



**Engaging Fathers
in
Human Services**

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**Strategies for
Guardian ad Litem**

Ken Sanders- Director

CENTER ON
FATHERING

Agenda

- The Core of Father Importance
- Child Welfare, TANF and Fatherhood
- Fatherhood in Colorado
- Male Help-Seeking Behaviors
- Value of Father & Paternal Engagement
- Issues of DV and Father Engagement
- Strategies for Father & Paternal Engagement



“What it means to be a Dad”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cR62SSo2DNs>

Dads are a mirror for children



What is the Best Interest of the Child?

Best interests of the child...

is the doctrine used by most courts to determine a wide range of issues relating to the well-being of children. These issues can arise in Child Welfare, Juvenile or Divorce/Separation cases.

What it feels like to Children



**We need to get out
of our silos!!**



Fatherhood and State Child Welfare



Child Family Safety
Review (CFSR)

Performance Improvement
Plan (PIP)

Agency Letter

Fatherhood in Economic Assistance

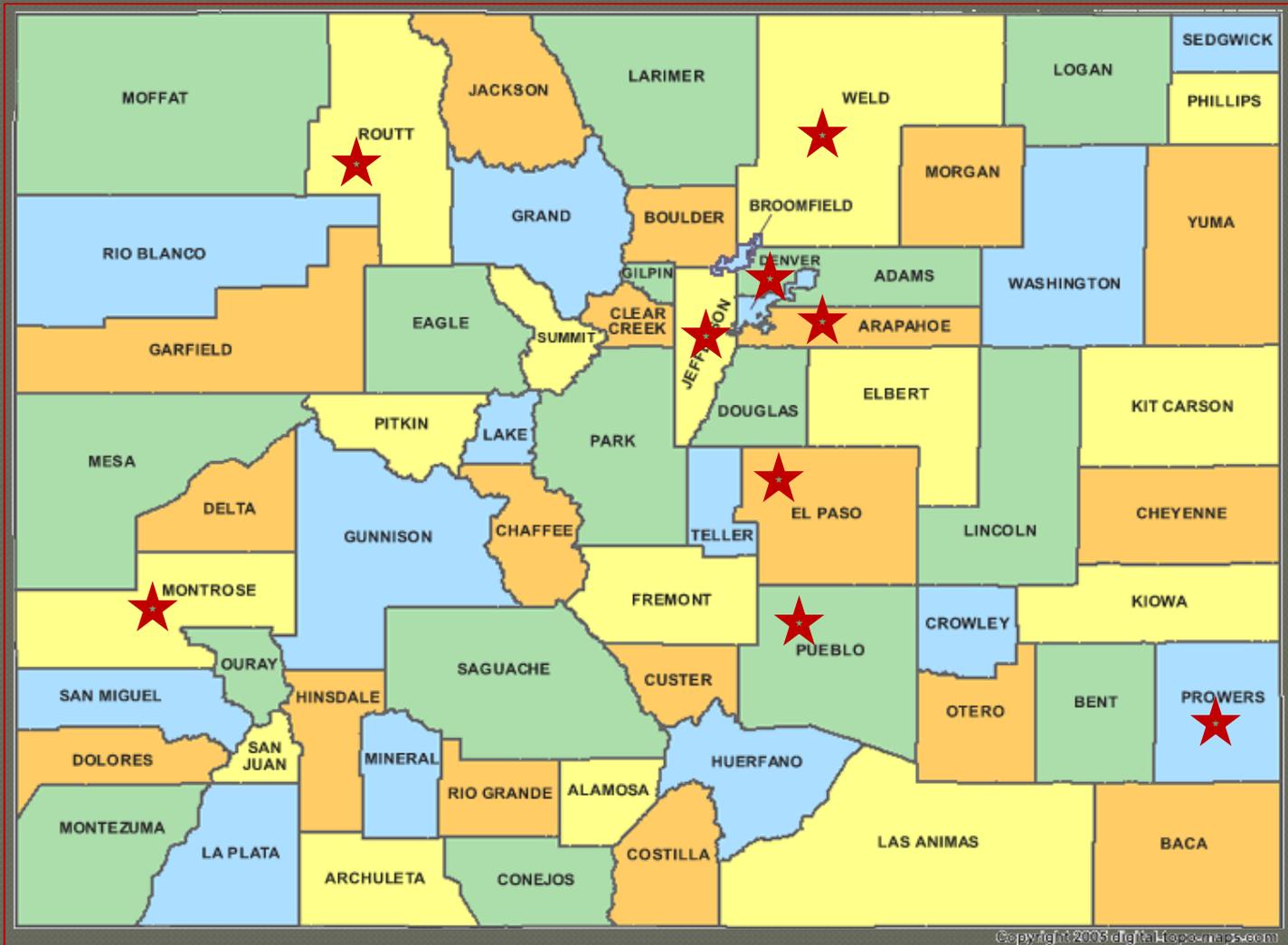
The four goals of TANF:

- To provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of relatives
- To end the dependency of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work, and **marriage**
- To prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies
- To encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families

Fatherhood in Colorado

- **Colorado Practitioners Network for Fathers & Families**
- **Training Academies on Fatherhood**
- **Ongoing technical assistance**
- **Website with information about all services, programs and supports for dads**
- **Additional Resources:**
 - **National Fatherhood Initiative**
 - **The Fatherhood Clearinghouse**

Programs in Colorado



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Promoting responsible fatherhood, assistance to fath... | Home | RSS | Print | Page | Safety | Tools

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be there
FOR YOUR KIDS

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JOHN JONES, FOOTBALL CHAMPION, FATHER OF FOUR



What would you hope your kids would say about you if asked what kind of dad they have?

I hope that they would say that I was fair and that I taught them how to be honest, good men.

Click here to read more of our interview with John

survey SAYS

Dads, how prepared were you when you became a father?

- Clueless
- Moderately prepared
- Fully prepared

Vote

[Show Results](#)

FATHER AND PARENTING

Colorado Dads

<http://www.coloradodads.com/>

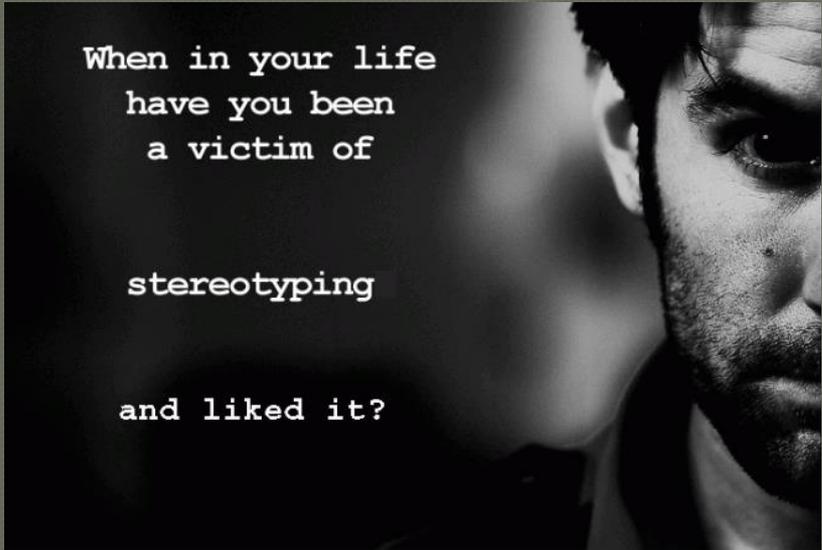
Male Help-Seeking Behaviors

Understanding Male Socialization

- Socially constructed ideas cultivate:
 - Emotional Conflict
 - Behavioral Problems
 - Emotional Pain which presents as stoic, firm, or detached

Societal Factors

- Discouraged from expressing emotion
- Anger is an acceptable male emotion
- Being physically strong
- Ambition and competition
- Economic success
- Sexual conquests



When in your life
have you been
a victim of

stereotyping

and liked it?

Barriers to Men Seeking Help

- Admitting to problem
- Difficulty in asking for help
- Being perceived as “weak”
- Fear of intimacy and vulnerability
- Scarcity of treatment approaches for men

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cZla922iqfY>

For men the question is
often “where’s the switch?”



Biological and Communication Differences between Men and Women

Women

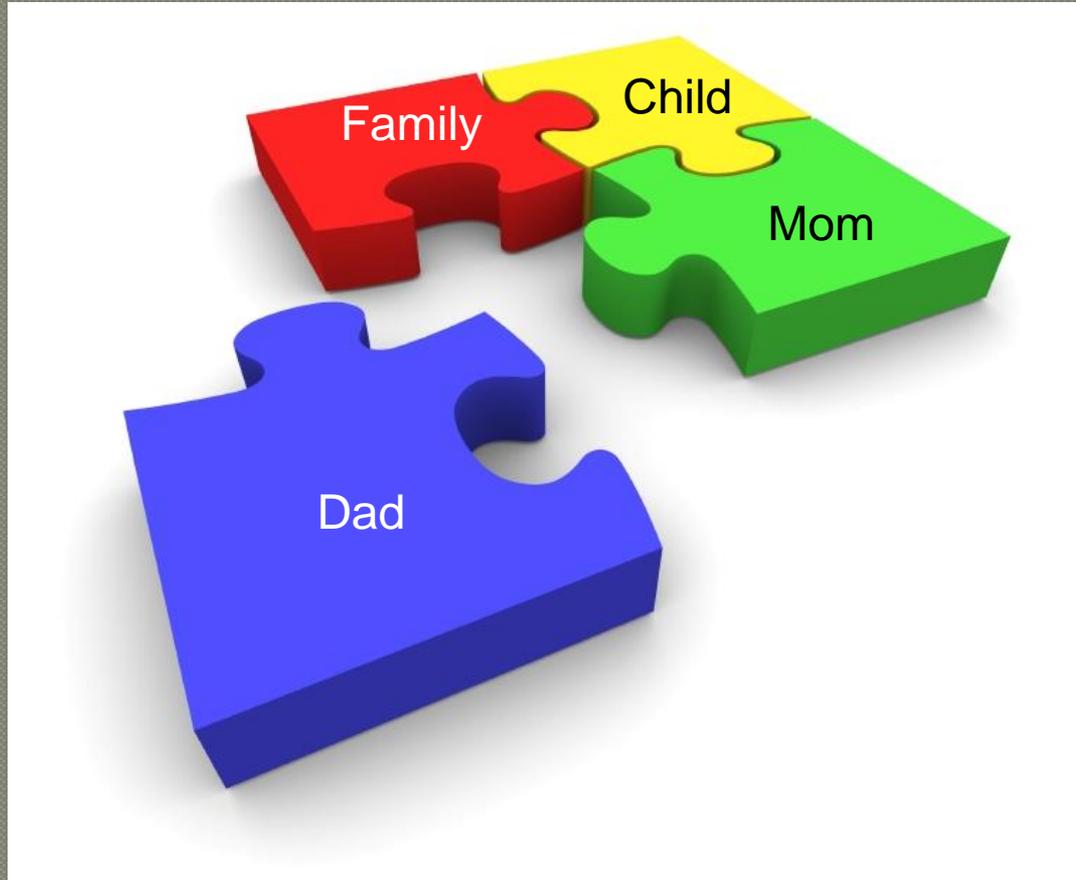
- More indirect when making requests
- Better in certain language abilities
- When listening:
 - Make a lot of eye contact
 - Use cues designed to indicate that they are listening, such as saying things like "yeah" and "uh-huh"
- More dendritic connections between brain cells.
- More evenly balanced between left and right-brain processing.
 - Thought to be slightly more intuitive, and sometimes better communicators

Men

- More direct in their communication (except when discussing relationships and feelings)
- Generally do not use a lot of these cues when they are listening to someone
- Many men are sharply left-brain dominant
 - Less socially adept, and are more task-oriented thinkers than females.
- At birth, a boy's brain is bigger than a girl's brain
- Men are better in certain spatial abilities

Men's Brains versus Women's Brains

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0BxckAMaTDc>



The Value of Father Engagement

“It doesn't matter who my father was; it matters who I remember he was.”

-Anne Sexton



Why involve Dads?

When not to involve Dads

What's in it for DADS?

- Activity Level Increases
- Reduces Stress Related Ailments
- Nurturing Side is Enhanced
- Lower Risk for Clinical Depression
- Job Satisfaction Improves
- Cope Better With Daily Life
- Life Expectancy Enhanced



What's in it for the Children?

- Higher cognitive achievement
- Reduced risk of child abuse or neglect
- Enhanced coping skills
- Lower risk for substance abuse
- Lessened chance of teen pregnancy
- Better relationships with others
- Less chance of criminal behaviors



What's in it for Child Welfare?

- Length of placements are reduced
- Reduces potential for future abuse/neglect
- Reaching out to paternal family increases natural supports and protection of children
- Fathers can help problem solve
- Break cycle of child welfare involvement
- Creates environment of trust and partnership



What's in it for Guardians ad Litem?



- Fathers can help problem solve
- Creates environment of trust and partnership
- Greater opportunity for complete picture
- Increased likelihood of reunification

Ring out the old... Ring in the New

OLD EXPECTATION:

Fathers are impossible to reach and not interested in taking responsibility for their children.

NEW EXPECTATION:

Fathers can be reached and want to learn to take responsibility for their children.

OLD EXPECTATION:

Dads who say they want to establish paternity just want to “get back” at the mother.

NEW EXPECTATION:

Dads who say they want to establish paternity want a chance to be fathers – sometimes the fathers they never were or never had.

OLD EXPECTATION:

Men and women can't raise children together if they are not living in the same household. The job should go to the mother.

NEW EXPECTATION:

Men and women can learn to co-parent, even if they are not living in the same household. This helps mother, father, and child.

Addressing Domestic Violence And Father Engagement



What are the Concerns if DV is present or suspected?

- **Potential for continued exposure to abuse**
- **May seek access to mother who does not want contact**
- **Abuse may be hidden dynamic**
- **Inadequate resources to deal with DV & Parenting issues**



Why engage a DV Batterer?

Enhance the safety and well being of children

**Transform Dad's contact with their children from
negative experience to positive**

How your children see you = CHANGE



Something My Father Would Do

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1pACKEPhxKQ>

- What does the story tell you about the effects of violence on children?
- How do you think the cultures of the men affect their choices?
- What does the story tell you about fatherhood and violence?

Parenting and the DV Batterer

- **Emphasis on empathy**
- **Child centered**
- **Appropriate boundaries**
- **Healthy discipline**





“Research has shown that some mothers who have suffered abuse want their children to have safer and healthier contact with their fathers and positive involvement by a father figure can be very beneficial to children’s development”

(Family Violence Prevention Fund, 2006)

“Except in cases where children are terrified of the battering parent or have been abused by him directly, children tend to desire some degree of ongoing contact with their fathers”

(Bancroft and Silverman, 2002)



Strategies for Effective Father Engagement



Paradigms

- What they are
- How they help
- How they hinder

Strategies to Encourage Help-Seeking Behaviors

- Normalize experience
- Minimize reflection on affect & emotions
- Provide direct feedback & action-oriented steps
- Make problems concrete and relatable
- Use logic & behavior approaches

Developing the Relationship

- *Principles of Partnership*
 - Everyone desires respect
 - Partners share power
 - Everyone has strengths
 - Everyone needs to be heard
 - Judgments can wait
 - Partnership is a process



Appalachian Family Innovations. (2003). Partners in change: A new perspective on child protective services (curriculum). Morganton, NC

Common Challenges to Father Engagement

- Expressions of Anger
- Co-Parenting and Parental Conflict
- Lack of Culture Attentiveness

Transforming Conflict Into Partnerships

- Conflict stems from:
 - Absence of communication, trust & relationships
 - Preconceived notions of right versus wrong
 - Passions
 - Shame
 - Challenge in our response to conflict
 - Power, rights & interests
 - Differing Needs



Approaches to Engaging Fathers

- Assume he wants to be involved
- Assume he wants to provide for his children
- Restore him in the child's life
- Individualize each case
- Suspend judgments
- Make room for expressions of anger



Approaches to Engaging Fathers (continued)

- Seek first to understand
- Recognize & acknowledge previous experience with other systems
- Transparency regarding court process and father's role in that process
- Acknowledge the power in your position along with empowering the father

Approaches to Engaging Fathers (continued)

- Identify Father's assets
- Increase his understanding of how important he is to his child
- Encourage opportunities for change, particularly if he has caused harm or been outside of the home



Even More Approaches to Engaging Fathers

- Explain court expectations for the Father
- Ask the Father, “How would you like your child to remember you 10 to 15 years from now?”
- Remind the Father that he is a role model for his child





“The father who would taste the essence of his fatherhood must turn back from the plane of his experience, take with him the fruits of his journey and begin again beside his child, marching step by step over the same old road.”

- Angelo Patri

The Center on Fathering

Fathering Classes

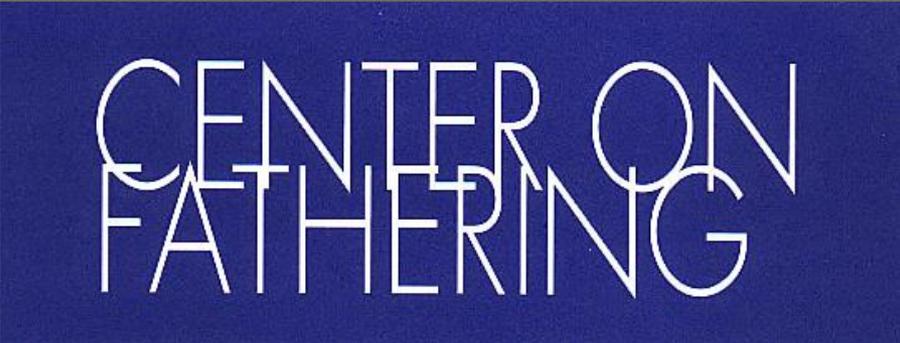
Fathers Support Group

Diligent Search

Treatment Planning

Service Assessment & Identification

Fathers as Providers



CENTER ON
FATHERING

Celebrating 20 years of service to Fathers and Families

Wrap Up



Questions??

Thoughts??

Feedback??

“Fathers represent another way of looking at life -
the possibility of an alternative dialogue.”



Louise J. Kaplan