

# Focus Groups for Father Involvement

Focus Groups are a great way to gather information from the people you are trying to reach, including fathers, mothers, grandparents, and others. They give space for people to raise their own ideas and concerns about supporting fatherhood. They also provide an opportunity to begin to identify parents who may be interested in helping develop fathering programming. Having these group discussions can be a catalyst to getting more fathers involved in meaningful ways.

It is helpful to connect with fathers and other parents already connected with your agency AND to invite others from the community who may not have accessed your services yet. Both fathers and mothers will have helpful insight into understanding father involvement in your community so focus groups will be helpful with dads and moms either together or separate.

## Determine your goals

Focus groups can be for many different reasons. Determine what your purpose of the focus group is so you are asking the right questions and getting helpful information.

Some topics could include:

- determining the general needs of fathers in your community
- assessing how fathers and parents view the father-friendliness of your organization
- finding barriers to fathers using your services and asking for their ideas of what they would be looking for

## Successful Focus Groups

- Encourage participants to talk one at a time;
- Encourage participants to say whatever comes to mind. You want to learn their views.
- Have participants who are respectful and non-judgemental of other people's comments.
- Provide snacks and incentives, if possible.
- Meet in a non-threatening and comfortable place.
- Remind participants that everything that is said here remains confidential (except for abuse, neglect, suicide, and criminal activities.)

## ■ Sample Focus Group

Total time: 90 minutes

### PART 1 Welcome - 10 minutes

- Facilitator Introduction  
Name and role of facilitator(s)
- General Information  
Washroom locations, refreshments, schedule for the focus group.
- Purpose of the Focus Group  
Share the reason for gathering people together, what the goal of the event is, and what you hope to take away by the end of it.
- Participant's Introductions  
Names of participants, number of children (gender and age).

### PART 2 Getting Started - 15 MINUTES

- Question: What motivated you to participate in this discussion group?
  - record responses on a flip chart or white board

### PART 3 Questions and Discussion - 60 Minutes

- You want to ask questions that relate to your purpose for the focus group.
- Adapt the content of the questions depending on the make-up of the group (fathers, mothers, grandparents, etc.)

Sample questions for discussion:

- What was your reaction when you learned that you would be a father/mother (feelings and emotions experienced)?
- Do you believe that your relationship with your own father influences your relationship with your children? How?
- Do you believe that the father role has changed since you were a young child? How?
- What are the qualities of a good father (ideal father)? of a good mother (ideal mother)?
  - Do they differ? If so, how?

- Is your role/your partner's role as father seen as valuable in your own circle? (family, friends, workplace, etc.)
- Do you think the role of father is valued in Canadian society in general?
- What gets in the way of accessing services and supports you may need as a father?
- When you have doubts and/or worries in relation to your role as a father who can you count on (family, friends, services, others)?
- Ask them to complete the Feedback forms (see below).
- How could we reach men and fathers more efficiently?

#### PART 4 CLOSING – 10 MINUTES

- What stands out for you in our discussion? Is there anything new?
- Do you have questions or final comments?
- Thanks from the facilitators.
- Collect contact information.
- Distribute incentives, if available.

## Fathers Feedback

Dads, we value your thoughts and ideas about how we are doing with reaching out to men. Please take a couple of minutes to respond to the following survey.

	Yes	No	Comments
1. In general, our premises are comfortable for men and fathers.			
2. Staff address fathers as well as mothers when they visit our premises.			
3. We have visible posters that reflect a diversity of men in positive relationships with children.			
4. We have resources that speak to men's issues, including fathering, health, stress, work, etc.			
5. Flyers and other written announcements are address to mothers and to fathers.			
6. Referrals are available for fathers to meet a variety of their personal and parenting needs.			
7. The community sees our organization as a place fathers can get support.			
8. Guest speakers, workshops and presentations are on topics relevant to men and fathers.			
9. Programs are scheduled at times when fathers are more likely to be available.			
10.Home visits and meetings are scheduled around the availability of fathers.			
11.Programs reflect things of interest to fathers.			
12.The approach to reach fathers differs from the approach to reach mothers.			
13.The programs reflect the diversity of fathers and men raising children.			
14.The organization has prioritized the role of fathers in the life of children.			

Other Comments and suggestions:

## Mothers Feedback

Moms, we value your thoughts and ideas about how we are doing with reaching out to men. Please take a couple of minutes to respond to the following survey.

	Yes	No	Comments
1. In general, our premises are comfortable for men and fathers.			
2. Staff address fathers as well as mothers when they visit our premises.			
3. We have visible posters that reflect a diversity of men in positive relationships with children.			
4. We have resources that speak to men's issues, including fathering, health, stress, work, etc.			
5. Flyers and other written announcements are addressed to mothers and to fathers.			
6. Mothers are encouraged to understand the ways men tend to interact with children.			
7. The community sees our organization as a place fathers can get support.			
8. Guest speakers, workshops and presentations are on topics relevant to men and fathers.			
9. Programs are scheduled at times when fathers are more likely to be available.			
10. Home visits and meetings are scheduled around the availability of fathers.			
11. Programs reflect things of interest to fathers.			
12. The approach to reach fathers differs from the approach to reach mothers.			
13. The programs reflect the diversity of fathers and men raising children.			
14. The organization has prioritized the role of fathers in the life of children.			

Other Comments and suggestions: