



PROVIDING DADS WITH AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE CHILD SUPPORT SYSTEM

Organization profile

Family Strides, Inc. is a 501©3 tax exempt organization located in northwest Connecticut, providing services to enhance opportunities for families to grow and develop through ongoing education and support. Family Strides partners with families and communities to ensure healthy pregnancy outcomes and positive parenting practices in order to strengthen families and reduce the incidence of child abuse and neglect.

The Challenge

Family Strides was seeing a pattern in its community – the only place that was serving fathers was the child support system, and the only place to send fathers who were not paying child support was prison. They also saw a challenge with the fathers they wanted to serve; the dads thought that the only responsibility they had was to pay child support or otherwise provide financially to their children.

The Solution

To address these challenges, Family Strides, led by Emil Renzullo, wanted to provide “another option” in the community where dads could turn for help. They also wanted to help dads see that the role they play in their children’s lives is much more than just paying child support.

So, they began running NFI’s 24/7 Dad® program, supplementing it with material from the community, such as inspiring or educational news stories. Its emphasis on the well-being of children compelled Family Strides to choose 24/7 Dad® in particular. Additionally, the program helps dads look at their own backgrounds to help them understand how their history effects their fathering. This was especially helpful for the population Family Strides wanted to work with, as many of the fathers came from disadvantaged backgrounds and had very little knowledge or experience in parenting.

Today, Family Strides runs 24/7 Dad® under the banner of its “Father Involvement Program” as a thirteen-week class designed to provide fathers with experiences that will lead to a more rewarding relationship with their children.

The Benefits

The flexibility and effectiveness of 24/7 Dad® allows Family Strides to help dads be better fathers and prepare them to benefit from other important services in the community, such as employment agencies, Head Starts, and hospitals. 24/7 Dad® anchors a program that focuses on child development education, employment assistance, job readiness skills, case management, and referrals available for any interested father or father figure.

Most importantly, the program has allowed the facilitator, Emil, to build strong, trusting relationships with the fathers he has worked with. The greatest testimony to this fact is that over 200 of the dads Emil had worked with attended his son’s funeral after his son passed away at the age of 12.

NFI Products and Services Used

- [24/7 Dad®](#)

Services provided by other groups or companies

Dads are referred to Family Strides' program from:

- Family courts
- Hospitals
- Employment agencies
- Head Starts
- Other community-based organizations