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## Stronger Families Through Healthy Relationships, Positive Parenting and Economic Stability Webinar

### Webinar Question and Answer (Q&A)

September 23, 2014, 2:00 pm ET

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**Question:** Where can I find out about Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood programs in my community?

**Answer:** The Office of Family Assistance (OFA) Healthy Marriage & Responsible Fatherhood website has a [Find a Program Map](#) with a listing of the OFA-funded Healthy Marriage, Responsible Fatherhood, and Re-entry grantees. Programs are listed by State and include a description of the program and website where available.

The National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse also has a series of [State Profile documents](#) that include various resources related to healthy relationships, fatherhood, and economic stability work in each State.

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**Question:** For an agency or program looking to integrate one or more of the areas (healthy relationships, positive parenting, and economic stability), what are some tips on ways to get started?

**Answer, provided during webinar:**

*Robyn Cenizal, Project Director for the National Resource Center for Healthy Marriage and Families, Senior Manager, ICF International*

I think one of the first things that any organization needs to assess whenever they're thinking about adding on new components is what is their current service delivery system? What does that look like? And then what makes sense in terms of the needs of the clients that they're serving? Bringing in a whole bunch of new ideas just because they're new and interesting ideas may not be the most appropriate strategy. I would start with assessing service delivery systems, and then perhaps thinking about integrating the different services, using the [Levels of Integration](#) that the Resource Center uses. Level 1 is basic integration. That could be simply informational handouts in a waiting room, whether those handouts are 10 Tips for Healthy Communication or brochures on the Community Healthy Marriage grantee or Fatherhood program. That's basic engagement, or developing a partnership if you identify, for example, that the cooperative extension agency in your community is offering financial education classes, financial literacy classes, bringing that partner in to offer those classes to your clients or developing a cross-referral system with that agency might be a good strategy. Or, if you're really in a position to fully integrate some of these new ideas, maybe consider how you might integrate the strategies for improving family economic stability that, that Penny talked about, downloading all that and actually integrating it into the work that you're doing. That might be a strategy.

There's also healthy relationship curriculum available on the Resource Center website in the [Virtual Training Center](#) than might be an appropriate curriculum to integrate. But I would start with an assessment of your service delivery system and your client needs.

*Penny Tinsman, Senior Project Manager, ICF International; Project Manager Office of Family Assistance (OFA) Healthy Marriage/Responsible Fatherhood Technical Assistance, and Economic Stability/Workforce Development Technical Assistance to Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood Grantees projects*

I would just second what Robyn just said in taking an assessment of your program and what you're trying to accomplish, and knowing that with your service delivery, how important the supportive services are and even if your goal is economic stability for your participants and that's what their goal is ultimately, when they come in and they need a job, and helping them understand that sometimes that can be a very, very hard sell, but they need a lot of other pieces as well. And one thing that I didn't mention and I, I should have, is not providing services to them that they don't need. If they don't present with a particular issue, having them receive services for something they don't need could be detrimental to your program and to their actual goals and objectives. To their individual plan.

*Nigel Vann, Senior Technical Specialist, ICF International, Resource Development Lead, National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse (NRFCH)*

I certainly echo everything that has been said. I think particularly not to try and stretch beyond your core mission. I think sometimes we trip ourselves up because we will go after a new grant, say, and try and do something that's really sort of beyond what we have been doing. But as I said during the presentation, if your mission, your goal in any way entails family strengthening or enhancing child well-being then that means you ought to be engaging with mums and dads so to the extent an agency may not be having a lot of success engaging with dads then I think take a step back and talk with all the staff about well, why isn't this happening? And why is this important? It's very important to really be clear with everybody on the staff, the benefits of both parents being involved in the lives of a child. Everyone's got to buy into this, as I mentioned, do some staff training. But talk to some dads. Talk to some dads in the community and get a sense of what they think of your agency and help them perhaps to develop a more positive attitude if that's not what they've got, and talk to the dads about well what might be interesting for you to come in, and what could we do to help. Have a male on staff, having that male face makes it much easier for a man just to walk in, but as I said before, it's not the be all and end all. I've seen many, many women do fantastic work with men without any other men on staff being really involved. Make sure that the first person anybody talks to is father-friendly so if a young man walks into your agency with his pants halfway down his waist, don't be thinking stereotypically about who he is. Embrace him as a young man who cares about his kids and really look for the strengths in everybody.

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**Question:** What are ways to assess if your agency is ‘father-friendly’?

**Answer, provided during webinar:**

*Nigel Vann, Senior Technical Specialist, ICF International, Resource Development Lead, National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse (NRFC)*

If you go to our (National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse) [Fatherhood Toolkit](#), you can download a father-friendliness assessment tool that was actually developed back in the 90’s. I had a hand in developing and it was developed for the National Head Start Association and there’s a different version, a slightly different version of it that’s available now for Head Start agencies through the Building Blocks, and there’s other ones out there. I think I saw that Neil Tift was part of the audience and he developed one many years ago and I’m not sure how available that is now and the National Fatherhood Initiative has one available as well but you can, you can download that one from our Toolkit anyway, and it’s broken down into five categories to take a look at various aspects of your agency and you can have staff get together in small groups to assess things on a scale of one to five or one to ten and then you can come up with where there’s some areas for growth and then you can start talking about ways to improve things. But I think again involving all the staff in that is key. You don’t want to just have one person whose job it is to engage with dads or with mums, you know, or to do the employment bit. You want everybody on board with the importance of everything so that everybody is talking it up with everybody they meet.

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**Question:** From an agency working with families in a domestic violence shelter as well as local parenting programs: We offer many resources and assistance to clients, what are ways to keep them motivated to follow through?

**Answer, provided during webinar:**

*Penny Tinsman, Senior Project Manager, ICF International; Project Manager Office of Family Assistance (OFA) Healthy Marriage/Responsible Fatherhood Technical Assistance, and Economic Stability/Workforce Development Technical Assistance to Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood Grantees projects*

I think that gets back to your case management piece having the case manager very involved. When they’re [clients] presenting with multiple issues, and it can be domestic violence, it can be substance abuse, it can be housing, whatever it is, while you’re trying to work with that, that’s building the relationship between your case manager and your participant. Being that resource, making sure that the services that the participants are receiving are good and that they are culturally appropriate for that individual. I think it gets back to some of what Robyn mentioned earlier, just the assessment of your service delivery. But case management plays such a crucial and vital role in that, and while they’re working through, or you’re dealing with maybe a domestic violence issue, you can also still be working on their soft skills or their other pieces and where that’s

appropriate, I think that's helpful as well. But I think it all boils down to your case management strategy that your program is implementing.

*Robyn Cenizal, Project Director for the National Resource Center for Healthy Marriage and Families, Senior Manager, ICF International*

I would add that one of the most important things to keep in mind whenever you're dealing with adults is the adult learner theory. The theory basically says that adults need to feel empowered and they need to feel the relevance of whatever it is that you're wanting them to learn, so getting back to what Penny said, if they are presenting with multiple issues, making sure that you're addressing the issues that they consider to be the most critical, the most urgent first, is a great way to start building that relationship, and making sure that any type of educational programming that you're providing to them is done using adult learner theory and not like you would teach a child where you expect them to come and to sit and to simply listen and be lectured to for a period of time. If adults value the information, they will stick with the program. Sometimes they have scheduling challenges and they have other barriers, and making sure you have strategies in place to help overcome those barriers so they can participate is important, but for the most part, people will do what is important to them, and so communicating that value, using your case managers to help them understand the value of what information they're going to learn from these different components of the program, is really key to getting them to start and stick with a program.

*Penny Tinsman, Senior Project Manager, ICF International; Project Manager Office of Family Assistance (OFA) Healthy Marriage/Responsible Fatherhood Technical Assistance, and Economic Stability/Workforce Development Technical Assistance to Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood Grantees projects*

Also one of the things we briefly showed when we were looking at the website is the [toolkit for facilitators](#) that Nigel was instrumental in helping us to prepare, provides video clips that can be also very helpful with the adult learning component as well.

*Nigel Vann, Senior Technical Specialist, ICF International, Resource Development Lead, National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse (NRFC)*

I think what Robyn said was particularly on point there and very eloquently put, Robyn. I think the key is, we've got to understand that folks' lives are complicated, right? And actually, if you help people get a rung up that ladder that I was talking about, life gets more complicated, so if you're now more involved with your kids or more involved in an education program, more involved in the training program, more involved in the job, it gets harder to keep coming to classes, but I think if you form that up-front relationship, and also that you've got this sort of real connection with the folk in the program as Robyn said, they, they're going to see the value of this and they're going to keep coming back. I think a lot of it is just from first contact that you, you listen more than you talk,

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and you form a relationship and if there's something real going on, people will try and get there. But there will be times when it's difficult, so you do need to check in with them sometimes before a session or if they don't make a particular session, make sure that somebody touches base with them before the next one just to sort of see what's going on and, if it's not a staff person it could be a fellow participant sometimes and sort of check in. You know, it might be a transportation issue. It might be there was a change in the job shift they had to work. It might be a child care issue so let's, you know, find out what's going on and see how we can help.

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**Question:** I was wondering if you have the statistics for girls who grow up without their biological father in the home, in terms of incarceration or in general? (Based on the breaking the cycle of incarceration slide)

**Answer:** *Nigel Vann, Senior Technical Specialist, ICF International, Resource Development Lead, National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse (NRFC)*

We don't have those specific statistics, but in general it's clear that children who grow up without their biological father in the home tend to fare worse than children in married-couple households. For instance, they are less likely to complete high school or attend college and more likely to engage in "risky behavior" such as using drugs or alcohol. Boys are more likely to be involved in the criminal justice system, but we haven't seen clear data concerning girls. Girls are more likely to become teen moms. However, it's also important to point out that many children raised in single parent households do just fine and the links between family structure and child outcomes are not uniform. As pointed out by Jane Waldfogel, Terry-Ann Cragie, and Jeanne Brooks-Gunn ([Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing](#), *Fragile Families* Volume 20 Number 2, 2010):

"Family instability, for example, seems to matter more than family structure for cognitive and health outcomes, whereas growing up with a single mother (whether that family structure is stable or unstable over time) seems to matter more than instability for behavior problems. Overall, [our] results are consistent with other research findings that children raised by stable single or cohabiting parents are at less risk than those raised by unstable single or cohabiting parents."

There are various resources that provide more information. For instance:

- [The Importance of Fathers in the Healthy Development of Children](#), Jeffrey Rosenberg and W. Bradford Wilcox, 2006.
- [Father Absence and the Welfare of Children](#), Sara McLanahan.
- *Father Absence and Child Well-Being: A Critical Review*, Center for Research on Child Wellbeing, Working Paper #02-20, November 2002, Wendy Sigle-Rushton and Sara McLanahan  
<http://research.policyarchive.org/21760.pdf>

The following excerpts come from the Sigle-Rushton and McLanahan paper:

- “Children who spend part of their childhood in a single-mother family are more likely to have sex at an early age than children who live with both parents (DeLeire and Kalil, 2002; Flewelling and Bauman, 1990). Daughters from single mother families also form partnerships, and begin childbearing (marital and nonmarital) at a younger age (Wu, 1996; Wu and Martinson, 1993; Painter and Levine, 1999). Whereas young women from two-parent families have a 6 percent chance of having a child outside marriage by age 20, young women from single mother, divorced and never-married, families have an 11 and 14 percent chance respectively. Interestingly, girls in stepfamilies have a 16 percent change of having a child – the highest chance of all (Painter and Levine 2000).” (p.12)
- “Women who grew up with a divorced mother have poorer physical health than adults who grew up in intact families (Glenn and Kramer, 1985).” (p.13)
- “Using occupational status as a measure of economic success, Powell and Parcel (1997) found that women who were living with both biological parents at the age of 16 had significantly higher status as adults than their counterparts who were living in other family types ... children from high status households were less likely to end up in high status occupations themselves if they came from a single-mother family ... adults who grew up in mother only families were more likely to experience spells of unemployment and to rely on public assistance than adults who grew up in two-parent families (McLanahan and Sandefur 1994). (pp 14-15)
- “In sum, as compared with children raised by single parents, children raised by both biological parents earn more in the labor market, are less likely to be live in poverty, have a higher level of assets, and are in a better position to insure themselves against economic uncertainties.” (p.15)

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**Question:** How can we get started connecting the men in our Fatherhood/ Healthy Marriage program with job placement programs?

**Answer:** *Nigel Vann, Senior Technical Specialist, ICF International, Resource Development Lead, National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse (NRFC)*

As a first step, you could conduct a “mapping process” to identify agencies and organizations in your community that provide workforce development and job placement services. Talk to your board members, staff, and partner organizations to tap their knowledge of local services available. You can also contact your local Workforce Investment Board and American Job Centers (aka One-Stop Career Centers) for information on local services and opportunities to develop partnerships.

- Explain the work that you are doing with fathers and mothers to help them with family strengthening and economic self-sufficiency goals.

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Emphasize how you would like to work with local workforce development and job placement programs to achieve mutual goals.

- The [Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act \(WIOA\)](#) was recently enacted to replace the 1998 Workforce Investment Act (WIA). WIOA encourages Workforce Investment Boards to be “increasingly engaged in the business of collaboration, convening and partnership.”
- [Workforce Investment Act \(WIA\) service locator](#)
- [Department of Labor \(DOL\) map of state job center websites](#)

The National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse maintains [state profiles](#) that include contact information for state and federal funded programs designed to enhance economic stability.

I would also reach out to local employers. Explain the work that you are doing and emphasize that graduates of your program are motivated to find and retain employment. Depending on the actual services you provide, emphasize how your graduates are better prepared for employment than others and that hiring them can help employers reduce job turnover. For instance, you might be able to describe the work your team does to help participants overcome barriers and acquire new skills. If you provide follow-up services, explain how you can provide ongoing support for employers and/or your graduates. Developing an ongoing relationship with employers can be a real win/win for all.

Finally, I recommend you look at the [Within Reach toolkit](#) that Penny mentioned in her presentation.

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**Question:** How should fatherhood groups address family violence? How do you navigate those fathers through a fatherhood program while also addressing the DV?

**Answer** *Nigel Vann, Senior Technical Specialist, ICF International, Resource Development Lead, National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse (NRFC)*

The National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse (NRFC) has provided a number of webinars on this issue (in 2008, 2010, 2011, and 2014). The [NRFC Webinars](#) web page has links to transcripts and PowerPoint slides from these presentations. The [State Profiles](#) include contact information for programs working to address and prevent domestic violence and will soon be adding a section on *Addressing Domestic Violence in Fatherhood Programs* to the online [Responsible Fatherhood Toolkit: Resources from the Field](#).

The following are some of the tips that we've heard from practitioners:

- Develop and sustain partnerships with domestic violence organizations to:
  - Develop protocols to ensure shared understanding and guide service delivery.
  - Facilitate cross-training for fatherhood program and domestic violence partner agency staff.

- Ensure all staff consistently and clearly model and encourage non-violent behavior and emphasize that violence is unacceptable in all relationships.
- Forming effective partnerships takes time, but ongoing constructive dialogue can help partners establish common ground and achieve mutual goals.
- Partners should work together to develop protocols that clearly explain key principles and strategies for addressing domestic violence.
- Use a mix of formal and informal screening approaches.
- Staff training should emphasize that violence is unacceptable in family relationships, include opportunities for self-reflection and growth, and clearly explain program strategies for raising fathers' awareness and encouraging non-violent behavior.
- Treat fathers with respect, help them talk about women without being demeaning, and encourage them to become allies in preventing domestic violence.
- Provide awareness-building activities and opportunities for participants to share their feelings, reflect on their past behaviors, and commit to healthy masculinity and preventing sexist and abusive behavior.
- Showing movies or video clips with clear messages from men about the negative impacts of domestic violence can be an effective way to encourage self-reflection, initiate discussion, and emphasize key points.

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**Question:** Where can I find the slides from this webinar?

**Answer:** Visit the National Resource Center for Healthy Marriage and Families website at [www.HealthyMarriageandFamilies.org/events-archive](http://www.HealthyMarriageandFamilies.org/events-archive) to download a copy of the slides, recording, transcript, and a Q&A document from this webinar.

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**Question:** Who should I contact if I have more questions about this webinar?

**Answer:** Visit the National Resource Center for Healthy Marriage and Families website at [www.HealthyMarriageandFamilies.org](http://www.HealthyMarriageandFamilies.org) or email us at [info@HealthyMarriageandFamilies.org](mailto:info@HealthyMarriageandFamilies.org).