

Engaging Fathers in WIC

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Objectives:

- Reflect on the “why” of engaging fathers in the WIC experience
- Explore concrete ways to better involve and engage fathers

WIC’s mission: To safeguard the health of low-income women, infants, and children up to age 5 who are at nutrition risk by providing nutritious foods to supplement diets, information on healthy eating, and referrals to health care. (www.fns.usda.gov)

- *How might engaging fathers help to fulfill the WIC mission?*
- *How might it help fulfill your agency’s mission?*
- *How might it help enhance children’s health and well-being?*

Fathers need our help to be engaged in a meaningful way with their children...especially in a program called “Women, Infants, and Children” that has limited program-to-client contact.

Relationships and interactions with fathers:

- How are you learning whether a father is in the family picture?
- When they’re in the door, make them feel welcome—what might that look/sound/feel like?
- Recognize that fathers want the best for their child. Treat them as a partner in parenting
- Be aware of our own biases and beliefs that might be a barrier
- Understand that fathers tend to parent differently than mothers—not better or worse, just differently.
- Be aware of cultural norms and traditions, and honor home languages as much as you can

Engaging fathers in the WIC experience:

- Outreach efforts to fathers who are the primary (or only) parent. How are we finding them?
- Father-friendly environment—what might that look like?
- Provide father-specific materials and information in your available resources
- Include father-specific content in your agency brochure, newsletters, and website
- Display photos and posters depicting men/fathers with their children
- Educate and encourage dads to be involved *at home*
- Have a male staff in your office who interacts with and supports dads
- Administer a parent survey for fathers – and use it to improve your program

Further Resources:

<https://wic.utah.gov/families/just-for-dads/> - Utah WIC program, father page

<http://www.calwic.org/focus-areas/engaging-wic-families/engaging-men-a-dads> - California WIC Association

www.fathers.com – National Center for Fathering

www.fathersandfamiliescoalition.org – Fathers & Families Coalition of America

www.fatherhood.gov – National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse