Engaging Men and Dads at WIC: A Toolkit
Who we mean when we say ‘Dad’?

- This toolkit can apply to any significant male figure in a child’s life:
  - Biological or adoptive father
  - Grandfather, uncle, older brother
  - Mother’s partner
  - Family friend
- This important male figure may be:
  - A single parent
  - Living with the child
  - Living separately
Benefits of Dad Involvement

- When Dads are involved, children gain many benefits:
  - Better school performance and more likely to graduate high school
  - Increased self-esteem
  - Improved relationships with peers
  - Reduced frequency of behavioral and psychological problems

- The family benefits as well!
  - Decreased stress related to parenting
  - Dads gain self-confidence
The Toolkit

- A collection of best practices and suggested ways to enact those practices
- Suggestions come from a variety of early childhood focused programs and organizations including:
  - WIC
  - Head Start and Early Head Start
  - Pre-school Learning Alliance (U.K.)
  - Best Start Resource Centre (Canada)
- 9 modules and links to resources in each
- Possible to implement ideas from just one module or several!
Organizations agree that getting staff engaged with including Dads is critical.

- Staff may be unaware of their interactions with Dads or feel resistant to including them.
- It is important to be sensitive to staff members’ feelings and to have trainings and dialogue.

Small changes to the physical environment can make a big difference!

- E.g., including an additional chair in the counseling room or providing Dad-friendly reading material in waiting areas.

It is important to think about framing and to present outreach efforts in language that is appealing to Dads.

- E.g., talk about finding solutions and building skills rather than support and sharing.
Some ideas from the toolkit to try:

- Build relationships with Dads by talking to them and making them feel welcome
- Reach out to individual Dads and invite them to be a part of WIC activities
- Provide Dads with resources and support to learn about parenting
- Have men present at the office as employees, volunteers, peer group leaders, etc.
- Keep in mind Dad’s time and work conflicts and consider offering evening hours
The toolkit explores ways that WIC staff can help Dads to support Moms during breastfeeding. For example, staff can:

- Answer Dad’s questions about breastfeeding and respond to any concerns
- Suggest ways that Dads can provide support and help out his partner

Another module focuses on ways that Dad can be involved with the baby/child that do not interfere with breastfeeding. Dad’s may be especially good at:

- Interpreting baby behavior
- Focusing on developing their child’s brain
- Active play
Going Even Further to Include Men and Dads

When a father involvement project gets further underway, the toolkit has additional ideas to explore such as:

- Peer groups for men and Dads
- Building community partnerships
- Increasing referrals for Dads
- Evaluating your efforts to see what works
Opportunities in 2016

- Join the Engaging Men and Dads Learning Collaborative
  - Membership includes:
    - A private listserv for member discussion
    - Networking and sharing conference calls
    - Webinars with guest speakers
- Sign up for the Summer Regional Trainings –
  - July 11, Santa Ana; Aug. 2, Modesto; Aug. 25, Oakland; Sept. 21, Redding; Oct. 28, San Diego
- Info: Call CWA- 530-750-2280
References

- http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/six_obstacles_to_father_involvement_and_how_to_overcome_them
- http://www.calwic.org/component/content/article/10-engaging-wic-families/318-engaging-men-a-dads-at-wic

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