MODULE III – EVALUATION & PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT: SEPARABLE PARTNERS

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MODULE III EVALUATION & PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT: INSEPARABLE PARTNERS

INTRODUCTION

his is the third module in the workbook "Working with Immigrant and Refugee Fathers". The goal of the workbook is to provide all human service providers and specifically immigrant serving agencies with some tools to assist them in the development and implementation of supportive and inclusive programs and services. This module focuses on the evaluation of programs for new Canadian fathers. Normally, program evaluation appears as the final chapter in program manuals. This seems logical. You design your program, you implement your program, you design your evaluation, and you implement your evaluation. If you are fortunate enough to receive further funding, you may use the evaluation information to make changes and additions to the program.

We take a different approach. We see evaluation not as something done at the very end, but rather, as an integral part of the development of the program. When a plan for evaluation is part of the vision and design of the program, and integrated into every program component, the information from the evaluation is able to inform and support program activities as they evolve.

We hope that this module will facilitate your active engagement in the evaluation process. You may be able to use this information to design and implement the evaluation process for your program. Or, you may prefer to use this as a source of information and guidance when you work with an external evaluator. Even if the evaluation does not come under your realm of responsibility, it is crucial that as a service provider, you have input into the evaluation.

PART ONE

WHAT IS PROGRAM EVALUATION?

Evaluation makes some people uneasy. This is not surprising, when so often evaluation is seen as a test rather than an opportunity to learn from experience and improve the service we are providing. If conducted appropriately, evaluations are valuable tools for improving the quality of programs and making wise decisions. We see evaluation as an invitation to grow and to increase the potential to provide excellent and effective programs.

Evaluation is a systematic, objective way of acquiring information. 'Systematic' refers to the fact the evaluation needs to be conducted according to a formulated method or plan. 'Objective' refers to the fact that evaluation should not be, as far as possible, influenced by personal feelings, judgements, or interests.

There are four main reasons why programs need to be evaluated:

- ♦ To demonstrate accountability to funders and stakeholders.
- ◆ To provide information which will lead to the improvement of current programs and provide direction for new programs.
- ♦ To provide documentation that can inform public awareness and policy decisions at both agency and government levels.
- ♦ To describe and acknowledge the work of the service providers.

Generally, funders and sponsoring agencies require program evaluations that answer the following questions:

- ♦ How accessible is your program to those who could best benefit from it?
- How comprehensive are the services that you are providing?
- ♦ How effective is your program in terms of its goals and objectives, and outcomes?
- ♦ How cost effective is your program?

In addition to these questions, those who are responsible for designing and delivering the program need the evaluation to address the following questions:

- What is the actual experience of participants in the program?
- Are there any unintended effects of the program?
- What is meaningful and helpful or valuable to participants in the program?
- What other people or groups could be involved in the program?

The exercises on the next pages will provide you with an opportunity to reflect on the meaning of evaluation in your personal and professional life, and derive from these experiences guidelines for conducting comfortable and effective evaluations.

THE MEANING OF EVALUATION

RATIONALE:

The purpose of this exercise is to encourage reflection on the evaluative experiences of participants, which will lead to recommendations for constructing positive evaluations.

Instructions:

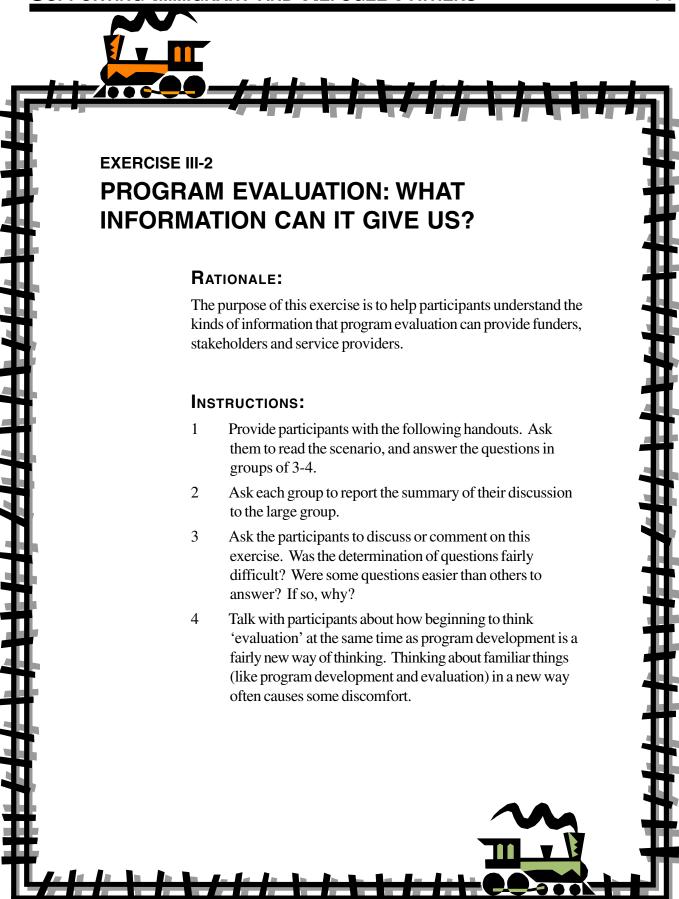
- Provide participants with three copies of the attached handout and ask them to complete the handout individually without discussions with others.
- Ask the participants to write about a different evaluation experience on each handout. The experience could come from both personal and professional life. Examples could include a driving test, an examination at college or university, a performance appraisal at work, or a medical examination.
- 3 Provide each participant with three sets of coloured sticky dots. Ask them to mark the most negative evaluation experiences with a red dot, the most positive with a green dot, and the more neutral one with a yellow dot.
- 4 Ask the participants, in groups of approximately 4-5 people, to share this information, and then, to identify the elements of a negative and a positive evaluation.
- Ask participants to share their conclusions with the larger group (i.e., what makes an evaluation a positive or a negative experience.) Examples might be statements such as:
 - "Evaluations are negative when you don't know that you are being evaluated!"
 - "Evaluations are negative when they are either "pass" or "fail" and the stakes are high."
 - "Evaluations are positive when I have some input into the process."
 - "Evaluations are positive when they help me do my job better."



THE MEANING OF EVALUATION

Complete the form below. Please do not discuss this with your fellow participants at this time.

Description of the process of evaluation. (What did the evaluator do? W did you do?)
Example: The tester told me to get into the car. I buckled my seat belt. got in, said nothing and just sat there. Finally I said, "Should I begin now He replied "Not until you show me where the hazard lights are." I could find them and 'freaked out'. Needless to say, I didn't pass the test!
What were the possible consequences of the evaluation?
Example: Pass and drive home, or fail and be humiliated.
What could have been done in the evaluation to make it more comfor for you?





PROGRAM EVALUATION: WHAT INFORMATION CAN IT GIVE US?

Your local community council has asked you to develop a Saturday morning drop-in program for fathers and preschoolers in a day care room at the local community centre. An informal needs assessment has indicated that many of the neighborhood fathers 'baby-sit' their children on Saturday morning to allow their wives to go shopping, or engage in other activities. The information you have received suggests that many fathers have difficulty 'entertaining' their children during these mornings, especially during the winter months when it is cold. Preliminary objectives for the drop-in father-preschooler program are:

- To provide leisure activities for fathers and children together.
- To provide the opportunity for fathers to socialize with other fathers.
- To help fathers engage in appropriate play with their children.
- To provide an opportunity for enriched play experiences for the children.
- 1. In groups of approximately four participants, discuss the following questions, which relate to what kind of information is needed. At this point don't try to describe how the information will be collected.
 - a) What kind of information will your funders (local community council) require?
 - b) What other stakeholders are involved in the project? What information might they require?
 - c) Once the program is operating, what kind of information will help you improve the program and/or provide direction for new programs?
 - d) What kind of information will help you inform the public about the needs of fathers and preschool children?
 - e) What kind of information will help you acknowledge the work of the staff in the father-preschool drop in program?

PART TWO

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS IN PROGRAM EVALUATION

Whether a full-scale program evaluation is underway, or an evaluation of one component of a program is being conducted, careful attention must be paid to ensure that the evaluation is conducted and reported in an ethical manner. Therefore, before we present the "how to" of program evaluation, we address the issue of ethics.

All research dealing with human subjects must be subject to stringent ethical guidelines. Program evaluation is research with human subjects. We believe that all funding agencies should ensure that an ethics committee should review the program evaluation component before final funding decisions are made. People who participate in programs often do so because they are facing some difficulty in their lives, or they want to be able to improve what they are doing. How do we ensure that the evaluation protects their rights?

Ethical guidelines for research uphold the "**right to privacy**". This means that each person has a right to decide for himself how much he will share with others his thoughts, his feelings, and facts of his personal life. We need to be very careful that this right is upheld. Sometimes, in subtle ways, the evaluation process may encourage participants to disclose more than they feel comfortable in doing.

Participation in the program evaluation must be **voluntary**. That means that the evaluators have a responsibility to ensure that participants understand what they are consenting to.

The evaluator has the responsibility to ensure that all records used for the research are **confidential**, and that the privacy of the participants continues to be respected in all reports and documents. All data must be coded and stored in a manner that ensures confidentiality and the report needs to be written in a manner that ensures that none of the participants are identifiable (unless permission is obtained).

Informed Consent

Two main focuses of ethical review committees are informed consent and confidentiality.

Informed consent means that project participants understand what they are agreeing to when they consent to participating in an evaluation, and that their agreement is made explicitly. This should be done in writing. Further, the individual giving consent has to be provided with all the information about the evaluation that any reasonable person would want to have before making a decision whether to participate, and that information has been provided **in a manner appropriate to the individual's abilities and limitations.** Special attention needs to be given to the choice of language used, and level of literacy used in each language.

Information provided to prospective participants should include:

- The topic, purpose and method of the evaluation.
- How the participant was selected to be part of the evaluation study.
- The kind of data that will be collected.
- ♦ The extent and duration of participation.
- ♦ How the information will be used.
- Possible risks or inconveniences that may occur as a result of the program evaluation.
- ♦ The identity of the person conducting the research, and the qualifications of that person.
- ♦ Who can be contacted for more information regarding the evaluation (other than the evaluator).

Confidentiality

Program evaluators are responsible for ensuring the confidentiality of all data collected during the evaluation process. This means ensuring that steps are taken to ensure privacy during interviews, that only limited members of the evaluation team have access to the material, and that steps are taken to ensure that names do not appear on any of the documents. Arrangements must be made to store the data in safe places and that after completion of the study, data is destroyed. If you intend to keep any of the information or records for future use, the participants must be informed of this and must agree to this following the guidelines for informed consent.

Ethics and Program Staff

When designing an evaluation, we must also consider the ethics in relation to program staff. As we know, evaluations can cause stress for staff because, indirectly, when a program is evaluated, the staff may well feel that it is their work that is being evaluated. They usually invest heavily in the program and cannot help but identify with the program evaluation. Therefore, even if staff members are not actual participants in the evaluation, they need to be considered.

- ♦ Staff members should be informed of the process of evaluation at the time they are hired.
- ♦ An evaluation of staff interactions with children or families should never take place without their knowledge.
- ♦ Staff should be involved in the process of evaluation from the beginning, if possible. At the very least, they should be aware of the goals of the evaluation. Is the evaluation taking place to assess certain aspects of the program for future planning? Is the goal to demonstrate fiscal responsibility?
- Staff should have an opportunity to express their concerns about the evaluation.
- ♦ Clear distinctions should be made between staff evaluation (performance appraisals) and program evaluation, and these should never be confused.

All universities and most colleges have a process of ethical review of research. We recommend consulting with someone with experience in social science research ethics, in order to be confident that you are conducting the evaluation in an ethical manner. We also recommend that you document the steps that you are taking to ensure that a high ethical standard is being maintained. We would also ask that you advocate with the funding agencies that ethical guidelines for program evaluation be required as part of all program proposals.

INFORMED CONSENT: HOW DO WE GET IT?

RATIONALE:

The purpose of this exercise is to help staff develop mechanisms to ensure that participants in the evaluation are giving informed consent.

Instructions:

You are developing a program for fathers who are very new to Canada. Some speak English very well, others less well. Some of the participants will have had little experience with social or human service agencies, and are not clear about the relationship to 'authorities' such as government, immigration officials, and program staff. The program is a six-week program for fathers called "Getting to Know Your City". The goal is to inform new fathers of recreation and support services in the city, while providing an opportunity for relaxation and networking with other fathers. You want to design a questionnaire that will help you choose the kinds of activities and information that will be most helpful to the participants. You will need to ask them to fill in this questionnaire.

- 1. In small groups, brainstorm and write a short explanation of the purpose of this evaluation.
- 2. In small groups, determine what steps will you take to ensure that:
 - Participants understand the intent, method, and use of the information
 - ♦ Participants understand that their participation is totally voluntary
 - Participants feel comfortable in refusing to participate if that is their choice.
 - ♦ The level of English is appropriate or if there is a need to translate into first language.
- 3. Share these responses with the larger group members.
- 4. Compare and contrast the "informed consent" documents with some that you collect from other research/evaluation projects.

ENSURING CONFIDENTIALITY: TAKING THE NECESSARY STEPS

RATIONALE:

The purpose of this exercise is to help participants understand and appreciate the necessity of ensuring confidentiality while conducting a program evaluation.

Instructions:

1. Read the following scenario.

As part of an evaluation process, fathers were asked to talk about how the program impacted their relationship with their toddlers. This question was asked during a face to face interview, which was tape recorded, then transcribed. One of the comments made by a father being interviewed really moved the program staff. He said that while he knew that in Canada spanking children was not approved of, he really knew of no other way to discipline children before he attended the program. Now he finds that he doesn't need to spank his children. Program staff felt that this statement really captured the essence of the value of the program, and quoted this participant in the final report. Obviously, they did not reveal the name.

Several months later the board of directors received a written complaint from this father. He believed that although his name wasn't mentioned, there were only 10 participants in the group, and that readers might be able to guess that he was the one who said this. "They will think I beat my children - you should not have written this in your report".



- 2. Ask the group members to reflect on this scenario. What could the evaluators have done to avoid this situation?
- 3. Develop guidelines for protecting confidentiality that you would use as part of your evaluation process.

PROGRAM EVALUATION – STAFF COMFORT LEVELS: HOW TO ACCOMPLISH BOTH

RATIONALE:

The purpose of this exercise is to help staff articulate the differences between performance evaluation and staff evaluation.

DIRECTIONS:

Read the following statement, made by a staff person who worked with new Canadian fathers. "At the end of the day, if the program was a failure, then I have failed!"

Discuss this statement in small groups. Do you agree with this statement? Why, or why not? What would be some of the reasons why a program could be less than successful, even if staff were excellent? Is the reverse true? Can a program be excellent if the staff are not?

Following these discussions, try the exercises described in the following handout.



PROGRAM EVALUATIONS – STAFF COMFORT LEVELS: HOW TO ACCOMPLISH BOTH

In dyads, fill in the blanks.

	1. If the evaluation results indicated that fathers chose not to participate in the second half of the program,
	it could mean that staff
	or it could mean
	——————————————————————————————————————
	 If the evaluation results indicate that the program has been very informative to new Canadian fathers, it could mean that staff
	or it could mean
	 If the evaluation results indicate that the program has not attracted enough participants, it could mean that the staff
	or it could mean that
	Now create your own examples:
+	4. If the evaluation results indicate that
	it could mean
	or it could mean

PART THREE EVALUATION TOOLS

The choice of evaluation tools will depend on many factors. These include:

- ♦ The knowledge, skills and professional preparation of the evaluator.
- ♦ The range and scope of the evaluation.
- Financial and human resources available.
- ♦ Whether you want to use qualitative or quantitative data, or both types of data.

Knowledge, Skills and Professional Preparation of the Evaluator

Perhaps the most important factor in the choice of tools is the first one that we listed. Program evaluation is a serious undertaking. The results of the evaluation can effect people's lives in direct and indirect ways. For example, if an evaluation demonstrates positive outcomes, this could result in the obtaining of more funding for similar programs. However, it is important that the evaluation is conducted in a way that makes these results valid. Designing surveys, protocols for focus groups and for individual interviews may seem fairly straightforward but in fact, these activities require considerable know how. Most program evaluators have academic degrees in the social sciences, which prepare them for this task. We believe that it is important that every program evaluation has input from someone who is trained and qualified. Smaller programs, or programs with smaller budgets for evaluation, are advised to limit the evaluation to the use of tools that can be constructed and analyzed within the framework of available expertise. Simple, straightforward means of collecting and analyzing information can be developed that could suffice for program evaluation in this case.

The Range and Scope of the Evaluation

When a complex or multifaceted program receives sufficient budget for evaluation, it is possible to design a comprehensive study that will incorporate a number of different evaluation tools, to be used with different stakeholders in different contexts. For example, individual interviews may be conducted with clients, another set of interviews may be conducted with staff, focus groups may be implemented for board members, and members of the community could be issued a survey questionnaire. In addition, data from intake forms and program tracking sheets may provide quantitative data. However, the majority of programs are simply going to evaluate their direct program outcomes. In this case, perhaps only one or two kinds of tools may be used. For example, a literacy program for new Canadian children may use intake forms and program tracking sheets to document the number of participants at each event, and a

very simple questionnaire may be developed to determine whether the desired outcome (fathers spend more time reading with their children) was attained. In addition, staff could keep a journal of "success stories" which could be a qualitative component to this program evaluation.

Financial and Human Resources Available

It is easy to underestimate the cost of program evaluation. For example, in one program it was decided to interview ten fathers to learn of their perspective regarding the need for support services. Let's analyze the cost incurred! First, someone had to be paid to develop the questionnaire. Then, the staff required some training regarding appropriate interviewing techniques related to both the questionnaire itself, and to cultural considerations in interviewing. Then the staff had to be paid (or released from their other jobs) to conduct the interviews. (The time required recruiting the interviewees, set up appointments, and travel to the place of interview turned out to be considerable). Then, the interviews needed to be transcribed. Normally, it takes three hours to transcribe one hour of taped interview. Finally, the extensive qualitative data collected required analysis. The written transcripts need to be read over and over again by the analyzer, each time through different eyes, to determine the themes and patterns that emerge. What appeared to be a simple project turned out to be very expensive, both in terms of financial and human resources! While this was a very worthwhile piece of evaluative research, we have to be realistic when we plan our program evaluation. With limited time and resources, we may have to limit the tools and collect a smaller amount of information.

Qualitative and/or Quantitative Data

Quantitative information can often be obtained fairly quickly and inexpensively, particularly if good records are kept throughout the program. But qualitative information, which can add so much richness to the evaluation can be used without adding extensive cost, **if program planning and program evaluation occur at the same time**. If staff develop good habits of continually maintaining tracking forms, journal entries, event evaluation forms, and other routinely collected information, this information can be collected, analyzed and reported without adding any new evaluation tools. If done properly, this can be a very valid program evaluation. In essence, the program evaluation can consist of the information that funders usually require on regular progress reports.

The following series of exercises will exemplify the use of ongoing program information as program evaluation. Following these exercises, we will show you how all the pieces can fit together to become a program evaluation report.

USING ATTENDANCE FORMS AS PROGRAM EVALUATION TOOLS

RATIONALE:

The purpose of this exercise is to demonstrate how attendance forms can be adapted to measure program effectiveness.

INSTRUCTIONS:

- 1. Circulate the handout on the following page, which is a sample of an attendance form from a family resource centre for new Canadian families.
- 2. Choose one of the program scenarios described previously in this module, or use another program that you are very familiar with.
- 3. Adapt the attendance form to suit the program you are considering.
- 4. Develop guidelines for recording, storing, and using the information for the program evaluation. Remember the ethical considerations of confidentiality and informed consent.



USING ATTENDANCE FORMS AS PROGRAM EVALUATION TOOLS

Workshop/Activity Title Group Facilitator (s) Date Participant Name			Children's Ages
Date		Τ	
		Г	
Participant Name	Address	Tel. No.	
			1

USING ACTIVITY EVALUATION FORMS FOR PROGRAM EVALUATION

RATIONALE:

The purpose of this exercise is to demonstrate how activity evaluation forms can be adapted to measure of program outcomes.

Instructions:

- 1. Circulate the handout on the following page, which is a sample of an activity evaluation form from a family resource centre for new Canadian families.
- 2. Continue with the same program scenario used in the previous exercise.
- 3. Adapt the activity evaluation form to suit the program you are considering.
- 4. Develop a summary sheet for pulling together the information from several activities. Think of a form that would capture the information in a succinct format and could be used in a progress report. Remember the ethical considerations of confidentiality and informed consent.



USING ACTIVITY EVALUATION FORMS

Sample of an Evaluation Form

MOSAIC CENTRE: Brighter Futures Workshops - Activities - Celebrations

Date:		
Activity:		
Attendance: # of Children:	# of Adults:	
Communities represented:		
Other topics or issues raised:		
Follow-up actions to be noted:		
What did the families indicate as most hel	pful or interesting?	
What suggestions were made?		
Were any connections or referrals made?		
Completed by:		

USING JOURNAL ENTRIES AS A PROGRAM EVALUATION TOOL

RATIONALE:

The purpose of this exercise is to demonstrate how journal entries can be adapted to measure of program outcomes.

Instructions:

- 1 Circulate the handout on the following page, which gives three journal entries written by the early childhood facilitator at a family resource centre for new Canadian families.
- 2 Consider the following three program outcomes:
 - a) Assisting children to develop early literacy skills.
 - b) Providing children the opportunity to further develop their English language skills.
 - c) Emcouraging children to learn through play and other activities.
- Underline with a yellow marker descriptors in the journal entries that you could use as qualitative data to support outcome a), a red marker for outcome b), and a blue marker for outcome c).
- Write a brief paragraph for each outcome using support from the journal entries. Remember the ethical considerations of confidentiality and informed consent.



USING JOURNAL ENTRIES

Entry # 1 - Oct. 5

Safir has rolled playdough flat on the table. "Look this," he says. "Oh that looks very flat and smooth Safir. May I touch it?" "No, no!" Safir is holding a playdough knife. "Now see it ishy." I have to think what "ishy" could be. Then I see Safir running the playdough knife back and forth across the playdough. "I scratch ishy." "Itchy, is the playdough itchy Safir?" Safir nods. "No more ishy, I scratch it."

Entry #2 - Nov. 9

Sandra was very excited about the book this morning. All the children enjoyed Red is Best but for Sandra red is best. It is her favourite colour and she spent some time showing me all the red things she could find.

Entry #3 - Nov. 18

Jin has just finished 'doing' MaryAnn's hair with barrettes and is now pretending to cook. Jin is speaking much more often now and is beginning to ask questions. Today he brought me the fire chief hat and put it on my head. This is unusual for Jin. "Wow Jin! Thank you for this wonderful hat! Is it my turn to wear it?" Jin nods and points to the mirror. "Do you think I should look in the mirror?" Jin takes my hand and leads me to the mirror. "Oh Jin, this looks very good. What do you think?" Jin smiles and nods then gestures to a chair. "That is a chair, Jin. What would you like me to do?" "Sit," says Jin in a whisper. "Sit? Oh, thank you. I would love to." Just then Jin notices the other facilitator, Tara, coming into the room so he waves goodbye to me and goes to find Tara. Tara has developed a bond with Jin and has been very supportive in his acquisition of English language skills.

PART FOUR

PULLING IT ALL TOGETHER – ECOLOGICAL PROGRAM EVALUATION

In the second module of this training manual, we talked about the use of the ecological conceptual framework, which guides the development of the program. The model, you will recall, consists of a series of concentric circles, which illustrate the environmental factors influencing potential participants. In the inner circle are the people for whom the program is designed, in this case immigrant and refugee fathers. The next concentric circle includes the family members and people who interact directly and on a regular basis with the fathers. The third circle includes the community. The fourth circle contains larger societal influences.

If you have used this ecological map in your program design, you may wish to go back to it when designing your evaluation. Take for example, the program that we referred to as "Getting to Know Your City" described in Exercise III-3. It would make sense for the evaluation of this program to include:

- The impact of this program on the fathers (the inner concentric circle).
- The nuclear and possibly extended family (the second circle).
- ♦ The community (the third circle).
- The larger societal factors such as attitudes towards immigrants.

With the ecological map in mind, outcome questions could include: "How has participation in the program affected the fathers' knowledge of available resources?" "How has the fathers' participation in the program impacted the family members' feelings of comfort in their new city or participation in wider community events?" "Has the program impacted whether community resources have become more accessible to immigrant families?" "Has staff participation in the program identified societal barriers that they will advocate to change?" These questions relate to all the rings respectively and show how even a small program can have a significant and widespread impact.

ECOLOGICAL EVALUATION

RATIONALE:

This exercise will help participants view program evaluation from an ecological perspective using appropriate evaluation tools.

Instructions:

1. Read the following scenario.

During a parent support group for immigrant parents, one of the immigrant mothers said, "This program is supposed to be for parents yet there is not one father in this room. In my culture, as long as parenting duties are automatically assigned to the mother, I will never be able to pursue my goals in my new country." The other women participants who came from a variety of countries nodded their heads in agreement. The staff person, who was born and raised in Canada, smiled and said, "Many of us Canadian born are facing the same issues."

In this and other sessions, enough information was accumulated to support the need for a program that would address the following issues:

- Prevalent societal views that child rearing is still largely a woman's domain.
- ♦ The lack of comfort of many fathers to undertake nurturing caregiving roles.
- *♦ The lack of support for fathers.*
- 2. Design a program with goals and objectives, which would address these issues.
- 3. Articulate outcomes statements and evaluation questions that would address the outcomes.
- 4. Describe how you would use attendance forms, activity evaluation forms, and journal entries as a major part of the program evaluation.
- 5. Show how this program evaluation relates to an ecological evaluation model.

