities with these materials.

Special thanks to the Meginnis Endowment at UIUC for funding to help support this effort and to the following individuals who developed the What Works Brief Training Kits materials: Micki Ostrosky, Hedda Meadan, Greg Cheatham, Monique Mills, Sallee Beneke, Nancy Gaumer, Amy Hayden, Elenor Rentschler, and Angel Fettig.

## Presenter Notes



### ***Speaker Notes:***

- Presenter should be familiar with the content in *What Works Brief #16*, available at <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/csefel>.
- Welcome participants.
- Take care of any logistics (e.g., length of time for session, break, handouts, etc.).
- Consider using *What Works Brief # 16* handout as a supplemental resource.
- Pass out pre-training survey for all participants to complete and turn in.
- As you present the workshop, remind participants to take the culture and background of children into consideration and to work hand-in-hand with parents when they select target behaviors, since some behaviors may be part of the child's culture.

“The single biggest social problem in our society may be the growing absence of fathers from their children’s homes because it contributes to so many other social problems.”

— Former President Bill Clinton  
October 15, 1995  
(<http://www.fathersforvirginia.org>)



***Speaker Notes:***

- Read slide and ask participants for comments or reactions.

“In 1960, over 80% of our nation’s children went to sleep in a home where both the biological mother and father were present. Today that number has dropped to less than 25%.”

— Dr. Ron Klinger, 1995  
The Center for Successful Fathering  
(<http://www.fathering.org>)



***Speaker Notes:***

- Read slide and ask participants for comments or reactions.

## Why Focus on Fathers and Father Figures?

- Fathers and mothers are children's first and primary teachers.
- Every parent has a unique way of caring for and interacting with his or her child.
- Bridging the gap between early childhood settings and home requires that teachers determine the unique strengths, wishes, and concerns of each parent.



Center for the Study of Early Childhood Development  
Foundation for Early Learning

### ***Speaker Notes:***

- Read slide and ask participants for comments or reactions.

## **“Father” or “Dad” Redefined**

The term “father” is sometimes used more broadly to describe men who are important in the life of a child: biological fathers, stepfathers, grandfathers, uncles, brothers, godfathers, friends, and mentors.



Center for the Study of the Family  
Foundation for Family Security

### ***Speaker Notes:***

- Read slide and ask participants for comments or reactions.

## Children with Involved Fathers/Father Figures Are...

- More successful in school
- More ambitious
- More self-confident with their identity
- Self-protective and self-reliant
- Less likely to drop out of school
- Less susceptible to peer pressure
- Less likely to get in trouble with the law



Center for the Study of the Family  
Foundation for Family Security

### ***Speaker Notes:***

- Read slide and ask participants for comments or reactions.

# Fathers' Importance on Children's Social-Emotional Development

- Engagement and Interaction
- Availability and Accessibility
  - Physical Presence
  - Emotional Presence
- Responsibility for Day-to-Day Care
  - Direct Care
  - Indirect Care



## *Speaker Notes:*

Research shows the following impact of fathers and father figures on children's social-emotional development:

- **Engagement and Interaction**
  - Play is the most frequent activity fathers engage in with their children.
  - Positive interactions strengthen the bond between father and child.
  - The quality of father-child relationships impacts a child's social-emotional development, including peer relationships.
- **Availability and Accessibility**
  - A father can be physically present, but "not there" if he is sleeping or not paying attention to the child.
  - The amount of time fathers actually spend with their child can vary greatly.
- **Day-to-Day Care**
  - Direct or physical care includes the time fathers spend bathing, feeding, and dressing children.
  - Indirect care includes things like arranging for child care, scheduling doctor appointments, and talking with teachers on the phone.

# Activity 1

## Pair-Think-Share

- **Pair** with a partner.
- **Think** about obstacles to father involvement and then ways to support and encourage father involvement.
- **Share** your thoughts with the group.



### ***Speaker Notes:***

- **Assign** partners.
- First, **think** about possible obstacles to the involvement of fathers/ father figures. Second, **think** of ways to overcome obstacles and encourage involvement. Fill in the chart on Activity 1 handout.
- **Share** thoughts with the large group.
- **Discussion Question:** Who do you typically call when you have a concern about a child?

## Activity 1

Obstacles to father involvement	Ways to encourage father involvement



### ***Speaker Notes:***

#### **Possible Obstacles:**

- Work schedules
- The involvement of fathers is not valued
- Resistance to male involvement
- Focus on biological fathers
- Lack of training for staff
- Mothers serve as “gatekeepers”
- Environment isn’t male-friendly

#### **Possible ways to reach out:**

- Father or “special guy” nights
- Playgroups
- Support groups

## What Can Providers Do?

- Be clear why involving fathers and father figures is important
- Acknowledge fathers as skilled and important caregivers
- Recognize fathers' impact on social-emotional development
- Demonstrate how fathers can have a positive impact (role play, videos)



Center for the Study of Men and Masculinities  
Foundation for Family Learning

### ***Speaker Notes:***

- Read over slide.

## What Can Providers Do?

- Assess the needs of fathers
- Develop programs in response to needs
- Evaluate program effectiveness
- Realize that each father has strengths, needs, and concerns—individualizing is key



Center for the Study of Fathers and Families  
Foundation for Family Learning

### ***Speaker Notes:***

- Ask participants for their reactions and other suggestions.

## Additional Resources

- <http://www.fatherhood.org>
- <http://www.fathersnetwork.org>
- <http://www.fathering.org>
- Levine, J.A., Murphy, D.T., & Wilson, S. (1994). *Getting men involved: Strategies for early childhood programs*. New York: Scholastic.



### ***Speaker Notes:***

- Thank the participants for participating and have them complete the evaluation form, if appropriate.
- Distribute the certificate of attendance if appropriate.

# Pre-training Survey

WWBTK #16: Fathers and Father Figures: Their Important Role in Children's Social and Emotional Development

- ☀ **What are positive characteristics of children who have fathers who are involved in their lives?**

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- ☀ **Name two ways in which fathers can impact children's social-emotional development.**

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- ☀ **What are two strategies that early care providers can use to promote fathers' involvement with their young children?**

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- ☀ **What are the three most pressing issues you face as an early childhood professional?**

1. 

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3. 

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# Pre-training Survey

WWBTK #16: Fathers and Father Figures: Their Important Role in Children's Social and Emotional Development

## Demographic Information

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Describe yourself (check the boxes that best describe you):

Your gender: ☐ Female ☐ Male

Your age: ☐ under 30 ☐ 31 to 40 ☐ 41 to 50  
☐ 51-60 ☐ 61 and above

Your ethnicity: ☐ European American ☐ Asian-Pacific ☐ Hispanic  
☐ African-American ☐ American Indian ☐ Other (specify)\_\_\_\_\_

Check your current teaching certificates:

- ☐ Early Childhood Education
- ☐ Elementary Education
- ☐ Special Education
- ☐ Other (Specify)\_\_\_\_\_

Check the one that best describes your education:

- ☐ High school or GED
- ☐ Some college
- ☐ Associate's degree
- ☐ Bachelor's degree
- ☐ Master's degree
- ☐ Other (Specify)\_\_\_\_\_

Your teaching experience:

How many year(s) have you taught preschoolers?\_\_\_\_\_

How many year(s) have you taught preschoolers with IEPs?\_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for completing this survey.

# Participant Notes



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## WWB Training Kit # 16

### Fathers and Father-Figures: Their Important Role in Children's Social and Emotional Development

#### Participant PowerPoint

## Notes

### Why focus on fathers and father-figures?

- Fathers and mothers are children's first and primary teachers
- Bridging the gap between early childhood settings and home requires that teachers determine the unique strengths, wishes, and concerns of each parent.



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### Children with involved dads are:

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## Fathers' Impact on Children's Social Emotional Development

- Engagement and Interaction
- Availability and Accessibility
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- Responsibility for Day-to-Day Care
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Development of Young Children

## What can providers do?

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Development of Young Children

## Additional Resources

- <http://www.fatherhood.org>
- <http://www.fathersnetwork.org>
- <http://www.fathering.org>
- Levine, J.A., Murphy, D.T., & Wilson, S. (1994).  
Getting men involved: Strategies for early  
childhood programs. New York: Scholastic.



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Development of Young Children

## Notes

# Pair-Think-Share: Activity 1

WWBTK #16: Fathers and Father Figures: Their Important Role in Children's Social and Emotional Development

**Directions:** Pair with a partner. Think about obstacles to father involvement and then ways to support and encourage father involvement. Share your thoughts with the group.

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Obstacles to father involvement	Ways to encourage father involvement

# CSEFEL Training Workshop Evaluation

WWBTK #16: Fathers and Father Figures: Their Important Role in Children's Social and Emotional Development

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Topic: \_\_\_\_\_

Speaker(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Your position: \_\_\_\_\_

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☀ Circle the number that best expresses your reaction to each of the following items:

- |  |                       |   |   |   |   |                        |
|--|-----------------------|---|---|---|---|------------------------|
| 1. This topic is important to me.            | (Extremely Important) | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | (Not Important at All) |
| 2. The amount of information covered was     | (Just Right)          | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | (Inadequate)           |
| 3. The information covered was clear.        | (Very Clear)          | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | (Vague)                |
| 4. The activities conducted were beneficial. | (Very)                | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | (Not at All)           |
| 5. The handouts provided were useful.        | (Very)                | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | (Not at All)           |
| 6. Overall, this presentation was            | (Very Useful)         | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | (Not Useful)           |

☀ Things I liked about this presentation:

☀ Things I would change about this presentation:

☀ Additional information I would like on this topic:

☀ New things I am going to try as a result of this workshop:

☀ Additional comments:

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## *Certificate of Training*

### Fathers and Father Figures: Their Important Role in Children's Social and Emotional Development

This is to certify that

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successfully completed the above training

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*Trainer*

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*Trainer*



Center on the Social and Emotional  
Foundations for Early Learning

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*Participant*

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*Date and Location*

Additional training resources are available at: <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/csefel/>