



## Handout 8-3: Tips for Workers Working With Fathers Who Are Angry

The following are some tips on working with fathers who have expressed anger but have done so in a manner that impedes forward movement on the case. These tips are not applicable to individuals who have threatened your safety.

- Attempt to reframe language that states, “This is what is wrong with you” rather than “This is how I’m affected.” Caseworkers are on the front line, and as a result, get the brunt of some parents’ anger. Recognize that it is not about you but about how the parent has been affected. Remember that his child or children are involved.
- Acknowledge the anger he is demonstrating. People who are angry do not want to be ignored; they simply want to be heard. You may not understand why he is angry or even agree that he has the right to be angry, but the fact that he is gives the worker valuable information about his feelings. Remember that anger is one of the socially acceptable emotions men demonstrate and is likely covering for something else.
- Do not dismiss or shame him for feeling the way he does. Acknowledging the imperfections of the child welfare system may help to level the playing field and allow you to connect with his feelings of being disrespected or slighted.
- Repeating his concerns helps acknowledge that you have heard what he has to say.
- Allow him some reasonable venting time, then begin to ask questions. Questions allow him to focus on responding to the questions instead of on what prompted the angry response. This will give the worker an opportunity use some of the strategies to engage the father.
- Once he is calmer, begin seeking solutions to the problem. Get constructive by developing ideas and plans that will further his goal of being an active and engaged father.

Some general tips include:

- Keep your voice low.
- Set boundaries.
- Use “I- messages.”