



Implementing an Innovative Parenting Program for Fathers

Findings from the B3 Study

THE BUILDING BRIDGES AND BONDS STUDY

OPRE REPORT 2019-111

DECEMBER 2019

MICHELLE S. MANNO
PATRIZIA MANCINI
CHARLOTTE O'HERRON

The Building Bridges and Bonds (B3) evaluation, a federally funded study of Responsible Fatherhood programs, is testing a set of three innovative approaches to help fathers with low income improve their parenting and employment skills. One innovation, Just Beginning (JB), was added to the existing fatherhood services at three community-based organizations. JB is a one-on-one parenting program that incorporates engaging skill-building videos and father-child play activities. In each of five JB sessions, fathers learn and try out one new strategy for interacting with their child to enhance the quality of the father-child relationship. The evaluation, which is using a random assignment design, will assess outcomes including improved quality of father-child engagement, increased parenting efficacy, and increased father-child contact to determine whether JB is effective.

As part of a series of publications from the B3 evaluation, this brief presents the first systematic analysis of how the JB innovation was implemented. Based on data from the three implementing organizations' management information system records, this brief describes how an initial sample of fathers who were enrolled in the study engaged in the JB component and each organization's usual menu of services. The study finds that the three organizations were able to incorporate JB into their existing menu of services but faced challenges to get fathers to engage in JB. In this early sample, 55 percent of fathers completed at least one JB session, and those fathers typically progressed through most of the curriculum.

The JB program uses a dual-generation and media-based approach to enhance the quality of the father-child relationship.

Introduction

A father's support — both financial and emotional — is linked to better outcomes on nearly every measure of a child's well-being.¹ However, fathers with low income — whether they live with their children or not — may find it particularly difficult to provide that support, as they face challenges to maintaining stable employment and stable relationships with their children. The Office of Family Assistance (OFA) within the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services provides grants to Responsible Fatherhood programs that aim to improve the well-being of fathers, their families, and their children by addressing the financial and emotional challenges fathers face. Federally funded Responsible Fatherhood programs do this by providing a combination of services in three required areas: healthy marriage and relationship skills, parenting, and economic stability.² As part of the effort in the fatherhood field to build the evidence base of effective, innovative programming to

support men and their families, the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE) at ACF contracted with a team led by MDRC, using funds from OFA, to conduct the Building Bridges and Bonds (B3) study. B3 identified and is testing new interactive skill-building approaches that address two of the three required areas, parenting and economic stability, within the context of existing Responsible Fatherhood programs.

The B3 study involved six organizations with existing Responsible Fatherhood programs; each offered its usual fatherhood services, which included curriculum-based workshops in the three required areas,³ as well as a variety of one-on-one services. Three of the organizations that are participating in the B3 study added a one-on-one fathering program called Just Beginning (JB) to their existing fatherhood services.⁴ JB is the subject of this brief. The JB program uses a dual-generation and media-based approach to enhance the quality of the father-child relationship. The program works with fathers and their children under 3 years old.

OPRE REPORT 2019-111
DECEMBER 2019

AUTHORS: Michelle S. Manno, Patrizia Mancini, and Charlotte O'Herron

SUBMITTED TO: Samantha Illangasekare and Katie Pahigiannis, Project Officers, Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

PROJECT DIRECTOR: Dina A.R. Israel, MDRC, 200 Vesey Street, 23rd Floor, New York, NY 10281

CONTRACT NUMBER: HHS-P23320095644WC

This report is in the public domain. Permission to reproduce is not necessary.

SUGGESTED CITATION: Manno, Michelle S., Patrizia Mancini, and Charlotte O'Herron. 2019. "Implementing an Innovative Parenting Program for Fathers: Findings from the B3 Study." OPRE Report 2019-111. Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

DISCLAIMER: The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, the Administration for Children and Families, or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

This report and other reports sponsored by the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation are available at www.acf.hhs.gov/opre.

JB offers a unique opportunity for evaluating the potential benefits of strengthening father-child relationships through an innovative approach to working with the targeted population of fathers with young children. First, JB approaches skill building through a “learn–do–reflect” cycle (described in more detail in the next section), in which fathers actively practice each new skill with the help of trained facilitators, who then provide immediate feedback and help dads build play-based skills. Second, JB includes the child in the parenting program, as the child is crucial to the “do–reflect” portions of the cycle; most Responsible Fatherhood programs do not require children to be present when fatherhood services are delivered. Therefore, JB has specific logistical challenges that could make it difficult for fathers to participate and stay engaged, namely that the father must have access to his child for the JB sessions. This study is the first time that the JB component has been implemented and rigorously evaluated in a community setting; a small nonexperimental study conducted previously suggested some benefits of JB for improving the quality of the father-child relationship among teenage fathers who were incarcerated.⁵ The B3 study uses an experimental design to assess the effects of JB as explained in Box 1.

The purpose of this brief is to describe (1) how fatherhood programs implemented JB within their existing services; and (2) how fathers engaged in both JB and the organizations’ usual menu of services. This brief is organized around four primary questions:

- 1 In what context was JB implemented?
- 2 Who participated in the JB evaluation and were they the intended population for the B3 study of JB?
- 3 To what extent were programs able to engage fathers and for how long?
- 4 What engagement strategies did the organizations use to encourage participation?

This brief presents information from systematic data collection activities, including semi-structured interviews with staff and focus groups with program group fathers from two rounds of site visits that took place with all three programs in 2017 and 2018. It also draws on management information system records from each site to report information about fathers’ demographic characteristics and experi-

BOX 1

EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN IN THE B3 STUDY OF JUST BEGINNING

The B3 study uses an experimental design to test the effects of Just Beginning (JB) on the quality of the father-child relationship, the frequency of father-child contact, and other outcomes, such as the father’s confidence in his ability to parent. Eligible fathers were randomly assigned to one of the two research groups: a program group, which was offered JB in addition to the usual services, or a services-as-usual group, which was offered only the usual fatherhood services. The random assignment study design helps ensure that the only systematic difference between the JB group and the services-as-usual group is the added JB component. Any differences that emerge between the outcomes of the two randomly assigned groups can be attributed with confidence to the added component. The results of these analyses will be shared in a future report.

The JB program is intended to enhance the quality of the relationship between a father and his young child.

ences in the program. The analysis includes fathers who were randomly assigned from October 2016 through September 2018 (approximately 95 percent of the full study sample). It details the services they received up to six months after enrolling in the program.⁶ These research data were systematically analyzed to address the four primary questions noted above.

Overview of Just Beginning

Just Beginning is a one-on-one parenting education program developed by psychologist Rachel Barr at Georgetown University and Carole Shauffer, lawyer and director of the Youth Law Center. The intervention was previously known as “Baby Elmo” and was originally designed to facilitate attachment and positive relationships between noncustodial teenage fathers who were incarcerated and their young children. For the B3 study, the program was adapted to be implemented in a community setting and to be appropriate for both resident and nonresident fathers of any age and their children.

The JB program is intended to enhance the quality of the relationship between a father and his young child over the course of five sessions. The topics covered in the sessions include the importance of father-child relationships and noticing the child’s signals and cues, following the child’s lead, the importance of verbal communication in child development, creating a positive learning environment via praise and encouragement, and summarizing fathers’ experiences and what they have learned. Each of the five, one-on-one JB sessions lasted between 60 and 90 minutes and consisted of three components:

- **LEARN:** A facilitator leads a training session for the father that includes viewing short videos featuring some simple parenting approaches.
- **DO:** Father and child participate together in play activity, which the facilitator observes, to practice the parenting techniques that are covered in the JB sessions.
- **REFLECT:** The father attends a debriefing session with the facilitator to reflect on how the play activity went, and receives feedback.

The program required a child-friendly environment in which the JB sessions could occur. Specifically, this environment consisted of a dedicated space with toys, soft mats, and books to facilitate father-child play activities. More details about B3’s implementation of JB are available in the B3 introductory brief and the B3 study design report.⁷

For nonresident fathers, the JB program needed the cooperation of the child’s mother or guardian to assist in making sure the child would be available for the JB sessions; for the B3 study a coparent orientation was developed to help the mother or guardian understand the goals and content of JB and its benefits for the child.

Staff members who were identified at each organization were trained to facilitate the implementation of the JB curriculum and participated in an intensive certification process with the JB curriculum developers; no other specialized training or degrees were required. Afterward, the developers provided ongoing coaching and technical assistance to the facilitators, including monthly phone

calls to review video recordings of their sessions with fathers and to discuss questions or concerns about delivering the JB services. MDRC also provided technical assistance to management and staff to help them integrate JB into their usual services, set program participation goals, and develop recruitment and engagement strategies.

In What Context Was JB Implemented?

JB was implemented in three community-based organizations that serve populations with low income in urban settings; the organizations have different focus areas and unique menus of fatherhood services structured in distinct ways.

- **Children’s Institute, Inc. (CII)** offers family-oriented programs at multiple sites in the greater Los Angeles area. CII’s fatherhood program consists mainly of the Men in Relationships Group (MIRG), a peer learning and support group that covers a variety of parenting and relationship topics. MIRG meets weekly for 90 minutes and is an open-entry, relatively unstructured program; fathers may join groups at any time and may continue to attend the meetings indefinitely. Sessions are often held in the evenings or over the weekend to accommodate the work schedules of fathers.
- **People for People, Inc.**, offers primarily educational and parenting services in Philadelphia. The fatherhood program, Project Developing Active Dads (D.A.D.), is a structured, seven-week program. For study participants, it consisted of seven weeks of Economic Stability workshops,⁸ which prepare fathers by teaching them the skills they need to address diverse challenges in the workplace. During the last three weeks of workshops, fathers also access job training; vocational certifications such as fork lift operation, work site

safety, or food handling; and job development services. Workshops ran for four days a week for the services-as-usual group, for four hours each day.⁹

- **Seedco** is a national workforce development organization. Its fatherhood program, Strong Fathers, Stronger Families, is operated by two separate community-based organizations in New York City: BronxWorks in the South Bronx and STRIVE International in East Harlem. Strong Fathers, Stronger Families is an eight-day program that spans two weeks and includes four days of economic stability and healthy relationship workshops and four days of economic stability and parenting workshops. After completing the workshops, fathers can receive financial coaching, referrals to vocational training, and job development and job retention support. Seedco enrolls fathers in cohorts every one to two weeks, depending on the location, and workshops range from about five hours to eight hours each day, four days a week.

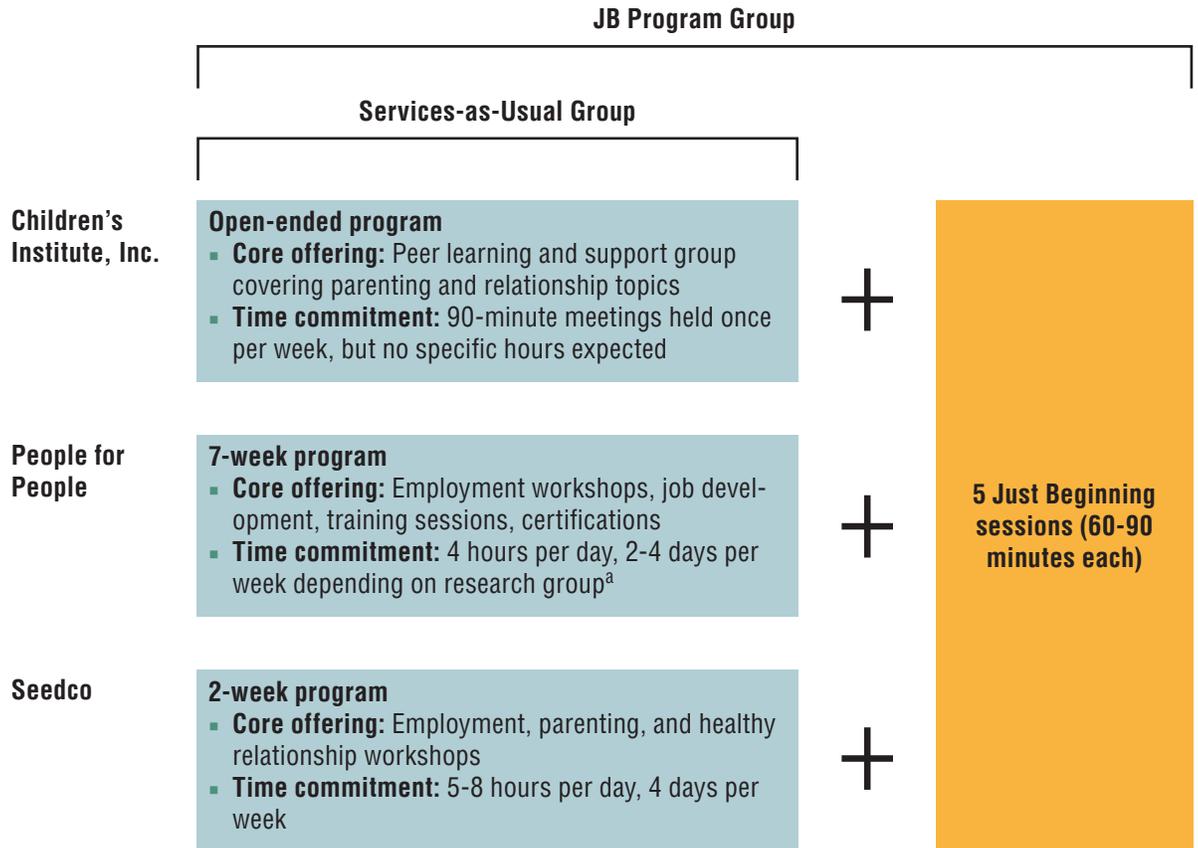
Figure 1 summarizes the usual services each organization offers to all fathers who are participating in the study, as well as the additional component that was offered to the JB group only. In addition to those listed, all organizations offered some form of case management support to study participants, either formally or informally. The usual fatherhood services, as well as other services offered at each organization, will be described in more detail in a subsequent report.

Organizations relied on a mix of existing and new staff to recruit for and implement JB.

For example, some organizations relied on their existing recruiters to simultaneously recruit for the general fatherhood program and for JB; these staff members included a description of JB in their pitch to potential participants, and some of them modified their recruitment approach to target fathers who would be eligible for both offerings. All three organizations hired at least one JB session

FIGURE 1

DESCRIPTION OF SERVICES AT SITES FOR THE B3 STUDY OF JUST BEGINNING (JB)



NOTE: ^aFathers in the services-as-usual group received an Enhanced Economic Stability component, consisting of two extra job-search workshops per week that dove deeper into the economic security topics. This component was added to keep the fathers in the services-as-usual group engaged in Project D.A.D., since they are not offered parenting and healthy relationship workshops or the JB program.

facilitator specifically to conduct the JB sessions, and some organizations also trained existing staff to carry out this function. Although these staff members were not required to have any experience facilitating parenting programs or working with children, almost all facilitators had experience working in early childhood development, teaching, home visiting, domestic violence, or other family services. Their years of experience in these areas varied. All three organizations also had a JB program coordinator to help carry out other aspects of the study's implementation, including intake,

outreach, administrative support, data entry, and sometimes back-up facilitation for JB sessions.

Organizations modified a space to serve as the child-friendly place where play sessions were held.

These modifications differed based on the type of space available but included changes such as transforming an unused conference room, setting aside a portion of a workshop room, and creating space within a child-care center. Most organizations found it helpful to dedicate this area entirely to JB sessions, so it was always readily available.

Fathers in the JB evaluation were mainly attracted to the fatherhood programs to learn about being a better parent and find a better job.

Who Participated in the JB Evaluation and Were They the Intended Population for the B3 Study?

As stated earlier, the organizations in the study offer unique menus of services to respond to the needs of the communities in which they operate. They also used a mix of recruiting strategies to attract fathers to their fatherhood programs, including attending events in the community, using online and social media tools, generating word-of-mouth referrals by building relationships with participants, and establishing a network of referral partners.

The variety of services offered and recruiting strategies used by the organizations during the JB evaluation attracted fathers with different personal challenges, needs, and interests in the services offered. All fathers, regardless of the reason they wanted to enroll in the Responsible Fatherhood program, were screened by the staff for JB eligibility. Fathers had to have a child between 2 months and 3 years of age, have seen their child at least once in the past 30 days, and have no reasons (legal or otherwise) that prevented them from participating in JB with the child. Fathers who were eligible were told about the JB program; those who consented to participate in the study were randomly assigned to the JB group or to the services-as-usual group.

Eligible fathers with wide-ranging circumstances enrolled in the study, and they did so for various reasons.

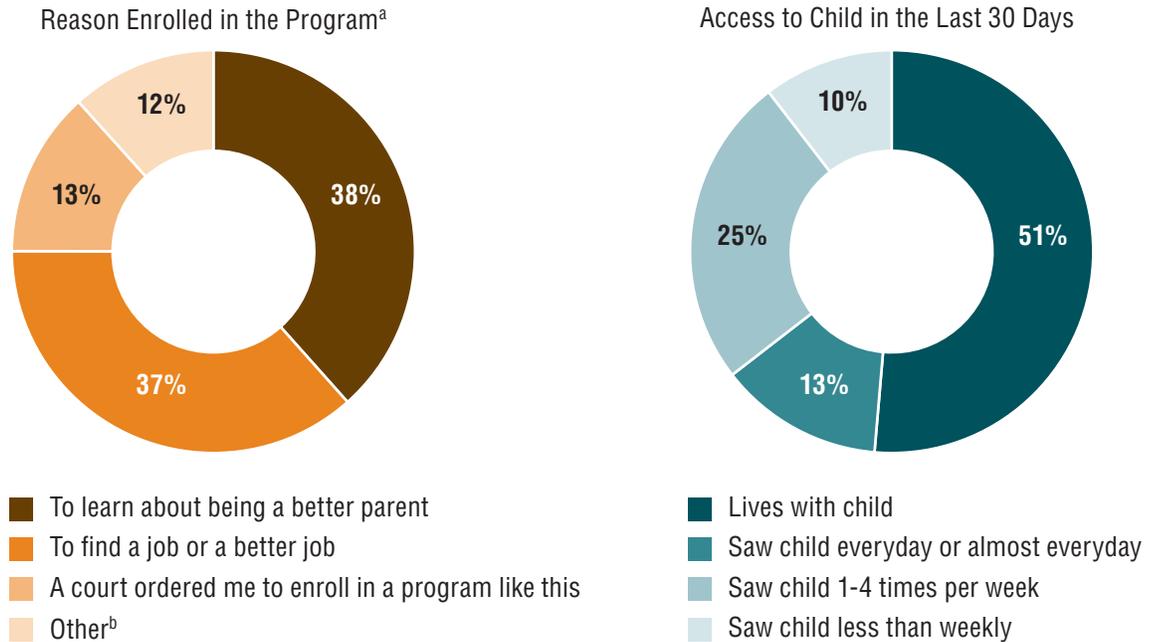
Because fathers were not screened for interest in JB, not all of them were actively seeking out parenting

services when they consented to participate in the study. The left-hand panel of Figure 2 shows that fathers in the JB evaluation were mainly attracted to the fatherhood programs to learn about being a better parent and find a better job. Also, 13 percent of fathers were asked by a court or officer (such as a parole officer) to enroll in a program like these to fulfill a program participation requirement, such as for a child custody case.¹⁰ The right-hand panel of Figure 2 shows that while all fathers had contact with their child in the 30 days before enrollment, the majority of fathers who were enrolled in JB had regular or frequent access to the child: More than half of them lived with their child at the time of enrollment, while an additional 13 percent had daily (or close to daily) contact with their child.

Data collected from baseline surveys also indicate that fathers in the study were experiencing challenges in at least one domain of their lives at the time of enrollment.¹¹ Only 39 percent of fathers were employed and 58 percent of them earned less than \$500 in the month before enrollment. Also, most of them had a criminal history (with 56 percent having been incarcerated in prison or jail). Most fathers who were enrolled in the program were young (26 percent were under 25 years of age; 51 percent were 25 to 34 years of age), and 70 percent were never married. There were generally no statistically significant differences in demographic characteristics between the JB and services-as-usual groups, and all fathers met the intended population criteria for the study.¹²

FIGURE 2

SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS AT ENROLLMENT, JUST BEGINNING (JB) EVALUATION



SOURCE: Calculations based on data from the B3 Applicant Characteristics Survey and the B3 baseline survey for JB.

NOTES: Overall sample size = 699, JB group sample size = 348, and services-as-usual group sample size = 351.

Distributions may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

^aFathers were asked the question, “Why did you choose to enroll in this program?” and could choose only one option.

^b“Other” includes “To learn how to improve my personal relationships” (5.1 percent), “My spouse/partner asked me to come/My friends were coming” (0.3 percent), “My parole/probation officer told me to enroll in a program like this” (1.9 percent), and “Other” (4.3 percent).

To What Extent Were Programs Able to Engage Fathers and for How Long?

The organizations implementing JB were able to maintain fathers’ participation in their existing Responsible Fatherhood programs while integrating the JB component.

Data from the management information system at each site show that the rate for fathers who ever participated in usual services was the same for both the JB group and the services-as-usual group, with no statistically significant differences.¹³ “Services” includes workshops or in-person individu-

al sessions or meetings that are 15 minutes long or more.¹⁴ Most fathers in both groups (89 percent) attended at least one in-person usual service and received 14 in-person services on average.

Parenting services represented a small portion of the overall usual fatherhood program services offered by the organizations; the JB component was designed as an add-on to existing services and significantly enhanced the offer of parenting services for fathers in the JB group.

Fathers were offered some combination of economic stability, parenting, and healthy relationship services, depending on the organization; sometimes multiple topics were comingled in a single session.

Fathers who completed one session were likely to progress through the program, so there was a heavy focus on getting fathers to the first session.

However, services that focused exclusively on parenting represented a small portion of the services offered to JB study participants, especially at CII and People for People.¹⁵ In fact, participation in usual parenting services was mostly observed at Seedco, where parenting workshops occupied four days of the Strong Fathers, Stronger Families program. Therefore, about one-fourth of fathers in the JB and services-as-usual groups engaged in any parenting services (workshops or individual sessions/meetings) that were not part of JB.

Figure 3 shows that adding the five JB sessions to the portfolio of parenting services offered to fathers in the JB group did not decrease attendance in usual parenting services, and boosted participation in parenting services overall. The JB component increased the percentage of fathers attending at least one parenting service by 42 percent (as shown in the left-hand chart). Also, engagement in parenting services overall improved for the JB group, as fathers attended, on average, two JB sessions on top of their usual parenting services (as shown in the right-hand chart).¹⁶

Fifty-five percent of fathers within the JB group completed at least one JB session.

The average number of JB sessions that fathers attended varied by site, ranging from about two sessions to three sessions. Of fathers who attended the first session, 70 percent reached the fourth session, which the JB curriculum developers consider to be adequate dosage (that is, frequency and intensity), given that the fifth session functions as a wrap-up to tie together the topics from the first four sessions.¹⁷ Sixty-one percent of those who attended the first session attended all five sessions.

What Engagement Strategies Did the Organizations Use to Encourage Participation?

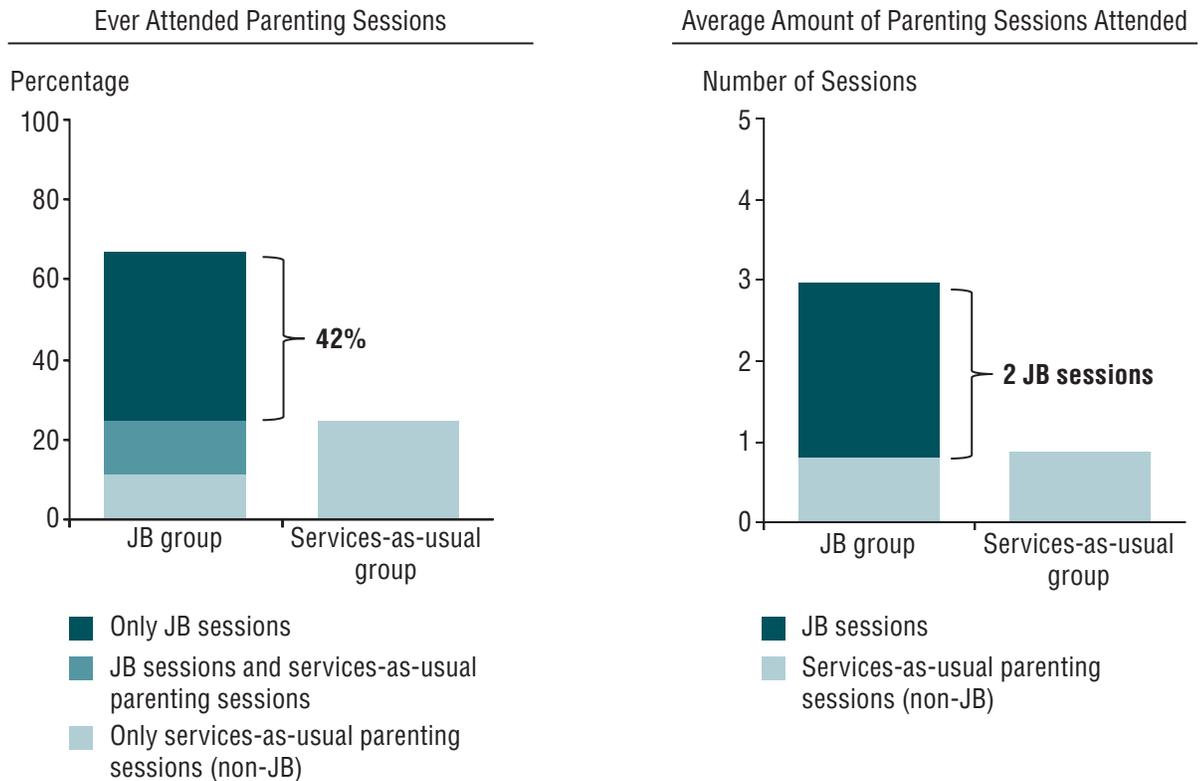
The JB participation rates were partially dependent on time and resources spent by staff to engage fathers in JB, particularly to get them to attend the first JB session.

The typical father who enrolled in a Responsible Fatherhood program in JB sites enrolled because he had heard about the menu of fatherhood services, not necessarily because he knew about JB. The study team had predicted this scenario from the start, assuming that a substantial fraction of fathers would not participate in JB services, given their varying reasons for pursuing a fatherhood program and their varying access to their children. Fathers also contended with personal and situational barriers, influencing their ability to participate. To encourage participation, staff spent significant time and resources on ameliorating those challenges and developed similar strategies across organizations to do so.

Staff were aware that working out logistics was the hardest step, and that fathers who completed one session were likely to progress through the program, so there was a heavy focus on getting fathers to the first session. In general, participating fathers experienced a lot of hardship in addition to their responsibilities as a parent. Many struggled financially and were searching for work. Some were even experiencing homelessness or living in shelters. These factors made it difficult for fathers to prioritize JB, especially if they were unsure of the value of the program. However, staff noted that once fa-

FIGURE 3

PARTICIPATION IN PARENTING SERVICES, BY RESEARCH GROUP, JUST BEGINNING (JB) EVALUATION



SOURCE: Calculations based on management information system data from each site.

NOTE: Overall sample size = 699, JB group sample size = 348, and services-as-usual group sample size = 351.

thers got started and saw the value of the program, many became more committed to it. Staff encouraged participation in subsequent sessions by staying in close communication with the fathers and using phone calls, text messages, and in-person contacts to remind them about their JB appointments. Nonetheless, some fathers were still hard to reach because they lacked cellular data plans or used their minutes sparingly.

As expected, the coordination that is required to bring a young child on site for a JB session proved to be a significant challenge, particularly for those fathers with ongoing custody issues or visitation restrictions. Even for the 51 percent of fathers who

lived with their child, attending JB sometimes required taking the child in and out of day care or traveling long distances with the child on public transit. The fathers themselves also sometimes had inconsistent and unpredictable schedules. As a result, sites had to be flexible when scheduling sessions, and they worked in conjunction with MDRC and the JB developers to find ways to make the sessions easier to attend while maintaining fidelity to the JB model. For example, some of the sites gave fathers an opportunity to combine two play sessions into one delivery, scheduled sessions in the evenings for fathers who worked during the day, and held play sessions at off-site locations that were more convenient for the father. At CII, where

a substantial proportion of fathers required supervised visits, staff even held JB sessions at the Department of Children and Family Services with a monitor present.

Irrespective of the location of the JB session, for the 49 percent of fathers who did not live with their child, attending JB sessions required coparent cooperation. For this reason, staff made a concerted effort to contact coparents early on to provide them with information about the JB program. Staff said that coparents who withheld access to the child or were not interested in supporting JB participation — because of acrimony with the dad or other reasons — were a particular challenge. However, coparents sometimes overcame their reluctance to cooperate once staff had the chance to clarify the intentions and benefits of JB.

To further support engagement, each program worked with MDRC to establish an incentive structure. For example, curriculum-focused gifts, such as a toy mirror to reinforce the lesson on noticing the child's cues, were provided at the end of each session; gift cards were provided at certain session milestones; and transit cards were offered to reduce transportation barriers. Some fathers and coparents reported finding these incentives helpful, but staff did not believe that incentives played a significant role in determining participation in JB or the usual services, given that fathers generally enrolled for other reasons.¹⁸

Programs that were structured to create regular opportunities for JB reminders and sessions were more successful at engaging fathers.

Staff reported having an easier time engaging fathers in JB sessions in fatherhood programs that were longer in length and engaged participants in structured, frequent services. People for People implemented this approach, where fathers were on site several days a week for a seven-week period, creating regular opportunities for both JB reminders and sessions. At the other two organizations, fathers were either not on site for services as frequently or often finished the other components of

the fatherhood program before they had time to complete JB. This made it difficult to engage fathers in JB, particularly in the later sessions.¹⁹

Conclusion

The participation data gathered in this study suggest that while Responsible Fatherhood programs were able to incorporate JB into their existing menu of services, implementing JB was not without challenges. Slightly more than half of the fathers in the JB group actually participated in the JB program. Many fathers faced challenges to participating at all, including coordinating the young child's attendance at the JB sessions, gaining the coparent's cooperation, and prioritizing JB against the competing demands that fathers in this disadvantaged population must manage. Also, some fathers may not have wanted to participate in a parenting program: By not screening potential participants based on interest, the JB sample included fathers whose goals for the fatherhood program did not necessarily include parenting lessons. Nevertheless, the organizations were still able to engage a significant portion of fathers in the program.

Further, fathers who were able to attend at least one session were usually able to progress through the curriculum, ultimately receiving the adequate amount of services — that is, four sessions (as identified by the curriculum developers). Achieving this participation rate depended on staff spending significant time and resources on engagement, as well as support and technical assistance from MDRC and the JB curriculum developers. Furthermore, engaging fathers in JB sessions was easier when the underlying fatherhood program was structured in such a way that enabled fathers to be on site for usual services on a regular basis and for the duration of the JB curriculum.

Future publications will address many other questions, such as the degree to which staff implemented the content of JB with fidelity to the model and how service receipt differed for key subgroups of

fathers. These and other aspects of service delivery, as well as findings about the impacts of JB on father-child relationship quality, father-child contact, and other outcomes, will be discussed in the final study report, expected in 2021.

Notes

- 1 For example, see Cancian, Slack, and Yang (2010); Carlson and Magnuson (2011); Cowan et al. (2008).
- 2 All three organizations implementing the JB intervention for the B3 study were OFA-funded Responsible Fatherhood grantees.
- 3 Examples include 24/7 Dads, On My Shoulders, and the Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP). Other curricula that are not branded are also used.
- 4 The same three organizations also implemented DadTime, a smartphone-based mobile application that provides a father with automated program attendance reminders and interactive tools to help him apply what he has learned in JB sessions to subsequent interactions with his child, which will be discussed in a future publication. Three other organizations implemented an employment component, Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Justice Involved Individuals Seeking Employment, in addition to their usual services. It is designed for individuals with recent justice involvement to help them recognize challenging situations, develop strategies to resolve problems when they arise in the workplace, and ensure success on the job. Its implementation is described in a companion brief ([“Applying Cognitive-Behavioral Techniques to Employment Programming: Findings from the B3 Study”](#)).
- 5 Barr et al. (2014).
- 6 This represents a partial sample of the full study. Random assignment ended in all sites by December 31, 2018. Future dissemination activities will include the full sample.
- 7 Israel, Behrmann, and Wulfsohn (2017); Harknett, Manno, and Balu (2017).
- 8 Project D.A.D. includes more components for nonstudy participants (for example, parenting and healthy relationship services in the first four weeks), but these additional services were not offered to study participants.
- 9 Fathers in the services-as-usual group received an Enhanced Economic Stability component, consisting of two extra job-search workshops per week that dove deeper into the economic security topics. This component was added to keep the fathers in the services-as-usual group engaged in Project D.A.D., since they are not offered parenting and healthy relationship workshops or the JB program. Fathers in the JB program group received Economic Stability workshops twice per week.
- 10 Eighty-eight percent of fathers in this category are from CII. The organization has an established relationship with Los Angeles County’s Department of Children and Family Services, and most of the fathers enrolled in the program are referred by the agency. A portion of them enrolled in the program to fulfill a court requirement usually related to child custody.
- 11 Based on data from the B3 Applicant Characteristic survey and B3 Baseline survey, both administered at enrollment.
- 12 Having few statistically significant differences between the two groups when the study began indicates random assignment was conducted properly. The one exception in this analysis is that nearly 8 percent more participants in the services-as-usual group reported having ever been incarcerated in prison or jail at baseline than JB group members.
- 13 If the difference in participation rates between the two groups is not statistically significant, it is not large enough to be attributable with a high degree of confidence to the program, and might instead be a result of chance alone.
- 14 Other types of contact, such as phone calls, text messages, or mail, are not included in this analysis.
- 15 At CII, MIRG sessions were not counted as “parenting” services because multiple topics, such as healthy relationships and employment, are covered during each session. At People for People, B3 study participants did not have access to its standard parenting workshops. At Seedco, parenting workshops occupied four days of the Strong Fathers, Stronger Families program.
- 16 If Figure 3 had counted CII’s MIRG sessions as “parenting” services, the percentage of fathers ever attending any usual parenting services (non-JB) across the three sites would have increased to 48 for the JB group and 49 for the services-as-usual group. (At CII, 81 percent of fathers in both groups attended at least one MIRG session.) Also, the average number of sessions would have increased to more than three. (At CII, fathers attended on average eight MIRG sessions.)
- 17 For context, in the 2014 nonexperimental evaluation of Baby Elmo, researchers aimed to deliver 10 father-child sessions to incarcerated teen fathers. Of the 64 fathers in the study, 52 percent of participants made it at least halfway through the curriculum, and 16 percent made it through the ninth session, which is the last session before the wrap-up. For the JB evaluation, the program was modified to include five sessions. For more information, see Barr et al. (2014).
- 18 The DadTime app was also used for engagement purposes. Findings on how DadTime was implemented and its effects on JB participation will be discussed in a subsequent report.
- 19 JB participation patterns will be explored further and discussed in a subsequent report.

References

- Barr, Rachel, Marisa Morin, Natalie Brito, Benjamin Richeda, Jennifer Rodriguez, and Carole Shauffer. 2014. "Delivering Services to Incarcerated Teen Fathers: A Pilot Intervention to Increase the Quality of Father — Infant Interactions During Visitation." *Psychological Services* 11, 1: 10-21.
- Cancian, Maria, Kristen Shook Slack, and Mi Youn Yang. 2010. "The Effect of Family Income on Risk of Child Maltreatment." Institute for Research on Poverty Discussion Paper 1385-10. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin-Madison, Institute for Research on Poverty.
- Carlson, Marcia J., and Katherine Magnuson. 2011. "Low-Income Fathers' Influence on Children." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 635, 1: 95-116.
- Cowan, Carolyn P., Philip A. Cowan, Nancy Cohen, Marsha K. Pruett, and Kyle Pruett. 2008. "Supporting Fathers' Engagement with Their Kids." Pages 44-80 in Jill Duerr Berrick and Neil Gilbert (eds.), *Raising Children: Emerging Needs, Modern Risks, and Social Responses*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Harknett, Kristen, Michelle S. Manno, and Rekha Balu. 2017. *Building Bridges and Bonds: Study Design Report*. OPRE Report 2017-27. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation.
- Israel, Dina, Rebecca Behrmann, and Samantha Wulfsohn. 2017. *Three Innovative Approaches to Serving Low-Income Fathers: The Building Bridges and Bonds Study*. OPRE Report 2017-28. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation.

This brief and the research upon which it is based are funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families (ACF), Office of Family Assistance (OFA). The Building Bridges and Bonds (B3) project is overseen by ACF's Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE). We are grateful to many individuals within these offices for their comments on previous drafts, including Samantha Illangasekare, Katie Pahigiannis, Maria Woolverton, Emily Schmitt, and Naomi Goldstein with OPRE, and Seth Chamberlain and Robin McDonald with OFA.

The authors sincerely appreciate the dedicated staff within the organizations participating in the Just Beginning intervention of the B3 study; Children's Institute, Inc.; People for People, Inc.; and Seedco and their community partners BronxWorks and Strive.

We are also grateful to the many MDRC and MEF Associates staff members who made this report possible. Emily Brennan, Bright Sarfo, Carly Morrison, Doug Phillips, Robert Mitchell, Samantha Steimle, Sundus Alfi, Osvaldo Avila, and Alec Gilfillan conducted site visits and numerous interviews, along with the authors. Erika Lundquist provided excellent guidance for our data team. Virginia Knox, Dina Israel, Cindy Redcross, Erin Valentine, Meghan McCormick, Helen Lee, Mike Fishman, Rebecca Behrmann, and Samantha Wulfsohn also reviewed drafts of the brief and offered helpful critiques.

We thank Samantha Steimle and Jillian Verrillo, who skillfully coordinated report production; Alice Tufel, who reviewed and edited the report; and Carolyn Thomas, who designed and prepared it for publication.

Last, we thank the many fathers who participated in focus groups and shared their experiences. Their voices are invaluable to the B3 study and we are deeply grateful for their contributions.

Dissemination of MDRC publications is supported by the following organizations and individuals that help finance MDRC's public policy outreach and expanding efforts to communicate the results and implications of our work to policymakers, practitioners, and others: The Annie E. Casey Foundation, Arnold Ventures, Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation, The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, Ford Foundation, The George Gund Foundation, Daniel and Corinne Goldman, The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation, Inc., The JPB Foundation, The Joyce Foundation, The Kresge Foundation, and Sandler Foundation.

In addition, earnings from the MDRC Endowment help sustain our dissemination efforts. Contributors to the MDRC Endowment include Alcoa Foundation, The Ambrose Monell Foundation, Anheuser-Busch Foundation, Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation, Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, Ford Foundation, The George Gund Foundation, The Grable Foundation, The Lizabeth and Frank Newman Charitable Foundation, The New York Times Company Foundation, Jan Nicholson, Paul H. O'Neill Charitable Foundation, John S. Reed, Sandler Foundation, and The Stupski Family Fund, as well as other individual contributors.

The findings and conclusions in this report do not necessarily represent the official positions or policies of the funders.

For information about MDRC and copies of our publications, see our website: www.mdrc.org.