

ENGAGING FATHERS

COUNTY AND DSS ATTORNEY
CONFERENCE

JULY 2012

ROAD MAP

- ESTABLISH IMPORTANCE
- WHAT DO WE SEE?
- WHAT KIND OF RELATIONSHIP DO WE WANT TO SEE?
- WHAT CAN WE DO?

WHAT'S THE POINT?

- WHY TALK ABOUT FATHERS? (WHY DO I TALK ABOUT FATHERS?)
- WHAT HAPPENS TO CHILDREN WHO GROW UP WITHOUT FATHERS?
 - 5 TIMES MORE LIKELY TO BE IN POVERTY
 - TWICE AS LIKELY TO DROP OUT OF SCHOOL
 - TWICE AS LIKELY TO BE ABUSED

WHAT'S THE POINT?

- CHILDREN WHO GROW UP WITHOUT FATHERS
 - TWICE AS LIKELY TO ABUSE ALCOHOL OR DRUGS
 - MORE LIKELY TO BRING WEAPONS OR DRUGS TO SCHOOL
 - MORE LIKELY TO COMMIT SUICIDE
 - MORE LIKELY TO BECOME PREGNANT

WHAT'S THE POINT?

- US CENSUS BUREAU: 25 MILLION CHILDREN LIVE APART FROM THEIR FATHERS. (1/3)
- NC: 27% FAMILIES WITHOUT FATHER
- NC: 31% BABIES BORN OUT OF WEDLOCK
- \$100 BILLION MAN: THE ANNUAL COST OF FATHER ABSENCE!

WHAT'S THE POINT?

- IN CASE OF DIVORCE:
 - FEWER THAN HALF OF FATHERS SEE THEIR CHILDREN MORE THAN SEVERAL TIMES A YEAR
 - 20-30% HAVE NOT SEEN KIDS IN THE LAST YEAR
 - 1 OUT OF 3 DADS WHO REMARRY NEVER SEE THEIR CHILDREN FROM A PREVIOUS MARRIAGE
 - CONFLICT: IS IT EASIER JUST TO AVOID?

WHAT DO WE SEE?

- IN YOUR CASELOAD:
 - DO DADS SHOW UP?
 - DO DADS PARTICIPATE
 - AS A RESULT OF DSS AND COURT INVOLVEMENT, DO DADS ENJOY A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP WITH THEIR CHILDREN?
 - WHAT ARE IMPACTS OF ABSENT/NON-INVOLVED FATHERS THAT YOU SEE?

WHAT DO WE WANT TO SEE?

- REUNIFICATION
- BUT MORE: NONCUSTODIAL FATHER NEEDS TO CONNECT.
- WHY?
- IMPOSSIBLE IN MANY CASES?
- ALICE: "THERE IS NO USE TRYING, ONE CAN'T BELIEVE IMPOSSIBLE THINGS."
- QUEEN: "SOMETIMES I'VE BELIEVED AS MANY AS SIX IMPOSSIBLE THINGS BEFORE BREAKFAST."

WHAT CAN WE DO?

- CHANGE.
 - WHY?
 - COMMENTS FROM GAL'S ABOUT COURT
- MOTIVATE: DARE TO INSPIRE (HOW?)
- MORE THAN A CASE PLAN, IT'S A LIFE PLAN
- WE, AND THEY, ARE CHARTING THE FUTURE OF CHILDREN (AND THEIR CHILDREN)

WHAT CAN WE DO?

- ENCOURAGE FATHERS
 - DEVELOPMENT OF CASE PLAN
 - PARTICIPATION IN CASE PLAN
 - VISITATION
 - CHILD AND FAMILY TEAM MEETINGS
 - STOP THE BLAME GAME
 - RESPECT FOR OTHER PARENT
 - MAKE FOCUS ON CHILD

WHAT CAN WE DO?

- ESTABLISH PATERNITY
 - WHY?
 - HOW?
 - CONNECTION TO PERMANENCE?
 - CONFLICT BETWEEN A/N/D AND CHILD SUPPORT CASES

WHAT CAN WE DO?

- TALK
 - ENGAGE FATHERS IN COURT
 - LOOK FOR BARRIERS TO RELATIONSHIPS AND INVOLVEMENT
 - WHAT ARE SOME OF THE BARRIERS TO FATHERS BEING INVOLVED?
 - FIND RESOURCES TO OVERCOME BARRIERS. (EX. REFER TO CFCC OR PHOENIX FOR EMPLOYMENT ISSUES)
 - DON'T ASSUME SOMEONE ELSE HAS IT COVERED
 - MOTIVATE (LITTLE DIFFERENT ROLE!)

WHAT CAN WE DO?

- SET:
 - REASONABLE GOALS: DON'T OVERWHELM
 - "PERFECTION OF MEANS AND CONFUSION OF ENDS SEEMS TO CHARACTERIZE OUR AGE." ALBERT EINSTEIN
 - CLEAR GUIDELINES (NOW NOT THE TIME FOR MISUNDERSTANDING)
 - CASE PLAN THAT ADDRESSES BARRIERS FOR FATHERS TO BE INVOLVED
 - CLEAR TIME PARAMETERS
 - ORDER THAT CLEARLY SETS EXPECTATIONS

WHAT CAN WE DO?

- BE:
 - HONEST
 - RESPECTFUL
 - SINCERE
 - UNDERSTANDING: SEEK FIRST TO UNDERSTAND, THEN BE UNDERSTOOD.
 - COMMITTED (ENTIRE TEAM)
 - CAREFUL IN TONE OF VOICE AND CHOICE OF WORDS (ESPECIALLY WITH DADS)

WHAT CAN WE DO?

- DO:
 - LISTEN (AND LOOK LIKE YOUR ARE LISTENING)
 - ENGAGE FATHERS (HOW?)
 - THINK ABOUT THE POWER YOU HAVE TO EFFECT CHANGE
 - CONSIDER YOUR LEGACY AS AN ATTORNEY: WHAT KIND OF ATTORNEY ARE YOU? WHAT IMPACT WILL YOU HAVE? CAN YOU HAVE?

WHAT CAN WE DO?

- DO:
 - LEARN MORE ABOUT WHAT WE DO (YOU ARE HERE, GOOD STEP!)
 - CONSIDER ATTENDING CHILD AND FAMILY TEAM MEETINGS WHEN APPROPRIATE
 - CONSIDER VISITING A GROUP HOME, A TREATMENT CENTER, OTHER RESOURCES
 - MY CASE

WHAT CAN WE DO?

- DO:
 - SET EXPECTATIONS FOR WORKERS TO CLEARLY IDENTIFY BARRIERS TO INVOLVEMENT OF NONCUSTODIAL FATHERS AND TO MAKE CLEAR CASE PLANS TO ADDRESS THE BARRIERS
 - READ THE REPORTS OF YOUR WORKERS: OBVIOUS IF YOU DON'T
 - MAKE SURE THE ORDERS YOU DRAFT ARE CLEAR
 - CARE WHAT HAPPENS. IT'S NOT JUST A JOB.

SUMMARY

- IMPORTANT: CHARTING THE FUTURE OF CHILDREN (AND THEIR CHILDREN)
- IMPORTANT FOR FATHERS TO BE INVOLVED
- CHALLENGE: "IT IS EASIER FOR A FATHER TO HAVE CHILDREN THAN FOR CHILDREN TO HAVE A REAL FATHER." POPE JOHN XIII
- CHALLENGE: "FOR RARELY ARE SONS SIMILAR TO THEIR FATHERS; MOST ARE WORSE, AND A FEW ARE BETTER THAN THEIR FATHERS." HOMER, THE ODYSSEY.

SUMMARY

- MAKE INVOLVEMENT BY NONCUSTODIAL FATHERS A REAL GOAL
- VIRGIL: "THEY CAN BECAUSE THEY THINK THEY CAN"
- ENCOURAGE, TALK, SET, DO, BE.
- WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE EMPOWER FATHERS TO DO THE RIGHT THING AND MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF THEIR CHILDREN?
- GENERATIONAL

THE END

- CHARLIE PLUMB STORY
- PHILOSOPHY FOR FATHERS:
 - BATMAN
 - YODA
