



Guide to **MENTORING FATHERS**

**National
Fatherhood
Initiative®**

© 2016, 2018, 2022 National Fatherhood Initiative®
www.fatherhood.org | www.fathersource.org
info@fatherhood.org | 301.948.0599

About National Fatherhood Initiative®

Because every child deserves 24:7 Dad.SM

National Fatherhood Initiative® (NFI) is the nation's leading non-profit organization working to end father absence. Underlying many of society's most pressing challenges is a lack of father involvement in their children's lives.

Our Mission

NFI's mission is to increase father involvement by equipping communities and human service organizations with the father-engagement training, programs, and resources they need to be father-inclusive.

Our Vision

NFI's vision is that all communities and human service organizations are proactively father-inclusive so that every child has an involved, responsible, and committed father in their lives.

To see more about our mission, our partners, our impact, and how we can help you engage fathers, please visit www.fatherhood.org

For fatherhood and family resources, including programs, resources, and other helpful materials, please visit www.fathersource.org.



Table of Contents

About National Fatherhood Initiative®	2
About Guide to Mentoring Fathers	4
Getting Started	5
Mentoring Pledge	6
Mentoring Fathers 101	7
Mentoring Activities	9
Ways NFI Can Help You Help Fathers	10

About Guide to Mentoring Fathers

National Fatherhood Initiative®'s Guide to Mentoring Fathers encourages you, the experienced dad, to mentor other fathers within your “circle of influence” (i.e. your social networks).

From dads who still care for their own children to seasoned “grandpas,” fathers of all types can make a difference. By tapping into your reservoir of fatherhood knowledge, you can offer your time to other fathers in need of guidance. It doesn't take a lot of time to make a difference either; by giving just a few minutes a week, you can make a difference.

Many men, especially young men, have become fathers without understanding the responsibility and commitment that is involved in raising children. Some fathers may have not had the guidance of their own father, and could benefit from your fatherhood experience.

Whether it's reaching out to a dad with whom you are already close, or by volunteering time to work at a mentoring organization, you can ultimately help increase the chances of children succeeding in life and help National Fatherhood Initiative® (NFI) combat the father absence crisis.



Getting Started

A mentor to another father is someone who is involved, responsible, and committed.

INVOLVED—he gives of his time and is interested in the well-being of the father he mentors.

RESPONSIBLE—he is a good role model (in his personal and professional life) for a father and takes care to keep those he mentors safe from physical and emotional danger.

COMMITTED—he is reliable and keeps his promises.

Coaches, teachers, neighbors, coworkers, and lots of other people mentor fathers within their personal and professional networks. You can be a mentor for a father in your personal (social and professional) networks—someone you already know or to whom you're connected through a family member, friend, acquaintance, or organization.

As a mentor to a father, NFI asks you to give a minimum of 12 hours in a year—just a few minutes each week to...

- Help another father you know by teaching him what you've learned and know about being an involved, responsible, and committed father.

To get started, sign the pledge on the following page, and start thinking about the context in which you might most enjoy serving as a mentor to a father.

Can you think of a father in your family, neighborhood, faith community, workplace, or elsewhere in your circle of influence who might be in need?

The Pledge

I, _____,
have committed to being a mentor to a father.

As a mentor, I will do my best to protect, nurture, and guide the father I choose to mentor. This pledge includes looking out for the fathers' safety and well-being.

I will model involved, responsible, and committed fatherhood. I will lead by example and avoid activities or behaviors that would not set a good precedent for a father I choose to mentor.

I will keep my commitment to the father I choose to mentor, and I will strive to mentor with integrity.

I desire to never stop growing and learning how to be a better father, mentor, and friend.

Signed: _____

Date: _____



Mentoring Fathers 101

Find a Father in Your Circle of Influence

You probably know dozens of other fathers. These men are in your “circle of influence” (social and professional networks) and are great places to start looking for another father to mentor.

Think about a father who is part of your extended family, a father in your neighborhood, a father who attends your place or worship, or a father who is a coworker. Have any of these men mentioned, even in passing, that they have challenges with their children?

Remember that fathers—and men in general—are not as likely to open up about their parenting struggles. So, you may have to become a private investigator of sorts to figure out if there is a way for you to help a father, one-on-one.

On the other hand, you might have a friend who’s been forthcoming and brutally honest about his parenting struggles—perhaps he has a teenager who’s using drugs or a child who’s acting up in school. Are these problems you’ve already lived through as a seasoned father? Or are these challenges that, using some of NFI resources, you could read and learn more about in order to help this other father?

Start Being Helpful

You don’t need permission to be helpful. There doesn’t have to be a proposal and contract agreement involved. After you find a father to mentor, you don’t have to tell him that he’s your “volunteer project.”

Indeed, it might be best to simply enter into an informal mentoring relationship without mentioning the word “mentoring.” He might be reluctant to open up if he thinks you want to help him because he’s “in need.”

Approach him as a friend.

Let the mentoring part come naturally as your relationship builds. As part of your initial approach, simply tell him that you’ve had some experience as a father, and that you would welcome the opportunity to talk with him about what he’s going through. Chances are when approached in this non-threatening way, he will welcome your support and friendship.

Mentoring Fathers 101

Save Your Advice for Later

Building a solid mentoring relationship takes time. In fact, research shows that the most effective mentoring relationships last at least one year. Your first and most vital job is to build trust between you and the father you're helping.

No one cares how much you know until they know how much you care. So don't rush to be the mentor a father never had. Resist the notion of offering advice and guidance right off the bat. You'll know when you've reached a healthy level of trust with your mentee when he seeks you out for advice or asks you questions about the challenges he's facing.

Crossing Generational Lines

If there is a large gap in age between you and the father you want to mentor, keep in mind that different generations have different ways of viewing the world.

The world of fathering is rapidly changing. Men are becoming fathers at older ages than ever before. It's not uncommon today to encounter many fathers in their 40's and 50's with toddlers running around the house.

The role of the father has changed dramatically in recent years. The average amount of time that fathers dedicate to the primary care of their children has increased. So too has the amount of time they dedicate to doing housework. Before you give advice to a much younger father, take the time to listen to and explore his world and the world of his child. After you understand where he's coming from, you'll be in a better place to provide useful guidance that he'll accept.

Encourage, Encourage, Encourage

Every father needs encouragement. Encourage the father you're helping to keep pressing forward. Everybody needs to feel like someone believes in them.

Every father needs encouragement.

Mentoring Activities

Here are a number of helpful activities that can provide the context in which to mentor a father.

Even though you might already have some idea about the activities you want to do, consider doing these activities together:

- Attend sporting events
- Play sports like basketball, tennis, and golf
- Go running or biking
- Visit a museum
- Attend a play or movie
- Make a phone call to ask about his day
- Have lunch or coffee together
- Visit him at home to sit outside and catch up
- Throw the football or play catch
- Invite his family to dinner
- Email or text him on a weekly or at least monthly basis
- Go fishing or boating
- Invite him to church, synagogue, mosque, or other house of worship (if you attend), or to another organized group you are part of



Ways NFI Can Help You Help Fathers

Get The Facts on Father Absence

There is a father absence crisis in America. [Get the facts on father absence](#) so you can know yourself and share with others “the why” behind your mission to help fathers understand how vital their role is in the family.

Share Free Resources

NFI has several free resources that can help a father you mentor. (And they can even help you with your own fathering.) Browse for free resources in our [Learning Center](#) by resource type to find resources to use. One of our most popular resources is [5 Questions Every 24:7 Dad Asks](#), a free guide you can download.

Reach Out to New Fathers

If you have a special interest in working with new fathers, consider running our [24:7 Dad®](#) or the [24:7 Dad® Key Behaviors Workshop](#) in your community. You can also distribute NFI’s print resources, which include [tip cards](#) and [brochures](#). They also include [pocket guides](#) that help new dads navigate the critical first years of their child's life. The guides include the [New Dad’s Pocket Guide™](#) and [Help Me Grow Guides™](#).

Reach Fathers at Your Workplace

Talk to your human resources department about starting a “working dads” club or lunch group. Ask if you can bring together working fathers who can learn from each other. Encourage your HR department to purchase resources from www.fathersource.org, such as the resources listed above that provide guidance on how to be a great father around the clock.

You should also consider running an NFI program—such as [24:7 Dad®](#) or [The 24:7 Dad® Key Behaviors Workshop](#)—or any of our [FatherTopics™](#) [Booster Sessions](#).

Ways NFI Can Help You Help Fathers

Reach Fathers in Your Community

Tell fathers in your community about NFI's Learning Center and encourage them to sign up to be a mentor to a fatherless child or another father. Consider meeting monthly to share ideas for mentoring activities, and the successes and challenges of being a mentor. You could also consider running NFI's programs and distribute any of the resources mentioned earlier.

Reach Fathers in Your Faith Community

Do you attend church regularly? Talk with your faith leader(s) about mentoring men in your community of faith. You can use any of our fatherhood programs in that setting.

Reach Out to Incarcerated Fathers

Interested in reaching out to incarcerated fathers? NFI has a program called [InsideOut Dad](#)[®]. Some prisons and jails allow volunteers to come in and run the program. Contact the administrators at a local facility to find out what you need to do to facilitate the program. Use our [Fatherhood Program Locator](#)[™] to find a program.

Find an Existing Fatherhood Program and Volunteer

Identify an existing fatherhood program in your community and volunteer to work with the fathers they serve. Many fatherhood programs across the country operate on small budgets and, as a consequence, welcome volunteers.

Ideas to pitch include helping them facilitate a fatherhood program they run, helping them hand out fatherhood resources at a community event that attracts fathers, or contributing any of your other personal or professional skills or talents to their work.

Start a New Fatherhood Program in Your Community

If you're ambitious, consider starting a fatherhood program or organization. Some people ask a local non-profit to sponsor a new fatherhood program or organization (e.g., providing an office for an individual and space in which to conduct an NFI program such as 24:7 Dad[®]) until the program or organization can support itself with its own funding. You can learn more about starting a fatherhood program by using NFI's free guide [7 Steps to Starting a Successful Fatherhood Program](#).