

Supporting Young Fathers

Component #10

Quality Indicators

Guiding Principle:

Expectant and parenting young fathers are supported/encouraged to be engaged and actively participate in all aspects of their child's life. "Responsible, engaged fathers are critical to the financial, emotional, intellectual and spiritual well-being of children."

Barack Obama

Rationale: Children who have actively engaged, caring fathers are more likely to have positive educational outcomes, be emotionally secure and confident and have better social connections with peers (Importance of Fathers in Health Development of Children). "Children who have access to two parents are also at reduced risk for school dropout, teen pregnancy, juvenile delinquency and substance abuse." Male involvement is also widely recognized as an evidence-based strategy that prevents adolescent births.

Key Elements

- A father-friendly environment and practices are established to affirm that fathers are welcome and supported by staff that are familiar with the needs of young fathers and services available to meet their needs.
- Young fathers are encouraged to participate in all aspects of the GRADS program.
- The importance of fathers is promoted and positive relationships between fathers and their children are emphasized and encouraged while the parenting styles of both mothers and fathers are recognized and supported.
- Young fathers are provided with an array of supportive, gender appropriate, culturally and linguistically appropriate services that promote both individual development and positive development in their families.
- Young fathers are provided with opportunities to learn self-care, reframing of "rites of passage", effective parenting, including prenatal health and childbirth, child development, child health and child care, nurturing skills, co-parenting strategies, and relationship skills.
- The needs of young fathers are met in the areas of education completion, family stability, job training, and financial literacy.
- Young fathers are provided with opportunities to learn about legal issues that may impact their experience of fatherhood, including paternity acknowledgement, child support TANF, and visitation for non-custodial and non-cohabitating fathers, and types of custody.

Quality Indicators

- Conduct resource mapping by identifying what local services are currently available for young fathers in the community and what services are missing or needed.
- Encourage local coalitions and organizations to review existing policies to assess service accessibility for young fathers and their families and develop strategies for increased access.
- Ask staff to complete the Father Friendly Check-Up to assess what their GRADS program is currently doing to engage fathers and create an action plan based on the results (See fatherhood.org.)
- Utilize resource or advisory committee to focus on fathers to identify and address barriers to father involvement and develop strategies for engagement and program participation.
- Survey young fathers to assess current needs, concerns, and interests related to program and desired services.
- Utilize an evidence-based or research-based fatherhood curriculum and resources that address real-life challenges for young fathers and their specific issues as determined by individual site needs survey.
- Develop focused, gender-specific outreach strategies to engage young fathers in programming and involve teen mothers in efforts to recruit and include young fathers in the GRADS program or case management.
- Encourage young fathers to participate in all services offered by the GRADS program, including but not limited to, classroom intervention, case management, child care, home visits, peer education, presentations on healthy relationships and field trips; and create opportunities for young fathers to interact with each other when possible.
- Offer father-specific services through a formalized partnership with a local organization or an on-site mentor, including case management, counseling, support groups and father- to-father mentoring focused on developing a positive self-concept, graduating, developing career goals, strengthening family relationships, and promoting positive and nurturing behaviors of paternal involvement.
- Provide referrals and support with case management to ensure access of services is successful for family planning, behavioral health, dental and preventive health services offered through school-based health center or community provider.

- Utilize local partners to provide services that address specific needs of young fathers to include health, behavioral, financial, educational, vocational training programs, legal and housing support and connect these (as needed) to statewide resources, services and programs.
- Encourage the healthy development of father-child relationships and increase awareness of the mother and other family members about the importance of father involvement in all aspect of child's life for child-well-being.
- Encourage the healthy development of father-mother relationships and for mothers and fathers to work on co-parenting, unless abuse of child or spouse has been substantiated.
- Provide young fathers with increased knowledge on healthy relationships as well as indicators of behaviors that exhibit power and control in an intimate relationship, warning signs and red flags that a relationship may be turning abusive, and the effects of intimate partner violence on children.
- Assist parents who want to be married or co-habitate in establishing healthy goals and developing an action plan to form a viable and stable partnership.
- Provide access to family mediation services and parenting plan development for parents who are not intending to marry or co-habitate.
- Assist fathers in developing life skills that will strengthen empathy, emotional literacy, nurturing, communication and healthy, enjoyable relationships with their partners and children, including violence prevention and appropriate discipline.
- Develop an individual service plan with young fathers that identifies realistic goals and strategies that address needs related, but not limited to, self-care, education and career, parenting, and relationships with child.
- Monitor level of father involvement in child's life and recognize accomplishments during one-on-one meetings with young fathers at least every 3-6 months through individual service plans and contact sheets.
- Assist fathers in learning ways to provide social and emotional support to their child, including assisting with child care, going to doctor's visits, helping with chores and assisting with transportation.
- Assist young fathers who are not in school and unable or unwilling to attend GRADS classes to participate in activities or programs aimed at improving access to their children and/or developing improved relationships with their families and developing an education and career plan.

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