



ENGAGING FATHERS IN THE CHILD WELFARE PROCESS

Non-custodial fathers appear only infrequently in child protection proceedings. Several reasons stand out including difficulty in locating the father, the mother's ambivalent feelings about engaging the father, the social worker's ambivalence about working with the father, state legislation and court rules that may not emphasize engaging the father, the father's reluctance to engage in court proceedings, and a general feeling throughout the court process that a father's participation is not valued.

Judge Leonard Edwards

CRB Checklist to Improve the Engagement of Fathers

1. Check that all possible fathers are identified.
2. If a father has not been identified, ask the caseworker what has been done to identify the father.
3. If the father's location is unknown, ask the mother or other relatives in the review if they know how to locate the father.
4. Make a recommendation that the caseworker follow-up on information gained during the review.
5. Insist that caseworkers use good faith efforts to identify, locate, and support the father throughout the child protection process. Use the "reasonable efforts" finding if necessary and appropriate.
6. Revisit the question of identity and location of the father at all subsequent CRB reviews.
7. When a potential father comes to CRB, let him know that the board is pleased that he has appeared because he is an important person in the child's life. Let him know that once his paternity is established, he will be treated as a parent in all subsequent court and CRB proceedings.
8. Recommend that the caseworker complete the testing for paternity as soon.
9. Make it clear that the father may be a placement possibility for the child.
10. Ensure that the caseworker has identified the father's extended family, informed them about the legal proceedings, and inquired of their willingness to be a placement or service resource for the child.

Note: This list is an adaption of the Judicial Checklist Regarding Engaging Fathers created by Judge Leonard Edwards. Judge Edwards is the author of "[Engaging Fathers in the Child Protection Process: The Judicial Role.](#)" National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges *Juvenile and Family Court Journal*, Volume 60, No. 2, Spring 2009.