



Fatherhood
Research
& Practice
Network

www.frpn.org

Findings from FRPN-Funded Projects 2: Testing the Use of Cellphones and Online Resources to Engage Fathers and Improve Parenting June 25, 2019

Who is FRPN?



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



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

What is FRPN?

- Six-year, \$4.8 million cooperative agreement to Temple U & CPR
- Funding by U.S. DHHS, ACF, Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, 2013-2019
- Targets fatherhood researchers & programs serving low-income fathers



Fatherhood Research And Practice Network

#1

Promote
Rigorous
Evaluation

#2

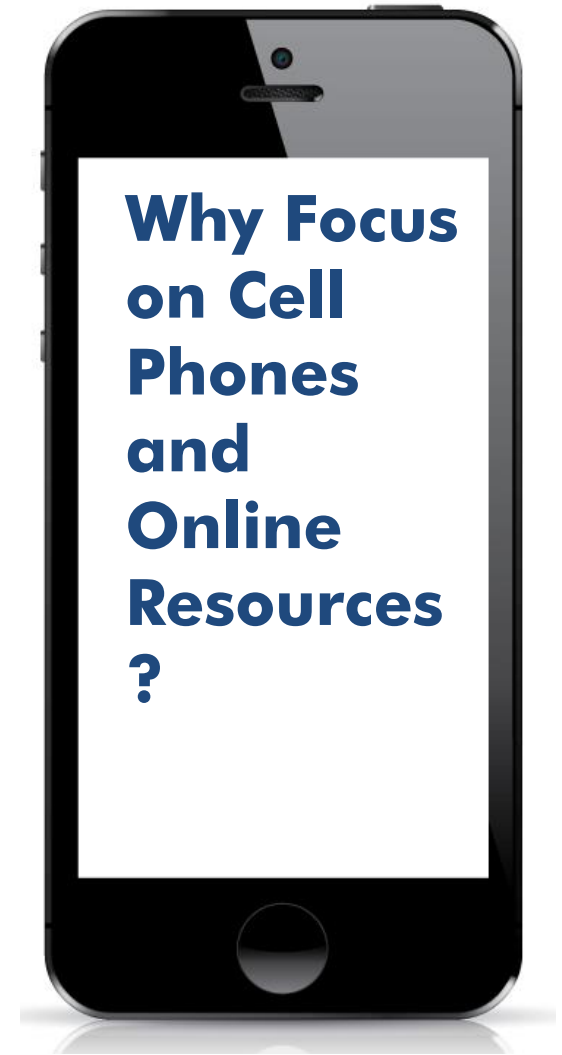
Build
Evaluation
Capacity

#3

Disseminate
Information



- Smartphones have virtually eliminated the digital divide among races and ethnicities with:
 - 80% of White, Non-Hispanic,
 - 79% of Black, Non-Hispanic
 - 75% of Hispanichaving some Internet access once you add smartphone access to home broadband (Pew Research Center, Home Broadband 2013)
- Cell phones are primary means of communication and social connection for younger generations (digital divide widens for those over age 65)
- Logical that parents, and fathers in particular, should be able to connect with programs, the government and judicial remedies through mobile devices & home computers
- Can mobile devices & home internet connection promote meaningful access to information and services for low-income, nonresident parents? Can they replace or supplement in-person formats?



Featured Studies

Amy Holtzworth—
Munroe, Indiana
University. “A qualitative
study of facilitators and
barriers to accessing
online parenting
programs among
parents filing a paternity
case”



Anna Hayward, State
University of New York
at Stony Brook. “An
RCT to examine the
impact of cell phone
technology on
engagement and
retention of fathers in a
fatherhood program”



Shawna Lee & Joyce Lee,
University of Michigan. “Testing
the feasibility of an interactive
mentor-based text messaging
program to increase father’s
engagement in home visitation”



Selva Lewin-Bizan,
University of Hawaii.
“A text-messaging
intervention to deliver
parenting ideas and
support to low-income
fathers”

A Qualitative Study of Facilitators and Barriers to Accessing Online Parenting Programs among Parents Filing a Paternity Case

Presenter: Amy Holtzworth-Munroe

**Co-Authors: Claire S. Tomlinson, Amy G. Applegate,
and Brittany N. Rudd
Indiana University**

FRPN Webinar, June 2019

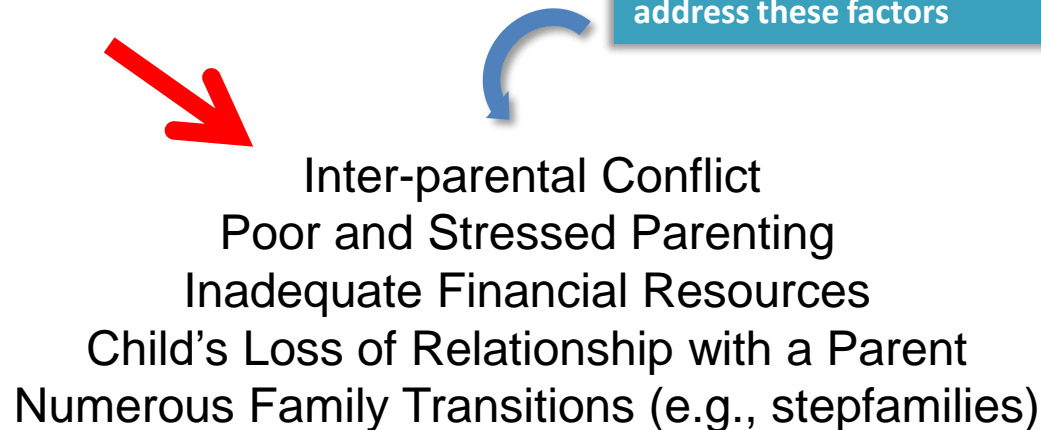
Why Target Parental Separation?



- *Increases Risk* for children's problems with adjustment
 - Behavioral and emotional problems
 - Academic, peer, and intimate relationship problems
- How to decrease that risk?
 - We know about *the related family processes* from basic social science research
 - Suggests possible *risk factors* for *parenting programs to target...*

Parental Separation

Parent programs for separating and divorcing parties are used to address these factors



Inter-parental Conflict
Poor and Stressed Parenting
Inadequate Financial Resources
Child's Loss of Relationship with a Parent
Numerous Family Transitions (e.g., stepfamilies)

Children's Adjustment

Thanks to Brian D'Onofrio for this slide.

Parenting Program

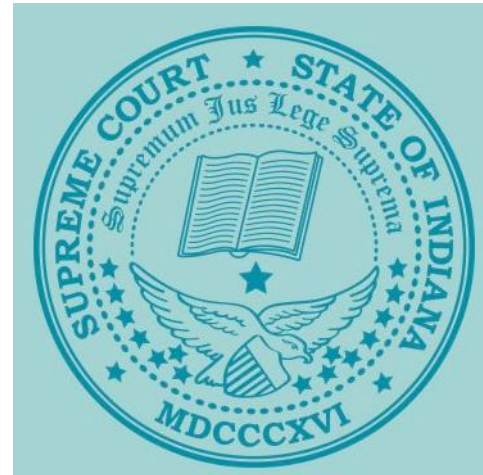
- Many courts require divorcing or separating parents to complete parenting programs
- Most common program: In-person, groups of parents, about 4 hours in length
- Concerns about program accessibility
 - Transportation, Time away from Work, Childcare, etc.
- **Online** programs increasingly popular:
 - Cost effective
 - Convenient
 - Fewer access barriers (e.g., transportation, child-care)
- Little research on their effectiveness
- We are conducting a study of online parent programs



Comparing Two Online Parent Education Programs for Divorcing and Separating Parents in Delaware County, Indiana ("Muncie Study")

Funded by:

Fatherhood
Research
& Practice
Network

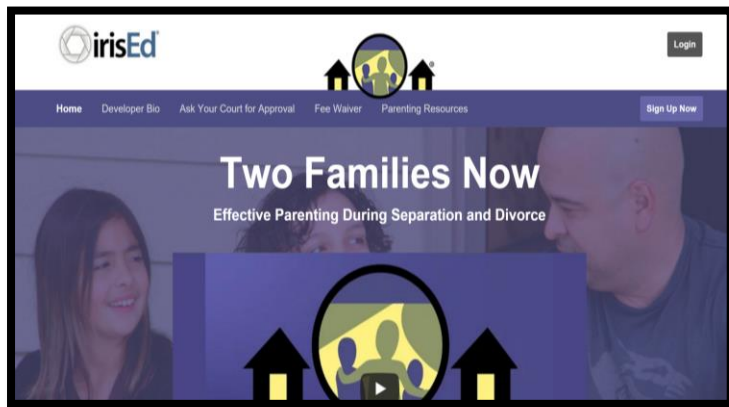


Special thanks to the Judges of Delaware Circuit Court, especially
Chief Judge Kim Dowling and Judge Marianne Vorhees, and
Court Administrator Emily Anderson

Overview of Ongoing Study

- Randomized Controlled Trial (RCT)
- Initial/new divorce or separation cases filed at court
- 3 study conditions:
 - 1) No online parent education program
 - 2) Two Families Now (TFN) online program
 - 3) Children in Between (CIB) online program
- Two subgroups: Divorce cases and Unmarried cases
 - **Focus today: ***Unmarried cases***

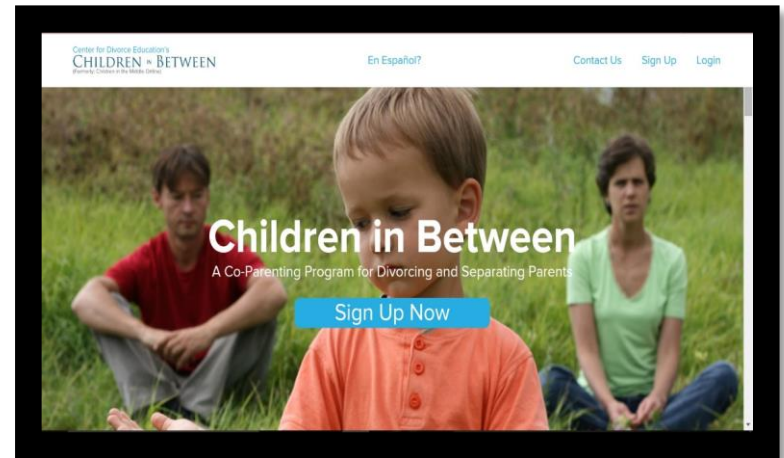




Two Families Now (TFN) and Children In Between (CIB)

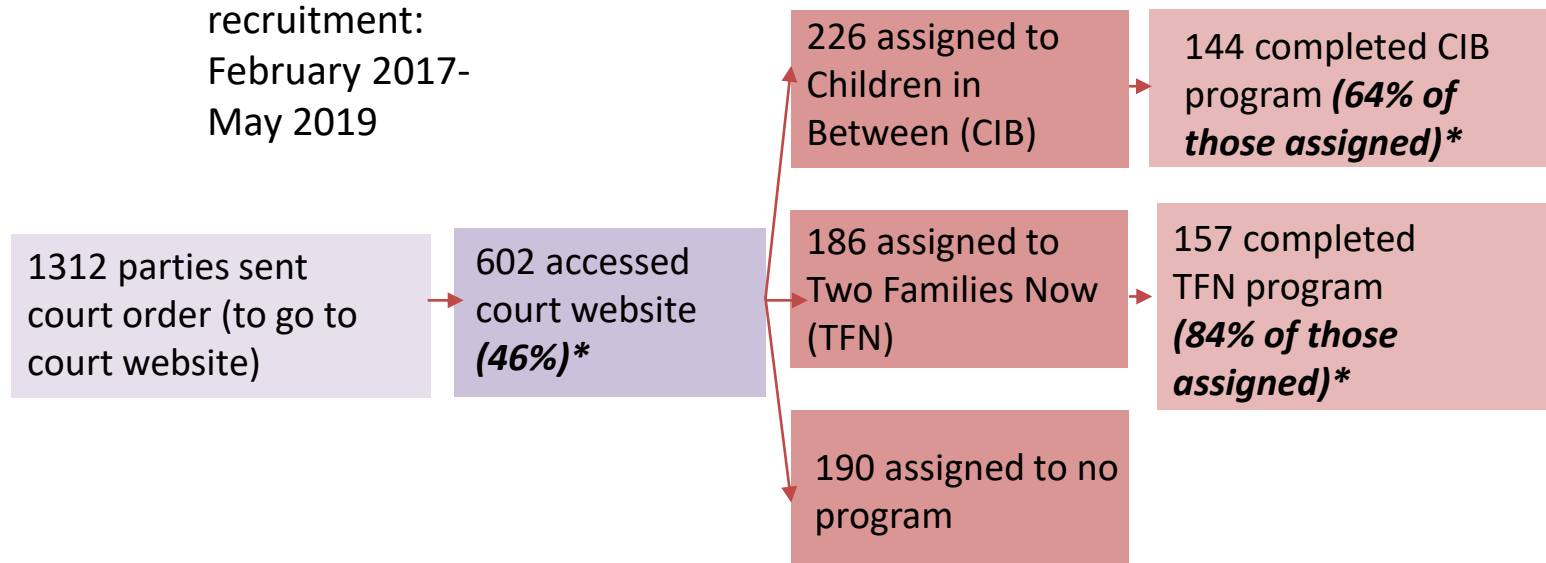
Each:

- ~4 hours
- Can be done on various devices
(e.g., phone, tablet, computer)
- Content
 - Videos modeling interactions between parents and children
 - Exercises and skills practice
 - Quizzes
- Being used around the country



Parenting Program Recruitment (Initial Divorce and Unmarried Case Parents)

Ongoing study
recruitment:
February 2017-
May 2019



Parties still encounter barriers to doing online program

Qualitative Interview Add-On Study

- Added a ***qualitative interview*** to explore barriers and facilitators to program completion
- Phone interviews with 40 unmarried parties
 - 11 completed parenting program:
 - 5 unmarried men; 6 unmarried women
 - 29 did not complete parenting program:
 - 10 unmarried men; 19 unmarried women
- Coded responses to interview questions
- Will only discuss facilitators and barriers mentioned by 25% or more of study participants in at least one group



Facilitators to Program Completion



- 100% of parents who did a program reported positive perceptions of the program.
 - Suggests if we can get parents into a program, they will see positives in the program.
- Both parents who did and did not do a program viewed the program as convenient (83%).
 - Both groups saw positives to the online technology (e.g., had technology).
 - Most parents (64%) preferred an online, over a face-to-face, course (e.g., privacy).
 - So online programs may be relatively accessible.
- Those who did a program were motivated by the fact that the court ordered them to do so (72%).
 - But how to engage parents who apparently were not motivated by the court order?

Barriers to Program Completion



- Both parents who did and did not do a program saw some negatives to the program (33%), particularly fathers (45%).
- Both parents who did and did not do a program worried about inconvenience (40%).
 - Even a 4-hour program may be too long.
- Parents who did a program encountered some technology issues (72%).
 - But for most parents who did not do a program, anticipated concerns about technology were not a barrier (16%).
- 72% of mothers who did not do a program would have preferred a face-to-face program that includes social support.
- Parents want more information, from the court , about programs and why the court wants them to complete a program (26%).

Overall Summary



- Fewer parents endorsed barriers than faci
- Parents who did the program generally liked it and found it helpful.
- Following initial engagement, parents seem to enjoy the online format—meaning the format could be a viable option.
- Parents still encounter barriers:
 - Similar to in-person programs (e.g., lack of time)
 - New for online (e.g., technology problems)

Future Directions



- Initial engagement in parenting programs needs to be addressed
 - Courts should explore new avenues of initially engaging parents beyond court orders:
 - In-person or personal contact with parties regarding program benefits
 - Parent endorsements of the program
 - Additional information about the program (flyers, brochures, etc.)
 - Reinforcement of consequences from court
- Online programs do not eliminate all barriers to program completion, so need to consider:
 - Technology support
 - Social support (chat rooms, discussion boards)
 - Offer options of in-person program OR online program

A RCT to Examine the Impact of Cell Phone Technology on Engagement and Retention of Fathers in a Fatherhood Program

Anna Hayward

State University of New York at Stony Brook

Jack McKillop

State University of New York at Stony Brook



An RCT to examine the impact of cell phone technology on engagement and retention of fathers in a fatherhood program

1. What strategies are most effective for engaging and retaining fathers in a responsible fatherhood program?
2. Is the provision of cell phones and ongoing cell phone contact associated with increased participation and program completion rates for fathers?
3. Is the provision of increased monetary incentives at 6 and 12 weeks associated with increased retention in the program and research protocol?
4. How do these retention interventions influence changes in program outcomes (responsible fatherhood, economic stability, healthy relationships)?



- Serves low-income fathers in Suffolk County (and now Nassau County), Long Island
Funded by DHHS-ACF since 2011
 - * 2011-2015 - served over 800 fathers
 - * 2015-2020 - have served over 700 fathers so far
- Provides the following services:
 - * responsible fatherhood (evidence based groups)
 - * healthy relationship (evidence based couples or singles group)
 - * economic stability (job development, job search, support)
 - * peer mentoring
- Participants received case management and evidence-based group interventions for 1-4 months, depending on need.



Protocol

- At intake clients are randomly assigned to:
 - **Control group** (normal conditions, \$50 and \$25 gift card),
 - **Cell phone group** (\$50 and \$25, plus text messages)
 - **Incentives group** (additional monetary incentive provided upon participation in the program)
- Fathers receive bi-weekly text messages for 12 weeks
- Goal is to increase participation and engagement in the program and retention in research interviews



Sample Text Messages

Week 3

Hi! This is SCFI! Communication is about talking and listening. Good communication happens when there is respect between you and your partner or child.

Hi! This is SCFI! How are things going? Have you gotten in touch with your Case Manager this week? You can reach them at 631-761-8518.

		Week	Group 1 - Control N = 73		Group 2 - Cell Phone N = 71		Group 3 - Increased Incentive N = 68		p-value
			N	Mean±SD	N	Mean±SD	N	Mean±SD	
Engagement		6	48	4.42±0.79	50	4.45±0.84	47	4.47±0.79	0.9307
		12	33	4.52±0.69	27	4.52±0.81	32	4.78±0.42	0.2859
Participation	Number of Contacts	6	48	15.33±6.27	50	13.80±5.53	47	15.38±5.96	0.3547
		12	33	16.55±6.87	27	15.07±6.45	32	15.41±6.35	0.6176
	Minutes of Contact	6	48	399.05±253.89	50	308.46±150.55	47	367.53±152.60	0.0796
		12	33	447.12±286.49	27	351.87±162.28	32	388.31±166.61	0.1807
		Week	N	%	N	%	N	%	p-value
Retention	Research	6	48	65.75	50	70.42	47	69.12	0.8240
		12	33	45.21	27	38.03	32	47.06	0.5216
	Program	12	47	66.20	48	68.57	47	69.12	0.9254

Findings - Qualitative

"I found it pretty helpful because every time I would be like stressed out because I would talk to my daughter's grandmother, which is the mother's mom, and she would tell me about what her mom is saying about me, I'll get like discouraged and stuff. Then I'll see a text message from her saying like "don't give up" or--- I forgot what else, but it was just like alright; it just reminded me that I'm doing a good job."

"It's knowledge for the day... you could be down and out and then there's certain quotes that get sent to you - certain stuff that shows that you can also see ways to try to look for things - certain quotes that they send is love- it's real words its real meanings its quotes that you gotta knowledge and keep in your head. When it comes to resumes or a lil job thing or certain pantries to go to - it's a blessing for all that; it's helpful - very helpful."

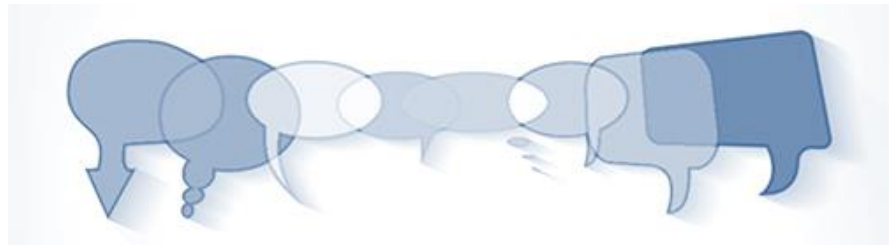


Other Aspects of Cell Phone Use (Qualitative Study)

- Keeping in contact with kids without having to go through the mother
- Talking to kids across distance when transportation is an issue
- Receiving motivation from children
- Lots of texting with kids especially the teenagers



Discussion



- No statistically significant differences between treatment, control, and increased incentive group on outcomes of:
 - Engagement (total score or sub scales)
 - Participation
 - Retention
 - No sub-group differences (age, race, employment, education, living situation)
- Qualitative feedback on sample of 40 fathers shows interest in and satisfaction with the texting.



Practice Implications



- Text messages have been an easy add-on to the program
- Low cost & almost everyone has a phone
- Fathers seem to enjoy the messages or are neutral (no negative feedback so far)
- Easy to implement with Google Voice
- Unclear value for participation and retention



Thank you! Any questions?

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Suffolk County Fatherhood Initiative

<http://www.greatfathers.org/>



Testing the Feasibility of an Interactive Mentor–Based Text Messaging Program to Increase Father’s Engagement in Home Visitation

Shawna J. Lee & Joyce Y. Lee

University of Michigan School of Social Work

Parenting in Context Research Lab

parentingincontext.org



Introduction to Text4dad®



- Text messaging is a relatively low-tech and scalable way to reach new parents
- Texting can be used as an “add-on” to home visitation (Carta et al., 2013; Lefever et al., 2017) or as a stand-alone intervention (Martin, Weiland, & Page, 2018)
- Text4Dad created to supplement home visitation with fathers
 - Targets low-income fathers with children aged 0-15 months
 - Aims to promote fathers’ engagement in home visits
 - Allow mentors—Community Health Workers (CHWs)—to send fathers tailored parent education, father-specific parenting resources, and to provide social support

Text4dad® - One Strategy to Engage Fathers in Healthy Start Programs

OVERARCHING GOAL: To promote the health and wellbeing of fathers, mothers, and children in Healthy Start families

1. Direct outreach to fathers
 - Home visitation by Community Health Workers
 - Group-based programs such as 24/7 Dad
 2. Parent education to Healthy Start fathers
 - Expecting & new dad parent education packet
 - Text4dad interactive text messaging program
 3. Screening and referral
 - Mental and physical health screening to increase service utilization
 4. Healthy Start staff training on father engagement
- Related activities:
- Fatherhood Advisory Board (FAB)
 - Coordination with other Healthy Start sites in Michigan
 - Technical Assistance from UM team

Development of the Text Messages

- Created messages using credible professional sources to determine parenting topics for families with young children (0-15 months)



Bright Futures™
prevention and health promotion for infants,
children, adolescents, and their families™

WebMD®



Text4dad[®] Content Includes:

- CHW mentor check-in messages – initial prompts and greetings from mentor
- Child development (including attachment and caregiving) – booster shots to supplement the parent education content delivered to fathers in the home visitation component of the program
- Father-infant interaction/ play messages – developmentally appropriate games and activities that fathers engage in with their infant
- Father-mother coparenting – prompt ways the father can check in with their partner
- Father self-care – address common struggles of parenthood
- Local services and events messages – provide events happening in the community and other local resources

Text4dad[©] Examples

- Child focused:
 - **Attachment:** “Have you started to set aside a special daddy play time with your baby? Making the new baby a part of your daily routine is a great way to bond.”
 - **Play:** “As your baby becomes more interactive, you can have fun playing some simple games like pat-a-cake.”
- Check-in messages:
 - “Good evening, [name of dad!]. Any additional resources that I can identify and send your way that would be helpful for you and your baby?”
- Resource messages:
 - “Check out this link for additional dad-related articles and resources:
https://www.babycenter.com/302_just-for-dads_1519295.bc”








Acceptability and Usability Pretests

- We used online surveys administered through Mturk to examine whether Text4Dad messages were acceptable and useful for fathers


Test #	Main Aim	Eligibility	Demographic	N
Pretest 1	Test preference for standard English vs. text language ("How R U 2day?") messages	18-40 years; expecting baby or have child under 3 years; fluent in English	Majority White, middle-income, married fathers	50
Pretest 2	Test messages divided into parenting topics and developmental age of child	Similar criteria although had to have child aged 0-15 months	Majority White, middle-income, married fathers	99
Pretest 3	Test Pretest 2 messages with low-income fathers	Same criteria but with household income of less than or equal to \$25,000	White, low SES, mixed marital status fathers	22

Acceptability and Usability Results

- Across all 3 online pretests, overall acceptability and usability of the text messages scores were generally high
- Standard English instead of “text” language was preferred
- Personal tone was preferred
- Dads wanted messages to be positive, encouraging, specific, and practical, without being preachy or judgmental
- Attachment and play messages most appealing to fathers with 2-9 month-olds
- Coparenting messages most appealing to fathers with 9-15 month-olds
- Low-income fathers expressed desire for messages on financial management
- Higher-income fathers expressed desire for messages on nutrition

-  Overview of My Dads
-  Dad Activities >
-  Groups >
-  Alerts >
-  Administration 
- Create/Edit Dad Profile
-  Help >



Create/Edit/View Dad Profile

Choose dad to edit or enter information for new dad below

Add New Dad

Demographics

Children

First Name	Last Name	Nickname	Gender	DOB	Assess?	Remove
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<div></div>	<input type="text"/>	<div></div>	<div>X</div>

Add A Child

Save



Overview of My Dads

Dad Activities ✓

Message History

Send Text Message

Add Note

Groups >

Alerts >

Administration >

Help >

Send Text Message to

Conversational Prompts

Optional: Select one or more conversational prompts to add to text message.

Domain

Bonding and attachment are rooted in responding to your baby's needs with love, warmth, and care. When you do this, you become a special and trusted person in your baby's life. (Attachment & Bonding-> Week 8)

Text Message

Bonding between you and your baby is a vital part of development. (Attachment & Bonding-> Week 8)

When To Send

Smile at your baby! When your baby sees your smile, natural chemicals are released in his or her body. It makes your baby feel good, safe, and secure. It also builds attachment to you. (Attachment & Bonding-> Week 8)

Alert Me Date

Optional: Select a date to be alerted.



Alert Me Note

Optional: Enter a brief note about the alert.

Resource Referral Note

Optional: Add a brief note about the referral.

Send Text Message



Overview of My Dads

Dad Activities

Message History

Send Text Message

Add Note

Groups

Alerts

Administration

Help

Send Text Message to

Conversational Prompts

Optional: Select one or more conversational prompts to add to text message.

Add To Message

Remove Question

Show Content

Domain

Attachment & Bonding

Text Message

Bonding and attachment are rooted in responding to your baby's needs with love, warmth, and care. When you do this, you become a special and trusted person in your baby's life.

When To Send

Optional: Select a date and time to send this message (leave blank to send now).



Alert Me Date

Optional: Select a date to be alerted.



Alert Me Note

Optional: Enter a brief note about the alert.

Resource Referral Note

Optional: Add a brief note about the referral.

Send Text Message



- Descriptive analysis of the mentor-mentee exchanges, e.g., timing and duration of exchanges
- Content analysis of the mentor-mentee exchanges, e.g., whether and how father responded to Text4dad messages, were exchanges supportive in nature
- Qualitative analysis of interviews with fathers
 - Acceptability of the messages
 - Whether Text4dad motivated them to participate in the home visitation component of the program
- Qualitative analysis of interviews with CHWs
 - Motivation to participate in and engage with fathers through the Text4dad program
 - Whether they felt it enhanced fathers' participation in other components of Healthy Start home visitation

Predictors and Outcomes of Dosage of Participation in Key to Kāne¹ – A Fatherhood Text-Messaging Program

Selva Lewin-Bizan, Ph.D.
University of Hawaii

¹*Kāne* was the father of living creatures in the Hawaiian mythology and represented the god of procreation



Background



- 40+ years – research about fatherhood and father involvement:
 - Cultural changes, fathers' roles
 - Importance in children's lives
 - Healthier socio-emotional development, better cognitive and school outcomes, fewer problem behaviors
- Parenting behaviors
 - Want to be more actively involved, involvement influenced by a myriad of factors

Background (cont.)

- Need for communities to assist fathers in removing barriers and to involve fathers in the lives of their children
 - Provide fatherhood programs
 - Become more involved
 - Improve competence in parenting
 - Decrease conflict with child's mother
- Lower SES -- lower participation rates (scheduling conflicts, time demands)
 - Response: maintaining flexible schedules or developing alternative interventions

The Need for the Study

- Technology-assisted interventions - email, text messages, videoconferencing, internet-based computers
 - Positive results
- Text messaging
 - Health promotion and disease prevention
 - Parenting skills
- Positive results
 - What about dosage of participation in programs (i.e., number of text messages the participant reads)?
 - Influences on fathers' dosage of involvement
 - Link between fathers' dosage of involvement and desired outcomes



Two Research Questions



- a) Do demographic and personal characteristics of fathers predict fathers' dosage of involvement in *Key to Kāne*?
- b) Do different dosages of involvement in *Key to Kāne* differentially affect levels of father involvement, paternal self-efficacy, and parenting alliance?
 - a. Inform recruitment methods
 - b. Inform program planning and retention methods

Census Information

23,808: Number of father-absent family households in Hawaii
That is 18.9% of all family households in the state

8.4 million:
Approximate number
of
father-absent family
households in
the United States
That is 24.1% of
all family households in
the nation

15,027 in City and County
of Honolulu (17.2% of all families
with children in the county)



4,054 in Hawaii County (23.4% of
all families with children in the
county)



3,427 in Maui County (22.4% of all
families with children in the
county)



1,300 in Kauai County (20.4% of all
families with children in the
county)



The Study: Procedures

- Team:
 - Researcher Selva Lewin-Bizan** (University of Hawaii)
 - Practitioner David “Kawika” Mattos** (Maui Family Support Services)
 - Technology-industry partner Victoria Bence** (iOS Maui)
 - Support from Edeluisa Baguio-Larena** (CEO MFSS)
- Developed and tested content and smart-phone application
 - 3 weekly messages to parents of children aged 0-12 (child development, engagement ideas, encouragement words) delivered during evening hours, 12 weeks
- Recruited 120 participants (attended meeting, enrolled on the spot)
- Administered baseline and post-program data collections
- Conducted 3 focus groups

Findings: Predictors of Dosage

	Dosage Group			
	No	Low	Moderate	High
Texts				
%		<40 excluding 0	40-69	70+
n	0	1-14	15-25	26-36
Participants				
%	19	11	13	68
n	23	13	16	57



Fathers with 1 child = .15
Fathers with 9 children = .42



Fathers with 1 child = .63
Fathers with 9 children = .29

- Less likely to be in the high-dosage, more likely to be in the no-dosage group:
 - Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, fathering more children, economic challenges (not enough money), behavioral/legal challenges (violent, protection order, keeping a job)

Examples of predicted probabilities:

Low dosage or moderate dosage do not vary significantly by the number of children

Findings: Outcomes of Dosage

Outcome	Dosage Group			
	None	Low	Moderate	High
	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)
Engagement				
Pre	4.3 (1.0)	4.3 (1.0)	4.3 (1.0)	4.3 (1.0)
Post	4.4 (1.0)	4.7 (0.3)	4.5 (0.9)	4.4 (1.0)
Self-efficacy				
Pre	1.8 (0.6)	1.8 (0.6)	1.8 (0.6)	1.8 (0.6)
Post	1.6 (0.4)	1.7 (0.5)	1.5 (0.5)	1.5 (0.5)
Alliance				
Pre	3.6 (1.4)	3.6 (1.4)	3.6 (1.4)	3.6 (1.4)
Post	3.8 (1.1)	4.3 (0.5)	4.3 (0.7)	4.1 (0.9)

- Contrary to the expectation based on prior research:
 - No significant effect for any of the outcomes
 - Text-messages reading dosage did not elicit statistically significant differences in mean father engagement, mean father self-efficacy, mean parenting alliance

Implications: Practice

- Recruitment efforts: target the vulnerable fathers, potentially not engaged in their children's lives
- Engage fathers' feedback to revise the program, better adapt to what fathers need and how they wish to be helped (text messages on basic needs such as sleep/nutrition/behavior vs. other families may prefer something else; non-resident fathers that do not have any face-to-face or phone or electronic contact with their children have specific needs) – one size does not fit all
- Fathers would like to have meetings with other fathers, either face-to-face or through an online forum - *Key to Kāne* could be embedded within another intervention

Implications: Future Research

- Recruitment efforts: target the vulnerable fathers, potentially not engaged in their children's lives
- We conducted a pre-post test with no control group
 - Need to create a randomized controlled trial - gold standard to test the effects of intervention on outcomes
- Self-reported nature of our data - who is a valid reporter?
 - Prior research: self-report shows more consistent predictive validity vs. may be subject to social desirability biases
- Our sample lacked cultural diversity (Hawaiian/Pacific culture)
 - Prior research: differences in father involvement by ethnicity and by cultural ideologies and norms

Conclusion

- Adding technology to increase fathers' participation in parenting interventions - important step towards reaching out to fathers who cannot engage in traditional interventions
 - We systematically identified characteristics of fathers that predict fathers' dosage of participation
 - Could not find significant associations between text-message reading dosage and expected father outcomes
 - Anticipate analysis of qualitative data from focus groups that have the potential to further explain our findings

Thank you!

Contact Us

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