

# Executive Summary: The DAD MAP Evaluation: A Randomized Controlled Trial of a Culturally Tailored Parenting and Responsible Fatherhood Program

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Programs serving fathers have expanded in recent years to provide services including parental workshops, workforce readiness training, and case management. Fatherhood programs typically include several educational and service components to address challenges common among low-income fathers, including unemployment, co-parenting conflicts, delinquent child support cases, and criminal justice involvement. Despite how ubiquitous fatherhood programs have become in addressing these challenges, few fatherhood programs have been rigorously evaluated to identify the effectiveness of program components on key outcomes associated with parental engagement, co-parenting, workforce participation, and child well-being.

The study described in this report aimed to contribute to a growing body of research on effective practices within fatherhood programs by providing a rigorous study of a culturally tailored fatherhood curriculum for

low-income fathers residing in Baltimore, Maryland. The Center for Urban Families (CFUF), in collaboration with MEF Associates as its evaluation partner, implemented a randomized, controlled trial testing the efficacy of the “Developing all Dads for Manhood and Parenting” (DAD MAP) parental education curriculum on key fatherhood outcome.

The DAD MAP workshops were designed to assist low-income fathers in four key areas: fatherhood responsibility, parental involvement, employment readiness, and co-parenting cooperation. The DAD MAP workshops include group discussion and activities to reinforce the important role of fathers, connect individual parenting behavior to childhood development, improve interpersonal skills through modeling and roleplaying, and promote ongoing efforts to seek work despite barriers to employment. The DAD MAP curriculum workshops are part of the Baltimore Responsible Fatherhood Project



BRFP staff enrolling fathers in services.

(BRFP) at CFUF, which also includes intensive case management and child support advocacy. One of the core objectives of this evaluation was to identify the value of including a theoretically structured parental skills building curriculum into a fatherhood program service in order to achieve outcomes dealing with parenting, co-parenting relationship quality, child well-being, and workforce participation.

A total of 164 fathers seeking fatherhood services from CFUF provided informed consent and were randomized to participate in either a fatherhood group session using the DAD MAP curriculum or a peer-led unstructured support group. Fathers were asked to complete surveys assessing paternal engagement, co-parenting relationship quality, work seeking or employment, and child well-being at baseline and at three-month and six-month follow-ups.

Results from analysis suggested that the DAD MAP curriculum had significant effects on parental engagement and informal child support

contributions at the three-month follow-up. However these impacts did not persist at six-month follow-up assessments. Although parental engagement and co-parenting relationship quality were positively associated, no significant effects of the program were observed on outcomes of co-parenting relationship quality. There were also no impacts reflected in childhood well-being outcomes at three-month or six-month follow-up. Results also suggested stronger impacts for fathers who did not participate in other key CFUF programs.

The current study is considered one more step in a series of efforts to identify effective fatherhood programs and program components using rigorous evaluations. Future studies may benefit from testing programs using a no-service condition to identify full program impacts and those of other components including case management and employment assistance.

