



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?



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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)



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



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Program Director
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Workforce Development Manager
Goodwill Easter Seals FATHER Project, MN



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Associate Director of Research and Data
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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?



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