



ALLiES eGuide

Father Group

The goal of the fathers' group is to increase fathers' participation in creating a safe community for children and, at the same time, to create a network of fathers in the new community to increase their social bonds and peer support with other fathers. Events should be organized so fathers can meet each other informally and do something together to further the goal of increasing fathers' participation and interaction with other fathers. We have noticed that one challenge in encouraging fathers to come to the fathers' group has been the cultural expectations of masculinity: men are often uneasy about speaking with other men about intimate issues such as safety in families. This has also been noticed while developing other projects for father involvement. Therefore, it is important to understand that involving fathers is a process and that it may be a good idea to start with activities in which they can easily participate, for instance, together with children. When the fathers' group has been established, the fathers can meet for instance once a month.

While planning fathers' activities and fathers' group work, it is useful to consider the following aspects:

- Start with a "low threshold activity", like father-child sports or a common breakfast with fathers and children in the kindergarten
- Encourage fathers personally, using face-to-face interaction, to join the activities
- Ask fathers about their wishes for themes and activities
- Use or create a network of regional father workers and activists
- Introduce fathers' groups and/or other fathers' activities and importance of fathers' participation in parents' evenings
- Keep the fathers informed about activities in blogs and on the web and produce posters or leaflets for the school/kindergarten
- Prepare pictures or drawings with children on the theme "Me and my dad" for father's day and make an exhibition of them for school/kindergarten or the local library. Invite fathers to look at them.
- Invite fathers to school/kindergarten to read stories to the children, for instance, or to talk about their occupation or hobby, or to help in some activity