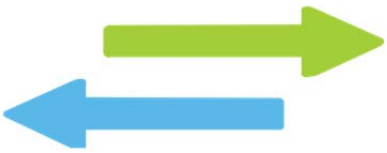
Fathers have a history of being underrepresented in child welfare, both in terms of their decision making and their involvement with their children. Federal, state and local governments have been making valiant attempts to address this issue in a number of ways. For the purpose of clarification, father engagement and father involvement is defined below, although you may define it differently for your purposes. The lists are not exhaustive, however, they do provide examples of things that can be measured and tracked.

Father Engagement – The process whereby a father is actively participating in the child welfare department. Engagement is sustained over a period of time, determined by the agency or organization. It is not a one-time only phenomenon. Perhaps he might be:

- Having regular correspondence with social work staff
- Participating in the case plan development process
- Providing pertinent information related to the development of a court report
- Participating in Team Decision Meetings and Family Group Decision Meetings
- Working with social work staff to identify paternal relatives as prospective placement options

This participation may have been at the request of and/or during outreach by social work staff or at the initiation of the father himself.



Engagement is a reciprocal process and occurs over time

Father Involvement – The process whereby a father is actively participating in activities with his child(ren), social work staff, or social work organizations. Involvement does not necessarily have to be sustained over time, but it could be. It can also be a one-time only phenomenon, but doesn't necessarily have to be. Perhaps he might be:

- Infrequently present, moderately present or frequently present in the life of his child(ren)
- Visiting with his child(ren) infrequently, moderately frequently or regularly frequent

- Visiting with his social work staff infrequently, moderately frequently or regularly frequent
- Participating in school activities
- Purchasing gifts for birthday, holiday and other special occasions
- Taking his child(ren) to daycare and participating in daycare activities
- Putting his child(ren) to bed at night
- Paying child support, etc.