

Home Visiting: Approaches to Father Engagement and Fathers' Experiences

Home Visitor Interview Guide

5 Respondents per Program

75 Minutes

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INTRODUCTION

Thank you for agreeing to meet with us today. I'm [INTERVIEWER NAME] and this is my colleague [ASSISTANT NAME], and we're researchers from the Urban Institute, a non-profit social policy research organization in Washington, DC.

As we may have mentioned, as part of this study, we are talking to leaders and staff in selected home visiting programs that actively engage fathers in their programs and services. We hope to learn about your experiences and the strategies you are using and how they are working in order to share this information with others who are interested in engaging more fathers. We are gathering information by conducting site visits to the programs and interviewing a range of managers and staff.

The goal of this study is to document:

- 1) the strategies used by selected home visiting programs to effectively engage fathers in home visiting services;
- 2) the perspectives and experiences of staff;
- 3) the experiences and views of fathers who have participated;
- 4) possible barriers/challenges to participation; and
- 5) lessons for other programs that are interested in more fully engaging fathers with young children in their services and activities.

We are visiting with you today because of the great work your program is doing on father engagement. During our visit this week, we are scheduled to talk with program administrators, home visiting staff, and both fathers and mothers to get their perspectives on father engagement in your program.

Our meeting with you today will last about 90 minutes. The structure will be rather open-ended, meaning we have a list of specific questions to cover but you can feel free to respond in as much detail as you would like.

INFORMED CONSENT

Before I begin my questions, I'd like to give you a copy of a consent form that describes our study procedures and your rights as a participant. If you agree to the study procedures, I'll ask you to sign and date your copy.

[NOTES TO FACILITATORS: Give copy of consent form to participant. Continue as participant reads along.]

I'd like to point out a few details on the consent form:

1. First, your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may choose to not answer any question and may stop the interview at any time.
2. Everyone who works on this study has signed a *Staff Confidentiality Pledge* prohibiting disclosure of anything you say during the interview that would allow someone outside the research team, including government staff and officials, to identify you. The only exception is a researcher may be required by law to report suspicion of immediate harm to yourself, to children, or to others.
3. Your name and other identifying information, such as the program's name and specific location, will be removed from the data to protect your privacy.
4. If we quote anything you share with us, we will not use your name in our report.
5. We value the information you will share with us today and want to make sure we accurately capture all the details. With your permission, we will audio record the session and take typed notes. These files will not be shared with anyone outside the research team. Once the project is complete, all audio recordings will be destroyed. During the discussion, if you would like to stop the recording while you make a particular comment off the record, please let us know and we will do so.

Do you have any questions about the study procedures?

Would you please sign a copy of our Informed Consent Form, and then may we begin our interview?

[Participant must sign and return one copy and may keep the second copy.]

[If anyone objects to the recording, the researcher who is not leading the interview will need to take thorough notes.]

PROTOCOL

Introductions

To get started, I have a few questions about your background and training. Later in the interview, we'll focus more closely on your experiences working with fathers during home visits.

1. To start, would you each please tell us your job title, how long you've been in this position, and your educational background?
2. What led you to become involved in this work?
3. What are your primary roles and responsibilities in the program?

Population Served

4. Tell us a little about the families that you serve (*Probe: average caseload; number of fathers/couples; demographics of parents including age, race/ethnicity, language, marital status, education, family size, prevalence of complex families*)
5. What are some of the strengths and the greatest risk factors that you see among the families you serve? (*Probe: mental health issues, substance abuse, domestic violence, housing instability, food insecurity, unemployment; risks for mothers and fathers*)
6. What, if any, risk factors make your job harder to do well? (*Probe: impact of risk factors on recruitment, engagement, retention, connections to services, following through with referrals*)
7. What, if any, client strengths make your job easier to do well?

Organizational Culture

8. Thinking about your organizational or program culture, how does father engagement fit—or not fit—into the mission of the work that you do?

Training and Supervision

Next, I'd like to talk about your training and supervision.

9. What kind of training did you need to complete for your position?
10. Did your training include information on engaging or working with fathers?
If yes, probe: content of training (general or if given written resources or organization's policy statement about working with fathers)
11. If yes, how would you rate the training you received on working with fathers? (*Probe: most useful components of training, areas where training could be improved*)

If no, what topics were covered in your general training that have helped you prepare for working with fathers?

12. What kinds of opportunities do you have for ongoing professional development that could support your work with fathers? (*Probe: if sufficient opportunities; areas of needed additional support, e.g. certain groups of fathers, fathers at high risk*)
13. Tell us about the interactions you have with your supervisors and peers. (*Probes: frequency of meetings with supervisor; frequency of team meetings; purpose of team meetings; shadowing peers*)
 - a) In your recent interactions with supervisors or peers, has the topic of father engagement been discussed? If yes, in what context? (*Probe: how home visitor can seek information about working with fathers from supervisor and other staff.*)

Interactions with Fathers during Home Visits

We are most interested in learning about your experiences working with fathers during home visits.

14. Now I have some questions about your typical interactions with fathers.
 - a) How often do fathers participate in home visits? (*Probe: if visits target mothers but include fathers, or target fathers but include mothers*)
 - b) Do you ever conduct visits with fathers alone (i.e., without the mother)—with or without their children? If yes, how often are those visits?
 - c) Are fathers recruited through mothers, or do you target fathers directly?
 - d) What strategies do you use to engage fathers in home visits? (*Probe: Are visits scheduled so that both mothers and fathers can join?*)

15. Tell us about the different home visiting curricula that you use. (*Probe: whether curriculum designed to incorporate fathers; if not, flexibility to deliver to mothers and fathers or fathers alone; example of content for both mother and father; example of content for only mothers; example of content for only father; discussions with mother about engaging fathers*)

16. During home visits with just mothers, without fathers present, do you ever talk about engaging the fathers? What do you discuss?

17. Give us an example of a particular case and the experiences you had working with the father.

18. How would you describe the level of father engagement across the families you serve? (*Probe: level of engagement for different types of fathers; hard to reach fathers; different strategies for different types of fathers*)
 - a)

Concerns, Challenges and Benefits from Engaging Fathers

Next, I'd like to discuss some of the challenges and benefits to working with fathers.

19. What are some of the greatest challenges have you faced in engaging fathers?
20. Have you ever had any concerns about conducting home visits with fathers present? Why or why not?
21. Have mothers you have worked with—or their family members—ever expressed any concerns about conducting home visits with fathers present? (*Probe: concerns*)
22. How often do you find that mothers don't want to involve fathers in parenting activities or actively exclude father from involvement? How often do you find that mothers want to involve fathers?
23. How often do you find that the situation is not safe or healthy for the mother or child to have the father present or involved in services? (*Probe: how respondent has handled situations*)
24. From your perspective, how do fathers benefit when they participate in home visiting services? (*Probe: changes seen in fathers, e.g. parenting skills, knowledge of child development*); *changes in relationships between mothers and fathers*)
25. What do you see as the benefits to mothers when their babies' fathers or the mothers' current partners participate?
26. How do children benefit when their fathers are engaged in the services you offer?

Lessons Learned and Goals for Program Improvement

Let's finish up by discussing any important lessons learned from your work to engage fathers in home visiting, and if any, areas where you would like to see improvement.

27. What would you say have been the most successful aspects of your efforts to engage fathers? (*Probe: success for different types of fathers; types of services correlated with success*)
28. How do you think the program could improve its efforts to engage fathers in home visiting?
29. What recommendations would you have for other home visiting programs like yours that are trying to engage fathers?