



3.5 SIMPLER Behavioral Solutions



3.5 SIMPLER BEHAVIORAL SOLUTIONS

Use these SIMPLER solutions drawn from behavioral science to increase father engagement.¹ This tool lists examples of how these solutions may be applied during recruitment and throughout ongoing services.

S	I	M	P	L	E	R
Social Influence	Implementation Prompts	Make Deadlines	Personalization	Loss Aversion	Ease	Reminders
<i>Highlight peer behavior</i>	<i>Break actions into steps</i>	<i>Create urgency to act</i>	<i>Tailor to the individual</i>	<i>Frame action as avoiding loss</i>	<i>Simplify the process</i>	<i>Reinforce important information</i>

Social Influence

Highlight the behavior of peers and other people of influence to affect decisions and actions.

During Recruitment	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Talk about what other fathers have liked or gained from the program when speaking with potential participants. ▪ Use testimony about the program from fathers who have graduated on printed materials/website/presentations. Share these testimonials with referral sources. ▪ Personalize the space with photos of real fathers, program-specific posters, note boards, commitment statements, or any other creative ideas. Point these out to fathers when they see the space. ▪ Create easy tools for fathers to make referrals through their network (email template, Facebook events, etc.). ▪ Ask a father who has completed the program to call potential participants to answer questions and encourage attendance. ▪ Hold orientations or special recruitment events so that interested fathers can meet staff members and other participants. ▪ Invite interested fathers as your guests to a social event with current participants. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Invite a father who has attended program services to the first class to talk about the benefits of the program. ▪ Set group expectations together and have the participants commit to attending. ▪ Remind them of their connection to the group, without guilt or blame. For example, “We missed you yesterday, see you on Friday?” ▪ Organize social activities for fathers and their families.

¹MDRC (2017).

Implementation Prompts

Plan an action in advance by breaking it into the steps needed to go from intention to action.

During Recruitment	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Talk through the logistics of attending an intake appointment. ▪ Have each father write down his plan on an appointment card to take with him. ▪ Keep potential participants engaged through regular contact before the intake appointment. You can call this contact “preenrollment.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ At regular intervals, review upcoming steps with fathers and discuss how they plan to complete them. ▪ Do not celebrate the end of each stage. Doing so signals to fathers that they are done. Wait until they have finished their planned action to celebrate.

Make Deadlines

Create urgency to take action by setting a date for completion.

During Recruitment	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Remind fathers of the date by which they must enroll in order to begin the program that month. ▪ Offer interested fathers an incentive to enroll by a certain date. (For example, fathers who register by X day get a toy for their child, or if they come in by X time of day they can get breakfast.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Remind fathers of milestones they are about to reach. (Also remind referral partner staff members who work with fathers outside the program about upcoming milestones/completion dates.) ▪ If a father misses a class, ask him to respond within a certain time frame to schedule a makeup.

Personalization

Tailor to the individual by providing personalized information or offering assistance specific to the individual's needs.

During Recruitment	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ask the participant about his job interests, child's name, etc. ▪ Highlight his role as a father and ask about his goals/hopes for his child. ▪ Get to know the father and find out what motivates him. You can use the information you learn to encourage him and provide him with additional reasons for coming. For example, if the father is subject to court oversight, you can provide a letter stating he is coming to the program. ▪ When calling or texting to remind a father about services, use the father's name and mention details you have learned in conversation. (For example, "Hi, Rob, look forward to seeing you tomorrow. I know you said you need a ride to get here, are you all set with that?") 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Make sure to build a rapport with fathers. If you don't immediately feel a connection with a father, work with case managers or other staff members to try to establish a relationship. ▪ Provide support that is specific to each father's needs, and remind fathers when they are close to milestones that meet their goals (for example, qualifying for a specialized training opportunity). ▪ Tell fathers when opportunities come up that match their goals, such as training opportunities or job fairs.

Loss Aversion

Frame actions as avoiding losses because doing so is more likely to influence behavior than highlighting gains.

During Recruitment	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Describe benefits that could be lost by NOT following the plan, rather than potential benefits that could be earned by taking additional steps. For example, "If you miss your appointment this week, you won't get to start the next group on Monday," or "Make sure to come to your appointment on Friday because it'll be your last chance to get your gift card this week." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continue to emphasize the potential loss of benefits. For example, "Make sure you attend the next two sessions so you don't lose your \$25 gift card," or "You should plan to attend all sessions, or you won't be eligible for job placements."

Ease

Simplify processes by removing hassles and making them as automatic as possible for participants.

During Recruitment	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Offer clear, simple explanations of the process to enroll and attend. Provide this information in multiple ways (that is, verbally, in writing, and in a visual checklist). ▪ If potential participants don't show up for intake, reach out to them immediately to reschedule. ▪ Talk about transportation during recruitment and provide instructions on how to get to your location. If transportation is challenging, provide resources (for example, help set up a ride share with other participants who live nearby or provide resources for public transportation). ▪ Implement a plan for a staff member to always be available to respond to a first-inquiry call, on a rotating basis among staff members, or have a friendly recorded voicemail with some details to encourage enrollment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Traveling can be a hassle and requires a lot of planning for any parent. Provide information on available forms of transportation support as soon as fathers enroll and provide frequent reminders about them. ▪ Make scheduling convenient and easy to remember to do (for example, a postcard with instructions on whom to call and how to reschedule). ▪ Show fathers around the building and classroom when they first enroll, so they can learn their way around those spaces. ▪ Each week, review every father who has not come in for sessions and talk through the possible reasons why each is not making it. Identify the hassles that are getting in the way and brainstorm a plan for how to reduce them.

Reminders

Reinforce important information by providing reminders that encourage the completion of an action.

During Recruitment	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Send regular text/email reminders and call before the intake appointment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Send regular text/email reminders. ▪ Call if a father missed a session and agree on a plan for him to attend next time. ▪ Use appointment cards regularly to remind fathers of the schedule. ▪ Encourage fathers to remind each other about sessions.