{ Building Stronger Father Engagement Through Community-Based Programming }

National Fatherhood Initiative®



Erik Vecere
Chief Partner Success Officer



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Program Success Director

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Objectives

- Provide a brief NFI overview
- Learn about the NFI core programs used in Community-Based Programming
- Learn the importance of using fatherhood curriculum as a part of a larger intervention approach
- Hear directly from two professionals whose organizations have incorporated fatherhood programming into their work



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Poll Question



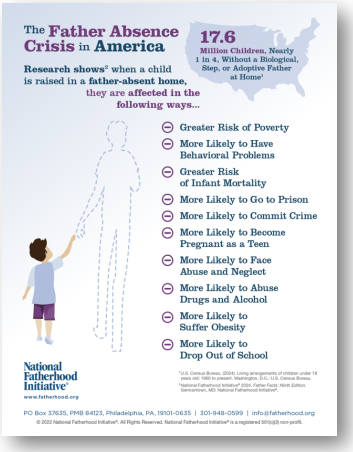
If your organization received a surprise visit from the "Father Engagement Police," what would they discover?

- We're rolling out the red carpet for dads.
- We're father-friendly, but there's room to improve.
- We want to engage dads but struggle to reach them.
- We have some work to do. Where do we start?
- I'm not sure how we would score.

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The Father Absence Crisis

- 17.6 million children, 1 in 4, live without a father. (Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2024)
- 9 in 10 Americans agree there is a father absence crisis.
- Research shows that when children have involved, responsible, and committed fathers, they express better socio-emotional and academic functioning and grow up to lead happier healthier lives.
- Research also demonstrates that father absence is strongly linked to poverty, teen pregnancy, juvenile delinquency, abuse, suicide, substance and alcohol abuse, and other issues.
- However, many of our nation's organizations remain mother-centric in their family offerings and services.



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(Source: National Fatherhood Initiative (2024). *Father Facts, 9th Edition.)*

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The Strengths of Father Presence





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Download these and other free, sharable images at https://www.fatherhood.org/father-absence-statistic

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Our Mission and Vision

{ Our Mission }

National Fatherhood Initiative®'s mission is to **transform** organizations and communities by **equipping** them to **intentionally** and **proactively** engage fathers in their children's lives.

{ Our Vision }

National Fatherhood Initiative®'s vision is for every child to grow up with an involved, responsible, and committed father.

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Incentivizing Father Engagement



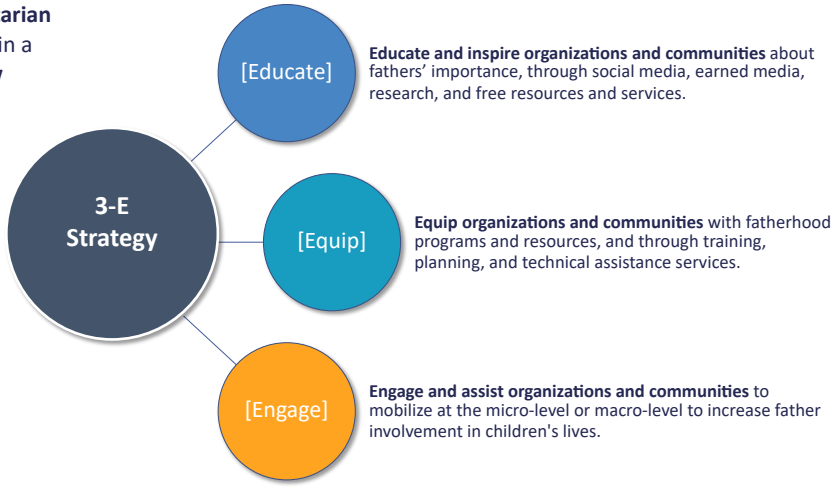
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Our 3-E Strategy

National Fatherhood Initiative® is a **non-profit, non-partisan, non-sectarian** organization founded in **1994** to begin a society-wide movement to **renew fatherhood** in America.



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A Brighter Future

National Fatherhood Initiative® + Your Organization or Network

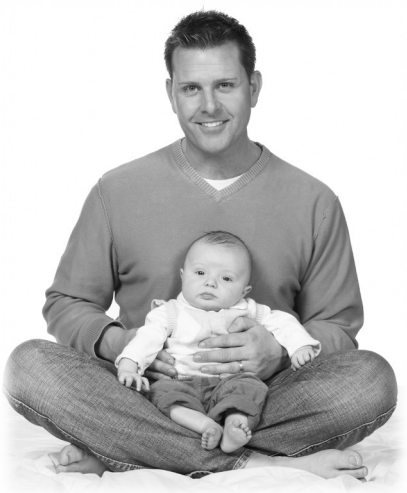
Healthier
Children ■ Families ■ Communities



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Key Message

Fathers are Irreplaceable &
an Essential Ingredient
for Child Well-Being



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Poll Question



If you could wave a magic wand and eliminate ONE father inclusion challenge tomorrow, which would you choose?

- Finding ways to recruit and retain dads.
- Getting staff excited about serving dads.
- Finding the funding and resources to support programming.
- Getting organizational leadership to prioritize father inclusion.

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Community-Based Programs

Flexible Fatherhood Programs

- Moderate or optional staff involvement
- Goes deeper compared to print materials



24:7 Dad® Key Behaviors Workshop



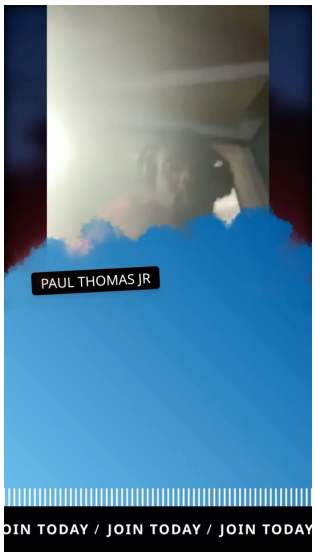
ProFathering15™

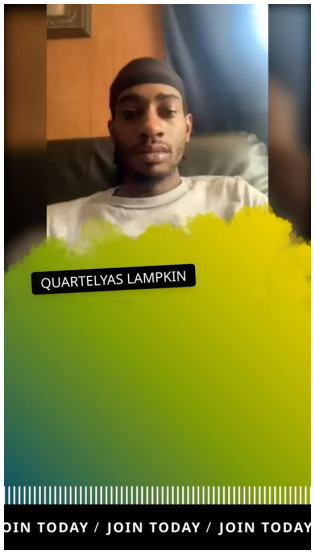
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ProFathering15 ™ Testimonials



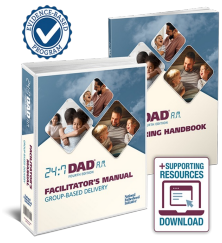


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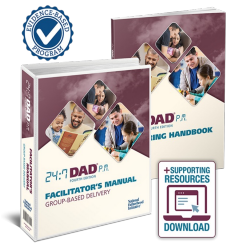
Community-Based Programs

In-Depth Father Involvement Programs for Dads

- Proactive father inclusion through programs
- Staff involvement required
- Goes deepest with dads around responsible fatherhood
- One-on-one and group-based programs



24:7 Dad® A.M.



24:7 Dad® P.M.

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Poll Question



A dad is excited about participating in your fatherhood program but he's unemployed, behind on child support, and struggling with transportation. What's your first move?

- Get him enrolled in the fatherhood curriculum immediately.
- Help him address his most pressing needs before enrolling.
- Enroll him while connecting him with support services.
- Refer him to another organization better equipped to help.
- Ask him what he needs most and build a plan together.

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A Comprehensive Approach

Curriculum Is the Foundation—Not the Entire Intervention

Fatherhood curricula build knowledge, skills, confidence, and connection. But dads also face practical barriers that can prevent them from participating—and from putting what they learn into practice.

LEARN	STABILIZE	APPLY	SUSTAIN
Evidence-based or Evidence-informed fatherhood education	Address immediate needs and barriers	Practice skills in daily family life	Maintain progress through ongoing support

Key message: Teaching fathering skills matters most when fathers can access the support needed to use them.

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A Comprehensive Approach

Surround the Curriculum With Coordinated Supports

Economic stability

Job readiness, workforce development, benefits

Whole-person health

Mental, physical, and emotional health; substance-use support

Family relationships

Co-parenting, healthy relationships, domestic violence prevention

Legal and financial navigation

Child support, custody, court and legal-system navigation

Basic needs

Housing, transportation, food, childcare

Ongoing connection

Peer support, mentoring, case management, referrals

Services can be delivered directly or through trusted community partners—what matters is a clear pathway to help.

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A Comprehensive Approach

Build a Program That Fathers Can Stay With

1 ASK & ASSESS	Learn each father's goals, strengths, and immediate needs.
2 CONNECT	Offer warm referrals and practical help accessing services.
3 FOLLOW THROUGH	Coordinate with partners; check whether services were received.
4 MEASURE & ADAPT	Track engagement, completion, referrals, and father-defined progress.

Sustainability = strong partnerships + responsive services + continuous learning

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Case Study #1: East Tennessee State University



John Hughes
Fatherhood Coach/Coordinator
ETSU Fatherhood Connection Initiative
ETSU Center for Community Outreach

- The ETSU Fatherhood Connection Initiative is funded by a grant from the state of Tennessee.

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East Tennessee State University Mission Statements

- East Tennessee State University
  - Developing a world-class environment to enhance student success and improve the quality of life in the region and beyond.
- Center for Community Outreach
  - To utilize university expertise and resources in the provision of work force services, human services, and clinical outreach to the citizens of East Tennessee.
- Fatherhood Connection Initiative
  - Fostering influential growth and positive father-child connections through meaningful experiences.

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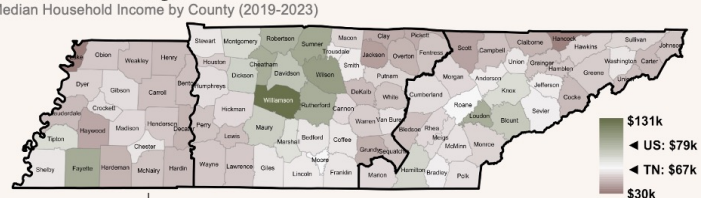
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Tennessee Income / Poverty

Of Tennessee's 95 Counties, 78 Had Median Household Incomes Below the State's Average

Median Household Income by County (2019-2023)



Highest 5 Counties		Lowest 5 Counties	
1. Williamson	$131,202	91. Haywood	$43,513
2. Wilson	$94,048	92. Scott	$42,679
3. Sumner	$86,005	93. Jackson	$41,475
4. Fayette	$84,764	94. Hancock	$31,995
5. Rutherford	$82,588	95. Lake	$30,500

Note: Green counties are above the state median of $67,097. Maroon counties are below the state median.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau

SycamoreTN.org

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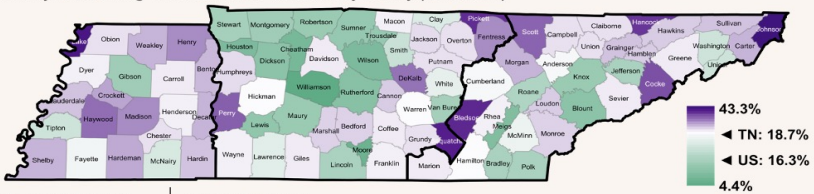
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Tennessee Youth Poverty

Young Tennesseans Living in Poverty

Poverty Rate Among Those Under 18 Years Old by County (2019-2023)



Highest 5 Counties		Lowest 5 Counties	
1. Johnson	43.3%	91. Wilson	9.1%
2. Lake	41.1%	92. Houston	9.1%
3. Sequatchie	39.8%	93. Cheatham	8.4%
4. Bledsoe	39.0%	94. Moore	6.6%
5. Pickett	38.4%	95. Williamson	4.4%

Note: Purple counties are above state rate of 18.7%, and green counties are below it. Source: U.S. Census Bureau

SycamoreTN.org

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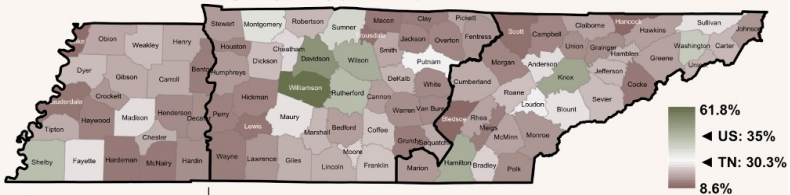
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Tennessee Education Levels

Tennesseans With at Least a Bachelor's Degree

% of Adults With a Bachelor's Degree by County (2019-2023)



Highest 5 Counties		Lowest 5 Counties	
1. Williamson	61.8%	91. Scott	10.2%
2. Davidson	47.3%	92. Trousdale	10.1%
3. Knox	40.2%	93. Lake	9.4%
4. Wilson	37.2%	94. Bledsoe	8.8%
5. Hamilton	37.0%	95. Hancock	8.6%

Note: Among adults 25+. Green counties are above the state rate of 30.3%. Maroon counties are below the state rate. Source: U.S. Census Bureau

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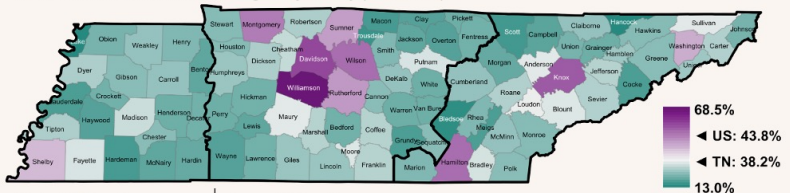
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Tennessee Education Levels

Tennesseans With At Least an Associate's Degree

% of Adults With an Associate's Degree by County (2019-2023)



Highest 5 Counties		Lowest 5 Counties	
1. Williamson	68.5%	91. Scott	16.6%
2. Davidson	53.3%	92. Trousdale	15.5%
3. Knox	49.1%	93. Bledsoe	13.9%
4. Hamilton	45.8%	94. Hancock	13.4%
5. Wilson	45.4%	95. Lake	13.0%

Note: Among adults 25+. Purple counties are above the state rate of 38.2%. Turqoise counties are below the state rate.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau

SycamoreTN.org

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ETSU Fatherhood Connection Initiative

- 1 of 8 programs in TN (grant awarded by TN Dept. of Human Services).
- Part of the state government to address the dearth of father-focused programs.
- Staff
  - Fatherhood Navigator: Coordinates scheduling and all day-to-day activities.
  - 2 Fatherhood Coaches (LMFT): Boots on the ground.

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Our Program – Curriculum

- The Fatherhood Connection Initiative gives dads (18+)* the tools and knowledge to bond with their kids and be a more confident father.
- We work with:
  - Dads who reside in 8 Upper East TN Counties.
  - Dads who have children that are 13 and below.
  - Low-income dads (also if the father or their child(ren) receive government assistance: Medicaid. TennCare, Families First, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance (SNAP), or Live in Section 8 or Low-Rent Housing.

*Biological fathers, grandfathers, stepfathers, adopted fathers, foster fathers, etc.

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Our Program – Curriculum

- In this program, after an enrollment meeting, the fathers meet with a fatherhood coach once a week for 12 weeks.
- Primary curriculum based on NFI's 24:7 Dad®.
- NFI's InsideOut Dad® when necessary.
  - Elements of InsideOut Dad® is included for reentry topics.
- Pre- and Post-Assessement
  - 24:7 Dad® Fathering Survey
  - Child-Parent Relationship Scale
  - Wellness Wheel: Assessing Your Life Balance
  - UT SWORPS

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Our Program

- During the program, the father and the child(ren) will do 3 different activities of their choice.
- The grant covers the cost of the activity and the transportation to and from there, if needed.
- Allows fathers to practice engaging with their children, based on what is discussed in the curriculum.
- We aid with transportation to and from weekly meetings with fatherhood coach.
- Referrals for appropriate Community Service Agencies will be provided as needed.
- We provide progress letters to agencies, when needed.
  - At the end of the program, the father receives a Certificate of Completion.

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Referral Sources (to the program)



- Dept. of Child Services (DCS) [Primary Partner]
- Day Reporting Center (DRC/CRC)
- Other state programs: ETSU NCP IMPACT, UT TCSEPP, Families First, Families Free, Sullivan County Jail
- ETSU/Ballad Health Strong Starts, ETSU Nurse Family Partnership
- Tennessee Family Justice Center
- Local School Systems
- Recovery Houses/Programs
- Google/Facebook/Public Fliers posted at different agencies (e.g. V.A.)
- Word of Mouth: currently enrolled fathers, family members, friends, etc.

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Referral Sources (to the program)

- Developed through significant networking and outreach efforts throughout the 8 counties of Upper East Tennessee (Pounding the pavement)
- Engaging organizations/developing partnerships:
  - Organization Meetings
  - Joining organization boards
  - Attending community organization's events
- Presentations
- Distributing flyers (everywhere)

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Challenges Establishing the Program

- Fathers' interest and motivation to participate.
- Establishing partners to refer fathers.
- New program (lack of knowledge about the program).
- New alternative to existing programs (parenting programs not specifically focused on men/fathers. Only program in East TN for fathers).
- GETTING THE WORD OUT.

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Challenges Delivering the Program

- Rural Environment:
  - Transportation
  - Many are unable to come to us
  - Meet the challenge by meeting fathers close to where they live.
  - Meeting fathers in their local library, health dept., cafe, McDonald's, donated office space, etc.
  - Aiding with the cost of transportation to and from meetings (gas cards, bus passes).

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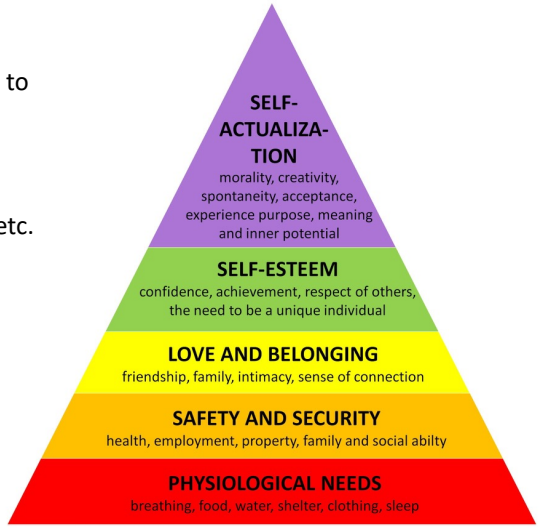
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Maslow: Hierarchy of Needs

- Assisting fathers to overcome barriers
  - Providing referrals for community organizations to assist fathers in overcoming barriers.
  - Funding allowed, provide financial assistance in overcoming barriers, such as emergency food, clothing, auto repairs, rent/mortgage, utilities, etc.



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General Challenges Fathers Face

- General Aspects (modeling, systemic)
  - Lack of confidence
  - Feeling disconnected from child's life
  - Lack of family support
  - Challenges with co-parent

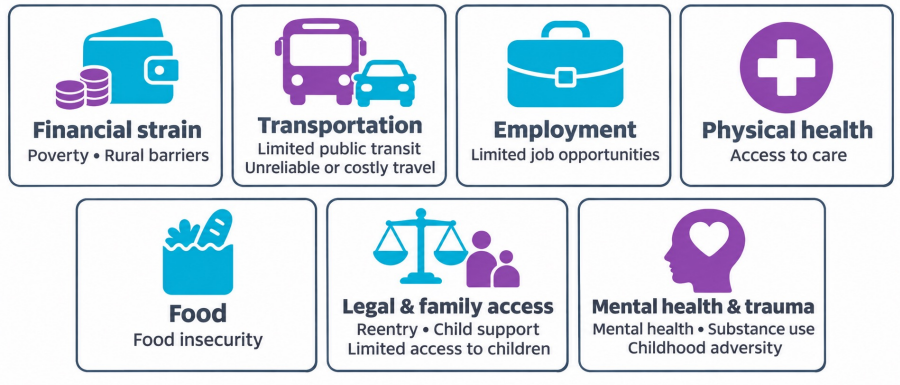
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Additional Challenges / Boundaries We See



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Program Delivery

- One-on-one (-v- group/class settings)
- When groups begin, the fathers face other challenges that prevent them from being able to attend meetings (finding required employment, mental health challenges, recovery – required meetings, etc.)

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References

- The Sycamore Institute (2024). 2023 income, poverty, health insurance coverage, and education in Tennessee's 95 counties. https://sycamoretn.org/2023-income-poverty-insurance-education/
- TN Department of Health Office of Informatics and Analytics (2025). 2023 Tennessee drug overdose deaths. https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/health/documents/pdo/death-report/2023_Tennessee_Drug_Overdose_Death_Report.pdf

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Case Study #2: Boys & Girls Clubs of Palm Beach County

- JoNelle Allen, Mentoring and Family Programs Manager
- Colin Walkes, Fatherhood Educator
- Clinton Seville, Fatherhood Educator

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BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS OF PALM BEACH COUNTY

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Case Study #2: Boys & Girls Clubs of Palm Beach County

- We utilize resources by connecting and working with the support of 24:7 Dad® to be able to:
  - Ask fathers what kind of help they need, such as a job.
  - Use 24:7 Dad® Fathering Handbooks and pamphlets to encourage engaged fathers.
  - Partner with Bridges Palm Beach, Riviera Beach, and Florida Rural Legal Resources with their community events.
  - Partner with schools and school-based activities alongside "Donuts with Dads" and "Bring Your Child to School Day".
  - Provide incentives for Fathers who complete cohorts, such as clippers, tools, equipment, etc.

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BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS OF PALM BEACH COUNTY

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Chat Question



Of the strategies you just heard, which one would you steal for your organization?

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Time For Questions



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