



New Jersey Department of  
Children and Families:  
Family and Community Partnerships

Dads Take Your Child To School  
Planning Guide 2013

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# INTRODUCTION: DADS TAKE YOUR CHILD TO SCHOOL PLANNING GUIDE 2013

The NJ Department of Children and Families (DCF) is proud to endorse **Dads Take Your Child to School (DTYCTS)**, a special day to celebrate and encourage the involvement of fathers and other significant male caregivers in the lives of their children - starting with a trip to school.

DCF 's Division of Family Community Partnerships asks that on **September 20, 2013**, stakeholders in school communities and other educational settings invite fathers and father figures to take their children to school to jump-start or renew a commitment to participate in their children's education.

DTYCTS is rooted in the mission of promoting father involvement in educational settings. Studies point to children benefitting when their fathers have an active role in their children's lives.



Positive paternal involvement is associated with improvements in academic performance, cognitive development, behavior, psychosocial development, health and well-being, household economics and overall parenting quality. This packet includes a timeline checklist for scheduling your event, some suggested themes and activities, resources, template forms, and recommendations for "next steps" to continue father involvement beyond the day's events.

# SAMPLE PLANNING TIMELINE CHECKLIST

## MAY-JUNE

- Gain support from key stakeholders: principal, Head Start director, key leaders, etc.
- Create a registration process for your event.
- Begin reaching out to community partners, including father-serving organizations.
- Organize a planning team, including staff, parents, and community partners.

## JULY-AUGUST

- Hold regular planning team meetings.
- Develop the schedule of events for Dads Take Your Child to School day.
- Alert local leaders and elected officials about your event and invite them to attend.
- Ask fathers to share and showcase their jobs, hobbies and talents at the event.
- Develop a list of follow-up opportunities for the dads who attend DTYCTS day.
- Create and print fliers to advertise the event.

## EARLY SEPTEMBER

- Contact local media/press to alert them to your event.
- Purchase or order refreshments and any other items needed for the day.
- Email, text message, mail and distribute fliers to the school community.
- Meet with planning team as necessary to ensure all tasks are clearly assigned and being executed.
- Involve the children and teachers - for example, teachers can help the children make invitations for their dads.
- Make sure safety protocols are in place.

## EVENT WEEK

- Have supplies and other necessary items set up before the morning of the event.
- Assign someone to take pictures for the school's use at your event and make sure release forms are signed.
- Print a sign-in sheet to get parent contact information.
- Compile a list of upcoming parent events to distribute during DTYCTS day.

## POST EVENT FOLLOW-UP

- Complete the DCF Dads Take Your Child to School online evaluation.
- Recognize any staff or community partners who helped make the day a success.
- Include pictures of the event in any school board- or policy council-sanctioned newsletters, web posts or in-house display areas.
- Review the surveys of dads' talents/hobbies to see how they can help with upcoming school events.

# SAMPLE PROGRAM THEMES

## **DTYCTS THEMES: Dads and Teens**

### **Concept:**

When they reach high school, many kids just aren't keen on having parents take them to school. You'll likely need to consider alternative activities to encourage teens to participate in DTYCTS.

### **Example Activities**

1. Have an evening event where dads and students participate in team sport activities, team building activities, contests or games. Perhaps have students teach their dads to do their favorite activity, such as graphic design or playing in instrument in the school band.
2. Have a financial consultant speak to dads and teens about funding and financial aid for college.

## **DTYCTS THEMES: Job Development and Educational Advancement**

### **Concept:**

DTYCTS provides an opportunity for schools and Head Start programs to provide information for fathers who would like to continue their education or broaden their job skills.

### **Example Activities:**

- Have a discussion on the dangers of predatory education institutions.
- Invite someone to talk about community resources for obtaining affordable education/job training programs.
- Invite local fatherhood programs that offer job-skill training.

## **DTYCTS THEMES: Promoting Financial Literacy and Asset Building**

### **Concept:**

Bringing kids and parents together to talk about money can create a fun learning opportunity that helps families make important decisions for the future. DTYCTS is an opportunity for fathers and children to come together to discuss the importance of good money management (affordable banking, tax refunds, free tax preparation services, proper use of credit).

### **Example Activities:**

- Invite representatives from local banks, credit unions or other financial institutions to help fathers open child savings accounts or other affordable and accessible banking services.
- Arrange a presentation on tools and strategies for long-term savings for a child's future (such as NJ State 529 College Savings Program).
- Volunteer Income Tax Assistance sites in the community could discuss free tax preparation services and tax credits that may be available to fathers.
- Have a financial consultant discuss matched savings programs - where each dollar saved is matched by dollars from a grant program - could be on hand to present and sign-up fathers onsite.

Ask a local Lions Club, Chamber of Commerce, or fraternal organization to donate funds that could match the savings of dad and students—dollar for dollar—for a one-week savings challenge. At the end of the week see which of the father-child teams saved the most money and have the winning team talk about their winning strategy at a later father-friendly event.

## **DTYCTS THEMES: Integrating Literacy, Homework Help and Engagement**

### **Concept:**

When fathers are involved in the lives of their children, especially their education, children learn more, perform better in school, and exhibit healthier behavior. Even when fathers do not share a home with their children, their active involvement can have a lasting and positive affect. There are many ways for fathers to be involved in their child's education.

**Example Activities:**

- Demonstrate age-appropriate techniques to read aloud to a child.
- Set aside time during the event for fathers to read with their children.
- Pass out reading logs and encourage fathers to read with their children at home. Provide an incentive to complete the reading log (ask a partner organization or library to donate books or prizes).
- Pass out library logs and encourage fathers to visit their local library with their children.
- Provide a list of father-friendly books.
- Below are some examples for ways fathers can engage with their children:
- Have your child talk about their day. Conversations about school often happen after sharing something about your day. Maybe a joke someone told at lunch or an interesting bit of current event news would stimulate a conversation about something at school.
- Use the backpack as a conversation starter. Go through your child's backpack with them every day after school. You may find little notes from teachers with assignments on them, as well as graded tests and homework assignments returned by your child's teachers.
- Ask direct questions. Rather than asking, "What did you do at school today?" consider asking some specific questions that will give you specific information you want, such as, "How did you do on your math quiz today?" or "What did you eat for lunch?"

**DTYCTS THEMES: Health and Wellness for Men and Families****Concept:**

Over the past three decades, the rate of childhood obesity in America has tripled. Today, nearly one in three children in America are overweight or obese. The numbers are even higher in African-American and Hispanic communities, where nearly 40% of the children are overweight or obese. Obesity is avoidable with healthy eating and physical fitness. DTYCTS provides an opportunity to talk to fathers about how to incorporate healthy eating and physical fitness in their homes. There are many creative ways to have children and fathers participate in physical activities throughout the event.

**Example Activities:**

- Invite health professionals to speak about the importance of children's health and/or men's' health.
- Discuss men's health issues, such as colon and prostate cancer, hypertension, diabetes and the importance of screenings.
- Plan a discussion on health literacy, health benefits, and the Affordable Care Act.
- Invite federal partners from the Let's Move! Campaign to discuss how families and schools can make healthy choices and build healthy communities. Go to: <http://www.letsmove.gov/initiatives>
- Plan physical activities that dads and children can participate in together, such as:
  - A basketball game made up of teams mixed with fathers and children.
  - Host a cooking class for dads and have the children help as assistant chefs.
  - Let's Move! Volunteer chefs can come in to provide a cooking demonstration and lesson (see link above).

**DTYCTS THEMES: Volunteer Opportunities****Concept:**

When fathers join an organization at their child's school or Head Start, like a safety team, PTA or Policy Council, their child knows that their father cares about how he or she does in school. Schools can encourage small steps, like chaperoning a trip or working with a teacher on a classroom need. The intangible benefits alone, such as pride, satisfaction, and accomplishment, are worthwhile reasons to serve.

**Example Activities:**

- Fathers can serve as hall monitors or school security.
- Have someone come in from WATCH D.O.G.S. (Dads of Great Students), a national program that encourages fathers to volunteer in schools to promote anti-bullying and school safety.
- Fathers can coach a team.
- Helping with school events (i.e., chaperoning an event, serving on a school committee or parent/teacher group, landscaping, construction, etc.).
- Remind fathers that they can add any volunteer work that they have done to their resume.
- Before your DTYCTS 2013 event, define and develop ways throughout the upcoming year in which dads can become involved at your school or Head Start.

**RESOURCES****Make Connections: Jobs**

NJ Department of Labor: <http://lwd.dol.state.nj.us/labor/>

Federal Financial Aid: <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/>

NJ Official Employment web site: [www.NJ.gov/nj/employ/](http://www.NJ.gov/nj/employ/)

NJ One-Stop Career Centers: <http://lwd.dol.state.nj.us/labor/wnpjpin/findjob/onestop/services.html>

National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse: [www.fatherhood.gov](http://www.fatherhood.gov)

Jobs4Jersey: <https://webos.dol.state.nj.us/Career/Login.aspx>

**Make Connections: Volunteerism**

National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse: <http://www.fatherhood.gov/get-involved/in-the-community>

New Jersey PTA: <http://www.njpta.org/>

National Fatherhood Initiative: [www.fatherhood.org](http://www.fatherhood.org)

**Make the Connections: Legal Services**

Legal Services of New Jersey [www.LSNJLAW.org](http://www.LSNJLAW.org)

LSNJ-LAW – statewide toll free hotline 1-888-LSNJ-Law/1-888-576-5529

**Make Connections: Literacy**

Imagination Library: [www.imaginationlibrary.com](http://www.imaginationlibrary.com)

Find your local public library in New Jersey: <http://ldb.njstatelib.org/Reference/index.php>

## **RESOURCES cont'd**

National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse: <http://www.fatherhood.gov/get-involved/with-school>

Reading is Fundamental (available in Spanish) [http://www.rif.org/kids/leer/en/leerhome\\_english.htm](http://www.rif.org/kids/leer/en/leerhome_english.htm)

### **Make Connections: Finances**

Child Support: <http://www.njchildsupport.org/>

SmartyPig: <http://www.smartypig.com/>

Mint.com: <https://www.mint.com/>

New Jersey State's 529 College Savings Program: <https://www.NJBEST.COM/saving-for-college/>

New Jersey State Community Action Association <http://www.njcaanet.org/>

New Jersey Bureau of Securities: <http://www.njsecurities.gov/>

The Financial Clinic: <http://www.thefinancialclinic.org>

Seedco: <http://www.seedco.org/>



# NEXT STEPS: INVOLVING FATHERS YEAR-ROUND

Not only is involving men and fathers in DTYCTS day important, but it is also important that fathers and men remain involved throughout the school year. It is important to provide specific jobs with specific time frames and to reinforce the value of their involvement in the school community.

## **DURING DTYCTS DAY:**

### **Be organized**

- Have a sign-in sheet so that you can capture who and how many dads participated.
- Have additional sign-up sheets for future volunteer opportunities ready.
- Survey dads to find out their expertise/hidden talent for future activities (i.e. workshops, career day, etc.). Then, go through the surveys each month to see how the dads can help with upcoming events.

### **Be social**

- Plan a short program in a meeting room or auditorium for parents after they have dropped off their children. If possible include coffee, juice and cookies.
- Allow time for the parents that are coming to the school to meet each other with a mixer.
- Encourage dads to take their child to school, even if they have to leave right away, but also offer breakfast and other activities for those who stay.

### **Have fun!**

- If possible, set up a picture booth for parents to take pictures with their children. Print the pictures during the program so that dads can take them home.
- Think outside the box! For example, one school created a "Victory Lap" where fathers and their children walked around the school (inside because it was raining) chanting "I'm glad you're my kid," and "I'm glad you're my dad." Another school had fathers participate in the school-day by making the morning announcements over the PA system.

### **Commemorate**

- Provide commitment cards for fathers that would like to be more involved; have them list specific examples of how they could help at the school.
- Create a letter, note, button, sticker, or T-shirt that says "I took my child to school today" to hand out to dads and/or male caregivers as they come through your school or Head Start doors.
- Provide Certificates of Participation to recognize dads (see page 11).

## **KEEPING DAD INVOLVED AFTER DTYCTS:**

### **Roles at School**

- Encourage and ask fathers to participate in PTA /PTO or Head Start Policy Council.
- Encourage fathers to volunteer as hall monitors in the school.
- Involve men in school beautification projects such as landscaping, painting, refurbishing, or building project at the school.
- Remember that not all dads want to do hands-on projects. Consider how you could use other skills such as accounting, and drawing or computer skills.

### **Helping with School Events**

- Recruit men to speak to students about their career or job.
- Ask fathers for help in putting on a student talent showcase; helping with programming, staging, set building, lighting, ushering and other preparations.
- Encourage fathers to read to classes and encourage them to continue reading with their child at home.
- Organize a father-daughter dance to help fathers bond with their daughters.

### **Community Building/Strengthening**

- Bring in dads from the local police department and bike shops to encourage bike safety, teach rules of the road, give bike tune-ups, and hold riding proficiency competitions.
- Develop a lunch buddies or breakfast buddies program where fathers or mentors eat breakfast or lunch with their child/mentee weekly or monthly.
- Ask fathers to volunteer at a family festival, helping with tickets, rides, games, concessions, etc.
- Consider making a group trip to a semi-professional or college ballgame a daddy-daughter or father-son outing.
- Organize dads vs. teachers sports competition that students can attend.