

A Pathway to Helping fathers

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What Fathers Need



What Fathers Need

- What can we do to promote occasions for these three conditions to occur for fathers in our neighborhoods and communities?
- How might fathers increase their chances for these three to be available to them?

Barriers to Father Involvement

In our experience there are numerous barriers that fathers and men in families confront that limit their full engagement in the lives of their children and families.

- Individual barriers
- Organizational barriers
- Systems barriers

Individual Barriers

- These are the messages that fathers learned as boys about masculinity, asking for help, the role of fathers and mothers and related cultural and gender-based implications.
- List several that your fathers carry with them.

Organizational Barriers

These barriers are found in social service agencies, community organizations and non-profits that typically provide services for families. The barriers might include programs with mothers in mind, not necessarily for dads, such as moms clubs at schools, family law clinics, home visiting services during the workday, women's studies at colleges, housing for homeless mothers and children, child care, etc.

What are those encountered in your agency?

Systems Barriers

- These are imbedded on a large scale that limit assistance for fathers: Maternal and Child Health, WIC, Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies, etc.
- Or they focus upon the deficits of fathers: Child Support Enforcement, Probation & Parole, Child Protective Services, the Selective Service System, domestic violence, family courts and child custody, DOC and the prison system, etc.

Reducing Barriers

There are numerous pathways to reduce these types of barriers that fathers confront. One clear path is for the board of directors and the agency staff to develop a recruitment plan and a retention strategy that clearly outlines who, how, and where you will take responsibility to make your services and programs available to fathers and men in families.

Who

- Employ staff who:
 - Understand men's learning styles
 - Respect paternal instincts
 - Have common experiences with fathers
 - Are sensitive to barriers that fathers encounter, especially low-income dads
 - Are comfortable with debate in groups
 - Want to see dads engaged with families

How

Develop a plan to implement specific strategies that focus upon direct recruitment and also indirect recruitment

Employ strategies that offer:

- Respectful attitudes toward fathers and men in families
- Materials that reflect the specific population to be recruited and served
- Language that has “guy appeal”
- Understand fathers’ paternal instincts

Where

- Go to places:
 - Where men frequent
 - Where fathers frequent
 - Where children go with their fathers
 - Where local mothers seek assistance
 - Where you can get your message across to a welcoming audience

Retention Strategies

- Focus upon advocating for needs of fathers, but not at the expense of mothers and women
- Offer a variety of affordable accessible services that are father-specific
- Allow client needs to shape the growth of your programs

Retention Strategies

- Start with where father is, not where staff thinks he should be
- Enforce ground rules that are respectful and effective
- Teach and practice win/win philosophy
- Understand and respect the impact of stereotyping language

Retention Strategies

- Maintain an environment that is clearly father friendly
- Utilize the asset approach over the deficit approach
- Express high expectations of fathers

Respecting Paternal Instincts

Across cultures, there are two significant differences between maternal and paternal instincts:

(1) Fathers tend to play with their children, using their bodies more than mothers do, employing their masculine approaches through tossing, roughhousing, tickling, wrestling and engaging in sports and outdoor activities of different types.

**AS THE FATHER
SEES**

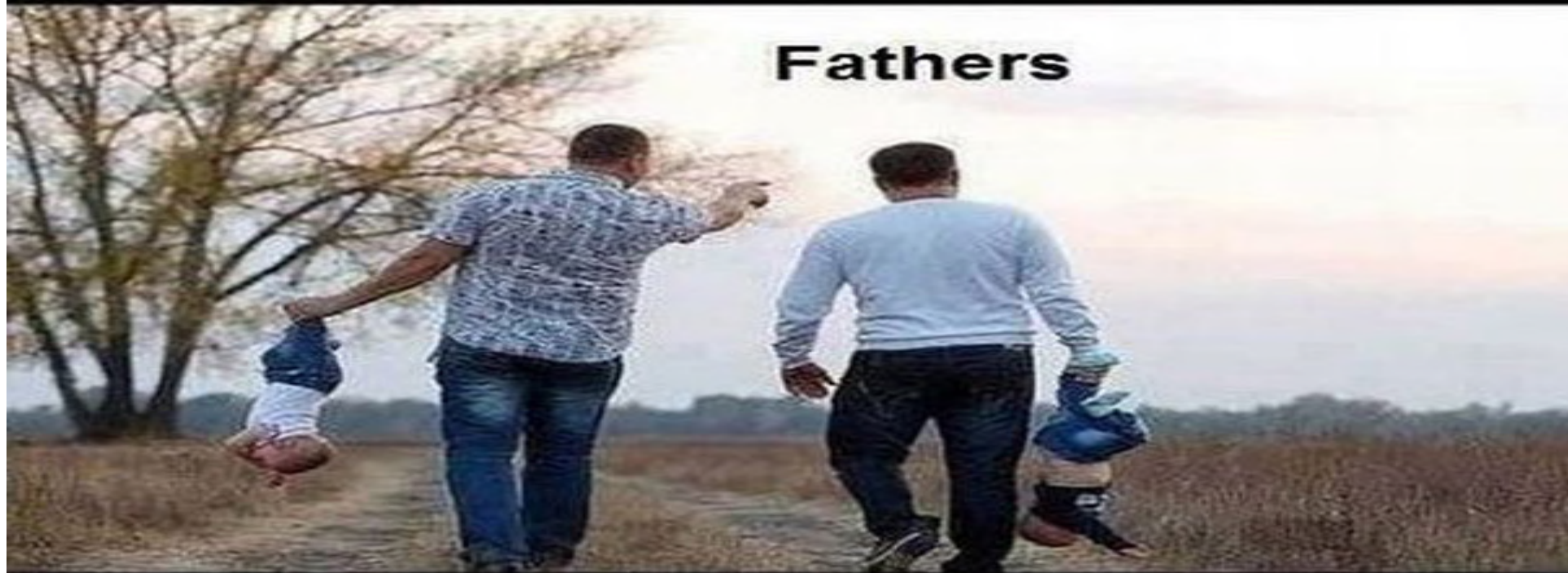


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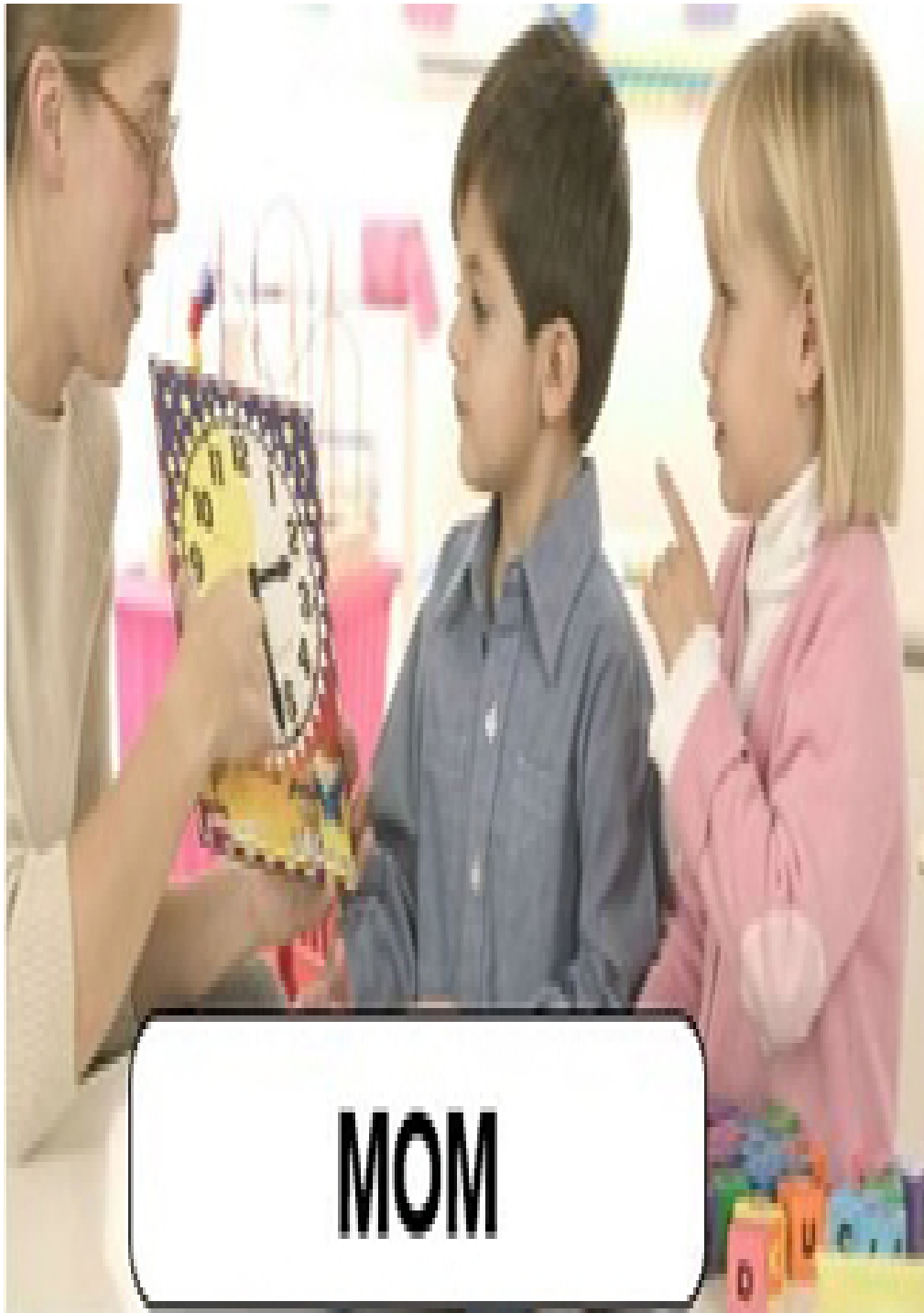
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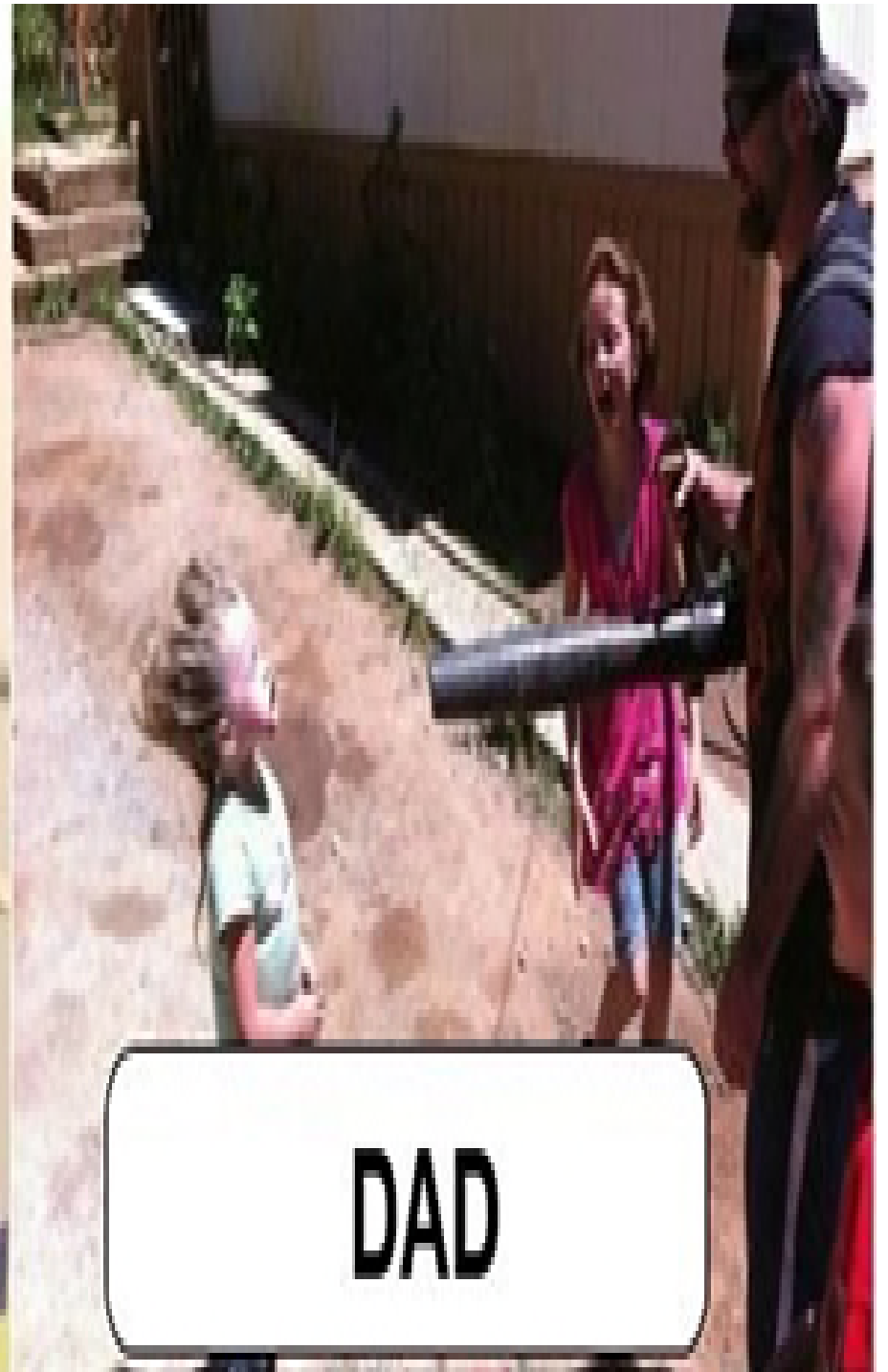


Respecting Paternal Instincts

(2) The second distinction is that fathers' daily interactions tend to focus upon helping their children prepare for the future- by emphasizing and role modeling such skills as instilling impulse control, learning to be a good loser, inspiring the work ethic, healthy problem solving techniques and introducing other mature survival attitudes and expectations.



MOM



DAD

MOM VS. DAD



Traditional Roles of Fathers

One factor found in successful programs that serve fathers is that staff attempt to offer some services that address the three primary roles that fathers have undertaken.

- Protector
- Provider
- Disciplinarian

Fathers are Protectors

From child-proofing a home when the child is very young to making sure their children are not threatened by other children or adults, fathers play an important role in making sure their children are safe and secure. This is particularly important in communities that experience higher rates of violence and crime.

Roles of Protector

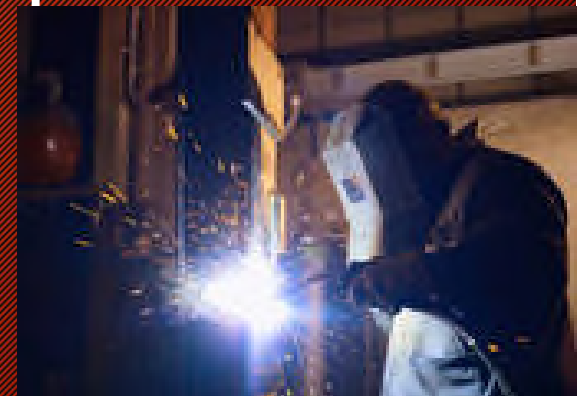
- Moms tend to see the rest of the world in relation to their children
- Dads tend to see their children in relation to the rest of the world

Honoring the Roles of Protector

- Mom's emphasis: Protect my child from getting hurt by the "outside world" such as from dangerous strangers, disease, lightning, mean dogs, bullies, car accidents, falls, etc.
- Dad's emphasis: Prepare my child to cope with the harshness of the "outside world", how to deal with the same dangers.

Fathers are Providers

A father's ability to provide for his family is very much tied up with the average man's sense of self and his sense of manhood. "Real men" bring home the bacon, support their family by the sweat of their brow, tend the fields, earn their keep and accept responsibility for their family.



Fathers are Disciplinarians

- Fathers tend to emphasize the mechanical or societal consequences of misbehavior, bringing more emotional distance to disciplining. Thus, they are often less likely to be manipulated.
- Fathers are generally more focused on having high expectations of their children and encouraging them to deliver on those consistently.

Conclusion

- To wrap up, if we determine what fathers need, identify and reduce barriers that fathers confront, create a recruitment and retention plan and provide services that address the three primary roles of fathers, a pathway to helping fathers will become quite clear.

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