Fatherhood Research & Practice Network

A Conversation with Researchers About Measuring Economic Security Outcomes in Fatherhood Programs

www.frpn.org

May 17, 2016

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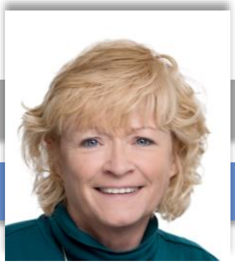
Who is FRPN?

Jay Fagan, Ph.D.
Temple University
FRPN Co-Director

Rebecca Kaufman, MSW
FRPN Senior Research Coordinator

Jessica Pearson, Ph.D.
Center for Policy Research
FRPN Co-Director



Nancy Thoennes, Ph.D.
Center for Policy Research

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Overview of FRPN

- Five-year, $4.8 million cooperative agreement to Temple University/CPR
- Funding by U.S. DHHS, ACF, Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, October 2013-September 2018
- Targets fatherhood researchers & programs serving low-income fathers (OFA and non-OFA grantees, state fatherhood commissions, CBOs, programs funded by TANF, child welfare & child support)

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FRPN Goals

#1 Promote Rigorous Evaluation

#2 Build Evaluation Capacity

#3 Disseminate Information

Goal #1: Promote Rigorous Evaluation

Funded 4 researcher-practitioner teams to conduct RCTs. Jan. 1, 2015 (70 Letters of Interest, 4 Awards, $50,000-$100,000/award).

Will fund approximately 6-8 researcher-practitioner teams. July 1, 2016. (54 Letters of Interest, Approximately 2-4 awards if $50,000 and 4-5 awards of $100,000.)

Developed and validated new outcome measures for nonresident fathers on parenting & co-parenting. Measures and instructional videos posted on www.frpn.org.

Conducting research on co-parenting and maternal engagement, gaps in fatherhood field.

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Goal #2: Build Evaluation Capacity

Papers that identify research gaps and research priorities for fatherhood programs and evaluators

One-day certificate program on evaluation research for fatherhood program staff for CEUs and Temple U certificate (New England, Ohio, NPCL, FFCA)

Quarterly webinars for researchers and practitioners on relevant topics & post on www. frpn.org

Research and evaluation briefs on a variety of topics including addressing IPV in fatherhood programs

Monthly TA calls with FRPN grantees and quarterly TA calls with selected OFA grantees to monitor progress

Consult with researchers and practitioners on how to connect (using FRPN list serve), design and conduct effective evaluations

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Goal #3: Information Dissemination

Create and maintain a comprehensive website www.frpn.org

- **General information about FRPN, the team, Steering Committees, and RFPs**
- **A List-Serve to connect researchers and practitioners & share best practices**
- **A variety of print and web-based resources to help practitioners and researchers conduct evaluations**
- **Documents that identify researcher gaps, resources to do rigorous evaluations, research briefs and outcome measures**

Distribute Blueprint, a monthly electronic newsletter, to 1,400 FRPN subscribers (34% open rate)

Make presentations at a variety of research, practitioner & policy conferences

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Why a Webinar on Measuring Economic Security Outcomes in Fatherhood Program

- The effectiveness of fatherhood programs is tied to goals related to employment, income and financial stability
- The economic security needs of participants drives services
- Many programs provide services dealing with job training, employment and job retention
- Poverty is associated with negative child outcomes and is most acute in single parent households
- Next to mother's earnings, formal child support is the second largest income source for poor families
- Many programs try to help fathers understand their child support case, improve payment, and lift enforcement actions

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Related FRPN Briefs

Measuring Financial Support Provided by Fathers in Fatherhood Programs

April 2016

Jessica Pearson and Nancy Thoennes

Http://www.frpn.org/evaluating-programs/our-research

Coming:

Measuring Employment, Income, and Financial Stability Among Fathers in Fatherhood Programs

Jessica Pearson and Nancy Thoennes

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Today's Speakers

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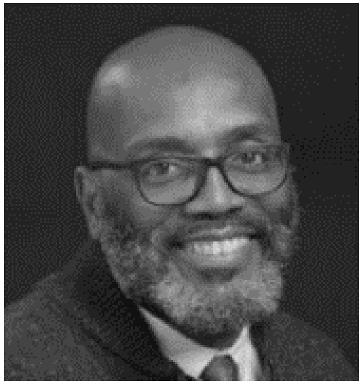

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Measuring Employment and Earnings Outcomes in Fatherhood Programs

Bret Barden
MDRC
Research Associate

Overview of this Presentation

- Why collect employment and earnings information?
- What types of employment and earnings information should programs collect?
- What are some advantages and limitations of different employment and earnings data sources?
- What are common measures derived from employment and earnings data?

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Why Measure Employment and Earnings?

- To determine whether participants are employed and economically stable before, during, and after program services.
  - To understand past employment and earnings of participants upon program entry
  - To observe changes in participant employment and earnings over time

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What Types of Data Should Fatherhood Programs Collect?

- Short answer: Depends on a which question(s) programs are trying to answer
- Two main types of information:

Administrative Records

- State Unemployment Insurance (UI) wage records
- National Directory of New Hires (NDNH) new hires ("W4") records

Self-Reported

- Surveys
- Baseline Information at Program Intake
- Ongoing information from participants throughout participation

- Each type of data has advantages and limitations

Administrative Data

- What are these data?
  - Typically, quarterly wage records
  - Reported by employers; recorded by state unemployment insurance programs
  - Contain total quarterly earnings per participant per employer
  - Contain limited information on employers (e.g., name, industry)

- What questions can these data answer?
  - How many participants worked in a particular quarter?
  - How much did participants earn in particular quarters?
  - How many employers did participants work for in a particular quarter?
  - In what industries did participants work?

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Administrative data: Advantages

- Fairly comprehensive for the types of employment covered for all participants in a program
- Contain detailed, specific information on earnings amount, number of employers, employer name and industry
- Not subject to problems with recall common to self report
  – Particularly useful for historical information and changes over time
  – Also useful for measures of prior employment and earnings at program intake

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Administrative Data: Limitations

- Can be difficult and time-consuming to obtain
  - Consent / releases from participants to access private data
  - Data sharing agreement process can be lengthy or a non-starter
- Can be resource-intensive to process and analyze
- Do not include informal earnings or earnings generated as an independent contractor ("1099 employment")
- Data often "lagged" due to reporting process
- Do not provide information on total time worked during a quarter and job characteristics such permanent vs temporary, full-time vs part-time, hours worked per week, hourly wage

Administrative Data: Common Measures

- Percent of participants employed
- Average earnings
- Average quarterly employment / number of quarters employed over a particular time period
- Percent of participants employed during every quarter of a particular time period
- Percent of participants earning above specific thresholds (e.g., percent of participants earnings more than $5,000 per year, more than $10,000 per year, etc.)

Self-Reported Data

What are these data?

- Questions asked directly of program participants either by program staff, in forms, or by surveyors
- Timing of these data collection efforts can be throughout the program or after
- Topics covered are flexible and up to programs to decide (Generally, helpful to align program intake questions with follow-up questions or specific outcomes of interest.

What questions can these data answer?

- Same questions as administrative data, plus information on job characteristics and employment not captured in wage records.
- But of course, there are limitations.

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Self-Reported Data: Advantages

Can ask about informal employment and employment not covered in quarterly wage records

- (e.g., 1099 employment)

Can obtain information about specific job characteristics and job quality

- Permanent vs temporary
- Full-time vs part-time
- Hours worked per week
- Hourly wage
- Job function

Can ask about more specific points in time than a quarter

- e.g., how many weeks or months worked

Can learn about how participants obtained jobs, why they quit jobs, if and how they are looking for jobs, etc.

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Self-Reported Data: Limitations

- Imperfect recall
  - Participants may not recall specific details or may recall them incorrectly, particularly about more distant events
- Response bias
  - In the case of surveys administered after program entry, respondents may differ from non-respondents and this could bias results
- Question framing / priming may affect results
  - Participants may not understand questions (importance of "pre-testing" questions)
- Survey efforts can be expensive and labor-intensive

Self-Reported Data: Common Measures

- Percent of participants employed
- Percent employed by type of employment
  - Permanent vs. Temporary (including day labor and odd jobs)
- Average hours worked per week
  - Percent working full-time (often measured as 35 hours per week or more) versus part-time (fewer than 35 hours per week)
- Percent of participants in various job functions
  - Specifically can get at function rather than just title
- Percent of participants working night shift vs day shift
- Percent of participants with benefits
  - Health benefits, vacation days, etc.

Self-Reported Data: Common Baseline m Measures

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Common self-reported measures that programs may want to consider collecting when participants enter the program include:

- Ever employed prior to program entry
- Currently employed at time of program entry
- Ever worked for the same employer for more than six months
- Employed in the past year
- Months worked in previous three years
- Hourly wage in most recent job
- Start and end dates of most recent job

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Examples of Current Projects Using These Employment and Earnings Measures

- **The Enhanced Transitional Jobs Demonstration (ETJD)**, sponsored by the Employment and Training Administration (ETA) in the U.S. Department of Labor, is designed to fund and rigorously test employment programs targeting noncustodial parents and individuals recently released from prison.

  The Enhanced Transitional Jobs Demonstration

- **The Building Bridges and Bonds (B3) study**, sponsored by the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation (OPRE) in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, tests the effectiveness of strategies to support parenting and co-parenting skills and to advance the employment of low-income fathers.

  Building Bridges and Bonds (B3) Evaluation

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Final Thoughts on Developing Employment and Earnings Data Collection Plans

- Pre-test all self-reported measures to ensure that participants understand the questions as intended
- Carefully frame research questions and the outcomes you wish to examine before deciding which data to pursue
- Review past projects to obtain more examples of measures for outcomes of interest
- Ask around to other programs, researchers, and state agencies about what administrative data are available and how to obtain them. The process and what data are available may vary considerably by state.

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Measuring Child Support Outcomes in Fatherhood Programs

- Elaine Sorensen, Senior Advisor,
- US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Child Support Enforcement

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Why Collect Child Support Information on Participants in Fatherhood Programs?

One of the goals of nearly all fatherhood programs is that their participants provide financial support for their children.

Child support is one way in which participants can provide financial support for their children.

Most fatherhood program participants are in the child support program and are legally required to pay child support.

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What Child Support Information Should a Fatherhood Program Collect?

- Two child support outcomes are key
  - Amount of child support that a participant is required to pay each month for all of his children covered by one or more child support orders
  - Amount of child support that a participant actually pays each month for all of his children covered by a child support order

Other relevant child support outcomes

  - Amount of past due child support, or arrears, that a participant owes for all of his children covered by a child support order

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What Questions Can These Data Answer?

- At enrollment, what percent of fathers in the fatherhood program have a child support order?
- Among fathers who owe child support at enrollment:
  - What is the average amount they owe per month?
  - What is the average amount that they paid per month?
  - What percent paid no child support at enrollment?
  - What is the average amount of back support, or arrears, that is owed at enrollment?
- Did the average amount owed by these fathers increase, decrease, or stay the same six months after enrollment?
- Did the average amount paid increase, decrease, or stay the same six months after enrollment?

Example Pre-Post Analysis

	One Month Prior to Enrollment	During the 6th Month After Enrollment
Percent of participants who have a child support order	70%	
Among participants with a child support order at enrollment:		
Average amount owed	$500	$400
Average amount paid	$100	$200
Percent paid nothing	80%	20%
Percent of order paid	20%	50%
Average amount of arrears	$5,000	$4,000

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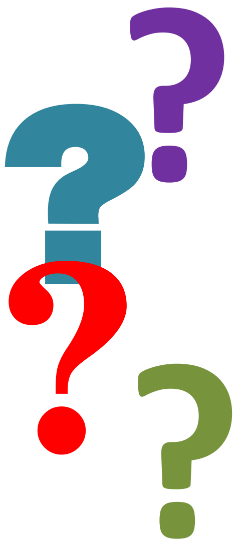
How Many Months of Child Support Information Should a Fatherhood Program Collect?

- The Pre-Post Analysis Example examined just one month of payments and amounts due prior to enrollment and six months after enrollment.
- If it is possible to collect data for a longer period, such as 12 months instead of one, that would be preferable because it would reflect a longer period of payment behavior.
- However, it is more difficult to collect 12 months of information than just one.

How Can A Fatherhood Program Obtain their Participants' Child Support Information?



- Ask participants how much they owe and pay
  - Benefits of this approach
    - Have easy access to participants, at least while they are involved in the program
  - Downside of this approach
    - Participants' knowledge of their child support payments and amounts due are often different than that of the child support program. The child support program has the legal record.
- Can also ask participants to obtain this information from the child support program
  - Nearly all child support programs have a web-based interface that allows parents to access their order amount and payment history on-line and print this information.

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Can the Information be Obtained from the Child Support Program?

- Fatherhood Programs who need to collect child support information for a large number of participants can work with their local child support office to obtain this information in batch format. However, there are three challenges to this approach.
  - Access is difficult due to privacy concerns
  - The child support office may not have the resources to provide data in batch format
  - Child support data are complicated and so it can be difficult to request exactly what data is needed, and to interpret the data once you receive it.

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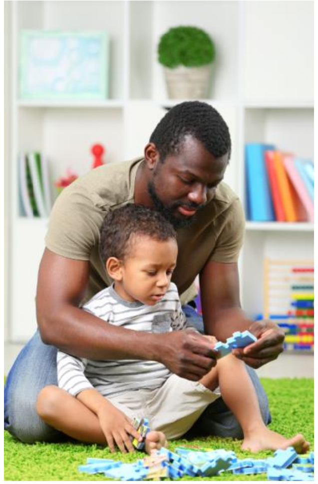
It is Possible to Overcome These Challenges



- Privacy concerns can usually be overcome. All child support offices have a disclosure form that fatherhood program participants can sign, which will allow the child support office to share the participant's child support information with staff at the fatherhood program.
- Although resources are scarce, many child support offices will develop a computer program to extract the data requested and provide it to the fatherhood program.
- Technical issues regarding child support data can be overcome. Written documentation of the data requested and provided will facilitate this process.

Other Measures of Providing Financial Support for Children

- Child support payments are only one means for fathers to provide financial support for their children.
- A fatherhood program may want to measure other ways in which fathers financially support their children.
- Key measurement decisions will need to be made:
  - Will need to decide how to measure financial support for children the father lives with. This is difficult because most family expenses, such as rent, food, and utilities, are shared expenses.
  - Will need to decide whether to include financial support that fathers provide for any children (current partner's) or just their own children.

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Other Measures of Financial Support for Nonresident Children

- Fathers with children who live elsewhere can provide financial support outside of the child support system, sometimes referred to as informal support. Research suggests that informal support can be substantial, especially among fathers not in the child support program.
- Need to decide how to define "nonresident" children. Typical survey question: Do you have children under the age of 18 who live elsewhere all or most of the time? If yes, the father is considered to have nonresident children.
- Need to decide whether to measure formal and informal support separately, or just ask about total financial support for nonresident children.

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One Approach to Asking Participants about Total Financial Contributions for Nonresident Children

One set of questions that can be asked of participants at enrollment are:

- Do you have any children under the age of 18 who live elsewhere all or most of the time?
- If yes, how many minor children do you have that live elsewhere?
- For those with nonresident children: In the past 30 days, have you paid anything toward the support of your minor children who live elsewhere?
- If yes, how much have you paid toward the support of these children during the past 30 days?

Increasing the time period over which payments are made gives a more complete picture of the financial contribution, but it increases the risk that parents won't remember what they paid.

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Asking for Total Financial Support or Support per Child

- These questions asked about financial support for all nonresident children. Some surveys ask about payments made for each child. Asking about financial support for each child is thought to generate more accurate information, but obtaining this information is time consuming and not always applicable since payments can be made for two or more children if they live together.

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Measuring Non-Cash Support

Fathers also provide non-cash support, which can be measured. A typical survey question is:

> In the past 30 days, did you buy any items such as food, diapers, clothing, or school supplies, for your minor children who live elsewhere?

To measure the dollar value of these items, surveys ask:

> How much money did you spend on items that you bought for the these children in the past 30 days?

Some surveys ask separate questions for each type of item bought for children. This is thought to provide more accurate information.

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For More Information on Measuring Financial Support by Fathers in Fatherhood Programs

Measuring Financial Support Provided by Fathers in Fatherhood Programs, by Jessica Pearson and Nancy Thoennes (2016). Fatherhood Research and Practice Network

- http://www.frpn.org/asset/frpn-research-brief-measuring-financial-support-provided-fathers-in-fatherhood-programs

Fatherhood and Marriage Local Evaluation and Cross-Site Project

- http://www.famlecross-site.info/FamleHome.html

Inventory of Measures for Use in Fatherhood Programs

- https://www.fatherhood.gov/sites/default/files/files-for-pages/Inventory%20of%20Measures-Child%20Trends%20March%206-09.pdf.

Two Relevant Studies in the Field

Parents and Children Together -- A study of four responsible fatherhood programs and two healthy marriage programs. It is examining grantees' experiences operating their programs, the perspectives of participants, and the effectiveness of services.

- http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/research/project/parents-and-children-together-pact-evaluation

Child Support Noncustodial Parent Employment Demonstration – A study of eight child support-led employment programs for parents who are behind in their child support and unemployed or underemployed. It is examining how these programs were implemented and whether they increased reliable child support payments.

- http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/css/resource/csped-grants

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Economic Security: A Qualitative Assessment

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Economic Security: A Qualitative Assessment

When We Say Economic Security, What Do We Mean?

A familiar question…. (using administrative data)

What are your current sources of income (check all that apply):

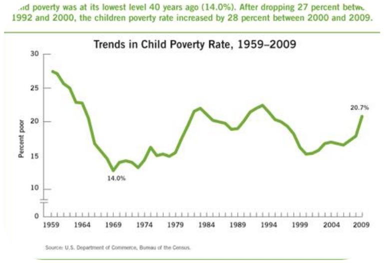
- Income from a job
- Social Security Disability (SSDI)
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- A Pension
- Unemployment insurance
- Child Support
- Alimony payments
- Other (specify_____________________________)

From Thoennes and Pearson (April, 2016)

Understanding the key **demographics of the city**

Race and Gender specific

Employment Rate



Poverty Rate

Education Attainment

Incarceration Rate

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Securing the **individual histories**

- Educational Attainment
- Employment History
- Interaction with the Jail/Prisons
- Fines and Fees Debt
- Child Support (current and arrears)
- Housing (Living Arrangements)
- Use of Food Banks/SNAP benefits
- Temporary Agency (History)
- Banked or UnBanked

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Questions?

Call (888) 567-1602 and tell the operator you have a question for the FRPN webinar.

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