

## NATIONAL RESPONSIBLE FATHERHOOD CLEARINGHOUSE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE WEBINAR

**Moderator: Nigel Vann**

**September 28, 2010**

**2:00 pm Eastern**

Operator: Good day and welcome to the National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse Technical Assistance Webinar. Today's conference is being recorded.

At this time I would like to turn the conference over to Nigel Vann. Please go ahead.

Nigel Vann: Thank you very much and good morning, good afternoon to everybody. We're going to be talking today about work with homeless fathers, but I think it stretches quite beyond that sort of topic area as we'll see. I did want to just make one announcement here before we start.

I know a lot of you have met James Worthy either at round tables (or) events and his father passed away on Sunday so I just wanted to pass that along so you can keep him in your thoughts.

And before I go further with talking about the Webinar, let me just pass it to Matt Crews who will remind you of how you ask a question if you wish to. Matt?

Matt Crews: Thank you, Nigel. Real briefly, I'm going to go over how to ask a question during the duration of the Webinar. Just so you know, at any time and at any point you can ask a question. It doesn't matter who's presenting, who's talking. And here's how you do so.

First you click on the word Q&A in the upper left hand corner. A box will pop up. You can type your question in the box. And then after that click the word Ask and your question has been submitted. Other technical issues that you may encounter - if the screen is too small hit F5.

However, when the screen is in a larger mode you cannot ask a question so you have to push F5 again or escape to go back to the original view. If you're having trouble hearing, send us a message with the Q&A tool.

And if for some reason you did not receive these slides with the email that went out this morning email [Info@Fatherhood.gov](mailto:Info@Fatherhood.gov) at the end of the presentation and we'll get them out to you. And with that said, I'm going back to Nigel.

Nigel Vann: Okay. Thank you very much, Matt. So again we're going to focus today on working with homeless fathers which is obviously a somewhat pressing issue given our current economic times.

And, you know, even if you're not working directly with homeless fathers most of you do work directly with some dads who have either been homeless in the past or in danger of becoming so in the future.

Even if they're not currently homeless their experiences may well mirror those of homeless dads in some key ways. And I think you're going to hear that from each of our presenters today.

*Take Time to Be a Dad Today*

So even if you're working with, you know, there are a lot of young dads out there who may not be thought of as officially homeless but certainly who struggle to find a stable place to live and often rotate between the households of friends and family.

Others of you are working with dads who have recently returned to the community from prison or otherwise struggle to find regular employment, find a willing wage or may have lost a job and been downsized or, you know, also dads coming back from military service can be struggling to find their place back home.

So today we're going to hear a little bit about the extent of homelessness and its impact on fathers and families. We're going to hear about some initiatives in Washington, DC, Rhode Island and California that have found ways to help homeless men and their families.

And we're also going to think a little bit about ways that fatherhood programs might be able to help not only fathers who are faced with this most severe of situations but also organizations that worked to help the homeless.

So with that in mind let me introduce our first speaker who as you see on the screen is Michael Farrell who is the executive director for the coalition for the homeless in Washington, DC. Michael has been with the coalition since 1989 and has been the executive director since 1996.

The coalition provides food, housing, shelter and supportive social services of 13 program sites around the District of Columbia. They serve more than 1800 homeless men, women and children annually.

Michael has done the Nonprofit Roundtable of Greater Washington, the District's Interagency Council on Homelessness and he currently chairs the Metropolitan Washington Council of Government's Homeless Services Committee.

So a very seasoned individual in the field with a lot to share with us. So let me hand it over to Michael.

Michael Farrell: Thank you very much Nigel and hello to everyone in the audience. Today, I have the privilege of talking to you a little bit about homelessness.

I think it's important as we look at the fatherhood initiative, the role that homelessness plays or how homelessness affects those individuals who are also fathers in the groups that we serve.

And so today I hope to provide you with some information from a national perspective and certainly you can compare that information and those experiences with what you are seeing in your local jurisdictions. And so without further ado we'll go to the next slide please.

The topics I'll cover this afternoon are who are the homeless; homeless subpopulations, issues affecting homeless men who are fathers; what's important to a homeless father need; and what can providers do. The next slide please.

Who are the homeless? The next two slides will present information that are derived from HUD's recently released 2009 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress and it provides information on the number of homeless who were counted during the period October 1, 2008 through September 30, 2009.

I think it's important to note, for those of you who are familiar with the annual point in time count of the homeless, that I'm not going to present that information in detail but try to focus on the

longer longitudinal study that was done by HUD in order to give you a fuller, more complete sense of the scope of homelessness from a national perspective.

With that said, when we look at the data from 2009 and really nothing has changed in the last 20 years, we find that the typical homeless person is a middle aged male. And based upon the count that was done in 2009 63.7% of the individuals counted were men.

Now while I do not have any hard data on the number of men who experience homelessness who were also fathers it stands to reason that it should represent a fairly significant portion of the homeless population.

You know, that of this 64 or so percent homeless men that, you know, probably - and I'm saying just probably, 50% of those who are experiencing homelessness are probably fathers.

And so the work that's being done with the fatherhood initiative is certainly very relevant to this core group that represents the largest single segment within the homeless population. Next slide please. In 2009 1.5 million persons were counted as being homeless.

And as you look at the slide you see the breakdown in terms of the number of persons who are homeless, persons and families, you know, who are homeless who are children. And the number of families, you know, that are headed by single women.

And we note that 79% of the families who were counted in the 2009 HUD assessment were headed by single women. But what is most notable is that the number of men who are either in families or who are heads of households have been growing since 2007.

You'll note that 18% were reported in 2007 compared to 20.4% in 2009. I think it's also important to note as we look at the 34% of persons and families who are reported as being homeless, that represented 170,000 households. So 170,000 households were reported as being homeless during the 2009 count.

And just for comparative purposes, you know, when we look at the 1.5 million count overall the national number for the point in time count for those who may be interested was 643,000 who were counted in January of 2009 as being homeless on one single night.

And so I wanted to emphasize the 1.6 million you see here is an annualized number, covering that period from October '08 through September 30, 2009. Finally, the group that's most adversely affected by homelessness are the children.

And 60% of the persons who were counted in families were homeless. And overall that represented 22.2% of the overall count of homeless that was done in 2009. So it represents 60% of persons and families but overall in terms of the total homeless count in 2009 it was 22.2%. Next slide please.

Homeless subpopulations - and so what we have here are some of the issues are persons who are affected by homelessness. And we note that, you know, first and foremost, you know, there's a high percentage of individuals who have substance abuse issues and most of them are men.

And then we also have those who are severely mentally ill. And then those who have some form of disability. And that's 42.9%. And those who have some form of disability could include some form of mental illness, substance abuse and other medical ailments.

We also have, you know, the numbers who are affected by domestic violence. And last but certainly not least, you know, the percentage of veterans who are also a part of the overall homeless population. And at least in 2009 that stood at 13.1%. Next slide please.

Issues affecting homeless men who are fathers. And so a major issue is simply the one of shame and embarrassment associated with being homeless.

And this is a significant barrier for some men in terms of engaging their children because of the shame and embarrassment that they have as a part - as a result of being homeless and being in shelters and not being able to provide and support their families much less their children.

Also we note that long absences from their children also may have an impact. And that absence could be due to incarceration or military service or some other issues that resulted in a long absence, you know, by the fathers from their children who also at this time are experiencing homelessness.

Inadequate income or lack of income is certainly very important. And the majority of homeless men who are in shelter are either unemployed or marginally employed. And so the lack or inadequate income certainly is a very important issue.

Substance abuse as mentioned earlier, certainly is an important issue that plagues homeless men more so than any other subpopulation. And so substance abuse and other health related issues also have some effect on homeless men who are fathers.

And then last, no desire to be a parent. Also included are those individuals who may question their parental status, you know, with respect to children but certainly, you know, there are individuals who are fathers but are not willing to accept responsibility for a number of reasons, you know, for the children.

Next slide please. What supports do homeless fathers need? And certainly fathers in general need a lot of support. But for men who are homeless this is a particularly challenging issue.

And so it is absolutely essential that they do have a caring support group to work with them to deal with the issues that are highlighted in the slide. And we begin first and foremost with understanding the personal challenges that the individual faces.

And that, you know, it certainly includes their homelessness and possibly unemployment and substance abuse issues, mental health issues as well.

And that the men must be able to become stabilized in their own situation as it relates to being homeless and dealing with their own personal issues before they can be good fathers.

And with that said, you know, want to lift up that the engagement process, you know, for these fathers certainly can begin, and if at all possible should begin while they are homeless. But it's to recognize that there are two tracks that you're working on.

You know, one is for the individual needing to reach a level of stability in order to effectively address their own issues. And the other part are the family issues, you know, which would include the children as well.

So you have to work with the individual to strike the appropriate balance in that regard with the ultimate goal towards helping them to reengage more effectively with their children and to become, you know, a good contributing father.

Another critical issue is dealing with child support and so individuals may need some assistance in navigating the child support system. And it really depends on the jurisdiction.

And in some cases it may be possible to with the proper assistance, to modify the child support orders which may include a reduction in child support payments or making the payment more reasonable for the man to contribute to.

And so that is as significant and very important issue, you know, for the men to deal with especially as we talk about reengaging or in some cases engaging for the first time with their children.

Parenting and co-parenting is very important especially the co-parenting part when you consider that this will represent a situation where individuals are trying to be parents and living separately.

And so that certainly becomes a little more challenging, you know, for individuals who are currently residing in homeless shelters.

You know, how to play an active role in the lives of their children even though they are temporarily housed in a shelter, is something that has to be worked with in conjunction with the service provider.

And there are a number of creative things that an individual can do while in a shelter and trying to engage or reengage with their children. And that would include walking their children, you know, to and from school and being involved in some play time activity, reading and things of that nature.

You know, these are things that cost little or no money and, you know, a father who is currently experiencing homelessness could certainly participate in. And last but certainly not least, you know, the fathers need support in how to reconcile differences with the mother of their children.

And certainly whatever support and assistance can be provided in that regard, you know, certainly in the long run would have benefit to the children as we continue with this process of engagement or reengagement for the fathers with their children. Next slide please.

This final slide - what can providers do? And in this slide we look at the roles that both fatherhood providers can provide as well as homeless services providers. And so with respect to the fatherhood initiative providers, you know, it's important to make contact with local shelters.

And to the best of your ability to tailor your program to meet the needs, the special needs of homeless men who are currently fathers. And that would go a long way toward helping those individuals to engage and reengage with their children.

On the other side is the things that homeless service providers need to do. And as a homeless service provider I can certainly appreciate the need of being flexible in working with fathers in our programs.

And to make sure that we structure our rules in such a way that fathers can have visitation and telephone contact with their children. And this is really important, you know, for programs that have weekend passes and a pass structure and things of that nature.

And so we have to as providers, you know, look at the bigger picture which is not just the individual father - the individual man but also the father who may be in our programs as well.

I think it's important to note here that when we work with women with children that part often case management plan typically is to identify childcare issues and childcare needs and things of that nature.

And that's pretty much so at least in the Washington, DC area it's pretty much always a standard procedure. But that is not always the case when we look at homeless men.

And oftentimes we only look at them as single entities and not a part of a family unit or at last a partial part of a family unit with respect to them being fathers of children.

So it really is important for homeless service providers to look at the man in a more holistic perspective that would include their family involvement. Lastly homeless service providers should identify men who are fathers to ascertain if they have regular relationships with their children.

Now I've touched on that in the previous bullet and I just really want to emphasize how important that is for homeless service providers to make sure that we're engaging the fathers in terms of our development of service ((inaudible)) and in a more broader perspective, you know, to make sure that we're not only just looking at the individuals but, you know, their children as well.

So Nigel, with that, that would conclude my presentation today and I look forward to receiving questions.

Nigel Vann: Okay. Thank you very much, Michael. Yeah. And again, we encourage you to send any questions in using the Q&A button for Michael at the end.

And I'd particularly like to emphasize, you know, the final point though that Michael was making there in terms of ways in which, you know, you as fatherhood practitioners could be reaching out perhaps to organizations in your community that are working in the homeless.

Just to see if they are really taking a look at men's needs as fathers. Because if they're not then that's certainly a way in which we can be having an impact. So let me move on and I'll introduce our next speaker who is Eileen Hayes, the President and CEO of Amos House in Providence, Rhode Island.

I hope you had a chance to take a look at Eileen's YouTube that we sent out this morning. If not, I encourage you to do that afterwards. She's talking there about some of the social enterprise businesses that they've been able to setup at Amos House.

So I've had the pleasure of knowing Eileen in various capacities going back to I'm not sure if it's the late '80s or the early '90s Eileen but it's been a long while.

She's got longstanding experience in the fatherhood field and is going to tell us about the great programs she's now got for the homeless in Rhode Island. In the late '80s she was director of services for adolescents and young families at the YWCA of New York. That's the YWCA of New York.

But even there they had one of the first programs for young fathers. And I actually had the pleasure of making a visit to that program I think it was in '89.

I'm not sure that's when I first met Eileen or not but that project I believe was funded by the Ford Foundation as part of the teen fathers project in the '80s. And Eileen also took the fatherhood development curriculum that was originally created by public/private ventures.

And we wrote that as the responsible fatherhood curriculum which I know several grantees are using right now. So that's her fatherhood background.

Beyond that you can see what she's been doing in terms of Amos House from her resume which is in - from her brief bio I mean which is certainly very impressive. She's also -she's the co-chair of the housing committee, the Providence Mayor's Taskforce on reentry.

She's served as a board member of the Rhode Island coalition for the homeless and in 2007, received a citizen's citation from the City of Providence recognizing her outstanding commitment to children and families. So we're certainly looking forward to what you've got to say Eileen.

Eileen Hayes: Thanks. Good afternoon everybody. Nigel, thank you. It's great to hear from you when you called and asked me to be involved in this. I'm going to talk today about really more from the inside, from inside an organization that really is an organization for homeless men and women and families.

And talk more concretely about services to help all of our folks move from homelessness to self sufficiency and talking about some of the particular issues that face homeless fathers and homeless mothers also but most concentrating on homeless fathers. So we can go to the first slide please.

I think the thing that we are - what I'm following with is really some of the national information that Mike has shared with you. And I want to talk a little bit about just some of the particular issues that fathers face if they are in homeless shelters.

We've seen an increase in the number of fathers in homeless shelters, most recently in fathers who are coming in with mothers and many of those families are becoming homeless because of the foreclosure crises and the high unemployment rates especially in distressed communities.

The unemployment rate in Providence where I am right now on the Southside is about 28% for mostly men. So the numbers of people who are finding themselves homeless has increased dramatically.

And another reason for that is that families are timing out of benefits not only in terms of family independence benefits but also unemployment benefits and other kinds of support. So there are more and more people who are ending up coming to our doors.

And there's a big distinction between fathers and homeless people in general who are homeless for a long time and may have been - become homeless because of a loss of a job or a medical illness.

And that's really about 80% of the people in our country are homeless and they tend to become housed within three to six months. That has slowed down somewhat over the years because, you know, the last couple of years because of our economic downturn.

But in general most homeless folks get housed within three to six months. Twenty percent of the homeless folks are those that are called chronically homeless and they tend to have longer bursts of homelessness.

And a lot of the homeless men that we work with, that 67% that Mike was talking about, are in that category who have chronic addiction. Often the addiction leads to incarceration. Without proper discharge planning incarceration leads back to the streets and back to addiction.

So there's a major cycle of people going from the streets to prison to back to the streets again. And my sense is that for the most - we were talking before about the number of those men who are homeless who are fathers and I think it's probably even higher than the 75% estimate.

I think it's probably closer to 90% for the men that are in - that I come in contact with. One of the issues is that people often don't even ask men if they are fathers. Usually if a woman comes into a shelter they automatically asked the question about whether or not they're mothers.

Men aren't always asked about whether they have children and so I think that's an important note for anybody who is working in the field, is to make sure that you have intake information that really asks that question and asks where the children are and helping the men identify where their kids are.

I think fathers who are in shelters often have a lot of emotional issues as well. And Mike talked about the shame that they face. And I think part of it is that fathers in our society are really valued when they can provide for their kids.

And just by nature of being in a homeless shelter there's an indication that a father has not been able to provide for his family. It's also true that because of the restrictions on family shelters they're most often run by women and there are many, many rules that are involved in living in the shelter.

And most of them come out of the need for safety. But many of those same rules take the role of a parent away from the parents because they - the parents also have to accept the rules of the institution. So their children are watching them being told what to do by the providers.

And I think it's a really hard - it's a hard balance for men who are in shelters with their kids, to feel some sense of authority and dignity that comes along with trying to take care of their families when they've lost a lot of the kind of locus of control is taken away from them.

So that sensitivity issue I think is really important. We can go to the next slide please. I'm going to talk a little bit about Amos House just because that's the context of the work that I'm doing here.

We were started 35 years ago pretty much as a soup kitchen and at the time, 35 years ago, we served about 35 meals a day to homeless men. There were very few women who were coming to eat with us 35 years ago. Today we serve about 800 meals a day.

And many more men than women but the number of women has increased over the years. And we are seeing many more families that are about to become homeless and are trying to prevent them from becoming homeless by supplementing their income with eating in our soup kitchens.

So there's been a transition over the years in terms of who comes to us for services. But we also run a number of different programs that are targeted specifically to homeless men and women. We have a 90 day program for 21 men and 15 women at any given time.

Out of those folks that are in that program probably 95% to 99% of the men are fathers. And the majority of them, of that 80% are coming directly from prison. So it's a population that has struggled with addiction and lots of criminal activities over the years.

So they come in and they live with us for 90 days. They have a very intensive case plan. The case plan requires that they look at clearing up whatever baggage they have from the past. So for fathers it may be looking to get a record of their child support ((inaudible)), looking at court fines.

Looking at any outstanding warrants. Helping - looking at sort of whether they have restrictions on being able to get a license. And all of this is in line with helping them become self sufficient so that they can begin to earn a living and move out of homelessness.

We ask very specifically who the men and the women - about family members and who their kids are and where their children are at this time and what kind of contact they have with them.

And it's a part of every person's case plan to begin the process of reaching out if not reuniting with their families. Many of the fathers have had children in - placed in DCYF custody and we have to do a lot of advocacy around helping DCYF workers accept the father into the plan.

So that's a big piece of the advocacy work that our case managers do on a daily basis. And because most of the men and women that come to us are battling with addiction we do - we run a fairly intensive 90 day program as well that is recovery based.

It's community based. We have groups throughout the day and throughout the week that are required and it's not just around addiction but it's around life skills and financial planning.

It's around helping people with anger management issues, domestic violence, HIV, all kinds of things that men and women really need help with. Everybody has to have a medical exam when they get with us so that we can make sure that we address any kind of medical issues that they face.

Many of the fathers and the men have a lot of medical issues that have not been treated because they don't have the resources and they tend not to go for any kind of preventative care. Also when you're living with us you have access to one of our training programs.

We run a culinary arts training program that has a national based certification that is the certification that for prep cooks to work anywhere in the country.

And CPR and first aid as well as hands on practicum where they work in either one of our businesses during their training or we help them find externships or internships in houses of hospitality and restaurants around the state.

We also run a 12 week carpentry training program that has a multiple certification. And not only do we do projects of classroom instruction but we also - the crew works about 30 hours a week doing construction projects.

We - the way that we get the work is that we offer people in the community that have housing projects that they need to do but they don't have the resources to pay for it, to partner with our carpentry program.

So they'll provide the materials and our students under the instruction of licensed carpenters, will actually do the work. So it's really a beautiful marriage because it helps build community with our neighbors and helps people gain good skills for their ability to get a job once they leave with us.

And more recently, we've been running a green jobs training program that offers five certifications as well as (OJT) ((inaudible)) construction weatherization for men and women.

But most of the men that are in the program - many of them have been homeless or are in our 90 day program and are currently homeless and get to attend the program while they're with us. You can go to the next slide.

We do a lot of work for men and women around job placement services because for those who have been homeless for a while or who have been in and out of prison, they don't have any viable work experience, paid work experience that they can build a resume with.

So we've created a transitional job program where we provide a stipend for folks while they're in the program. They spend six weeks working in-house, in Amos House in one of many, many positions that we provide within Amos House and then - and during that time they also take financial literacy classes.

They're eligible to be part of our loan - our lending program where they can take up to \$1000 in a loan. And they use that money to payoff fines, to get licenses reinstated and get insurance so that they can ultimately get a vehicle which is often needed in order for them to get to work.

But it - and then the second half of their time we find employment in the community with employers that would not necessarily hire our folks because of their criminal background, who are willing to take a shot because of the relationships that we've built with them.

And we have had very good success in having those placements ultimately become paid work for the men and women that we've placed because the employer has taken a place and actually has overcome some of the stereotypes and has hired a number of those men and women.

And in the last seven years or so we have really launched our social enterprise model because what we found was that we were having a hard time placing men and women especially who were homeless, into jobs.

So we started our own catering business that grew out of our culinary training program and more recently started a carpentry business called Amos House Builds that grew out of our carpentry training program. All of the staffing except for the general managers, are staffed by graduates of the program.

And that model is actually a model that Amos house uses in all of our employment. We have about 55 people on staff. And half of those employees whether they're in our kitchen our case managers or house managers or receptionists are graduates of our program who were formerly homeless.

And many of them are now living with us in one of our buildings as well because we own 14 buildings to provide housing for over 150 people. So employment through our businesses has been a big piece of our social enterprise.

And we intentionally design the positions as stepping stone positions. We don't really want people to stay with us. We want them to gain some skills, build a resume, gain some self esteem and feel ready to go into the wider world so that we can make that position available for the next graduate.

So I'm going to talk a little bit about the specifics around the case plan that happens for everybody that works with us. As I said before, our case plans are very intentional.

So we're looking to look at things like child support orders, visitation schedules, court fines, warrants, anything that would prohibit fathers from unification. And also looking at the reasons why fathers have been separated from their children.

So part of what happens over time is that because the fathers are showing up and they're making payments on these orders and on these warrants and on these fines, they're building a track

record with the court that allows them to be in a better position for visitation and in some cases reunification.

We've had a number of fathers - I think we have ten fathers right now who actually are providers that have full custody of their children and are living with us in one of our housing units with their children because they were just in a better position to provide for their children.

So that's a big piece of what we're doing. And the other piece I think that's been really important is really building their ability to create some kind of financial stability through financial counseling. Everybody gets a credit report. They create savings plans. They establish good credit.

All of these things are really important when a father is going before a judge to determine both visitation and reunification schedules. Next slide please. I just want to talk a little bit about some of the issues that are very particular to the fathers that I've worked with here at Amos House.

These may not be necessarily national issues but they certainly are with us. One of the issues that we find very often is that a number of the fathers have multiple children with multiple partners.

And as they try to establish connections with their various children it's often the relationship with the child's mother that either allows for that connection or makes that connection much more difficult. And so we have to really help fathers figure out how to start that process of reunification.

And we often encourage fathers to connect with the children first where there is a natural support from the child's mother so that they're beginning to reach out to the kids that they can immediately start working with. And then over time, we help them build connection to their other children.

Unfortunately what happens is that they tend to spend more time with the children where there's not conflict.

And as we've worked with the children who have come in with the fathers it's often very hard for the kids because they're not necessarily all feeling like they're getting the same level of involvement from their fathers as their siblings even, or step siblings are getting.

So that's one of the big issues that we have to work with on a regular basis. The other issue I think that's an important one is based on why the person is homeless I think it really - because that's to be thoughtful about the case plan and the reunification plan that we put into place.

For some fathers who come to us because of criminal activity where they were doing - when they were dealing or involved in anything in terms of possession or distribution they have a much harder time when they try to reunite with their families.

Part of it is that the families have a hard time accepting them back without the cash that they had beforehand. So I think that's a big issue that we have to help fathers learn how to manage not going back to a lifestyle where they have instant cash.

They don't necessarily have job skills. Many of the fathers that have come here even though they're in their 30s or 40s, they've never had a legitimate job so their ability to work within a minimum wage job and really have the patience to earn income and create a budget and all of that is really hard.

But it's not only hard in terms of their will to not go back to the lifestyle. There's often a lot of pressure from their family members who really want them back but they want them back in the way that they had them beforehand, without the worry that they're going to get arrested again.

So it's a vicious circle for them. And we've had to do a lot of work by bringing fathers together in the fatherhood group so that they can talk about that pressure to provide financially but not go back to a lifestyle that puts them at risk. And I think it's a particular difficulty for them.

The other issue with many of our homeless fathers is that because of their records they can't go back to the families because of the restrictions around the housing where their moms and their children are living.

If their families are living in subsidized housing or Section 8 housing they're often barred from that kind of housing.

So we've worked on creating a pilot project here in Rhode Island called Short Stay where we're actually asking the Housing Authority to be willing to allow fathers to come home for three to six months as long as there are support services in place to help the family integrate that father back into the community so that they can actually begin to reconnect with their children and their family members.

As long as the housing rules stay the way they are given that most of the low income - most of the homeless fathers come from low income families they're not going home to communities where they are readily allowed back.

And so that creates a tremendous amount of difficulty for them to be good fathers and play that role while they're being barred from the houses where their children are. And so there needs to be a lot of support around helping fathers manage all those different issues as they try to reunite with their kids.

Next slide please. Probably the most important thing to do for fathers who are homeless is to assign them a coach or a case manager to walk them through the process. Fathers often have a hard time asking for help and get overwhelmed easily.

And they need somebody that's going to help them stick with it and not give up when they get so much pressure and not a lot of support in their looking to do the right thing. The court judges - the system doesn't necessarily embrace them.

They've seen them come back repeatedly so they often feel that the father is not truly committed to changing so that makes it really difficult for them.

And the system also in many ways is trying to support the mother who has been taking care of the children for the whole time that the father was either homeless or incarcerated. And it's often very hard to balance the needs of the mother as - and the father and most importantly the needs of the children.

It's really great if you can provide some sort of financial support around helping people get things like IDs and birth certificates, license renewals, warrant - clearing up warrants and fines. Our case managers go to court a lot with our fathers to get them to be able to establish a payment plan.

Too many times fathers will be released from prison only to be picked up and violated because they have an outstanding fine that they haven't been able to pay because they have lack of income.

So as soon as we help people make those connections and go legitimate to the courts it allows them the freedom to be able to do the work outside that they need to do to become self sufficient. There really has to be a lot of emphasis on training work and education.

If fathers are not given the skills that they need they're not going to be able to move beyond the cycle of addiction and homelessness.

So - and for fathers who are older it's really hard for them to go back to school and to maybe go back to a literacy program and work on getting a GED or a high school equivalency. We have these external degree diplomas where people can get life credits to earn a high school diploma.

But it's really hard for fathers to walk in and ask for that kind of help. They do need to understand their legal and moral responsibilities to their children. We require them to begin to make those relationships strong from the time that they start.

And that also means that when they do get a job we ask them to put 75% of their earnings into an escrow account so that we help them budget the money that they have so that they can move towards self sufficiency. And we expect that they're going to take care of their children's needs.

We have a lot of workshops around what is a need and what is a want and not immediately taking the money that they get and trying to buy, you know, expensive clothing for their kids which is the tendency that they have to make themselves feel good so all of those counseling issues are really important.

I think it's really important to begin as soon as you can bringing the child's mother and other family members into the case plan.

You need to understand what the reasons are for the separation for those fathers, if there's any kind of violence or anger issues that they've had or any kind of reason why the father shouldn't be reunited. Then it's really important to know that.

It's also important when possible to create a safe place for fathers to meet with their kids. We have programs here where fathers can go to the local children's museum.

Those things are really important but not to be taken for granted that fathers will automatically know how to do that because it's often really hard for them to do that.

We do drug and alcohol screening and documentation on a regular basis and a random basis so that we keep records, so that we can show probation and parole or DCYF that the fathers are doing well. And finally, it's important to offer any kind of ancillary services that the fathers need.

We teach parenting classes that are open to fathers and mothers. We also have anger management classes that are court certified so that they can get court credit for these classes.

So essentially as they're working with us our job is to really remove all of the obstacles that got them to the position that they're in and then help them to a more stable position so that they're actually in a position where they can reunite with their kids. So I think I'm going to stop there.

Nigel Vann: Okay. Thank you very much, Eileen. Lots of very good information there. Yeah. And as I said upfront, you know, I think Eileen really sort of laid out how the issues involved with homeless fathers aren't that much different really from a lot of the guys that everyone's working with out there.

So let us move onto our third speaker, who is Steve Nordseth, Program Manager with the Bill Wilson Drop-In Center in San Jose, California. We see him there with his daughter who he told us earlier is actually 2-1/2 years old now.

He's now got a little boy who is just about the same age as the one he's holding there. And we're welcoming Steve back as a presenter. If you remember he actually presented in our June Webinar. So he's our first person to do back to back Webinars.

We do try and sort of spread this around a bit and avoid too much of that, but given that this is working with homeless fathers and that's really what Steve's doing we thought it important to involve him in this Webinar.

Again, as you'll see from his bio, Steve's worked for the Bill Wilson Center for more than eight years now, working with homeless and gang impacted youth ages 14 to 24.

They have a one stop shop model of services by employing a diverse team of staff who provide everything from basic to advanced services all in one location in a program open 22 hours a day.

Like Michael and Eileen, Steve is also an active member of various collaborative in the community that serve homeless youth and adults and he's on the San Jose Mayor's Gang Prevention Taskforce and the Santa Clara County Collaborative on Affordable Housing and Homelessness. So Steve?

Steve Nordseth: Great. Thank you. I really appreciate being on twice in a row. And I just couldn't resist when I saw the title come out for working with homeless dads because that really is something that we do as really the core of our program is working with homeless youth and really providing as many services as we can.

So I'm really, really happy to be here. So I'm going to jump right into it in terms of slides and start with giving you kind of a brief overview of what I'll be talking about. I think my presentation will mirror very well the two presenters that have gone before me.

I'll give a little bit of an overview about what our program does specifically. And our program is obviously a youth based program but I think a lot of the ideas and the experiences that I'll talk about and share today are pretty applicable to other adult programs whether, you know, nationally or what have you.

And then I'll talk a little bit about some of the challenges that our dads face that again I think I something universal. It's going to be very closely related to some of the challenges that were previously mentioned.

And then I'll talk about a few techniques that we use to address some of these barriers that young dads and older dads will face when trying to deal with homelessness as well as getting reinvolved with families. So if we could just go to the next slide please.

So the model that we created here is called a one stop model. So really what that means is trying to bring as many services to a space where youth or homeless individuals feel comfortable.

I think if you've worked with homeless folks in the past you understand that there is a big trust barrier in terms of accepting services in a very marginalized population. So a lot of trust building is crucial in the beginning phases of really providing services to homeless folks and in particular homeless youth.

So what we do is we create this safe space here at our drop-in center. It's a very welcoming environment with a nonjudgmental staff who are open to talking to these young people about anything that they're facing.

And once youth or adults begin to feel safe then we start to implement some of these more intensive services, some of the things like the case management or the job development or the parenting education stuff that we do here.

And what we've seen is a huge increase in terms of folks receiving services onsite as opposed to being referred out to different services. So in the earlier years I've had the benefit of seeing our program grow.

In earlier years when we did a lot of referral out to different services whether it was say for example, one thing that our program now does in-house over the last year or two is medical services. Obviously homeless folks have a need for medical care.

So prior to having medical care onsite we would have medical vans that would come into our parking lot and so forth. And we didn't get as many folks accessing those services as we wanted to even though case managers were willing to walk them right out there, engage in those services with them.

Once we brought those services in-house and had them inside a facility where these folks feel safe use of medical services just completely skyrocketed in terms of services for themselves. We have a pediatrician onsite which serves our participants' children.

And those services really took off once it was inside this environment where folks feel safe. So I think it's important if you can, to bring as many services to your fathers where they feel comfortable. If you've built an environment in your program where they feel comfortable, bringing the services to them.

Or if there's another provider that focuses in on serving homeless folks you can bring your services to them. And that really leads to that harm reduction model that's next on the slide which is basically bringing the services to where folks are at. It's a very client oriented perspective, client directed.

So we're not putting any type of preconceived notions on these clients that we're working with. We're letting them kind of dictate where they want to go in terms of what they want to work on first. Maybe it's an income.

Maybe it's taking care of some warrants, perhaps it's housing or maybe it's substance abuse. But we really try to help young folks realize how to reduce the harm associated with particular behaviors without necessarily having to change the behavior itself yet.

But the real impetus of that program is being able to meet people where they are. So either if they're comfortable here you bring the services to them or if they're comfortable somewhere else you take your services there. Next slide please.

Some of the very basic services that we do here at the drop-in center, as Nigel mentioned we are open 22 hours a day. So we do a lot of very basic services. The folks that we have here are street homeless folks.

So they're either staying in shelters or actually living on the street, along the rivers or in homeless encampments. And a lot of basic needs are met first.

So obviously we provide, you know, hot meals every day, three hot meals a day, food and water and snacks that they can either consume here or take with them, a lot of hygiene stuff that folks are going to need. We provide showers and laundry facilities onsite that they can use.

Any type of supplies that they may need if they're living outdoors, can be provided here as well as services to keep them connected with family, loved ones, other service providers. So we do mail services. We have a phone service that they can use if they want to get calls from employers.

They can go on computers to stay in contact with potential job folks or families or My Space, social networks, things like that. Next slide please. Some of the more advanced stuff that we do here and this is really where I think the magic happens.

A lot of the trust building phase is done during the initial basic needs being met. And then once we've got some buy-in from these folks who really try to transition them into the more advanced services like the case management, the referrals to whether it's a treatment program or mental health programs that we have onsite or in the community.

A lot of what we do is centered around transportation. Folks need to be able to get to parole to check in.

They need to be able to get to jobs, to work. So a lot of what we do is transportation as well as medical care here onsite, legal assistance for taking care of some of those warrants or outstanding, you know, bench warrants, tickets, so on and so forth, obstacles that are getting in folks' way or being self sufficient.

A big proponent of our program both for fathers and for young folks in general is job development and financial assistance, you know, I'll get to that in the next couple of slides.

Basically one of the real keys to our young folks being homeless and being unable to really commit to parenting is the fact that they have no stability due to the fact that they have no income, no way to take care of themselves or their family.

So we can go to the next slide please. So some of the challenges that our dads face, and just to give you an idea of a study that we did - when we did a random sampling of the youth that we see here, we see about 1000 different youth throughout a year long period, those are unduplicated youth.

And we'll get about 6000 different duplicated visits from those youth during the year. So what we found is that at least a third of these young folks coming to the drop-in center have at least one biological child. That was last year.

And, you know, that doesn't take into account for all the youth that are parenting fatherhood, mother figures for whether their spouse if you want to, you know, spouse/baby mama whatever you want to call it, their significant other who has a child, a lot of these young folks act as that parenting figure or that role model for those folks.

And they are just as critical in terms of shaping these young children's lives as a biological parent might be. So we haven't really gauged that yet. But there's a huge population of those folks as well here at the drop-in center. So I think it mirrors some of the statistics that came out earlier.

So the lack of housing for our youth usually manifests itself in multiple different ways. Basic needs obviously not being met, the need for housing, the need for food, the need for things just to survive are either, you know, not being met or are much harder to meet.

And what that really creates is this kind of crisis mode that young folks or adults, if you're working with adults, are in where you're not even sure where your next meal's going to come from. You don't know where you're going to be this evening.

You don't know if you're going to get back to your encampment and all of your stuff has been thrown away or gone through. So it's a very troubling type of situation to be in because of that lack of stability.

And primarily there's a lack of income for childcare or child support, so it's difficult to be a responsible father when you don't have any form of income to contribute to taking care of your children, whether that's, you know, through child support or actually just having your children with you and having the money needed to buy diapers or buy formula.

So some other issues that our young dads face are issues of custody and child protection services. A lot of our young folks have had their children taken away for various different reasons - abuse, neglect so on and so forth.

Or they've actually surrendered their children because they're unable to take care of them. So what this starts is a very long, difficult, complicated process of trying to get your child back or get custody reestablished.

And obviously, you know, I'm sure those of you who have worked through these issues with folks know that it's a short window and it's a difficult process. And it requires a lot of responsibility and stability in terms of the parent trying to regain custody.

And if you're homeless, you know, those types demonstrating that you're self sufficient is going to be extremely difficult. So a lot of them face relationship troubles with either prior girlfriends, boyfriends, folks that they have had children with or who have been co-parenting with.

There's a lot of struggling relationships out there so we really try to address that as well through our parenting classes. We've got a big, big issue with substance abuse whether it's, you know, addiction, self medication, whatever the reason behind it may be.

It's difficult to be an effective parent when you're dealing with a substance abuse problem.

And the lowered sense of self worth that comes with being homeless or like was mentioned in some of these previous slides, feeling like a failure because you're unable to be a responsible parent and to contribute and what might be seen as a meaningful way to your family.

So those kind of lowered sense of self esteem and self worth are very challenging to overcome. Next slide please. So this is just a quick diagram, kind of something I put together that obviously this is going to be true for every single person.

But it is a good idea of what we see a lot in the drop-in center that we work in. And it really is a very cyclical process where young folks really come out and experience a lack of income or a lack of self sufficiency.

Now whether they're emancipating out of foster care at age 18 or, you know, the parents are kicking them out of the house or they lose housing at 24, 25 and they have children and they lose a job, whatever the impetus behind it may be what it all comes back to a lack of income, a lack of self sufficiency.

No ability to actually take care of yourself and provide a stable environment for your kids. So what it ends up in is a loss of your housing, whether you lose your job or you come out of foster care. You've lost your housing.

You're on the streets and you're immediately tossed into this crisis mode where you're jumping from shelter to shelter, you're trying to get into programming. There's all kinds of requirements that need to be fulfilled to get into these different shelters, these different programs for families.

And it's difficult because especially in these tough economic times we've got a lot of people trying to get into these programs and programs are absolutely busting at the seams. And young families are forced with the decision to be out on the street with these young children.

And that's going to lead to, you know, emotional trauma, issues of abuse and ultimately unfortunately what we see in a lot of cases of families who are experiencing homelessness is that they lose their children whether it's due to, you know, substance abuse or issues of abuse or neglect.

They end up losing their children to the system. And if they are unable to reclaim those children in time or, you know, they're not able to meet the requirements that they need to the cycle can begin again with the children themselves, unfortunately.

So we really try to intervene in these different phases of the cycle and that's what's important I think to point out. Is that depending on where folks are in this cycle the intervention might be different.

So a lack of stability is created by this homelessness which in many times for our young folks and for adults as well, can lead to substance abuse issues, can lead to criminalized activity or behavior which then in turn many times can lead to incarceration for their disenfranchisement.

And what we get is this cycle starting over again. The previous preventer talked about this cycle of getting locked up, coming out, releasing to the streets and then getting locked up again in this cycle keeps going.

And every time you're accumulating more, you know, more difficulties in terms of getting your kids back and reestablishing yourself. So it really is a pretty terrifying cycle to look at. Next slide please.

So some of the techniques that we use as a program to address these issues are we always start with meeting basic needs. So when a dad comes in we let them tell us what they need first.

And that's really our client center model, that harm reduction model where parenting may not be the first thing on somebody's mind if they're homeless. They don't know where they're going to sleep. They don't know where they're going to eat.

Parenting may be the farthest thing from their mind at that moment. So really letting them direct the services as they come into your program - what can we do, what resources can we give you to create, you know, a sense of stability or well being or at least that your basic needs are met?

And in that you're building the trust up. You're letting the client feel comfortable and you're giving the client the opportunity to actually begin to look at the more kind of in depth issues like parenting or getting reconnected to a family. Next slide please.

Another thing that we try to do is create a physical stability so whether that is by placing a youth in our shelter or finding, you know, a live-in program or a housing first model or some kind of family program that they can count on for an extended period of time.

And I think that's important to make that distinction. Is that you need - in order to create stability you have to have a long term program that you're getting into. It can't be a 15 day or a 30 day emergency shelter. Because even if you're in you know you're in for this specific period of time.

But always in the back of your mind it's well what happens when this time is up? And it becomes very difficult to have a future perspective which is really what youth or adults need in order to make these plans if you don't know where you're going to be, you know, in just a short period of time.

So really creating some form of permanent stability or at least semi-permanent stability so that folks can really start to make some progress. For us a major thing is doing job skills and employment placement.

Those youth who are eligible to work we try to train them and build them up and place them in community positions where there is opportunity for advancement and they get a livable wage. That way you've got an income coming in.

And once you've got income you can start to have stability. We wrap that around with some different services, support services and we can really see youth start to take off towards being self sufficient.

If youth or adults are unable to work there are other types of sources of income whether some kind of public benefits or whatever resources you can use creatively to get some form of income in to create that sense of self sufficiency is really, really important in creating the physical stability.

We also try to increase the knowledge and skills that our young people have whether through doing groups and workshops onsite about parenting itself as well as lots of other different life skills that these folks might need. And finally, I would just note to be prepared for the long term.

Particularly with homeless individuals because many homeless individuals have experienced homelessness in the past and this is a long term chronic problem.

So really starting to plant that seed of there is an optional reality here that we can get into housing, we can get into self sufficiency and those types of things.

Even for our youth for example, you know, during that same study that we did where we found out a third of our young folks have children, we also found out that 80% of these youth have been homeless before, that they were experiencing multiple bouts of homelessness.

And for a youth under 24 to have already experienced several homelessness incidents is just amazing to think about when you finally get to an adult if you're working with adults. I mean we meet adults on the street who have children and who have been homeless for 20, 30, 40 years.

And to really think about serving those young - or excuse me, serving those adults can be a pretty long term venture. Next slide please. A lot of what we do here with the youth is around creating emotional security as well.

So once we've got these basic needs met, we've got some physical stability, we really try to hone in on some emotional security.

A lot of our young folks have experienced trauma, abuse, so we really try to come at the services through, you know, the model of trauma, informed case and relating everything back to making sure that we're addressing some of these emotional issues that young folks are dealing with.

And adults are just as susceptible especially if you're talking about, you know, adults who come back from military service and so forth. We can have issues of PTSD and there are lots of issues that youth and adults face in terms of mental health.

So we try to provide in-house counseling, psychiatric care, rehab and so forth for these folks that are facing these issues. Substance abuse is another major issue.

So making sure that we have treatment options for folks - outpatient/inpatient, you know, providing onsite support workshops and education around substance abuse.

And then just creating positive outlets for parents and for individuals where we can actually go out and do family activities where we invite the father's children to come along whether it's part of the men's group that we do or just part of the drop-in center that we operate.

We invite these children to come along and let's get out and go fishing for the day. Let's go to the movies. Let's do things that these homeless folks - individuals don't typically get to experience.

You know, some of our young folks have never even been fishing, have never gotten to take their children to do something like that so it's a real bonding experience for parents and children. Next slide please.

Another technique that we use as we bring the services to them, whether that means if there's a service out there that we think is going to benefit homeless individuals, homeless parents, we connect network with that service and bring it in or we actually bring our services to them.

We have another great partnership with another federal program out here in San Jose called the job corps where they train young adults to work in the workforce. And a lot of these young adults are parents. They're not custodial parents because it's a live-in program.

But a lot of these youth will be either returning to their children who might be staying with relatives or staying with their co-parents. So we train them in the ten week curriculum. It's great because we have them in an area where we know they're going to be there.

We know that they're a part of this program, that they have to be there at a certain time. So we provide this optional service if they want to choose to go. And we get really great graduation rates. So it's a really good partnership that you can develop with other programs that are serving similar populations.

So partnering with shelters and different service providers is pretty critical in terms of bringing the services to them. Next slide.

One thing that we've also really noticed as well is that keeping the curriculums quick and concise is critical to getting young homeless fathers and I would imagine this is true is for adults, engaged in all of the knowledge that they might need to really start to think about making some changes.

For instance, our parenting curriculum that we do at the job corps is a ten week cycle where it's done once a week over ten weeks. And they get this, you know, about - I think it equals out to about 30 hours worth of education. Well we condense this for our, you know, extremely transient population.

Our dads that we only see once every few weeks or, you know, once a month so that they can get that information as well but they get it in a condensed environment. So what we've done is we do weekend retreats where we do three day long.

We take them out of town. We go to a vacation spot. We rent, you know, a site or a house on the river, on the lake and we go through this curriculums. We work for eight to ten hours a day, you know, doing these curriculums.

And we also combine that with family activities and bonding experiences and so forth that makes it a really great experience for these youth. And the important part is that they get all that curriculum and they graduate and they leave with some really great skills.

Where on a ten week cycle it's really difficult to get youth to come back consistently, especially those who were transient or homeless - street homeless.

We also do, you know, weeklong employment institutes where we do the 32 hours of education within one week so that the youth are coming back, back to back to back six hours a day.

They're getting all of the stuff that they need right there so that there's no opportunity really for them to fall through the cracks. They get everything they need as quickly as possible and that's proven to be a really great technique for us in terms of getting the information across.

What they do with that is really up to them. Next slide. We really try to reward achievement as well. So creating opportunities to reward folks for their efforts. One way we do that in particular is through our parenting workshop.

We provide sweatshirts - Fatherhood First sweatshirts that these youth get at the end of this ten week curriculum or the retreat. And youth take a lot of pride in these sweatshirts. They've got a couple of different purposes. They're a motivating factor.

They're a reward and incentive for going through this difficult kind of curriculum and working through all of these issues. And they also serve as an outreach opportunity for us because youth are coming up, even adults in the community, are coming up to us, how can I get one of those?

Where did you get that? Where can I buy it? I want one. And we're able to tell them hey look, the only way to get this sweatshirt is to go through this class and you've got to take this curriculum and you've got to graduate. And then you get those sweaters.

So it serves as a great outreach and an engagement tool for us because kids want those sweaters. And we see them downtown all the time - kids that we've trained previously and have gotten those sweaters and they're wearing them really proudly.

So that's one tool that we've found is really, really cool. But rewarding efforts in any way you can, whether that's holding a little graduation ceremony, making certificates, there's all kinds of different techniques that grantees come up with for rewarding achievement in areas like that.

But really what it comes down to is creating confidence and skills in order for folks to become reconnected with families. Next slide please.

So some of the tools that we use to connect or reach out to fathers who are homeless or mothers who are homeless, basically parenting homeless young adults or adults, is we really connect with the local collaborative that deal with homelessness issues.

So most I think major metropolitan areas will have some form of a collaborative where agencies that serve homeless folks or low income folks come together on a monthly basis or a quarterly basis. Talk about resources issues that they're facing.

So getting involved in these collaborative and doing presentations, trainings about different services that your organization would be willing to bring to them is something that organizations like mine and others are always open to hearing about whatever we can do to increase the level of service here we are definitely open to.

So that's something that I would definitely suggest. Marketing your services at the street level as well in places where homeless folks are going to be. I think if you want to reach out to a specific population you've really got to take your message to them.

You can't rely on just leaving fliers at a homeless shelter or just leaving fliers, you know, with a service provider. I think you've really got to take your message directly to the folks you want to serve and let them know hey look, this is who we are, this is what we want to do.

This is what we provide. Come check us out. And then finally, just outreach, outreach, outreach. And that leads me to my finally slide. Just a couple of ideas about where to do outreach to reach homeless individuals. It's something I want to note before I say where.

It's just that when you create your literature make sure that it would make somebody coming from that lifestyle or that perspective or whatever you want to call it, feel comfortable coming to your program. So for us we work with youth. We do a very grass roots, low tech flier.

It mimics almost like some of those band or concert fliers you might get placed on your windshield if you're parking downtown. Because it's something that youth can identify with. It's something that they're going to look at when they get and then they'll see the different services.

So making something that is - takes into consideration the folks you're outreaching to so that they'll feel comfortable looking at your agency, your services or what you're providing and would consider coming by.

Places that we do outreach here which I'm sure is probably pretty universal to other cities or areas like libraries. Anywhere where folks can get free internet you're going to find homeless individuals.

Soup kitchens, community colleges - we've got a ton of our young folks who are going to community college and even going to some of the state schools that we have here like San Jose State University. So community education facilities can be a great place to find homeless youth and adults in many cases.

And then obviously there's going to be the shelters in the streets and a lot of Alcoholics Anonymous and, you know, Narcotics Anonymous, different agencies that deal with substance abuse is a great place to market your programming.

So with that, I think that's it for me. But I really appreciate the opportunity to be here. Thank you very much.

Nigel Vann: Thank you very much Steve. And yeah, I think, you know, each of our presenters has really emphasized some of the key themes here. Well one of the things I really noted here is that you've all talked about the need to create stability in folks' lives.

And I think that goes to the core of responsible fatherhood work because you can't be a responsible parent until you've got some stability. And one way we stop this cycle obviously is to try and raise our kids in a stable environment so they have a better shot of this.

Or that's where we get into the confidence and the skill making that Steve was talking about. I also realized the idea that we treat, you know, I've heard that from a couple of grantees recently.

The Denver Indian Family Resource Center and the Education Service Center, Region 19 in El Paso were both sharing how they had done retreats recently. And I think, you know, whenever you can do that and get people in that space to really focus for a few days you can have that impact that Steve was talking about.

And I also really noted that you've all mentioned a good number of agencies that we might think about reaching out to partner with in terms of working with homeless fathers or fathers on the brink of homelessness, like the child welfare agency, the job corps that Steve was talking about.

The judges and the public housing, obviously the homeless shelters and the soup kitchens, the prisons and the jails, child support, probation and parole and on and on and on. You know, I've got a list that's twice that long just from what I was listening to there.

So I just wanted to share briefly what a couple of other grantees are doing. If you can take me to those slides Matt and the next one.

You know, I realized the majority of grantees probably don't think of themselves as working with homeless fathers although I think a lot of you when you do think about it probably are working with guys who have either been homeless or are on the verge of being homeless, you know.

So I just wanted to highlight a couple of things that have been going on. So Resource Incorporated in Minneapolis - they have their dads help out at two different homeless shelters once a month. And you see that quote there from FBO, (Barbara Spore).

What it does is it really - it creates a growth opportunity for the dads. You know, they get not just go and help out but they also get to share some of what they've been learning and how they've been growing as dads. And also, you know, it's a way to (fresh) recruit some more dads into that program.

So you see the content information there for (Sherry Grant) and if you do want to find out more about what they've been doing. And then the next slide Matt. And then this is just - I really encourage you to go to this Web site at the bottom of the page there.

This is a publication from the Children's Institute in Los Angeles. They are one of the community access grantees. And in that capacity they make sub grants to other folk in the community.

And one of those sub grants went to the Weingart Center who as you see here, have been working with homeless families since 1983. But one of the things that they really realized when they first got this grant is they had not been working with men as fathers.

So it really did - it created for them a real change in their service paradigm. We can go to the next slide Matt. And here there are just a few quotes from that publication which is a - the publication is a - there's a full chapter in there where they talk about their work with homeless fathers.

But the real challenge for them was that they had to get the staff onboard with this. And this came up I think in everyone's presentation in one way or another.

But the fact that if you're working with families, be it homeless families or be it any other family situation too often when we talk to mothers we ask are you a parent. Because we realize that's an immediate need whereas with men we don't do that. And the next slide.

And this is just one of the things that the Weingart Association shared as a lesson for them that in working with men around how they might reconnect with their kids even if it seems hard, just to be consistent.

And even if it's just a case of writing a letter, even if your children aren't going to receive those letters yet perhaps you'll have a chance to present the letters to them at a later time. And the next slide Matt.

And this is just one story that I took out of that article that I think sums up a lot of the work that we do be it with homeless fathers or other fathers who may not be connected with their kids. But as you see here this dad had not been in touch with his teenage son for eight years.

Another father in the program helped him get in touch with his son and they had a phone conversation. And the son was in Chicago. And when they talked he told his dad that he'd been thinking of him every day. So when the father came back into group and told this story he broke down in tears.

And as we know, you know, that is one of the breakthrough moments that happens in these father groups all the time. But he said he always believed that my son was better off without me. He had no idea how much his son had actually missed him.

So I think it just underlines that we can't overestimate the role of fathers. We can't overestimate the role of fathers. We can't overestimate the impact - the absence or presence in the lives of our children. And the next slide Matt.

And this is just a closing quote from that chapter where they really encourage other organizations to think about changing their service paradigms. And again I think that's work where you as practitioners can encourage other people to do this.

You know, just to reach out to various organizations in the community and encourage them to take a look at how they're engaging with fathers. So on that note, let me just pose a couple of questions to the presenters.

If I could start with you Eileen, you mentioned, you know, a lot of the work you've done to connect to other organizations in the community. I'm just wondering if you could perhaps talk about that for a minute or two.

I'm thinking in particular about the public housing approach and the judges. How do you go about doing that?

Eileen Hayes: Well partly with the judges I think the most important thing has been being an organization that is solid and that takes our results very seriously. So when judges - oftentimes when people are paroled or referred to the court system the judge decides where that person goes to stay for his treatment.

And as we've built relationships with judges because we've had good completion rates then that has increased over time. Judges rely on us for a placement for fathers and for men and women in general who are homeless or who are coming out of prison.

Because of having our solid reputation we also make sure that when somebody has to go to court that we show up with them. It really makes a difference when a man or a woman shows up with a case manager from our organization.

We've done our homework, we bring records of their yearend tests. We bring letters that show what they're doing in our program. We work closely with probation and parole from the time that a father gets here so that probation and parole sees us as a resource and as a partner in keeping the father on track.

So because of those relationships we then are often called upon to offer our advice in terms of whether or not a father is ready for visitation. And if so, we help shape what that visitation is going to be looking like.

And in terms of the housing, because we are working on a reentry taskforce we have the mayor support that the test scores are really important to look at the number of men coming home from prison who are coming back into our communities.

And we looked at what was available in terms of housing. There's very little available for men coming back from prison who are homeless, especially when they have certain charges that prohibit them from going home to their families.

And there is, you know, there is an intentionality not to discharge people to the streets. So basically what we did was we designed a pilot that said we want to have you consider having fathers come back and we understand that there is real fear about why you don't want them in your housing.

But if we provide the supportive services and we accept the whole family as part of that support service. Because very often the family members that are embracing the father coming home really needs support because he's shifting the whole dynamic of what's going on in that household when he comes back.

And really look at the whole family and how to integrate the father back into the family. We have begun to - and again this is a pilot that we're just beginning to move on. We were hoping to get second chance - second act funding from criminal justice which we didn't get.

So we're doing it sort of by one housing authority at a time.

Nigel Vann: Great. Thank you. We had one question come in about going out, reaching the streets. Asking if there is any suggested locations where one should start. Can you address that Steve?

Steve Nordseth: Yeah, absolutely. I think what you really ought to start with is thinking about who exactly you want to find.

Because, you know, while homeless individuals as a category are their own culture there are actually many different subcultures within homeless folks whether it's adults or it's gang impacted homeless kids or it's, you know, those actual street gutter punk style homeless kids.

That might be the kind of more typical idea when you think about homeless youth. There are all kinds of different folks. So depending on who you're outreaching to you'll want to adjust your technique.

The easiest way is to go to homeless service providers such as shelters or soup kitchens where folks can get a meal because it's a guaranteed bang for the buck. You're going to meet the most homeless folks there.

If you're really doing street outreach and you want to actually take it to the homeless folks where they're at you're going to want to look at main parks and areas where homeless folks will frequent.

You're going to look at encampments that are usually in secluded places either behind buildings, foreclosed buildings, along riverbeds is where we have a lot of homeless encampments here.

You just want to take into consideration that folks within places like homeless encampments and so forth are going to be much harder to engage than somebody who is already linked into services like a shelter.

When you go into a shelter you go in knowing that those folks are willing to receive services and that they maybe more easily engaged in terms of getting them into programming like parenting stuff.

When you're working with folks who are on the streets they may or may not be into actually receiving services or getting into some type of program that helps with parenting stuff. So I think it really comes down to networking with the homeless agencies, the ones who specialize in homeless folks in your area.

Ask them where you can find the homeless folks or if maybe you can tag along with them when they do outreach and just handout information. That's what a lot of the agencies do here with delimiting dollars is we team up with other outreach workers, we go out together.

And that way there's just more info out there on the street and you get to see different locations that you might not have thought about. So that's what I would suggest.

Nigel Vann: Thanks. Yeah and I think obviously as well from what you've been saying, you know, a lot of how you get your youth is obviously word of mouth from the fact that the youth sort of in the program do share that information. Yeah. Mike, let me ask you a question.

I know there is this federal stimulus package for the homeless prevention and rapid rehousing program. I just wonder is there a resource perhaps that folks might go to, perhaps to the HUD Web site where they could share any information with folks that they might be working with?

Would you like to just address that for a minute?

Michael Farrell: Certainly Nigel. The - more commonly referred to as HPRP, Homeless Prevention and Rapid Rehousing, is a part of the federal stimulus program. And the dollars used for that program are targeted to two specific groups - prevention of homelessness, you know, for individuals and families and rapid rehousing.

And what we mean by that is placing people back into housing who have experienced homelessness, as quickly as possible.

And oftentimes, the individuals who can most benefit from this are those who have lost employment and have been rehired and now find themselves financially strapped and in need of a short term cash assistance to really get back on their feet in terms of paying first month's rent and security deposits.

And sometimes, you know, rents, you know, for two, three or four more months. But the assistance is short term and not indefinite. With that said, those stimulus dollars are available at two varying degrees around the country.

And so in the Washington, DC metropolitan areas a lot of the dollars have really been used towards for prevention of homelessness as opposed to the rapid rehousing.

And earlier in my presentation, I talked about the homeless count, both the count that was done on a longitudinal basis by HUD but as well as the point in time count.

And in this year's point in time count we noted that there was no appreciable increase in the homelessness in the Washington, DC area.

And a lot of that is attributed to the HPRP funds which have been used to either prevent people from becoming homeless or helping them to become rehoused as quickly as possible.

As it relates to the fatherhood initiative, certainly when you look at homeless families and in particular and maybe to a lesser extent, homeless individuals or homeless men, certainly these funds could, you know, be utilized, you know, to help individuals to become housed and therefore either reunify a family or keep the family from sliding deeper into poverty and/or homelessness.

Nigel Vann: Okay. Well thank you very much. Yeah. And, you know, I did do a little bit of looking around on the Web site this morning and the housing and urban - the Department of Housing and Urban Development - there is a Web site you might want to go to.

It's HUD H-R-E, so H-U-D-H-R-E dot info and that gives you information on the Housing and Urban Development Homelessness Research Exchange. And you can also of course get in touch with me or with Michael or Eileen and we can give you a bit more information on that if you're interested.

I do need to take us to our closing survey. But just one more quick question that came in. Someone was asking if any of the programs have active collaborations with the state child support program.

I do know that the Weingart Association in Los Angeles had a very good collaboration with their local county office. And they actually reported that in most situations the county was able to help to reduce or even eliminate some of the arrears.

And they had people come in and make presentations which is obviously, you know, a good model for all fatherhood programs. I think that's been a part of the program at Amos House right Eileen?

Eileen Hayes: Yeah. We've had a lot of informational sessions where people come in and talk about obligations. And we have free legal clinics once a month just to talk in general about whatever the fathers or any of our clients need help with.

Nigel Vann: Great. Yeah. And, you know, so again I hope that these presentations really help you think a little bit about how you might reach out to individual homeless fathers but also how just in terms of sustaining your program and moving forward you might think a little bit more broadly perhaps about some of those folk out in the community who you could partner with to help fathers and families.

So with that let me go to Matt for our survey question and I'll just come back for a few closing remarks.

Matt Crews: Great folks. We're going to make these really quick, probably about 30 seconds to answer reach one. The first question is I have a better understanding of the scope of homelessness and the impact on fathers and families.

You have five options to your left and there is a no vote at the bottom of the screen. I'll hold for a moment. All right, great, let's move to the next one. The advice and suggestions of ways to work with homeless youth and fathers was helpful.

All right. The third question - the suggestions of ways to work with other community agencies to help homeless fathers with families were helpful. And lastly, in general I received information that I can use in my work with fathers.

And for those of you that have joined us only through the audio telephone line of course you can't answer the poll questions but we would appreciate any feedback that you want to provide on the Webinar. You can email [Info@Fatherhood.gov](mailto:Info@Fatherhood.gov).

And I think everybody's answered. I'll give it back to Nigel. Thank you.

Nigel Vann: Okay. Thank you very much, Matt. Yeah. And thanks for pointing out as well that not kind of everyone is able to actually access the online thing so yeah, we certainly appreciate those of you who can only join online - I mean on the phone.

And also of course I appreciate everyone who's spent their time to be with us here and in particular our three presenters. Thank you very much to Michael, Eileen and Steve.

And let me just say that our next scheduled Webinar which will be the final one of the calendar year, is going to be on Tuesday, November 16. And at that time we'll be addressing issues of how to encourage healthy marriage skills as a key part of being a responsible father.

And then we'll be working with them - the operative family systems to decide on the topics for 2011. And I do encourage you, if there's a topic you'd like to see in a Webinar or if there's a topic that you would like to present on a Webinar please do let me know.

And, you know, let me know in the next week or two and I can try and get that on the schedule. But let me know at any time. So again, thank you very much to you all and thank you very much to the presenters and have a good rest of the day.

Eileen Hayes: Thank you.

Michael Farrell: Thank you.

Steve Nordseth: I already did. Thank you.

Operator: And this concludes today's conference. We thank you for your participation.

END