

# **Developing services that engage and meet the needs of fathers: What we know from research and practice**

Breakout 3, 11:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Wednesday, March 17, 2021

3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Washington Fatherhood Summit

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- Strategies for involving and engaging fathers in programming

Tova Walsh, University of Wisconsin – Madison

- Engaging Fathers and Mothers Together as Co-Parents in Home Visiting: Lessons from Dads Matter-HV

Jennifer Bellamy, University of Denver

- Fatherhood Engagement with Boots on the Ground

Keoki Kauanoë, Family Education and Support Services

- Questions and Discussion

# ***Strategies for Involving and Engaging Fathers in Programming***

Tova Walsh, PhD, MSW  
University of Wisconsin-Madison

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# Who are fathers?

- Biological
- Stepfather
- Father figure

...in families ranging from married to cohabiting, single parent, and re-combined.



Notions of the role of a father are diverse, and may be influenced by cultural and demographic factors.

# Benefits to children of positive father involvement

Positive father involvement is associated with positive social, emotional, and cognitive outcomes for children from infancy to adolescence.



Amato, 1994; Deutsch, Servis, & Payne, 2001; Flouri & Buchanan, 2003; McBride, Schoppe-Sullivan, & Ho, 2005; Mosley & Thomson, 1995; Parke et al., 2002; Sarkadi, Kristiansson, Oberklaid, & Bremberg, 2007; Volling & Belsky, 1992; Yeung, Duncan, & Hill, 2000

# Father involvement in child and family interventions

Father involvement in programming and services – including permanency planning and parenting training, Head Start, healthcare, and schools – is associated with improved child outcomes.



Bagner & Eyberg, 2003; Coakley, 2008; Eckenrode et al., 2000; Fals-Stewart, Fincham, & Kelley, 2004; Gervan, Granic, Solomon, Blokland, & Ferguson, 2012; Guterman, Bellamy, & Banman, 2018; Lindahl, Tollefson, Risser, & Lovejoy, 2008; Wysocki & Gavin, 2004; Yogman, Garfield, & AAP Committee on Psychosocial Aspects of Child and Family Health, 2016

# Father-inclusive and father-specific programming

***Father-inclusive*** practice aims to actively encourage father participation and ensure that services are responsive and accessible to fathers as well as mothers and children.

***Father-specific*** programming is designed specifically for fathers, with the needs and interests of fathers guiding service delivery.



# What type of parenting support are fathers looking for?

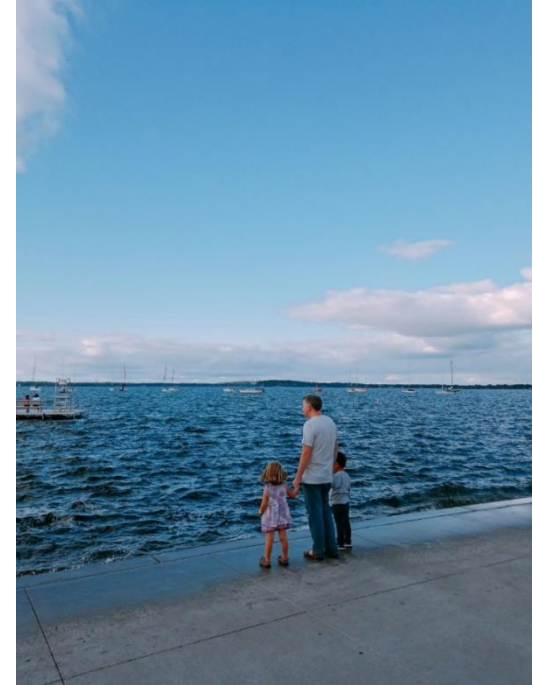
- Accessible information from credible sources
- Father-focused resources
  - Guidance about how to be a supportive partner to an expectant / new mother
- Information about development
  - How to engage with young children to promote healthy development
  - Age expectations and behavior management
- Ways to access services that are non-stigmatizing and don't make fathers feel they're using resources intended for mothers
- Normalize the frustrations of parenting

Lee, Walsh, et al., 2013; ; Lee, Walsh, et al., Under Review; Walsh et al., 2014; Walsh, 2020



# Barriers to father engagement

- Beliefs that act as barriers
- Provider barriers
- Practical barriers
- Competing responsibilities
- Tension between parents



Ahmann, 2006; Garfield & Isacco, 2006; Harknett, Manno, & Balu, 2017;  
Moore & Kotelchuk, 2004; O'Donnell et al., 2005; Phares, Fields, & Binitie, 2006  
Yogman, Garfield, & AAP Committee on Psychosocial Aspects of Child and Family Health, 2016

# Strategies for involving and engaging fathers

- Presume high interest on the part of fathers
- Learn from mothers and fathers about their desire to be engaged independently or jointly
- Engage compassionately
- Target marketing and outreach to fathers
- Address practical barriers
- Create a father-friendly environment
- Reinforce fathers' contributions and role as models for children



# Strategies for involving and engaging fathers

- Male staff and father to father strategies
- Programming where fathers are not outnumbered
- Learn what fathers want ...& offer it!
- Learn about and respond to fathers' individual circumstances
- Offer resources to achieve parenting & related goals
- Collaborate with other providers
- Moments of opportunity



# Acknowledgements and Resources

- Wisconsin Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Board

Father-focused webinar series:

<https://preventionboard.wi.gov/Pages/OurWork/OnlineLearningLibrary.aspx>

- Photo credit: Alameda County Father Corps' Fatherhood Photo Bank

<https://www.diversityoffatherhood.com/>

- Research collaborators

Neal Davis (Intermountain Healthcare); Craig Garfield (Northwestern Feinberg School of Medicine & Lurie Hospital); Shawna Lee (University of Michigan); Vijay Singh (University of Michigan); Richard Tolman (University of Michigan)

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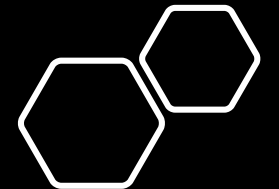


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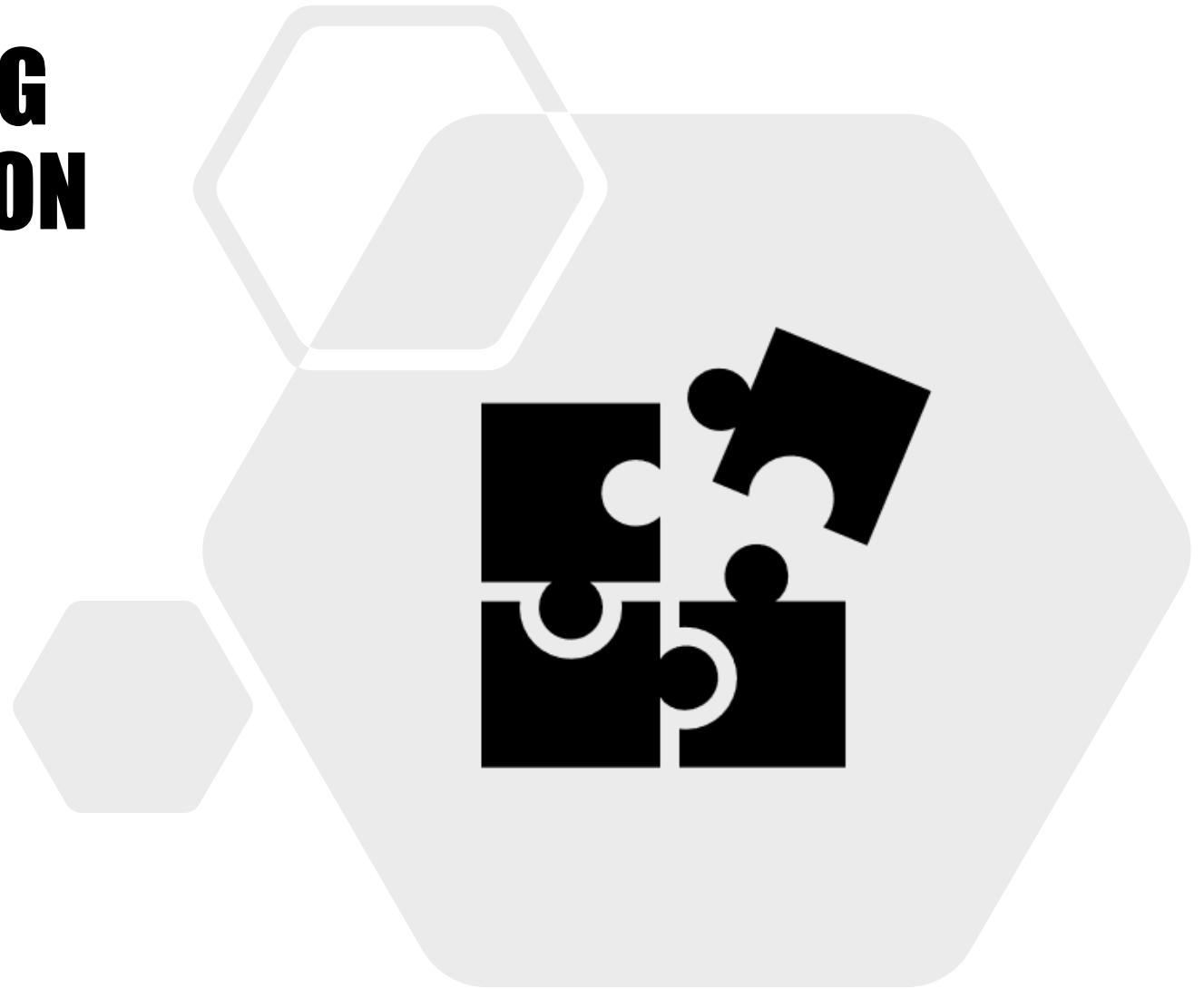
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Engaging Fathers in Home Visiting Services  
Dads Matter-HV  
Jennifer Bellamy  
March 17, 2021



# FATHERS AS A “MISSING PIECE” IN HOME VISITATION

- Growth of home visitation
- Fathers and outcomes
- Importance of mother-father co-parenting relationship
- Few home visitors report engaging fathers and mothers together in services

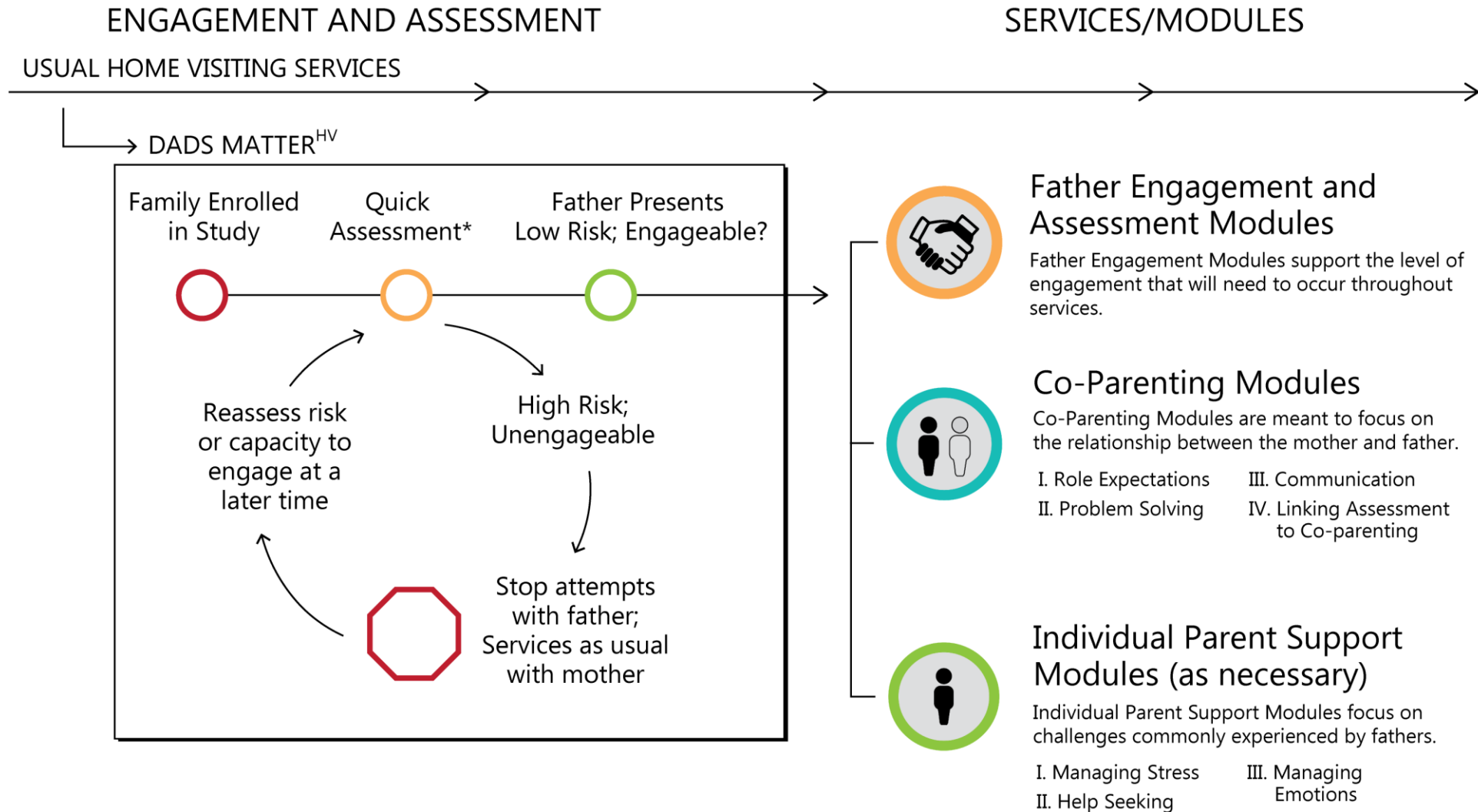


# Surveys with Home Visitors

- Workers espouse generally positive attitudes and expectations about working with fathers and mothers together in home visiting, but say:
  - Lack of time
  - Perception that fathers do not want to participate
  - Lack of training
  - Worry that if they work with fathers, it will take away from their work with mothers

....Prevents them from engaging fathers.

# The Dads Matter-HV Model



# FATHER ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES-Control Group

- Incentives
- Leave him information
- Tell him he's needed/important
- Communicate through mom

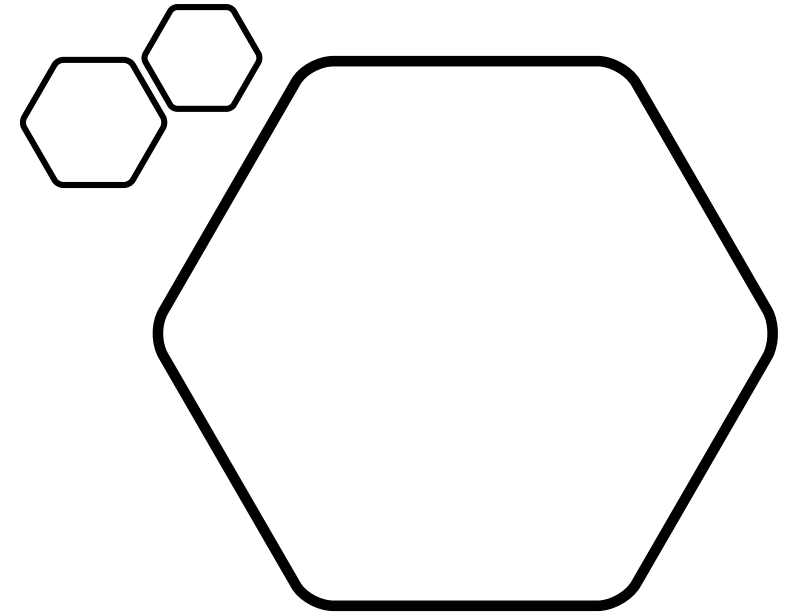


# FATHER ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES- Intervention Group

- Talk to him
- Make eye contact
- Leave things for him
- Communicate through Mom
- Specifically/explicitly invite him
- Tell him he's needed/important
- Referrals (jobs etc.)
- Using hands-on activities
- Use technology
- Being there/consistent/building trust
- Giving him information
- Providing opportunities to interact with other dads
- Explaining benefits of his involvement
- Using "other" activities: holiday parties, family events, etc.
- Respect/acknowledge his expertise
- Consider schedules

# Dads Matter-HV PRACTICE CHANGES

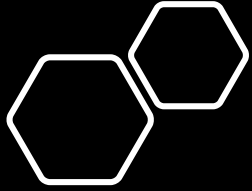
- More inclusion of fathers/paying attention to them and co-parenting in various aspects of services
- Reflection on their own perceptions and beliefs about fathers
- More of a family approach
- Getting over discomfort, uncertainty, hesitation



# Take Aways

- Fathers and mothers can be engaged together in home visiting services, but it takes:
  - Flexibility
  - Creativity
  - Persistence
- Home visitors will state that they generally value fathers, but they need consistent support and encouragement to identify and address barriers
  - Practice
  - Training on specific strategies
  - Cueing/asking
  - Supervision/leadership





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