Innovative Responsible Fatherhood Activities: Early Implementation Findings from the Building Bridges and Bonds Evaluation

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STUDY GOALS

• Launch *three* innovative service approaches in responsible fatherhood programs

• Build knowledge in three areas:
  – Employment
  – Parenting and co-parenting
  – Program engagement

• Sponsored by U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families (OPRE/OFA).
PROGRAM APPROACHES DESIGNED FOR B3

Father Engagement:
- Mobile/Smartphone Application

Parenting Services:
- Just Beginning

Employment Services:
- Cognitive Behavioral Intervention

Just Beginning sites
- LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA
  Children’s Institute, Inc.
  Program: Project Fatherhood

CBI-Emp sites
- LONG ISLAND CITY, NEW YORK
  The Fortune Society
  Program: Employment Services Division

- CLEVELAND, OHIO
  Passages, Connecting Fathers and Families, Inc.
  Program: Jobs for Dads

- NEW YORK, NEW YORK
  Seedco with STRIVE and Bronx Works
  Program: Strong Fathers, Stronger Families

- PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA
  People for People, Inc.
  Program: D.A.D. (Developing Active Dads)

- DUNBAR, WEST VIRGINIA
  The Kanawha Institute of Research and Action
  Program: KISRA Fatherhood Program
HOW IS JUST BEGINNING INNOVATIVE?

- JB draws on current knowledge of strong parenting programs
  - Targets fathers with young children
  - Multiple modes of learning
    - Explanation by facilitator
    - Demonstration with Sesame Street videos
    - Practice with child
    - Feedback
  - Emphasizes positive reinforcement of father’s behaviors
THE JUST BEGINNING APPROACH

Learn

- Father and facilitator discuss simple parenting approaches
- View Sesame Street video clips to illustrate them

Do

- Father applies parenting approaches he just reviewed through a play session with his child
- Facilitator observes

Reflect

- Father reflects on the play session
- Receives feedback and encouragement from facilitator
MAKE A SPACE FOR PLAY SESSIONS

Before

After
PRESENTATION GOALS

• How has early implementation varied across different contexts and program structures?
  – Could this work with fathers who have limited access to their children?
  – Could this innovation be established in a community-based setting (not in a prison)?
  – Could the innovation be delivered with fidelity by existing fatherhood program staff?

• What are the program participants’ perceptions of the activities?

• What are the barriers to participating?
SITE IMPLEMENTATION OF JB

• 1st time JB implemented in non-prison setting at any scale
• Staffing: specialized staff not required to operate with fidelity
• JB is added to existing set of services
  – No significant changes made to basic 5 session structure

Children’s Institute Inc (Los Angeles)
Multiple sites around LA

People for People (Philadelphia)
One location in North Philly

SEEDCO (New York City)
With STRIVE and Bronx Works
Two sites: Harlem and the Bronx
Participant Characteristics

**Age (years)**
- Under 25
- 25 to 34
- 35 to 44
- 45 or more

**Race/Ethnicity**
- White/Non-Hispanic
- Black/Non-Hispanic
- Hispanic
- Other/multi-racial
- Non-Hispanic
Participant Characteristics

Number of Children Under 21

- 1 child: 40%
- 2 children: 24%
- 3 or more children: 36%

Residential Fathers vs. Non-Residential Fathers

- Residential Fathers: 52%
- Non-Residential Fathers: 48%
### Participant Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learn about being better parent</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find a job or a better job</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Court ordered*</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve my personal relationships</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other/more than one</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parole/probation office told me*</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Fathers were told by the court or their parole/probation office to participate in a program of their choosing; participation in any federally-funded Responsible Fatherhood program is always voluntary.
Where you have most used skills from fatherhood program?

- In dealing with my child: 33%
- Looking for work/at work: 30%
- In dealing with my child's other parent: 17%
- In dealing with another adult: 14%
- I did not use skills from workshop: 6%

Represents 64 text message survey respondents out of 266 possible respondents.
Fatherhood Services Overall

- **Transportation**
  - Programs give public transportation passes
- **Other program or system requirements**
  - Coordinate with other program case managers, courts, etc.
- **Getting a job**

Specific to Just Beginning

- **Access to Child**
  - Facilitators adjusted curriculum delivery - fewer times the father has to bring child
  - Facilitator meets father/child in a more convenient location or time (weekends to accommodate working fathers)
  - Coordination with co-parent, child caregiver or CPS
QUESTIONS WE WILL BE ANSWERING IN THE COMING YEAR

• How MDRC collaborated with fathers and staff to develop a smartphone application
• Additional early implementation findings for Just Beginning and Cognitive Behavioral Employment
• Final impact results expected in 2021

For access to project publications: www.mdrc.org/b3 or https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/research/project/building-bridges-and-bonds

For a copy of this presentation: https://www.mdrc.org/members/presentations

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