

## TIPS FOR MOMS: WHY DADS WHO ARE NOT AT HOME MATTER

Many women are not with their children's father and there may be some difficult history that causes concern about our contacting him:

- ✓ Maybe there was a disappointing ending to the relationship in the past.
- ✓ Maybe there was a lot of conflict or violence.
- ✓ Maybe there are concerns about substance abuse or mental health issues.

Sometimes the mother is angry at all the responsibility that has fallen on her shoulders.

**We will listen to your concerns and take them into account in deciding how to contact him.** If you are worried about your safety or the children's safety, we will make every effort to insure safe contact and will safety plan with you. Here are some things you should know about our work with fathers:

- ⇒ Except in situations of acute risk, we are required to work with fathers. (See the Differential Approaches Tip Sheet.) In all other situations, we make repeated attempts to find and contact them. Fathers have the right to information about their children's well-being.
- ⇒ Our goal is to help fathers step up in a safe, nurturing and responsible way. We will work with fathers in different ways, depending upon their strengths and risk factors.
- ⇒ We also work with fathers to get them to recognize how much work single moms do.

**BENEFITS OF FATHER INVOLVEMENT:** A key issue for DCF is that research indicates that children have better outcomes when their fathers are involved with them in a consistent, nurturing and responsible way. This is not to overlook or minimize mothers' contributions, but to point out that fathers can make important contributions to children's wellbeing. **Research indicates that younger children whose fathers are involved in a good way benefit in the following ways:**

- ◆ Increased exploration of the world around them.
- ◆ Less hesitance and fear in new situations and more willingness to try new things.
- ◆ Greater tolerance for stress and frustration.

**For older children (10 + years old),** the positive and nurturing involvement of a father, even when he is out of the home, brings the following benefits:

- ◆ Protects children from engaging in delinquent behavior—associated with less substance abuse, truancy, stealing and violence.
- ◆ Lower frequency of disruptive behavior, depression, sadness and lying.
- ◆ Higher educational achievement. (Get kids to do homework.)

**When kids are in foster care and out of home fathers follow up consistently:**

- ◆ Foster care stays are shorter.
- ◆ DCF has a shorter involvement with the family (cases close faster).
- ◆ Children return to their kin (particularly mothers) more often.
- ◆ Fewer allegations of neglect or abuse after the case closes the first time.

Two other things which you can consider:

- ⇒ Kids gets part of their identity from each parent. If they miss the father completely, they can easily assume it is because there's something wrong with them.
- ⇒ Many dads have had problems and have outgrown them over time. We also work with fathers to help them deal with their issues so they can step up in a good way for the kids and share responsibility with and support the mothers.

Developed by F.Mederos with the Malden Area Office Fatherhood Engagement Leadership Team.