

"DAD'S MATTER"
A PARENT PEER MENTORING PILOT PROJECT

SCOPE OF THE PROJECT

Dad's Matter is parent engagement strategy to strengthen protective factors in high need African American families with young children. This pilot family engagement project will further align OhioMHAS health promotion strategies and community supports with the goal of Ohio's Early Learning Challenge Race to-the-Top Grant to increase kindergarten and school readiness. The pilot is co-sponsored by the Governor's Office of 21st Century Education Early Education. Community partners include the "Ready to Read" Early Literacy program sponsored by the public libraries and area child care and referral agencies.

Utilizing a parent peer mentor approach, the Dad's Matter mentors will identify and engage fathers in their natural environment to guide, support and equip them with tools to be more engaged parents. Early childhood research points to the importance of the role of parents and other caregivers as continuous teachers to their children. Enrolling children in high quality preschool settings and parent involvement in their children's learning are key factors supporting children's kindergarten readiness. The Dad's Matter program supports both of these outcomes by teaching fathers to be more involved in the early literacy effects that are predictive of children's school success.

To support improved outcomes for kindergarten and school readiness, Dad's Matter mentors will coach fathers in the importance of reading and literacy, thereby increasing quality time with their young children. Interactions with targeted fathers will occur in community setting such as public libraries where they can gain access to the resources of the library, such as print (age appropriate books), electronic (computers) and digital (applications and websites). Additional settings may include children's museums, boys and girls clubs, churches and other easily accessible, (no cost) community settings.

The parent peer mentor approach was selected based upon feedback obtained in parent focus groups that they many parents feel more comfortable with people who are most like them whom they believe will not judge them and truly support them. The pilot is targeting to serve 60 fathers in FY 2015. The initial pilot site is Franklin County, with a view to implement one other site for comparison data.

Evaluation of the Dad's Matter Parent Engagement Strategy will focus on pre and post measures of the number of hours fathers read with children; the number of books currently in the home; the frequency of interactive activities fathers have with their children, fathers involvement with their child's teacher; and a behavioral measure of fathers motivation to be more involved in their children's development and wellness. The goal of the project is to determine the extent to which these father engagement outcomes have been improved.

For More Information about the Dad's Matter Project Contact:

Valerie Alloy, Ph.D.

Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services

Bureau of Children & Families

30 East Broad St. 8th Floor

Columbus, Ohio 43215

614-728-0251 desk, 614-644-5331 fax