

## WHAT TO DO WHEN THEY SAY "WHERE'S DADDY?"

- There really is no one right answer, but for most single parents, if you have come to terms with heading a single parent family, your children will be happy with the answers you give.
- Share that it is OK to come from a different family background than a friend or family member. A family doesn't have to be the traditional idea- any group of people who care about the child and are responsible for his well being can be a family.
- Answer questions when your child asks them - don't say, "we'll talk about it when you are older."
- Meet your own needs by taking care of yourself. Find other adults to talk to, socialize with, and remember the basics - rest, proper diet, and exercise.
- If the other parent is not seeing the child, find another male role model for your child (this is important for both genders). Perhaps an uncle, neighbor, or other family member will help.
- Take your time in introducing new partners to the children. You may be in a hurry to "replace" the child's other parent, but your child is not. Do not encourage your child to call male friends "Daddy" until you feel the relationship is truly long-term.
- If your child's father lives far away, you can explain that he would see the child if he lived closer. You can keep in touch through phone calls, letters or email.
- If the child's father is not safe to be around, you can let the children know that while their father cares about them, he is not able to see them (due to drug addiction, violence etc) right now. Avoid saying negative things about the other parent - you may talk about his behavior but stay out of judgements of the person. Remember to stress the positive (but be honest) about the other parent - after all, your wonderful child is half his!
- Be aware that the other parent has legal rights to visit the child as well as responsibilities to pay child support and other expenses like medical coverage. Consult an attorney or legal services for information on these rights and responsibilities.
- Don't use the child to get back at the other parent. This only hurts your child!