THE CASE FOR FATHER ENGAGEMENT

Fathers Belong in the NICU.

Make inclusion visible, practical, and consistent from day one.



WHY FATHER ENGAGEMENT MATTERS

NICU fathers are often expected to be the strong ones, supporting their partners, managing responsibilities at home, returning to work, and navigating an overwhelming medical environment.

Yet fathers need support, connection, encouragement, and opportunities to bond with their babies, too.

OUR GOAL

Move fathers from feeling like visitors to feeling like essential members of their baby's care team.

FIVE WAYS TO START IMMEDIATELY



1 Welcome dads intentionally.

Address fathers directly, introduce them to the care team, and invite their questions.



2 Offer a NICU Dad Survival Kit.

Include snacks, hospital information, parking resources, a notebook, and encouragement.



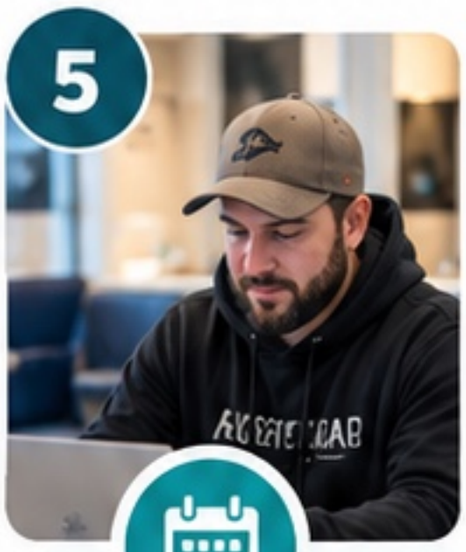
3 Create Dad's Rounds.

Offer informal gatherings where fathers can talk with other fathers.



4 Encourage hands-on care.

Invite dads to participate in diaper changes, reading, kangaroo care, and feeding when medically appropriate.



5 Make support accessible.

Provide evening, weekend, and virtual opportunities for working fathers.

REMEMBER

Father engagement is not about taking support away from mothers. It's about making sure both parents receive the support they need.

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Stronger Dads. Stronger Families. Brighter Tomorrows.

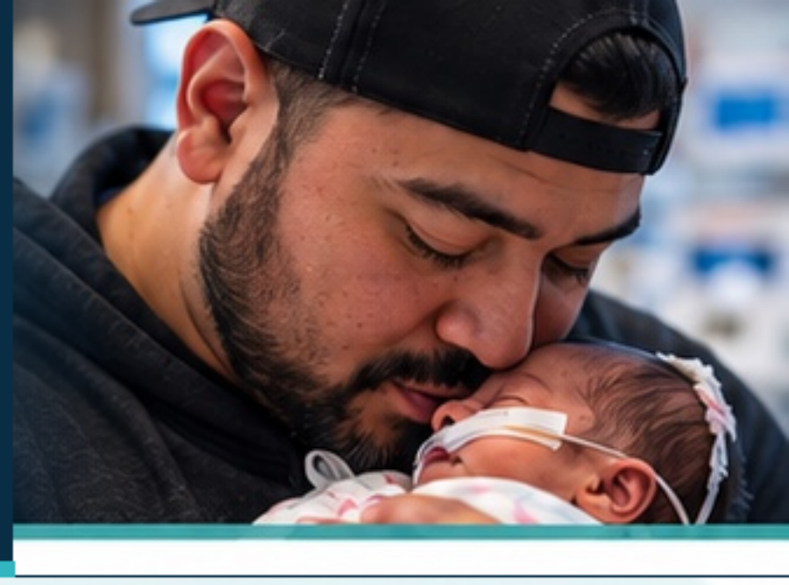
A COLLABORATIVE FATHER-SUPPORT RESOURCE

Preemie Adventures • The NICU Dad • Brandon Institute LLC • Dr. Chavis Patterson

PRACTICAL IDEAS. REAL IMPACT.

Programs to Support NICU Fathers

Small steps that can make a big difference for NICU fathers.



THE GOAL

Practical, affordable, and meaningful programs that help fathers feel included, supported, and empowered throughout the NICU journey.

1 DAD ACADEMY

Build Skills. Build Confidence.



Short, hands-on classes teaching NICU caregiving skills. Build confidence and equip dads for their role.

EXAMPLE TOPICS

- Understanding the NICU
- Diaper changes and basic care
- Reading and bonding
- Preparing for discharge
- Q&A with the care team

2 DAD'S TOOLBOX

Resources. Support. Encouragement.



A physical toolbox filled with practical resources, coping cards, milestone cards, hospital information, and encouragement.

POTENTIAL ITEMS

- NICU information and resources
- Emotional coping cards
- Baby milestone cards
- Questions for rounds cards
- Self-care items and a notebook

3 DAD STORIES NIGHT

Real Dads. Real Stories. Real Support.



Invite two former NICU fathers to share their experiences. No presentations required — just honest conversations.

WHAT IT PROVIDES

- Peer connection and encouragement
- Practical advice from lived experience
- A chance for current dads to ask questions
- Can be held in-person or virtually
- Low-cost and easy to implement

ADDITIONAL IDEAS TO CONSIDER

These programs can be adapted to fit your organization's size, budget, and resources.

DAD DROP-IN
Coffee, snacks, and an informal place to connect.

SPORTS NIGHT
Pizza, games, trivia, or a break from the NICU.

VOICES FROM THE NICU
Audio recordings of former NICU dads sharing their experiences.

NICU DAD TEXT LINE
Opt-in encouragement, education, and support messages.

READ TO YOUR BABY
Provide children's books and opportunities to record themselves reading.

DAD & BABY PHOTO DAY
Capture meaningful fatherhood milestones.

PEER MENTORING
Connect current NICU dads with trained former NICU fathers.

PUNCH OUT THE STRESS
Partner with local gyms for free beginner fitness sessions.

DISCHARGE PREPARATION
Car-seat prep, feeding, bathing, home safety, financial/work resources.

ONGOING SUPPORT
30 / 60 / 90-day check-ins and community resources.

WHY START HERE?

- **LOW-COST** — Simple to launch with existing resources.
- **HIGH IMPACT** — Meets real needs for NICU fathers.
- **FLEXIBLE** — Can be adapted to fit your organization.
- **SCALABLE** — Start small and grow over time.

THE BIGGER MESSAGE

Not every interaction needs to be educational, emotional, or clinical.

Sometimes the best support is simply another dad saying: *"I've been there. You're not alone."*

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MORE THAN VISITORS. THEY'RE PART OF THE TEAM.

The NICU Dad Experience

A continuous journey of support from admission through life at home.



1

DAY 1 — WELCOME

You're a Dad. You Belong Here.

Make a strong first impression and set the tone for the journey ahead.

- Dad Survival Kit
- NICU Dad Pass
- Personal introduction to staff
- Invitation to Dad Drop-In



2

WEEK 1 — CONNECT

Build Your Support System.

Help dads find their people, get informed, and feel less alone.

- Dad's Rounds
- Peer mentor
- Dad Academy
- Food/parking support



3

DURING NICU STAY — ENGAGE

Be Part of the Care.

Give dads hands-on opportunities to bond and be involved in their baby's journey.

- Milestone Passport
- Reading program
- Kangaroo care
- Dad Photo Day
- Sports/game nights



4

APPROACHING DISCHARGE — PREPARE

From NICU to Home.

Equip dads with the knowledge and resources they need for what's next.

- Dad Academy discharge class
- Car-seat prep
- Feeding/bathing
- Home safety
- Financial/work resources



5

DISCHARGE — CELEBRATE

Road to Home.

Celebrate the progress, the hard work, and the new chapter ahead.

- "Road to Home" graduation
- Certificate
- Keepsake photo
- Discharge Dad Box



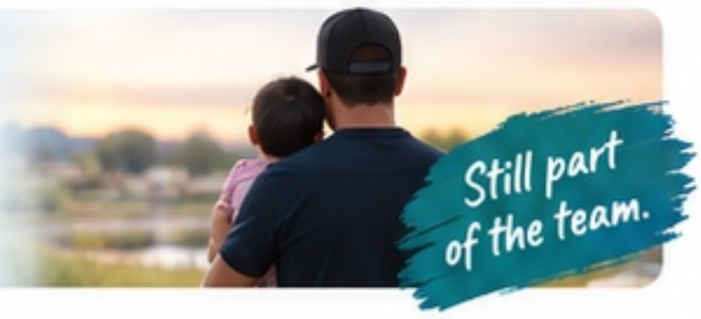
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AFTER DISCHARGE — CONTINUE

The Journey Doesn't End.

Keep the connection going and support long-term success.

- 30 / 60 / 90-day check-ins
- Peer connection
- Community resources



YOUR ORGANIZATION'S 90-DAY ACTION PLAN

Small steps. Big change.

1 DAYS 1–30

- Identify father-support gaps
- Gather feedback
- Select one pilot program

2 DAYS 31–60

- Launch the pilot
- Engage staff and peer mentors
- Promote participation

3 DAYS 61–90

- Gather feedback
- Measure engagement
- Decide what to expand

THE BIGGER MESSAGE

Not every interaction needs to be educational, emotional, or clinical. Sometimes the best support is simply another dad saying:

"I've been there. You're not alone." ♡

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