

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

- Martinez, et al. (2013, April). *A guide for father involvement in systems of care*. Technical Assistance Partnership for Child and Family Mental Health. Retrieved from http://www.air.org/sites/default/files/downloads/report/AIR_Fatherhood_Guide_061413_0.pdf
- Dads Take Your Child to School Day. (2017). Retrieved from <http://www.dadstakeyourchildtoschoolday.com/>