



Fatherhood
Research
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Network

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Inside the Black Box, Part 2: Fathers' Attendance in Fatherhood Programs



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



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)



Fatherhood Research And Practice Network

#1

Promote
Rigorous
Evaluation

#2

Build
Evaluation
Capacity

#3

Disseminate
Information



Why a Webinar on Fathers' Attendance?

- Evidence suggests that many fathers have low to moderate rates of attendance in fatherhood programs.
- Continuous quality improvement (CQI) efforts rely on the collection and analysis of reliable attendance information.
- There are many ways to measure attendance, and it is not always clear which way is best.
- There is clear evidence that fathers' attendance affects outcomes for fathers and families, but few studies have looked at attendance in relation to outcomes.
- Some strategies may improve attendance and should be replicated (if possible).
- See: FRPN Research Brief: "Attendance in community-based fatherhood programs." January 2018, www.frpn.org

Presenters



Kirk Berry

Program Director
People for People Inc., PA



Guy Bowling

Workforce Development Manager
Goodwill Easter Seals FATHER Project, MN



Brenda Oyer, Ed.D.

Associate Director of Research and Data
The RIDGE Project, OH



Panel Discussion #1: Introduction to Programs, Clients, Services

Brief description of fatherhood program:

- Geographic location and year of origin
- Free-standing or part of a multi-service agency
- Target population served
- Fatherhood services offered and curriculum used



How Attendance is Measured

- Number of sessions attended (e.g., parenting classes, case management sessions)
- Number of overall hours of workshop attendance
- Number of hours of participation in specific content areas (e.g., content focused on coparenting)
- Number of modules completed
- Number of service activities
- Number who complete the program or graduate



Selecting a Method to Assess Attendance

- Measure hours per content area when workshops or classes cover multiple areas
- Use number of sessions when each session has a clear and distinct focus
- Use number of modules completed when father curriculum is incorporated in a broader program (e.g., home visiting programs that include a father component as part of a visit)
- Use number of services or activities pursued as part of an effort to obtain employment (e.g., classes, interviews)
- Use number who complete minimum number of classes/services needed to graduate when completion of program leads to a specific outcome for father (e.g., entry into employment training program is allowed)

Analysis of Attendance Data

- The mean level of sessions or hours attended (affected by extremes)
- The median number of sessions or hours attended (less affected by extremes)
- Divide attendance into categories such as low, medium, and high OR none, partial, and full
- The Parents and Children Together (PACT) evaluation reports percentage of fathers who attend one-half or more sessions
- Percent that graduate (e.g., attend 8 out of 10 sessions)

Rates of Attendance

- Fathers attended an average of 3.2 ($SD = 4.6$) out of 16 possible sessions of the DAD MAP curriculum at CFUF in Baltimore MD
- Fathers in community settings attended approx. half ($M = 5.31$, $SD = 3.81$) of 10 possible TYRO Dads sessions at Ohio's Ridge program. 40% attended 8 out of 10 sessions, which is the minimum to graduate
- Several CPR evaluations of employment-focused programs for child support populations find that 31-34% did not participate at all, 20-23% participated at low levels, and 46% participated fully
- People for People Responsible Fatherhood Program in Philadelphia, PA, reports 70 percent of fathers who start the program attend all sessions, which consists of 28 sessions administered over 7 weeks

Panel Discussion #2: Program attendance measure & patterns

Briefly explain:

- How you measure attendance
- Benefits of this measure
- What level of attendance do you get
- How your program records & uses attendance information



Influences on Attendance

- Intensity of the program (multiple hours over a short time)
- Program components (case management & classes/services)
- Scheduling sessions (2 times per week vs. 1 x per week)
- Sequencing of program activities (economic, fatherhood)
- Availability of fathers (unemployed, services at residential site)
- Program quality (staff experience, program organization)
- Attendance incentives, hard skills training, child support breaks
- Attendance mandated/monitored by a court
- Availability of public transportation or reliable car
- Program offers food & support for transportation or childcare
- Strong relationships between program staff and fathers
- Number of required program sessions/hours
- Make-up opportunities for missed classes

Intensity, Sequencing, Scheduling

- The PACT study found that fathers who attended an intensive program model (i.e., programs that engage fathers daily over a short period of time, such as four weeks) received twice as much parenting content compared with fathers who attended programs that met weekly (Mathematica Policy Research, 2017, December).
- The Ridge program requires that participants in its TYRO Dads program attend 8 of 10 sessions in order to access WIOA funded job training opportunities.
- The Fathers & Sons study found that attendance improved when classes were offered 2 times per week rather than 1 time.

Panel Discussion #3: Explaining Your Attendance Rate

Briefly explain why you get the attendance rate you get

- How population served affects attendance
- Program policies regarding attendance
- Characteristics of attenders/non-attenders



Effects of Attendance on Outcomes

- Few studies examine fathers' attendance in relation to outcomes but 5 of 6 looked at show attendance matters.
- Fathers who attend more sessions/engage in more services benefit more from the program & show stronger outcomes than do fathers who attend fewer sessions/services.
- Full participation in economic security programs associated with higher rates of jobs, earnings & child support payment.
- Some studies find a “dose threshold” for program effects (e.g., TYRO DADS study found significant gains in outcomes for fathers who attended 8 of 10 sessions).
- Possible that a third factor such as individual motivation might explain both higher dosage & better outcomes.
- Attendance in other programs may affect fatherhood program outcomes.

Panel discussion #4: The Impact of High and Low Attendance Patterns on Clients, Staff and the Program

Does attendance matter?

- Impact on participants
- Impact on fatherhood groups/classes
- Impact on the staff
- Impact on the agency



Ways to Improve Attendance

- Offer transportation assistance (e.g., gas cards, bus tokens)
- Offer valued employment and child support incentives (e.g., access to WIOA funded job programs, subsidized jobs, driver's license reinstatement and state debt forgiveness)
- Maximize program intensity thru scheduling & sequencing
- Build strong staff relationships with fathers
- Use reminder calls, texts, we missed you calls and home visits
- Coordinate with courts to monitor father participation where appropriate
- Keep the number of class hours and service requirements to realistic levels
- Schedule program classes/services at times and locations that are convenient for program participants & offer make-up opportunities
- Offer a high quality program

Panel Discussion #5: Recommended Strategies to Achieve High Attendance

What have you tried and what works to improve attendance

- Experience with social media and other forms of outreach
- Experience with incentives
- Experience with court monitoring
- What staff interventions help
- What research does the field need to improve attendance
- Final thoughts/advice about attendance



Questions for the Panel?



Contact Us

- Jay Fagan, PhD, FRPN Co-Director
 - jfagan@temple.edu, (215) 204-1288
- Jessica Pearson, PhD, FRPN Co-Director
 - jspearson@centerforpolicyresearch.org, (303) 837-1555
- Rebecca Kaufman, MSW, FRPN Coordinator
 - rebecca.kaufman@temple.edu, (215) 204-5706

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