

# Taking Care of Business

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**Activity 16-1 What's New?**  10-15 minutes

**Activity 16-2 The Mirror**  10-15 minutes

**Activity 16-3 A Self-Sufficiency Word Game**  15 minutes

Optional Warm-up Activity:

**Activity 16-4 What Does It Mean to "Take Care of Business"?**  30-40 minutes

**Activity 16-5 My One-Year Plan**  35 minutes

**Activity 16-6 Feedback/Wrap-up**  10-15 minutes

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## Key Concepts

- A *self-sufficient man* is someone who takes care of his financial, social, and personal needs either alone or with the support of others, such as a partner, family, and friends.
- Personal characteristics that foster self-sufficiency include self-discipline, motivation, and responsibility.
- To become self-sufficient, a father needs the skills to earn a living for himself and his children.
- Becoming self-sufficient involves a process of establishing goals and developing a plan to reach those goals.
- Becoming self-sufficient does not weaken ties with significant others, but it does reduce dependence on others for daily survival.

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## Materials Checklist

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### Activity 16-2 The Mirror

- Large mirror and marker (or newsprint and marker, or chalkboard and chalk)
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### Activity 16-3 A Self-Sufficiency Word Game

- Handout, “A Self-Sufficiency Word Game”
  - Leader Resources, “Word Game Answer Key” and “Indicators of Self-Sufficiency Traits”
  - Pencils (for everyone)
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### Activity 16-4 What Does It Mean to “Take Care of Business”?

- Leader Resource, “Indicators of Self-Sufficiency Traits” (from Activity 16-3)
- Handout, “Self-Sufficiency Inventory”
- Newsprint
- Marker

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Activity **16-5**    **My One-Year Plan**

- Handout, “My One-Year Plan”
- Pencils (for everyone)

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## What's New?

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**Planning Note:** Tailor the following questions so that you are asking the men about specific ideas, concepts, and skills reviewed in Session 15, “The Issue of Race/Racism.”

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### ▼ Discussion Questions

1. Would somebody like to tell the group what he got out of the last session?
2. Did anybody change his ideas about race and how to deal with racism as a result of our discussion last time? How have your ideas changed?
3. Since our last session, has anybody had an experience with his children that raised the issue of race? What happened? Were your responses different from how you might have reacted before we discussed race and racism?
4. Did anyone talk with friends, family members, or others about the issues that came up in our sessions about race? What was it like to discuss these issues?
5. What part of our sessions about race had the greatest impact on you? Why?
6. Do you think that you will change anything about your stand on the issue of race? What will you change?

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## The Mirror

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**Purpose:** To give participants an opportunity to evaluate how well they are doing as men, fathers, and providers.

**Materials:** Large mirror, or newsprint and markers, or blackboard and chalk.

**Time:** 10-15 minutes.

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**Planning Note:** Before this activity, place a large mirror in the front of the room or hang up a sheet of newsprint to serve as the “mirror.” (If necessary, use the chalkboard and chalk.)

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**Procedure:** Tell the men that today they will be talking about the steps to take in order to be in charge of their own lives, or to become *self-sufficient*. Say something like, “We’ve spent several sessions talking about how to keep your jobs so that you can support yourselves and your families. Today we’re going to take this one step further and talk about what it means to be in charge of your own lives, or to be *self-sufficient*. Part of being self-sufficient is being able to take care of your basic needs such as food, housing, clothing, and transportation. What your needs are and how you satisfy them will depend on whether you are alone, are with a spouse or partner, or are part of a family. Today we’ll also look ahead to the future to think about what you’d like to accomplish within the next year. These goals, too, will be influenced by whether you are alone, are in a relationship, or are caring for your children and have family responsibilities. But before we look ahead and set goals, let’s evaluate how well you are doing right now as a man, a father, and a provider.”

**Tell** the men that you would like them to look into the mirror at the front of the room (or, if you don’t have a mirror, to look at the blank sheet of newsprint or at a “frame” you have drawn on the chalkboard). Instruct them individually to “look at yourself,” and think about how well you have lived up to your own definition of manhood and how well you have done as a father and a provider. Anyone who has fallen short of his own expectations should draw a “crack” in the mirror with a marker.

**Remind** the men that they should participate in this activity only if they feel comfortable; this is primarily a time for self-assessment. Then invite each of them to come up to the mirror and assess himself. In asking the following questions, try to get a balance of positive and negative self-evaluation from the group, and remind the men to be constructive in their feedback.

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### ▼ Discussion Questions

1. Would anyone who put a crack in the mirror like to explain what the crack means?
2. If you put a crack in the mirror, what can you do “fix” it? What could you have done differently in the first place, so that the mirror would not be cracked?
3. Would anyone who looked at his reflection and felt good about himself like to talk about why he did not put a crack in the mirror?
4. To what degree did your self-evaluation depend on your ability to take care of your responsibilities as a father?

**Remind** the group that today’s session is about self-sufficiency. Say something like, “In the next activity we are going to talk about what it means to be self-sufficient.” Then go either to the optional warm-up (Activity 16-3) or to Activity 16-4.

## Optional Warm-up Activity

### A Self-Sufficiency Word Game

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**Purpose:** To introduce participants to the concept of self-sufficiency and the qualities that make a person able to take care of his own needs.

**Materials:** Handout, “A Self-Sufficiency Word Game”; Leader Resources, “Word Game Answer Key” and “Indicators of Self-Sufficiency Traits”; pencils (for everyone).

**Time:** 15 minutes.

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**Planning Note:** This session is intended to help the men evaluate what it takes to be able to care for their basic needs and the needs of others they may be responsible for. Although the emphasis is on becoming self-sufficient, help the men understand that how they do this depends on whether or not they are involved in a partnership, family, community, etc. It is equally important to “debunk” the myth that men do not need others for survival. The goal is to help the men understand that self-sufficiency requires the wisdom to know when and how others can support them in their efforts to accomplish their goals.

Use “A Self-Sufficiency Word Game” as a warm-up activity if you think that the men can manage its reading level. If many in the group might be unable to identify the words in the puzzle, move directly to Activity 16-4, “What Does It Mean to ‘Take Care of Business?’”

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**Procedure:** Start the activity by telling the participants that they will play a word game that focuses on the concept of self-sufficiency. First, ask volunteers for a general definition of the word *self-sufficiency*. Emphasize that being self-sufficient includes knowing when to ask for support as well as knowing how to be part of a family or other group of people. Then distribute pencils and the handout “A Self-Sufficiency Word Game.” Explain that at least nine words are hidden within the game that could be used to describe a self-sufficient person. Give one example — the word *employed*, which is already circled on the handout.

**State** that the object of the game is to find and circle five additional words that describe characteristics of a self-sufficient person. Explain that the words may appear normally or backwards, and may also travel up and down. (You might have participants work in pairs, particularly if some have difficulty reading. If your group likes competition, make the game a contest, and award a prize to the first participant or pair that finds five words.)

**After** one person (or pair) has found five words, stop the game, and ask the winner to list and define the five words. (Award the prize if the game was played as a competition.) Then ask the other men if they found any other words. After you have discussed all the words identified by participants, conduct a brief brainstorming activity to get the men to identify any other important qualities of self-sufficiency. Use the Leader Resource “Word Game Answer Key” to point out words that were not found. Have the men give examples (or “indicators”) of all nine self-sufficiency characteristics. Use the Leader Resource “Indicators of Self-Sufficiency Traits” to provide additional information and examples.

**After** you have discussed the meaning of all nine self-sufficiency characteristics and have identified examples (or indicators) for each, discuss the activity by asking the following questions.

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**▼ Discussion Questions**

1. How do the words that you identified in the word game relate to being able to provide for yourself and your family?
2. Which of these words describes you?
3. In what ways are you able to take care of yourself?
4. How do you think your life will change as you become better at taking care of your own needs?
5. What will you have to do to become self-sufficient?
6. What does it mean to say that a self-sufficient person knows when and how to ask for support from others? Does a self-sufficient person ever need help?
7. What is the difference between getting support from others and having others “do for you”?
8. Which people in your life do you feel are self-sufficient? What qualities do these people have that make them self-sufficient?

## A Self-Sufficiency Word Game

**Directions:** There are at least nine words in this puzzle that might describe a person who is self-sufficient. The words can be formed vertically (up and down), or horizontally (across, from left to right or from right to left). Your task is to find five words. When you find a word, circle it, and write it in the blank spaces below the puzzle.

D E N I L P I C S I D O R G A N I Z E D O D E P S  
A X E C I Y D R E L I A B L E X Z V L M E Y L O E  
D S C L O S E L A O G D E T N E I R O O L L B L L  
T V B E O M Y C A L L H O M E T T R O T B O I C F  
N A L L E L B A T P A D A R E G F O R I A V S N R  
E J E F F R E E D C L A O A F I R E T V D E N K E  
D E L I E R Y O Y T N L F F A N I S E A N P O W L  
N J A S M R E S I L I E N T Y P A M O T E E P V I  
E J A C K P Z L P A M X X W I L L A R E P P S X A  
P I N E E J E R R I Y M I J E A R L T D E O E A N  
E D F A T H E R O E A J U L T R E Z A I D L R Z T  
D F E R E O C I R R Y N N I Y R A N O I S I V M Q  
N O C Y D O T D E P I C A T E D E T R E B E R U E  
I E N N P O E M P L O Y E D L E N A W T S P L O C

- |          |          |          |
|----------|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 4. _____ | 7. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 5. _____ | 8. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 6. _____ | 9. _____ |

## Leader Resource

### Word Game Answer Key

D E N I L P I C S I D O R G A N I Z E D O D E P S  
 A X E C I Y D R E L I A B L E X Z V L M E Y L O E  
 D S C L O S E L A O G D E T N E I R O O L L B L L  
 T V B E O M Y C A L L H O M E T T R O T B O I C F  
 N A L L E L B A T P A D A R E G F O R I A V S N R  
 E J E F F R E E D C L A O A F I R E T V D E N K E  
 D E L I E R Y O Y T N L F F A N I S E A N P O W L  
 N J A S M R E S I L I E N T Y P A M O T E E P V I  
 E J A C K P Z L P A M X X W I L L A R E P P S X A  
 P I N E E J E R R I Y M I J E A R L T D E O E A N  
 E D F A T H E R O E A J U L T R E Z A I D L R Z T  
 D F E R E O C I R R Y N N I Y R A N O I S I V M Q  
 N O C Y D O T D E P I C A T E D E T R E B E R U E  
 I E N N P O E M P L O Y E D L E N A W T S P L O C

1. Adaptable

2. Dependable

3. Reliable

4. Disciplined

5. Employed

6. Independent

7. Self-Reliant

8. Resilient

9. Responsible

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## Leader Resource

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### Indicators of Self-Sufficiency Traits

**1. Adaptable:** To be able to adjust or change to handle different situations. *Indicators:* You make contingency plans in case your babysitter doesn't show up or the person you usually ride to work with can't pick you up on a particular morning.

**2. Dependable (or 3. Reliable):** To be worthy of other people's confidence or trust. *Indicators:* If you say you're going to do something, you do it except under extreme circumstances, in which case you call anyone who is relying on you to explain why you cannot keep your word. You always pick up your child at the agreed-upon time. You are always on time for work or your training program.

**4. Disciplined:** To be able to maintain control and order in your life; to be able to put off meeting your own needs or desires when required. *Indicators:* You get up every morning at the time you need to. You set a limit on how much you drink, and you stick to it. You brush your teeth every morning and every night. You fasten your seat belt every time you get into a car. You buy only what you can afford. You pay your bills on time.

**5. Employed:** To be working and earning enough legal wages that allow you to support yourself and your children.

**6. Independent (or 7. Self-Reliant):** To be in charge of yourself, and to know when to rely on others. *Indicators:* You make your own decisions, sometimes getting ideas or advice from other people but not asking them to make the decision for you. You pay rent for a place to live. You are capable of washing your own clothes and cooking your own meals. When you have responsibility for your child for a few days or an afternoon, you provide the care (you don't have your mother, sister, or girlfriend do it). You wake up in the morning on your own or with the help of an alarm clock rather than expecting someone else to wake you.

**8. Resilient:** To be able to recover from or adjust to change or a crisis. *Indicators:* You accept the role of father even if you did not want or plan to be a parent. You look for and find a job if you lose your current one. You bounce back after losing a relationship that is important to you.

**9. Responsible:** To be able to accept the consequences of your own behavior and to “do the right thing” in a tough situation. *Indicators:* You accept your duties as a father when you are told your partner is pregnant. You establish paternity so that your child will know his or her father. You pay (or are willing to pay, if unemployed) child support so that your child can live a decent life. You use condoms every time you have sexual intercourse. You call if you’re going to be late and unable to keep an appointment.

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## What Does It Mean to “Take Care of Business”?

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**Purpose:** To identify qualities of self-sufficiency. To enable fathers to evaluate their progress in their efforts at taking care of their own as well as their children’s needs. To help fathers identify barriers they face in pursuing this goal.

**Materials:** Leader Resource, “Indicators of Self-Sufficiency Traits” (from Activity 16-3); Handout, “Self-Sufficiency Inventory”; newsprint and marker.

**Time:** 30-45 minutes.

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**Planning Note:** If you conducted the optional word game (Activity 16-3), you should modify this activity by skipping the brainstorming and moving directly to the handout “Self-Sufficiency Inventory.”

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**Procedure:** If you have not done so already, ask participants to brainstorm the qualities of a self-sufficient father. Record their responses on newsprint, and ask a volunteer to read the list aloud. Use the Leader Resource “Indicators of Self-Sufficiency Traits” (from Activity 16-3) to add important terms and to describe indicators for each characteristic.

**Next,** using the handout “Self-Sufficiency Inventory,” have each participant evaluate himself by putting a check mark next to each quality of self-sufficiency that he already has. (If there are nonreaders in the group, read each statement aloud, and allow time for the men to think about their responses.) Encourage participants to be honest, and emphasize that no one could already have all the qualities needed; anyone who did wouldn’t be in this program.

**After** the men have completed the handout, ask for volunteers to share their inventories with the group. Each volunteer should state which qualities of self-sufficiency he already has and which he still needs to acquire. The group can make comments or ask questions after each man’s presentation. Be sure to ask each presenter to give examples of the qualities he has. (Again, if any nonreaders want to volunteer,

read aloud each statement, and have the men respond verbally as you go through the list.)

**When** all the volunteers have presented their inventories, discuss the activity by asking the following questions.

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### ▼ Discussion Questions

1. On a scale of 1 to 5, how do you rate your self-sufficiency? (1 = I depend on others for everything; 5 = I can take care of my needs and responsibilities alone or with the support of others.)
2. Which traits of self-sufficiency are the most difficult to achieve? Why?
3. What is the biggest roadblock preventing you from being self-sufficient right now?
4. Which person do you depend on most to help meet your daily needs for food, shelter, and clothing? How would you manage if that person moved to a city far away? How could the person you depend on most help you to develop the skills to take care of your own needs?
5. How might a self-sufficient father still need and get support from others? (Examples: babysitting or child care; someone to listen or give advice; etc.)
6. What important steps might an unemployed father take on the road to self-sufficiency? (Examples: enter this program; get a GED; declare paternity; complete job training; look for a job; get an apartment; etc.)
7. How can fathers teach their children to become self-sufficient?
8. What kind of job do you think you need in order to become self-sufficient?
9. In what ways can the members of a family demonstrate that they are self-sufficient? (Examples: sharing household chores; earning part of the family income; sharing equally in child care responsibilities; etc.)
10. What does it mean to you to “take care of business”?

## Self-Sufficiency Inventory

**Directions:** How close are you to achieving self-sufficiency? This is not something that happens overnight. It takes time to develop the attitudes and skills listed below. Put a check mark next to every statement that is true for you.

### 1. How adaptable am I?

- I set up other plans for a babysitter in case my first plan falls through.
- I figure out a way to get to work or training if the person I usually ride with can't pick me up.
- I take any kind of work if it's legal and if it allows me to support myself and my children.

### 2. How dependable am I?

- If I say I'm going to do something, I always do it except under extreme circumstances. Then, I call anyone who is relying on me to explain why I cannot keep my word.
- I almost always pick my child up at the time that I say I will.
- I show up for work or for this program on time every day.

### 3. How disciplined am I?

- I get up every morning at the time I need to.
- I set a limit for how much I drink, and I stick to it.
- I fasten my seat belt every time I get into a car.
- I buy only what I can afford.
- I pay my bills on time.
- I go to work or training even if I don't feel like it.

*(Continued on page 18)*

## 4. Am I employed?

I am employed and earning enough at a legal job to allow me to support myself and my children.

## 5. How independent am I?

I make my own decisions, sometimes getting ideas or advice from other people but never asking them to make the decision for me.

I pay rent for a place to live (or I own my home).

I wash my own clothes.

I cook my own meals.

When I have responsibility for my child, I provide the care. (I don't ask my mother, sister, or girlfriend to do it.)

I wake up in the morning on my own or with the help of an alarm clock instead of expecting someone else to wake me up.

## 6. How resilient am I?

I accept the role of a father even if I did not want or plan to be a parent.

I will look for and find a job if I lose my current one.

I will bounce back if I lose an important relationship.

## 7. How responsible am I?

If I learned that my partner was pregnant, I would accept my responsibility as a father.

I would establish paternity so that my child would know his or her father.

I pay child support (or am willing to pay, if unemployed) so that my child can live a decent life.

I use condoms every time I have sexual intercourse.

*(Continued on page 19)*

- \_\_\_ I do not quit my job until I have found another one.
- \_\_\_ I take care of my financial responsibilities (child support, rent, etc.) before I spend money on leisure activities.
- \_\_\_ I call if I'm going to be late or unable to keep an appointment.

**8. Based on your answers to the questions above, rate how self-sufficient you are. (1 = not self-sufficient; 5 = very self-sufficient)**

1	2	3	4	5
I depend on others for everything.				I can take care of my needs and responsibilities alone or with the support of others.

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## My One-Year Plan

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**Purpose:** To assist participants in developing strategies for operating independently.

**Materials:** Handout, “My One-Year Plan”; pencils (for everyone).

**Time:** 35 minutes.

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**Procedure:** Tell participants that in Activity 16-4 they identified which self-sufficiency characteristics they already have and which they would like to develop or improve. Now they will develop a plan for reaching their goals over the next year. Explain that thinking ahead and planning are two essential strategies for those who want to have control over their lives. Remind the men of their previous sessions about handling conflict and negotiating for support at work and in their personal relationships. Tell them to keep in mind what they have learned about the role that others play in their efforts to accomplish their goals.

**Distribute** pencils and the handout “My One-Year Plan,” and ask participants to give serious thought to what they would like to be doing in the next year. Review the handout by reading each incomplete sentence and giving examples of how someone might complete it. Then allow about 10 minutes for participants to complete the handout. (Again, if there are nonreaders in the group, read each statement aloud, and give the men time to think about their responses.)

**Ask** a few volunteers to share their plans. Each volunteer should say what specific steps he will take to achieve one of his goals. Discuss the roadblocks that he might face and how he might overcome them.

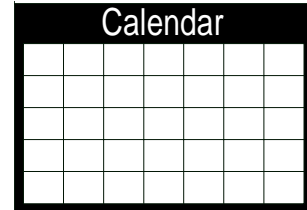
**Discuss** the activity by asking the following questions.

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**▼ Discussion Questions**

1. How realistic is your personal plan?
2. What roadblocks might get in the way of your plans? How might you overcome them?
3. Do you think that your plans will change after you leave this group? If so, how will they change? Why?
4. What things should you be doing right now to prepare for the year ahead?
5. How much does the success of your one-year plan depend on having a job?
6. Which goals in your plan can you accomplish even if you can't find work?

## My One-Year Plan



**Directions:** Please complete the following sentences by filling in the blanks.

### In the next year I plan to:

1. Live in \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Work at \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Make \_\_\_\_\_ per hour (or \_\_\_\_\_ per week).
4. Pay \_\_\_\_\_ in child support per month.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ with my children.

### In order to accomplish these goals, I will:

1. Complete \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Work on my skills \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Stop depending on \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Improve my relationships with \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ every day.
6. Change the way I \_\_\_\_\_.
7. Continue to \_\_\_\_\_.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ drugs and alcohol.

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## Feedback/Wrap-up

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Ask the following questions to discuss what the men got out of today's session.

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### ▼ Discussion Questions

1. In general, what did you learn about self-sufficiency from today's session?  
What did you learn about yourself?
  2. Has this peer support group helped you to become more self-sufficient?  
If so, how? If not, why?
  3. What was it like to think ahead and develop a one-year plan? How helpful was it to do this?
  4. What do you think you will need in order to stay focused on your plan after you leave this program?
  5. What can you do if you find yourself falling short of your goals for your one-year plan?
  6. What does it mean to "take care of business"?
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**Planning Note:** Tell the men that Session 17, "Managing Your Time and Money," will help them think about how to balance the roles and responsibilities they have as fathers and providers. It will also help them to prepare to manage financial responsibilities such as setting up a household, paying child support, and taking care of their basic needs.

In preparation for this, ask for volunteers to research the cost of some basic monthly expenses. Assign the following tasks (and post the list on newsprint):

1. Get five estimates of monthly rents for a furnished room, apartment, or home.
2. Call the telephone company to find out the monthly cost of phone service.
3. Call cable TV to find out the monthly cost.

4. Estimate the cost of furnishing a three-room apartment or house. (Go to furniture stores as well as secondhand stores such as the Salvation Army.) Include sheets, towels, pillows, blankets, curtains, etc.  
Estimate the monthly cost of household goods and food.

Ask the men to be prepared to share the results of their research at the next session.