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INFORMATION MEMORANDUM

TO: All Head Start Grantee and Delegate Agencies

SUBJECT: Head Start's Father's Day Communication in Support of Responsible Fatherhood

INFORMATION:

As the Office of Head Start (OHS) continues to implement the Head Start Roadmap to Excellence, our initiative to raise the level of quality across all of our Head Start programs, this Father's Day gives us an opportunity to underscore the important role that fathers play in the lives of the children we serve.

Included in the Head Start Roadmap to Excellence is the launch of a family engagement initiative designed to partner with parents and families around children's learning, to ensure the relationships between parents and children are as strong as they can be, and to set the foundation for lifelong involvement in their children's education by strengthening families' roles as the primary educators of their children. This family engagement initiative highlights the varied ways to engage families and broadens our vision of family engagement to one that is more multi-dimensional and one that is more responsive to the realities of parents and families coming to our programs.

As we continue to provide training to local programs on the best approaches for working with families, OHS has launched four new National Training and Technical Assistance Centers as part of its redesigned training and technical assistance system. The National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement will be providing best practices and guidance to programs as they work with fathers in promoting the long-term success of their children.

Also, programs are guided by the Head Start Program Performance Standards, which require local programs to engage families in their child's learning.

Father's Day provides yet another opportunity to celebrate the valuable contributions that Head Start and Early Head Start dads, uncles, grandfathers, and other male figures across the country make in local programs. Fathers and grandfathers are sitting on policy boards, participating in parent-teacher home visits, parent education groups, and activities designed to support their children as they make the transition to Kindergarten. Research tells us that children with involved, loving fathers are significantly more likely to do well in school, have healthy self-esteem, exhibit empathy and pro-social behavior compared to children who have uninvolved fathers. Committed and responsible fathering during infancy and early childhood contributes to emotional security, curiosity, and math and verbal skills.

In June 2010, President Obama called for a national conversation on responsible fatherhood and healthy families saying that, "We need fathers to realize that responsibility does not end at conception. We need them to realize that what makes you a man is not the ability to have a child – it's the courage to raise one." OHS shares President Obama's continuing commitment to the promotion of responsible fatherhood and has provided investments in research and evaluation as well as funding demonstration projects to identify, inform, and bring recognition to the significance of fatherhood as it relates to child development.

Last month, we issued an e-blast encouraging programs to participate in the President's current fatherhood initiative. If you have not yet signed on to this effort, please visit the *President's Fatherhood and Mentoring Initiative* website at <http://www.fatherhood.gov/initiative> or, *en Español* - <http://www.fatherhood.gov/iniciativa>.

When you sign up you will receive:

- information about local and national events that support fatherhood and mentorship;
- links to exceptional fatherhood and mentoring resources; and
- access to unique content.

OHS continues to support fatherhood through a variety of strategies, including 24 Healthy Marriage and Families Initiative grants, and two Innovative and Improvement Projects that specifically focus on the promotion of Responsible Fatherhood (Fatherhood First and Las Manos De Apá). Fatherhood is integrated into the ongoing efforts of OHS' national efforts to support parent and family engagement.

For more information about Head Start's fatherhood efforts, you may contact Mia Hendricks, Program Specialist at OHS, at mmia.hendricks@acf.hhs.gov.

In honor of this occasion, I leave you with this message, for a child with an involved father, every day can be a Father's Day. Thank you for your work every day on behalf of children and families.

/ Yvette Sanchez Fuentes /

Yvette Sanchez Fuentes
Director
Office of Head Start