Engaging Black Fathers in Behavioral Health Settings
Episode Guide

Focus: The importance of engaging Black fathers in behavioral health settings and best practices to improve child and family well-being as well as disrupting the racist, patriarchal narrative of what a Black father looks like

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Key Findings

● If a father is involved, studies show:
  ○ Lower levels of child neglect, depression, and child delinquency
  ○ Children are more emotionally secure and confident
  ○ Children have higher levels of social connection with peers, cognitive development, and self esteem
  ○ Children are better able to deal with frustrations in school

● Fatherhood looks different across the board
  ○ In general, males who have a caregiving role in families
  ○ Could be biological father, adoptive father, or social father

● Stereotypes of the black father
  ○ “The absent black father”
    ■ Question who created this stereotype and if the statistics count the comparatively high rates of incarceration and police involvement in black communities
    ■ Masculinity and manhood narrative
  ○ Racism of narratives and statistics
    ■ How black families are viewed
    ■ The systemic/structural impact on Black families

● Masculinity and patriarchy contribute to how fathers are engaged in the family
  ○ Masculinity is often not tied up into caregiving
Key Recommendations

- Attend to issues that the father is dealing with (not just in family life)
  - Talk about emotions
  - Engage in targeted outreach efforts
- How to engage black fathers in behavioral health settings
  - Think about and listen to the stories of the fathers who are involved
  - Train staff members on the positive contributions of fathers
    - Staff members’ perceptions of black fathers
    - How fathers are integral in caregiving for children
    - Teaching fathers about healthy development and how to talk to their kids about their feelings
  - Environment/visual space matters
    - Look at the space families are entering into. Include pictures and literature that help male caregivers feel included
  - Be direct with men
  - Resistance is not a bad thing, it is a protective measure
- Look into fatherhood initiatives locally and nationally
- Engage young boys in talking about their feelings

Resources