



How to Use **24:7 DAD**[®] with Teen Dads

GROUP-BASED AND
ONE-ON-ONE DELIVERY

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**National
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Introduction

Welcome! We're so pleased you acquired the 24:7 Dad® program, the most widely used fatherhood program in the country.

Because more organizations than ever use the program with teen dads (ages 13-19), we created this guide to provide tips on using 24:7 Dad® (A.M. and P.M.) effectively with this often underserved group of dads. The content draws from interviews with seasoned program facilitators in organizations that serve teen dads.

How to Use this Guide

This isn't a comprehensive guide on how to effectively serve teen dads. It doesn't address all the challenges they can face (e.g., difficulty paying child support, finding employment, staying in school, and the shock of suddenly transitioning from boyhood to parenthood). There are other resources that can help you learn how to address those challenges.

This guide focuses instead on advice and guidance in the form of tips to help you effectively facilitate a specific program—24:7 Dad®—with teen dads. The good news is that in applying the tips, you'll undoubtedly help teen dads with the broader challenges they face.

Using this guide is quite simple.

- Step 1: Read through the tips. Although each tip is numbered, a tip's number doesn't reflect its importance. Tip #1 is no more important than Tip #2, Tip #3, etc.
- Step 2: Reflect on how you can apply the tips by going through each program session and identifying whether specific tips apply to that session and, if so, how you'll apply them.
- Step 3: Record detailed notes in your Facilitator's Manual (or wherever you would like to record notes to guide you in facilitating the program) on how you'll apply them.

With that simple use in mind, it's time to read the rest of this guide!

“I don’t customize it. I use it as written and laid out. Each module or chapter as it is written, ordered. That’s because teen dads can relate to all of the topics, such as Family History and what they remember about how they were raised.”

Marcus G.,
Pennsylvania



Tips

Tip #1: You don’t need to customize the content!

The knowledge and skills contained in the program are as important to a teen dad as a dad of any age.

- **You might have to customize the length of sessions or the entire program, however, depending on the setting in which you’ll deliver it.** If you’ll deliver the program in a high school, for example, you might be restricted to 45-60 minutes (often a typical length of a high school class). In that case, some facilitators break each session into two sessions so they can still cover the entire program.
- **As long as your setting allows for delivering of the entire program in two-hour group sessions or one-on-one, you can deliver the program as designed.** If you have less time, refer to the 24:7 Dad® Customization Chart in the Appendix.

Tip #2: Decide whether to not cover some of the content, tailor some content, and which content to emphasize.

Here are three examples of how to apply this tip.

- **Session 12: Dads and Work in the 24:7 Dad® A.M. program covers work-family balance.** If all or most of the teen dads you’ll serve don’t work, you could leave out that session and spend more time on another one. (Keep in mind that although work-family balance might not apply to them now, it almost certainly will in the future.) If you decide to cover it, think about how some of the tips on work-family balance might not apply to the kinds of jobs teen dads tend to have. Point out to the teen dads the nuances in applying some of the tips (e.g., they probably won’t have their own office).
- **Session 4: Knowing Myself in 24:7 Dad® P.M. program includes tips on how to build self-worth in themselves and others.** Because all or most of the teen dads you’ll serve are likely to have infants or young toddlers (or might be expecting a child), the tips on self-worth are especially helpful because they can apply them during their child’s earliest years for maximum benefit. Consider emphasizing them.

To apply this tip, it’s critical to know the teen dads before they start the program. Consider using the Optional Introductory Session. It will help you learn about the teen dads before you take them through Session 1.



Tip #3: Use the content in 24:7 Dad® to help teen dads navigate two of the relationships that challenge so many of them: the relationship with the mother's parents and their own parents.

Both sets of grandparents can be involved and highly influential in decisions about how and where the child is raised, and in the level of the dad's involvement. Teen dads can apply much of the knowledge and skills they'll learn in 24:7 Dad® to develop healthy relationships with their child's grandparents. **Emphasize this point with the dads at the program's start.**

Here are some examples of how to apply this tip using the sessions in the A.M. and P.M. programs on how to effectively communicate and manage emotions.

- **Session 5: Communication in the A.M. program and Session 7: Power and Control in the P.M. program can help teen dads reduce communication problems and the potential for power struggles not only with their child's mother but with their child's grandparents, too.** Indeed, a teen dad can be more prone to communication problems and power struggles with the child's grandparents on mom's side than with the teen mom herself, especially when her parents are, for all intents and purposes, in charge of raising his child.
- **Session 3: Showing and Handling Feelings in the A.M. program and Session 3: Dealing with Anger in the P.M. program can help teen dads manage their reactions to statements and actions of their child's grandparents that can activate a teen dad's hot buttons.** These sessions can also help teen dads articulate how much they care/feel about being involved in their child's life, which can be helpful in convincing a grandparent to be open to and even facilitate teen dads' involvement.
- **Another session in the A.M. program that can be quite helpful in navigating relationships with the child's grandparents is Session 10: Working with Mom and Co-Parenting.** That's because the co-parent(s) might be either the grandmother or, as is increasingly becoming the case, the grandfather on either side. When this is the case, teen dads can apply to this relationship what they learn about resolving differences with the other parent and how to empathize with the other parent's point of view.

“I have shown ‘It’s Not about The Nail,’ a video on YouTube, for levity and to develop rapport around how difficult it is to communicate with partners.”

Johnny W.,
New Mexico

“Teen dads can resist some of the concepts because they think, ‘I got this,’ ‘I can do relationships,’ ‘My parents/older people mess things up.’ We have to sit on a concept longer with the teen dads.”

Johnny W.,
New Mexico

Tip #4: Integrate relevant video, stories, and other content.

Facilitators of 24:7 Dad® often integrate additional videos (other than the videos that come with the program) to illustrate and support its content, regardless of the types of dads they serve.

- Facilitators of the program with teen dads say, however, that using video and other imagery is especially important with these dads because they live in a world dominated by imagery.
 - These facilitators use commercials with positive portrayals of fathers and videos they find on YouTube.
 - No matter the videos you use, ensure they’re relevant to today’s teens (e.g., topics teens struggle with, videos with teens and celebrities teens know, and, if you use commercials, and products they know).
- In addition to video, these facilitators emphasize that when integrating stories or other content (e.g., in publications), be sure it resonates with teen boys.

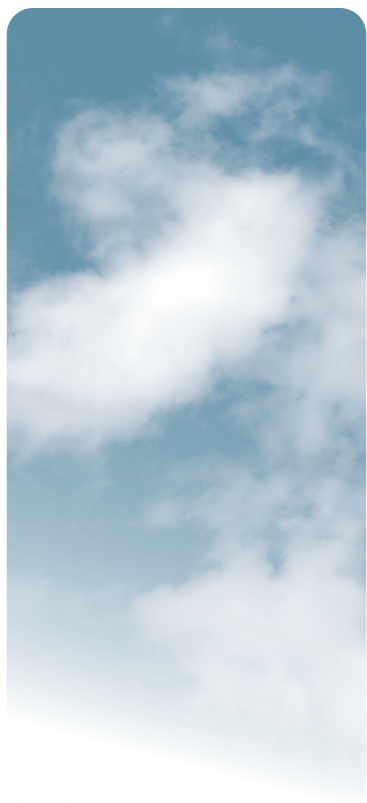
Tip #5: Be aware that teen dads lack life experience.

Compared to older dads, teen dads have less experience to draw upon.

- Compared to older dads, teen dads can have difficulty grasping some of the content. They can have difficulty grasping knowledge and skills associated with communication, for example, because their relationships at this time in their life have necessarily been short-term. They’ve had less experience communicating with others, including the mother of their child, in an adult manner. You’ll teach them knowledge and skills that might be completely foreign to them. They’re likely to know next to nothing about being a good parent or father.
- This lack of life experience can lead to overconfidence. Some teen dads believe, for example, that they know how to properly behave (e.g., communicate) in their relationship with the mother of their children and others (e.g., the parents of the mother of their child). As a result, you might have to spend more time on some topics than you would with older dads.

Tip #6: Leverage teen dads’ optimism, “present orientation,” and place in the “Golden Moment.”

- As a result of their lack of life experience, teen dads can be more optimistic about the possibility of being a good father. Facilitators of the program with teen dads say that because these dads tend to be less “jaded” than older dads, teen dads see more possibility in becoming involved in their child’s life and being a good co-parent. They can also be more optimistic about the mother’s (or primary caregiver’s) desire for them to be involved.



“They’re a lot more childish. You have to allow room for them to go farther off topic. With teens, they digress a lot. So you have to digress with them and then bring them back. Most of the teens’ issues are present tense. With older fathers, their issues might be past, present, or future. Teen dads have a lot of present and ‘right now’ issues.”

Shawn C.,
Ohio

- **This optimism can lead them to be very interested in and hungry for learning the knowledge (e.g., child development) and skills (e.g., communication) to facilitate their involvement.** Indeed, facilitators of the program with teen dads say that these dads are more open than older dads to new information and ways to think and behave. They can be more open, for example, to challenging their beliefs on healthy masculinity.
- **Teen dads tend to be focused on the present, the here and now.** This orientation can be an advantage when asking them, for example, to recall information. They’re living the past that older dads must recall. As long as teen dads are honest about their experiences, their memories are likely to be more accurate.
- **Teen dads are often motivated to be involved in their child’s life—and mothers are more likely to want their involvement—because teen dads are either expecting a child or have recently had a child.** Research shows that dads and moms of all ages are most highly motivated around father involvement during the prenatal and postnatal periods. Leverage this “Golden Moment” to recruit teen dads’ into the program and maintain their participation. Facilitators of the program with teen dads often leverage this motivation by recruiting heavily through word-of-mouth (teen dad to teen dad) and through teen moms and the programs that serve teen moms.

Tip #7: Create hedges to deal with teen dads’ immaturity.

Nearly every facilitator of the program with teen dads says that dealing with immaturity is one of the primary differences in facilitating the program with them. **Because of their immaturity (both mentally and physically, such as brain development), teen dads can be more prone to:**

- **Digress from the topic.** It’s typically more difficult to keep them on topic. At the same time, facilitators point out that they must allow teen dads to go off topic (because that’s what they do, and it helps to develop rapport with them) and look for opportunities to bring them back on topic as quickly as possible. Consider acquiring NFI’s Effective Facilitation Certificate™ for guidance on how to keep dads on topic and bring them back quickly when they digress. (For more information on the certificate, visit www.fatherhood.org/efc.)
- **Pound their chest.** For many teen dads, it’s important they appear to already “be a man” and they have it together. It’s difficult for them to acknowledge their lack of maturity. That’s why Session 2: What it Means to be a Man in the 24:7 Dad® A.M. program acts as a hedge. It addresses healthy masculinity head on at the beginning of the program.

“ I find that, at this point in their lives they’re not thinking as much about what the mother’s going through and how to be attentive to the co-parenting piece or how their children view them as a father figure. They’re more focused on themselves. Everything is immediate with these dads, especially with the influence of social media. So we have to raise their awareness of what the mother is going through and feeling and being proactive within the co-parenting relationship. I have to encourage them to be proactive to resolve issues with the moms by being more self-aware and empathetic.”

Marcus G.,
Pennsylvania

- **Fantasize.** They might be unrealistic about the possibility of their involvement in the life of their child, and the level of involvement they can have. So while their optimism can serve them well, as noted earlier, it can also prevent them from seeing what’s possible. Learning as much as you can about each dad’s situation before he starts the program—and deepening that knowledge as he goes through it—is a hedge. It will help you assess whether a dad is fantasizing and help you bring him back to a more realistic frame of mind.
- **Struggle with abstract thinking.** Facilitators of the program with teen dads emphasize the importance of being very concrete with them. Facilitators said they have to be very specific (e.g., use lots of examples and analogies) and use even more sensory experiences (e.g., hands-on exercises facilitators create) to drive home critical points.
- **Focus on their wants and needs to the exclusion of others’ wants and needs.** Teen dads can tend to not think enough (or at all) about what the mother of their child (or grandparents) is going through—her experience, struggles, wants, and needs. Facilitators of the program with teen dads focus on raising the dads’ awareness of what others are going through, and encourage the dads to be proactive in dealing with issues that arise between them and the mother. Ensuring that you use the sessions on communication and managing emotions in the A.M. and P.M. programs is a hedge, as is Session 10: Working with Mom and Co-Parenting in the A.M. program.

One of the best ways to create hedges is to establish ground rules at the program’s start. Should other issues arise as the program progresses, establish additional ground rules “on the fly.” (Consider using the Optional Introductory Session. It will help you establish ground rules.)

Maintaining confidentiality—what’s said in the room stays in the room—is the ground rule that facilitators said they establish with teen dads. This is especially critical in delivering the program to a group of teen dads. One facilitator said this is especially important because of teen dads’ use of social media and how quickly potentially damaging information can spread across it. He mentioned more than one example of a teen dad who posted on social media what another dad shared in-group that caused problems outside the group.

Tip #8: Get creative to quickly establish and maintain rapport.

Quickly establishing and maintaining rapport is vital with dads of any age. So, use tried-and-true tactics such as sharing personal stories that help teen dads see that you’ve struggled (or still struggle) with the same issues around parenting, relationships, and life in general that they do.

But also get creative with building rapport. Some facilitators of the program with teen dads have gotten creative in building rapport through the use of mobile phones and social media, for example. Some communicate with dads

“One of the teen dads’ biggest needs is how to have more contact with their children. The relationship with their child is directly proportional to the relationship with the mom—their relationship with mom can flow on a daily basis, and I can see this on Facebook. When the relationship is not on, they don’t get to see their children. So they might not come to class when the relationship is off and want to come to class when the relationship is on.”

*Allan S.,
Arizona*

between sessions via text to show how much they care—“Just to checking in and see how you did on the test you were concerned about. How did it go?”

Some facilitators also connect with dads through social media. In some cases, they create an account for the purpose of connecting with the teen dads they are working with. A Facebook (or Instagram) profile helps the teen dads get to know the facilitators as “real people.” This connection also allows the facilitators to get a better, broader picture of what’s happening in the dads’ lives that can even affect the dads’ participation in the program (e.g., relationships with the mom of their children that are on, off, and on again). Knowing what’s happening in the dads’ lives can trigger the facilitator to reach out with a personal touch, such as encouragement to keep attending sessions.

Bonus Tips!

We asked facilitators the following question: If you were to speak with a group of facilitators who were about to start the program with teen dads, what are the most important three things you'd tell them?

Here's what they said!

"First, no matter who walks through the door, you have to meet them where they're at. Some have addiction problems and don't care about school and don't intend to get a job. Second, for most of us grown folks, we might tell them you have to do this, should do that, etc. But that will shut them down—don't direct them to do stuff. Work with them to build the motivation to do stuff—what they need to do to be an involved father. Third, emphasize the value of fatherhood—it's a deep abiding idea. It's worth fighting for, without physical violence, of course."

Johnny W., New Mexico

"First, you have to develop a rapport with young men—you have to get them to trust you. Second, know the audience you're working with. Have awareness of where they're coming from—the dynamics of their home and community—to get to know them as individuals and their setting. Last is consistency. You need to be consistent in terms of being available so the young men can rely on you. Many of them don't have that kind of relationship with their own father or another male. I keep my schedule as tight and consistent as I can. The days I am at a particular site, I will be there, and if not, I text them to tell them I won't be there. Being consistent shows them a model for them being consistent and available with their own children."

Marcus G., Pennsylvania

"Having patience with the group is number one. Number two is don't expect that they know anything. Number three is you have to be relevant in scenarios, stories, and relate to and be vulnerable to them—if not, they bore fast. You have to share your own experience so they identify with you."

Shawn C., Ohio

"First, a lot of teen dads have some improperly diagnosed or misdiagnosed ADHD—they've been medicated, been told that they don't learn right, and that they're not good at school. So they have a poor image of school and classes. I tell them the class is optional, and however they can focus (e.g., doodling or stand up and walk around) is okay. I even provide them material to fidget with. I tell them that whatever helps you to participate is fine to do. Second, meet teen dads where they're at and roll with their resistance, especially if you're a much older facilitator. Offer to invite them to think about the content in the program rather than requiring them to give an answer or opinion. Every dad will have a different need and want something different out of the program, so get to know them individually so you can coach them along the way. And third, always have snacks!"

Allan C., Arizona.

APPENDIX

24:7 Dad® Customization Chart

How to Use

24:7 DAD®
FOURTH EDITION

with Teen Dads

TIME FRAME	SESSION USAGE	AUDIENCE/ SETTING	HOW TO STRUCTURE TIME TOGETHER	BENEFITS	CHALLENGES	IDEAS TO TRY	FIDELITY MAINTAINED
6 Weeks	Maximize use of all 12 sessions and assessment tools	Group-Based	Facilitate 2 sessions per week, spending 2 hours facilitating each session. Follow each step in the Session Guide as detailed. Have fathers fill out the Fathering Survey™ at the beginning of the 1st session and the end of the 12th session.	This is an attractive option for dads who are mandated by court to attend the program. Men can accomplish their goals in a shorter time frame. This option can help with retention because fathers see the duration as 6 weeks instead of 12 weeks.	Deciding how to handle dads who want to enroll after the 1st or 2nd session; finding a dedicated and skilled facilitator; less time for the facilitator to prepare for the next session. This strategy can be more difficult for participants to process and apply program concepts as compared to having one session per week.	<p>For dads who want to enroll after the first or second session, you might want to first consult with the group to see if they have any concerns. Then, consider delivering the missed sessions to the father using 24:7 Dad® in a one-on-one setting until he's up to the current group session.</p> <p>If you don't have a dedicated and skilled facilitator on staff who can deliver the program, consider approaching your board members with the task of finding someone. Getting involved on other organizational boards can also be a great way to find a skilled facilitator looking to help dads. You should offer a stipend to the facilitator for their time and make sure the facility and food/beverages are coordinated.</p> <p>A suggestion to increase preparation time between sessions is to schedule them on either Mondays and Wednesdays or Tuesdays and Thursdays. This strategy will provide equal time to prepare between the two weekly sessions (Remember, that first and foremost, you must be sensitive to the dads' schedules).</p>	Yes
8 Weeks	Choice of any 8 of the 12 sessions.	Group-Based	Spend 2 hours facilitating each session once per week. Follow each step in the Session Guide as detailed.	This option works if you only have the opportunity to meet once per week for 8 weeks. Sometimes referral partners, funders, or dads can make this program format the only viable option.	Not able to use the Fathering Survey™; deciding which sessions to eliminate; evaluating impact.	<p>One way to inform which sessions to select is by getting feedback from dads during the first session on which of the other sessions are most meaningful to them. You should make sure to use the closing evaluation questions found at the end of each session in the Session Guide to help assess the participants' learning competencies. You should also work with an evaluator to create some kind of pre/post assessment or post-reflective assessment since you are not able to use the Fathering Survey™ with this option.</p>	No

TIME FRAME	SESSION USAGE	AUDIENCE/ SETTING	HOW TO STRUCTURE TIME TOGETHER	BENEFITS	CHALLENGES	IDEAS TO TRY	FIDELITY MAINTAINED
12 Weeks	Maximize use of all 12 sessions and assessment tools	Group-Based	Spend 2 hours facilitating each session once per week. Follow each step in the Session Guide as detailed. Have fathers fill out the Fathering Survey™ at the beginning of the 1st session and the end of the 12th session.	This option best fits with how NFI designed 24:7 Dad®. You can use the instructions and worksheets for the assessment tools found on the password-protected supporting material webpage for facilitators (www.fatherhood.org/247dad-support-materials) to evaluate knowledge, attitudinal and behavior changes. The option creates the optimal environment for transformation among the individual dads and the entire group.	Getting dads to the 1st session; getting dads to commit to all 12 sessions; deciding how to handle dads who want to enroll after the 1st or 2nd session; finding a dedicated and skilled facilitator.	For getting dads to the first session, see recruitment strategies (Chapter 5 of the Facilitator's Manual - Program Guide section). For getting dads to commit, see retention strategies in the same section. For dads who want to enroll after the first or second session, you might want to first consult with the group to see if they have any concerns. Then, consider delivering the missed sessions to the dads using 24:7 Dad® in a one-on-one setting until he's up to the current group session. If you don't have a dedicated and skilled facilitator on staff who can deliver the program, consider approaching your board members with the task of finding someone. Getting involved on other organizational boards can also be a great way to find a skilled facilitator looking to help dads. You should offer a stipend to the facilitator for their time and make sure the facility and food and beverages are coordinated.	Yes
24 Weeks	Maximize use of all 12 sessions and assessment tools	Group-Based	Divide each session into 2 equal segments at the break. Spend 1 hour facilitating each session once per week. Follow each step in the Session Guide as detailed. Have dads fill out the Fathering Survey™ at the beginning of the 1st session and the end of the 24th session.	This requires less time commitment per week and is easier for dads to work into their schedule.	Program length will take 24 weeks instead of 12 weeks.	Consider doing 1 hour sessions twice a week to shorten the length of the program to 12 weeks. Remember to ask the dads in your program and community what will work best for them.	Yes

TIME FRAME	SESSION USAGE	AUDIENCE/ SETTING	HOW TO STRUCTURE TIME TOGETHER	BENEFITS	CHALLENGES	IDEAS TO TRY	FIDELITY MAINTAINED
2 Weekend Retreats	Maximize use of all 12 sessions and assessment tools	Group-Based	<p>Choose a weekend during a particular month (i.e., Friday night through Sunday afternoon) and cover sessions 1-6.</p> <p>Choose a weekend the following month and cover sessions 7-12.</p>	<p>This option works great for programs that already offer weekend retreats for men. 24:7 Dad® provides a way to effectively evaluate the progress of the men in a setting that has limited distractions and interruptions.</p>	<p>Getting dads to commit to two weekends in two months; breaking up the sessions so that dads still have time to do other activities.</p>	<p>Survey dads connected to your organization to find out what would be the specific barriers to attending both weekends and what would motivate them to come. You can then make sure you're offering the elements (e.g., activities, location, guest speakers) that would be attractive to your target audience.</p> <p>To break up the sessions most effectively, consider doing one session Friday night, cover three sessions Saturday morning, give them Saturday afternoon and evening to themselves then finish the last 2 sessions Sunday morning.</p>	Yes
Meetings as Scheduled (i.e., Home Visitation) Consider Using the Facilitator's Manual for One-on-One Delivery	Maximize use of all 12 sessions and assessment tools; or use select sessions	One-on-One	<p>Divide each session into 2 equal segments at the break. Decide how often you can meet.</p> <p>Spend 30-45 minutes facilitating each session. Follow each step in the Session Guide making minor modifications to the group activities as needed. Have dads fill out the Fathering Survey™ at the beginning of the 1st session and the end of the 12th session</p>	<p>If you're already providing counseling, mentoring or other one-on-one services, this option will interface with what you are already doing. You can use all of the 24:7 Dad® assessment tools to evaluate outcomes.</p>	<p>Compensating for the lack of group interaction; ensuring the dad is responding beyond a superficial level.</p>	<p>Consider facilitating a group version that dads can move into after they get comfortable with the topics in 24:7 Dad®. You could, for example, use the 24:7 Dad® A.M. program in a one-on-one setting and the P.M. program in a group setting. If you're providing one-on-one interaction to several dads, create a fun activity for them to do as a small group. Eventually, they might be open to creating one small group, rather than multiple one-on-one situations.</p>	Yes, if you conduct all sessions in order.
Periodic Workshops	Select session(s)	Large Event	<p>Choose the appropriate topic (i.e., if you're asked to present a workshop as part of a domestic violence event, you might choose Session 3 from the A.M. program "Showing and Handling Feelings"). Decide if you can cover all the activities within your scheduled time. If you don't have enough time, pull out the activity you think will have the greatest impact and cover the other points through facilitation or lecture.</p>	<p>You can leverage these community events to get the word out about the 24:7 Dad® program. If you're running an on-going 24:7 Dad® group, this might be a way to recruit other dads from the community.</p>	<p>You will not be able to use or make full use of the Fathering Handbooks or assessment tools. Dads won't experience the transformation that occurs by going through the entire 24:7 Dad® program.</p>	<p>Consider offering periodic workshops in the same order that they fall within the 24:7 Dad® program. Start with Session 1 and move through the other sessions numerically. This strategy might allow you, at some point, to change from periodic workshops to an ongoing, weekly support group.</p>	No