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Office of Family Assistance

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NRFC Technical Assistance Webinar



“Working with Dads Prenatally and Early Years:
Encouraging Early Bonding and Addressing Health and Safety Issues”

Moderator: Nigel Vann, NRFC Director of Training and Technical Assistance

Presenters:

Bernie Dorsey, Conscious Fathering Coordinator, Parent Trust for Washington Children, Seattle, WA

Rebecca Graham, Director of Healthcare Programming, National Fatherhood Initiative, Pittsburgh, PA

Deondre Bedgood, Training & Technical Assistance Coordinator, Circle of Parents, Chicago, IL

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Webinar Transcription (provided by Global Crossing)

Operator: Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for standing by and welcome to the National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse Technical Assistance webinar. Through the presentation participants will be on a listen only mode.

If at any time during the conference you need to reach an operator, please press Star 0. As a reminder this conference is being recorded Tuesday, July 28, 2009. I would now like to turn the conference over to Mr. Nigel Vann, Senior Director of Training and Technical Assistance. Please go ahead sir.

Nigel Vann: Thank you very much Carlos and welcome everybody, good morning, good afternoon depending on where you are. Today's webinar as you see on the screen is going to focus on working with dad's prenatally and during the early years.

Just a couple of general things I wanted to say and then I'm going to introduce the webinar and then I'm going to forward it to Matt Crews just to remind you how to ask questions as the presenters go forward.

Take Time to Be a Dad Today



This is totally unrelated to the webinar but I did notice a news story a few days ago that I thought was worth mentioning just in terms of, I know there's some Healthy Marriage grantees on the line, but particularly for the Fatherhood grantees.

This has to do with child support, and you know with the increase in the number of people receiving unemployment benefits, many states have seen big increases this year in the amount of money that's being drawn from unemployment checks to cover child support obligations.

So it just struck me that for those of you who are working with the non-custodial dads with child support orders, it might be a good idea to reminding them if they lose their job they can request a modification of the amount of their child support order because if they don't request the modification, that amount stays the same irrespective of current income. And I know a lot of guys get themselves in a bind that way.

So I just wanted to say that briefly. Also as an announcement we won't be having a webinar in August because of OFA Grantee conference where we look forward to seeing as many of you, well Project Directors and Evaluators who will be there.

In September the webinar is going to focus on working with step families and also fathers in multiple partner fertility situations, i.e. dad who may have biological or step children living with them but also biological children in other households.

So I just like to a general invitation to any of you who might be doing work in those areas and might be interested in participating in that webinar as a presenter, please let me know.

So today, we often talk about how hard it can be to recruit fathers for fatherhood programs. One of the key times that you can really get your hand around this I think is to try to find dads or men at a time when they've got concerns or issues that your program can help them with. So during pregnancy is certainly one of those times.

Most men at that time are going to have numerous questions and concerns even if we don't always acknowledge that. Most are worried about things like, you know, how



our partner is going to change during pregnancy. What the birth is like. What's going to happen after that? So, you know it's an idea time to approach a dad when he's worrying about those things.

Likewise throughout the first few years of our child's life, he or she is changing so rapidly that it can hard to keep up and so men do have questions. We just need as practitioners to create an environment where we can help them find answers and support.

A lot of dads still tend to think that the mother plays the primary parenting role during the early years. You know a lot of us think that we can wait until our kid is old enough to catch or hit a ball or even kick a ball before we start getting really engaged. The tragedy then can be that we may have missed the opportunity for some really key early bonding which is one of the things we're really going focus on today.

You know we really need mothers to help dads be more involved as well. We need to help, we need mom's help, it be okay for dad to change the diaper, bath the baby, read the bed time story, etcetera, etcetera. And you know that more traditional for the male, female separation of roles has certainly been true for previous generations. It was certainly true for my dad's generation.

I know as you watch me being fairly closely involved with my son from birth on, he often expressed the wish that he had been more involved when I was young. But I think things are changing. If there is any golf fans out there, you've probably heard the story of the young English golfer in last week's British Open.

His wife was due to go into labor at any time and he announced that he was going to leave the tournament no matter if he was in the position to win or not which caused great debate in the British Press and I think probably a little bit over here too.

Ultimately to me what that says is men's attitudes are changing. We do want to be more involved, we just don't always know how. So one of the jobs for fatherhood practitioners is to help dad's be more involved and to encourage mom's to help dads be more involved.

So that's going to be the focus of our presentation today to help us think about that. So before I move on to introduce our first presenter, let me throw this to Matt Crews who is going to just remind you how to ask questions using the Q&A button.

Matt Crews:

All right, thank you Nigel. I just want to quickly go over how you can ask a question. If you have a question that comes up during any of our presentations today, you can send them to us via the live meeting tool. And when you do this you'll get a standard response back to let you know that we've gotten your questions. And it will also free up for you to ask a second question.

So please don't hold back if there is anything that you would like for us to present. And at the end of all the presentations today, we'll get back together with all of the presenters and pose these questions. If a question is not addressed we will do so afterwards as a follow up.

But please send as many as you have and here is how you ask a question. If you look at the top of your Toolbar, you should see a button that says Q&A. Simply click on the button, type in your question and hit Ask. You can also use this if a presenter is too quiet or if you didn't catch something, you can also feel free to send it to us.

And real quick, just a couple of other technical issues aside from the question and answer tool. If you'd like to take your presentation to full screen, if the current format is a little too small or perhaps your viewing the presentation with more than one person, hit the F5 button on your keyboard and that will take the presentation full screen.

And if you hit the F5 button a second time or the Escape button that will take you down to the original format. You have to be in the original format in order to ask a question. But after you've asked that question, you can then go back to the full screen.

And again, if you're interested in the slides from the presentations today, feel free to send us an email at info@fatherhood.gov and we'll get those to you. So thank you all for participating and I'll turn it back over to Nigel.



Nigel Vann:

Thank you very much Matt. And you know as Matt said I believe some people may have had problems in downloading the slides for this presentation, so if you didn't get the slides, you know you can wait they will be posted on the clearinghouse website in a month or so but if you wanted to get them earlier, just email us and we will get those back out to you. There's also a, there was a handout that Becky Graham had wanted me to share with you so we may be sending that to you as well.

So for our presentation today, you see the names on the screen of the three presenters. There's actually quite a unique connection between the three of them. Deondre Bedgood as you see works with Circle of Parents. They are an organization that has one of the OFA Community Access Grants which means they've got funds to sub grant to other organizations. And they're doing that with organizations in 10 to 15 states with (unintelligible) of infants and toddlers.

And they use Bernie Dorsey's Conscience Fathering Program to work with dads prenatally in their various sites and they also contract with the National Fatherhood Initiative who Becky Graham works for and they contract with NFI for series of father friendliness training sessions for the various partner organizations involved in the project in each of the states.

So we've got a fairly unique connection here (we'll be hearing from) some of the (ins and outs) of that as we hear from the presenters. One of the great pleasures for me in doing this work has always been the people you meet doing the work. I used to say, you know I'd be going to the airport again and I'm thinking why am I going to the airport again, I should be staying, this was when my son was young, I should be staying at home being a dad but I did struggle with that when he was younger.

But going out and meeting people like you guys out on the phone here doing this work, you know it always sort of bring you to life and just to see the passion that people bring to the work and the impact that you all have on people's lives, it certainly makes it all worthwhile.

So our first presenter, Bernie Dorsey is certainly someone who is given me cause to feel like that over the years. Bernie is the Conscience Fathering Coordinator with the Parent Trust for Washington Children in Seattle, Washington. You see his picture on

the screen there. We have had a few of you ask why we don't put the pictures of the presenters up so for this webinar, for the first time we do have everybody's pictures for you to see. So you can get a sense of who's talking to you if you haven't had the opportunity to meet them.

I first met Bernie Dorsey and we were talking about this the other day to figure out when it was. It was 1999 I believe at a state conference in Washington. And one of the things I remember about that is he invited me to have a ride in his boat after the conference and unfortunately I didn't have the time to do that. And the next time I met him he had sold the boat. So, I'm still waiting for that Bernie.

But I do remember then and, you know and various opportunity since then have been very impressed with (Bernie's) grasp of this fatherhood work in general and since he started doing this work prenatally with fathers in hospital in the Seattle area he's gone on to serve over 10,000 expectant fathers in the Seattle area over the last 11 years which is quite an achievement.

He's also been a guest speaker at numerous statewide and national workshops. He sits on the Community Advisory Committee for the University of Washington's Center on Infant Mental Health, the national advisory board for the Children's Bureau for the Children's Bureau Quality Improvement Center on Early Childhood.

He's also received a number of Fatherhood awards. And in 2005, he co-created Washington State's Keep Kids Safe Vehicle license plate program. And the revenue from that from the sale of those plates has been used to directly support community based programs in Washington State. And he's also been serving for the last couple of years on the local school board which keeps him very busy.

So with no further a due let me turn it over to Bernie Dorsey to tell us about ways we can engage fathers prenatally. Bernie?

Bernie Dorsey: Thank you very much Nigel. You know so much of this work has been just seeing who lasts. Who hangs in there? Who really perseveres? And it's always fun to connect with people from around the country that we've intersected with at some

point in time over the years. So I appreciate the opportunity to contribute and I'm really honored that you would invite me to do so.

I've got 20 minutes here and I'm going to really try to move as quickly as I can to get onto the other presenters also in hopes that we can really convey this big message. And to me this big message is that we have to begin to focus more of our attention on what I call the Golden Moment.

And that golden moment is when a man really begins his entry into fatherhood because it's that moment when they're most receptive to what it is we're trying to help them with.

Okay, next slide please. And a lot of times in kind of talking about fatherhood issues in general I like to frame the conversation maybe in ways that we haven't necessarily thought about. And some of those ways really involve taking the information we already know and just looking at it differently. And one of the things that are always amazing to me is that when you look at the national average of births where there's a man involved, even using conservative numbers, 94% of the time there's a man involved in conception. And the other 6% obviously there has to be a male gene in there somewhere.

So when you look at the fact that 94% of the births in our country are conceived naturally, and that there is a dad involved, I think we really need to begin to kind of break down this idea that we don't where the dad is, we don't think he wants to be involved. We can't find him. Because if you look at the 4.3 million births in our country last year according to the National Center on Health Statistics as of March of this year, these numbers from 2007 really indicate that we've got about four million dads out there becoming new dads every year.

And so I guess that should really, let me retract that last statement, 4 million dads doesn't necessarily indicate that they're brand spanking first time dads. Those are the men that we want to concentrate on because that's as far up stream as we can really get.



We need to rework the definition of fathering. Because as it is right now, working with men as Nigel mentioned at the beginning, the attitudes of the fathers is really changing and what we're seeing a lot of is that our attitude has not caught up with their behavior.

And so part of that is a response to this new behavior. And in response to it think we need to look at their values, maybe in different ways. I often ask people in conversations what are the top three definitions or a part of a definition they would use for mothering? And typically that response usually will generate first and foremost mothers care and nurture their children.

And the second thing is that they keep their children safe. And that the third thing is that they provide financially. When you ask for a typical definition of what a father's role should be, number one usually is providing financially. Number two may be keep their children safe and number three may be caring and nurturing for their children.

I would argue that if we're really going to redefine fathering that we need to shift that so that those two definitions are in line. So that whether you're a mother or a father, your number one job is to care for and nurture your child. And your number two job is to keep those children safe. And number three but not necessarily less important, is to provide financially for them.

And as I talk of these scenarios I recognize that they do not apply universally amongst every population that we serve all across the country. But I think often times we try to focus on the men that are least likely to want to be positive influences. And I suppose there's a part of me that really feels as though we walk often times around the men that do want to be the positive influence.

But I believe by raising the level of the lake and increasing the capacity of those men standing right in front of us, we will in turn affect those men that may be are not as ready to be involved in their children in a positive way.

But we can't necessarily - we can't encourage a man to be a caring and nurturing father if we don't recognize a few basic things. And we can't, in recognizing those things we also need to be responsible in preparing him for that role. And that's why

we focus on dads prenatally because we recognize we can teach them a few skills that really begin to kind of change this trajectory of fatherhood as I mentioned at the top of the slide. Its one of the ways that I really look at the whole issue is if we capture this man's attention at the golden moment, and if we are able to convey some basic set of skills to him then I believe we have changed his trajectory.

Next slide please. One of the interesting things when you look at new fathers is what's really normal for new dads? And I know we all are interested in what is the evidence say? And mathematical policy research did a study of early Head start fathers in May of 2003. And the interesting thing to me was that these numbers don't necessarily reflect our attitude often times. Or at least the attitude of some practitioners that I've work with over the years.

And that is that for these early head start fathers, that 86% of them were at the birth of their child. Now they didn't designate whether that was married or unmarried. These were just 86% of the early head start fathers. And that also 95% of them were present at the hospital after the birth.

The thing that I have discovered over the last 11 years, that they have little or no experience with babies. And that throughout this process during the pregnancy, during maternal child care, during maternity services, during women and infant and children services, they have a real struggle for relevance.

And just the example of the terminology that I just used in regards to pregnancy and early parenthood, I think it to me that's pretty good reason as to why they would feel that way. Why they would struggle for relevance.

So if we can get an opportunity to work with them and being to kind of shift their image, their personal definition, then I believe that's the moment that we'd be irresponsible if we didn't concentrate on at least capturing.

I've had discussion over the years with different programs and agencies I've work with around father involvement and father engagement and I'm sure many of you have had also. And one of the ways that I like to kind of frame those conversations is to look at these statistics in front of you right now and say, wait a minute I think we



really need to own the fact that if we're trying to involve a father of a toddler, then my contention would be that we're not trying to involve him, we're trying to re involve him.

Because the majority of them were right there in front of us at this golden moment and we really kind of failed to take advantage of that opportunity. And as I make these comments during my part of the presentation, I just want to say that I think it's really important that people understand that I am not about saying we've been doing this wrong or we've been doing that wrong. What I am saying is that I believe we need to evolve our definitions of how we view parents so that they in turn will evolve their definitions and the way that they view themselves.

If we don't begin to really acknowledge the fact and I go out on a limb sometimes when I say this, but when we don't begin to really acknowledge the fact that fathers are just as important as mothers, then we'll never see a long term shift in the way that we deal with parents and consequently the way that we begin their parenthood and how that parenthood will ultimately affect the welfare of their own children.

Next slide please. One of the interesting things that we discovered over the years in presenting the Conscience Fathering Program is that 80% of the men that we've worked with and as Nigel mentioned its now over 10,000 men in just the Seattle area, that 80% of these men have no significant experience with a baby six months or younger.

And so for instance if I ask this group of 10 men who has this experience and two of them raise their hands saying, yes I've had experience with a baby six months or younger maybe it was my niece or my nephew or maybe I was able to borrow my neighbor's child until they got hard and then I was able to give tem back.

And if I were to ask them, okay were you ever alone with that baby? Then one of those two hands comes down. So really now you've got 90% of men on the eve of fatherhood that have no significant experience with a baby six months or younger while they were alone.

And also that 60% of these men have either a negative or non existent model for their own fathering and this is a very unscientific kind of a survey poll question that I

used to do years ago when I started the program and quite frankly I stopped doing it because it was defeating to me.

And that is if I've got this room of ten men and I ask these ten men how many of you are here to learn about being a new dad just because you want to be exactly like your father? He was such a role model that you want to walk in his footsteps? Of these ten men I'll see four hands come up. They want to be just like dear ole dad, he was a great model, he was around, he was involved.

If I ask the next question being how many of you are here because you don't want to be anything like your own father, then I'll see another four hands come up. These men have a desire to learn to define their fatherhood exactly opposite of the way that it was model for them.

And the remaining two men in the room, never shared a significant relationship with their won fathers. So they have literally no role model other then maybe what society told him about fathers and fathering.

And I think we all can acknowledge that when you look at the images portrayed around fatherhood in the media and I know the National Fatherhood Initiative did some wonderful work around raising our awareness of how men are portrayed in the media that is pretty easy to see that is you have a young boy or even a young girl in a room watching the television all alone and they see how fathers are portrayed in that media, and they don't have an example to compare it to, how could they not build that expectation of their own adulthood if they choose to have a family?

And then the final thing that is always interesting to me when we're looking at a class full of new dads is how many of them have never actually even held a baby before. And 10% is another kind of a conservative number. I think the 10% that raises their hand in that room are usually the ones that have overcome a little bit of self consciousness and are really willing with in the first ten minutes of the class to acknowledge what they don't know and do so proudly.

My sense is there is probably another couple of guys in that room who wont admit the fact that they've never held a baby before. Next slide please.



The way that we present the program is to really frame it in a way that we as men, very few of us have any experience, significant experience around caring for brand spanking new babies. And it's not capable of learning it, it's typically that no body has sat us down and talked with us about it and done so in a way that's dignified and respectful.

I have to confess that it kind of drives me a little crazy sometimes when I see new information published for fathers that is really good information, that is substantial information and can be of great benefit to men, but it's framed in a way that's demeaning.

And so they take what should be an honored role that needs some work around the capacity and ability to fulfill that role and they convey it in a way that maybe it's about a auto car manual or some other form that they think is guy speak which is certainly going to communicate to some men but is it really going to raise the level of the lake around how we view fathering and value the role of fathers?

One of the things that we also look at in the program itself specifically is we like to give men an opportunity to kind of frame their behavior with the child in ways that will dictate their responses to things.

And one of the things that I came up with many years ago in researching and putting the program together was the idea that when you look at the majority of child development information and baby care and parenting, most of the good information out there really advocates for three basic tenants and that is that parents, not just mothers, not just fathers but parent that they practice consistent predictable and reliable behavior with their own children.

So when we talk to men about learning their baby's five basic needs we talk to them about how you should do that in a consistent, predictable and reliable way because literally from the first hour of your child's life they are beginning to learn how they can count on their father. How will my father respond to me when I need something?



Learning their baby's five basic needs is a way that we've taken baby care, new born baby care and we've really disseminated it down to raising a man's competence in caring for his baby's five basic needs, ultimately is going to increase his confidence in his ability to take care of those needs.

So we walk them through and its, sometime I have to say, its kind of amusing to watch a room full of men, and we have there's one class in downtown Seattle where we've been for eight years and we typically have between 25 and 30 guys in this class.

And to look around the room and see 30 guys holding a little plastic baby doll simulating holding the baby is really sometimes quite comical especially once they get used to it and they get comfortable with it. And how almost immediately their preference is to actually hold that doll rather than put the doll down.

But their basic needs that they learn through us is how to feed their baby. And specifically one of the things that we really stress quite hard is that we want the guys to understand that breast feeding is what's best for their child and for the mother of their child and that the number one predictor of their baby and mom's success is the support and encouragement of the father.

So we teach them how to be supportive and encouraging of mom, for mom and baby while they are learning the technique they need to breast feed. We also acknowledge that breast feeding is the only thing they cannot do. So we talk to them about if or when it becomes a necessity to bottle feed the baby. And a lot of what we talk about is how the baby communicates specifically how the baby communicates their hunger.

We want these men to learn what are my baby's hunger queue? So that we can teach them to not just to respond to a hungry baby when they cry but to anticipate the need to feed by being able to really concentrate on the subtle cues that a baby gives.

Now my arterial motive here quite frankly is to acknowledge that I want these men concentrating so hard and being so conscience if you will of what their baby's behavior is that my arterial motive is that I know their bonding is going off the charts at this point.

They think they're concentrating on hunger cues, so the reality of it is these are bonding moments. We teach the men about their baby's need to eat. The baby's need to burp. The baby's need to be cleaned and changed on a regular basis. And we simulate all of these things by working with the dolls and teaching them how this happens and how this plays out.

Also we teach them that the baby needs to rest just like all of us. And how important it is to keep aware of how much rest their baby is collecting and also that they need to rest too so that they can be available and energized if you can use that terms for new parenthood, energized around caring for their baby when their baby needs them.

And then the fifth basic need and Deondre will elaborate a little more on some of the work that we've already discovered in the Circle of Parents Project is that the fifth basic need is that babies need to cry. And that we want men to understand that their crying baby does not indicate that they've done something wrong, it indicates that they need to check and see is my baby crying because they're hungry?

Are they crying because they need to burp? Are they crying because they need their diaper changed? Are the crying because they're tired? And if all those needs have been met, then we encourage out dads to look at some other different ways and we share with them some of these ways to sooth their crying baby.

So by practicing holding and handing off and diapering and burping these dolls, its fascinating to see these men really become engrossed in what is it going to take to care for my baby from the very first breathe?

And acknowledging that my relationship with that child begins at that very first breathe. The key to a lot of this is to really recognize that parenting is about partnership and that their role is not one that should compete with mom but one that should parent in harmony with mom.

And we give them some ideas around how to parent in kind of a harmonious way. I doubt I'm the only one on this call that has to kind of look at the fact that is the competition around new parenting really stemming as much from dads as it is from



moms? Can it be - could you really say that there's competition more from one or the other? I think that probably what happens is that society puts so much pressure on new moms to know all of this stuff whether they do or do not that they feel as though they need to guide dad. That they need to teach dad.

I believe that as we change that dynamic so that fathers come into parenthood with this basic set of skills, they still need to negotiate with mom what outfit the baby is going to wear. What they don't need to be taught by mom how to diaper their own child.

And consequently I believe we change the dynamics of that relationship in a way that creates partnership and not a situation where the father is the assistant and mom ends up creating a definition of motherhood that quite frankly two, three, four years down the road she's not going to want to fulfill. She's going to wonder why he's not helping. Why he's not involved.

Next slide Please. So in my last minute here, I just want to talk real quickly about why I concentrate so hard on these fathering skills. And it's not without a methodology or a belief and my belief is that children are a tremendous catalyst for change.

Only the man, only the person can sustain that change but I've seen people do tremendous lifestyle shifts when it comes to the birth of their child, their first child, their second child. But it's a moment in time where as adults we often will reflect and say what do I need to change in order to be a better model for this child? Be a more responsible care giver?

Sustaining that change really begins to work on the man himself. By moving these men to a strength based perspective, one where we're moving them from being incompetent to confident and from a potential perpetrator of say for instance shaken baby syndrome or neglect or some form of abuse against a very, very young child. We really challenge them to move to advocacy.

So we don't only provide them with the basic skills they'll need to care for their new born baby but we also give them what we call the challenge which is to take those skills, share them with other men and to make sure they understand that their role as



father of this child is to not only acknowledge and meet their baby's needs and anticipate those baby's needs, but also to advocate for their own child's safety.

And not only their own child but every child in their community. I believe that by encouraging these separate streams of thought around fathers, that this first is father of the now. This child can be a tremendous catalyst for this man to work on himself. Maybe he's got issues around substance abuse, alcoholism, employment. Those really are defined in helping this man become a better man so he can be a good father.

The second one is to really concentrate on fathering skills. And that's the part where I think that we can really move the needle is to help men understand not only how to care for their new born baby but also how to care for their toddler. What should I expect out of my nine month old baby?

I've been so involved from their very first breathe, I want to know, what am I going to need to do be involved when they are nine months old, when they're nine years old, when they're nineteen years old.

But by changing these two different parts of his definition, I believe we can begin to kind of shift this needle around responsible fatherhood. And that puts me right at 21 minutes, I think so. There you go Nigel.

Nigel Vann:

Thank you very much Bernie wonderful job. And you know in an ideal world every single dad would get exposed to these kind of messages prior to birth. You know in an ideal world we would have some work in the schools around parenting skills and relationship skills but obviously we're all the way there yet.

But I did like one of the things that Bernie said there that is one of the things that you can do with the dads you work with. You can help them be an advocate for the safety of every child in their community. And that's one of the ways in which we really do sort of have a major impact on our communities I think.

So with that, let me turn to our next presenter who is Becky Graham. Becky is the Director of Healthcare Programming for the National Fatherhood Initiative. She



provides training and technical assistance for organization that are using their fine materials such as Dr. Dad which encourages father child bonding and helps dads build the knowledge and skills to deal with healthcare and safety issues for their infants and toddlers.

It really is a sort of logical next step from what Bernie was just talking about. You know this effort to focus on the kids when they are in their early developmental stages. So I've had the pleasure of working with Becky at the National Fatherhood Initiative over the last 18 months.

And although a lot of the NFI staff work remotely, I'm here in New Mexico, Becky is in Pittsburg and she's a big Steelers fan by the way. I have had the opportunity to spend some face to face time with Becky and she certainly brings great insight to this fatherhood work that we're engaged in.

Her background is in the field of pediatric nursing. She has over 25 years of healthcare experience. She's developed research training programs for nurses with a focus on the pediatric population. She's got an under graduate degree in nursing and a Master's of Science in organizational leadership.

And she's got some great insights to share with us today that I think are really going to help you think about ways in which you can work with dads of infants and toddlers and help them be more involved and more aware dads.

So with that, let me turn it over to Becky Graham.

Becky Graham: Thank you Nigel. And I just want to say it's a pleasure to be here through this technology of webinar. And just to clear the air I am not a father and I have never been a father. I don't plan on being a father but I can say that for a large part of my marriage I did try to wear the pants in the family. And so I was pleased when Nigel gave me this opportunity to talk about encouraging early bonding, addressing health and safety issues.

One of the goals of this webinar is just that, to encourage early bonding. So as I was developing my presentation I asked myself okay so how do I bond with my audience?



I can't see you, I can't touch you, I can't even hear you. But I want to bond with you so that you will sense that I'm a partner in the fatherhood field. That I'm an advocate for you and that I want to offer what ever expertise that I have to help you to succeed.

Many of you are working with fathers who have these same challenges with their children. They can't see them, they can't touch them, and sometimes they can't even hear them. Next slide please.

So what definition of bonding can we build on? Wikipedia defines bonding in three different ways. So if we look at the first one it talks more about the bonding that occurs at the time of birth which is what this particular webinar is focused on. It's also the establishment of a pair bond.

The second one is a close friendship that develops because of an intense experience. Well some of you work with fathers where the first two definitions are applicable but a majority of you are experiencing barriers that create an environment described in these definitions.

Which leads us to the third definition which is commonly used in dentistry. It's a technique or procedure for restoring the discolored or damaged surfaced of the tooth by coating it with a highly durable resident material that adheres to the existing enamel. Next slide please.

So we'll call it Dadistry. Now I'm sure if the phone lines were open I'm sure I would hear a few groans or chuckles but humor me as I pull you into my abstract thinking. Dadistry, a technique or procedure for restoring the damaged surface of a father by equipping him with the skills and tools he needs to adhered to the existing man.

Just to what Bernie had talked about with the percentages of the fathers who wanted to be like their dad, the percentages of fathers who didn't want to be anything like their dad and then the percentage of fathers who had no experience of a role model in their lives. So there are surfaces on our fathers that have some damage to them that we need to help them to build their skills, their confidence to adhere to the existing man.



So how do we help dads to do that? How do we help them to bond with self? Many of you are already doing just that. Next slide.

Well let's talk a little bit, just cover a little bit of the barriers to bonding. These are just some of the more obvious barriers. I'm sure you are too familiar with them. Keeping in mind the new definition of bonding, a technique or procedure for restoring the damage surface of a father by equipping him with the skills and tools he needs to adhere to the existing man.

I'm going to introduce you to stages of adoption. And these stages of adoption are kind of stages that you would use in decision making. But I'm going to introduce you to these and moving, we're going to help move fathers through these stages so it can help you to find new ideas for connecting fathers to the existing man as well as to his children and perhaps to the mother of his children.

So we're going to do this and we have to do it one dad at a time. Next slide. So these are the four stages of adoption. The first one is awareness, I know there is a problem. Interest, I want to find out more. Decisions, I have to do something. And implementation, I am doing whatever.

Each stage has a clear purpose. Every father, every facilitator, every home visitor, every organization is at one of these stages for adopting fatherhood as a vital component to the well being of children.

The goal is to move from one stage to the next. I will provide suggestions on how you might do that with your fathers but keep in mind that there may be organizations that need to move to the next stages as well.

So it may not just be the fathers that your working with that need to move through these stages, it may be your own organization that perhaps is hung up on one area and isn't ready to move to the next. We just have run across that.

Next slide please. And in my work that I do with a lot of organizations we spend time on the ABCDE of critical thinking. And do to our time constraints today, I will just simply mention it and it is the file that Nigel is going to send out to all of you



afterwards it's just a document that talks a little more in depth about these different stages of critical thinking.

So and I want you to just read through them and kind of do your own self analysis and also do your own analysis of your organization to see if they are, if any of these might be tripping you up from moving to the next stage.

So we have the assumptions were we recognize the assumptions, the assumptions are things such as a statement like anyone can get a job if they want one. That can be an assumption. And assumptions like that can bar you from opening up to being more creative in how you reach dads. Some with biases. You know we can have biases where men are insensitive, that's a bias. And if you've got those kinds of conversations going on in your organization it can again, be a barrier.

The closure, analyze the need for closure. Organizations that want to just fix the problem and want to do it quickly and aren't really looking at the underlying causes of the problem in the first place.

Same with data, managing the data. What information are they getting in? And are they analyzing it and organizing it? And then there's always the other factor which are emotional factors and environmental factors. Next slide please.

And another caveat before I dove more into the four stages of adoption. Stay connected to the mission of your organization. This is your compass, so like for example with NFI our mission is to improve the well being of children by increasing the portion of children growing up with involved responsible committed fathers in their lives.

Everything we do we funnel through this mission so that we don't get distracted, although sometimes we do. But you know you can also use this with your dads. So your dads, do your fathers have a mission? Are you helping them to kind of create that picture of what they want for their children? Next slide.



So here are some of the ideas for increasing awareness. But remember awareness is only the first stage. Often times we can expect people to go from awareness to implementation. And nine times out of ten that doesn't happen.

I'm sure we've all experienced that even within our organizations where they've said, well here, here's a class you need to implement, you don't even know that there's an issue with it. And it doesn't happen with our dads that way. And so its and when it does, when we do expect those kinds of leaps, it generally doesn't have any tremendous results.

So a compilation of research concerning fathers and well being of children can be found at NFI Father Facts Additions. So sharing research on how father involvement improves the health outcomes for children is one of the first ways to increase awareness. And I put some ideas here of what you can do to plug that research in.

Next slide please. Here's another, these are areas that people may or may not be aware of that there is a father factor. For example in childhood obesity, if you just tie all these issues in with the fact that having a dad can influence these results in your child.

So it's a hot topic and here's the study that shows the influence of a father on his child's BMI. And I've given you this source of the slide so if you weren't able to open the PDF please, you know contact Matt and he'll send it to you again and you can get where the source is.

But you never know what information your going to share with your dads, with your organization, sorry that's my fax machine going off, with your dads and with your organization that are going to spark someone to become aware that there is an issue in the lack of father involvement. Next slide.

Here are just a couple more studies just for you to have that information. Perhaps some of you were not aware of the strong influence that fathers have in this area. And this is a determinant, what's so fascinating about this study is that the first bullet point here, these children are less likely then non obese children to report that their fathers are physically active. And this determined it was not found for mothers. So



there are some very striking differences between the way children perceive their fathers and the way children perceive their mothers. Not better, not worse, just different. Next slide.

This is a father factor in asthma. Again, these are just points that you can bring out in the awareness phase of moving your dads, your organization into understanding the need for engaging fathers or for the father himself to become engaged. So talking about this study. Next slide.

This is a father factor in childhood injuries. The fact that there's an increase, there's a 20%, a child that grows up in a single parent family has about a 20 to 30% increase of accidents and burns, falls and such. Okay next slide.

So if we move to the next stage of interest. So how do we spark an interest where someone actually wants to learn more? Where a dad wants to learn more or an organization wants to learn more? Or a mother wants to learn more? So we have to talk about these discussions on relationship barriers. Why don't moms want to engage fathers? Why don't moms encourage fathers to participate more? Why are many women choosing singleness and parenthood over marriage?

So, you know its kind of getting into those discussions. Doing a history of fatherhood in America. Again, these are, did you know, and I'm just using that as kind of a - the start for did-you-know articles. For example in the United States, did not send fathers of young children into war until World War II. So fathers who are newly married and had young children, they did not send into war.

Now upon return, a lot of these fathers who had these young families and these new brides were - came home, had seen atrocities, were put back into our inter culture and they were emotionally detached; didn't quite know how to deal with what they had experienced. And because of that we had fathers that were physically present but emotionally detached.

So even from that a seed was planted. Do we need fathers? So again, this is - these are areas in which you can stimulate interest. Next slide please.



Another is talking about that mom is gateway or gatekeeper. There are more and more studies being done on how moms can be a very strong influencer on the father's roles and how he sees himself as a father. So engaging mothers in the conversation is another way to move people to interest. Focus again on the mission.

NFI recently released a free download called Mom is Gateway. And free is always a good name for nonprofit. A good word for non-profits I should say. This is a three-session workshop for moms. And it's really about a paradigm shifter to help moms understand how they can help themselves by encouraging father involvement and by - be encouraging to the fathers with their involvement. And this is a huge area that - of a barrier for getting dads engaged and bonding. Next slide.

Marriage readiness, that's another. We all know the success of a restaurant is location, location, location. Well this is true of fatherhood as well. Providing opportunities to expand interest in these areas. And as we know, marital status is the strongest predictor of father presence or father absence.

So focusing in on curricula or ways in which you can start the discussion of -- why should people get married; or how can people stay married? And just another idea is to talk about personality differences -- kind of similar to what - Meyers-Briggs. Sometimes we can deal much more effectively with a - with barriers when we know who we are and just a self- awareness part of that. Next slide.

So now after we've moved from awareness to interest, now we're moving into decisions. I have to do something. See the - some of the elements of what you can do as far as encouraging your dads to attend prenatal visits, fatherhood workshops.

And then moving down to child development knowledge. Like what Bernie was talking about. Helping a dad to really see his child as a separate entity, but one in which he is a key player in the development of that child. And this area right here can be a crossroads for many fathers. If the journey itself is too much, the father may decide to stop the process. And this is especially true for fathers and newborns.

When a man is aware that he's going to be dad, they can have a tremendous interest and desire to be a good father. They may attend prenatal visits; tend to the needs of

the mother, et cetera. Then he might hit that point where he has - asks himself -- do I have what it takes? This is where organizations need to be prepared to help him answer this question with a yes. That can only be done through collaboration.

One organization cannot meet the needs of every father -- or mother for that fact. And it is in these stages that such programs like Conscious Fathering or - we have a Doctor Dad program which kind of goes to the next step after what Conscious Fathering does.

And this workshop provides fathers with new ways to protect and provide for his child. It's again, concrete confidence building skills that can help fathers to just be able to answer that question -- do I have what it takes -- with a resounding yes. Next slide.

So then after we've - after the dad's able to answer that question with a yes, we can go to implementation where he is -- I am valued; I am capable; I am present; I'm involved responsible; and a committed father. So let's review again. Next slide.

The definitions that I created with the Dadistry technique or procedure for restoring the damaged surface of a father by equipping him with the skills and tools he needs to adhere to the existing man. So what is your organizations doing to restore the damaged surface of a father?

Now, in a way, you know, you don't want to say your - that all dads are damaged. Well mothers - we can say the same for mothers as well. But that we each come with our own life experiences, our own baggage, our own paradigms of how we should move through life and how we can help our children to become contributing members of our culture. And so sometimes we have to remove some of the damage in order to get to that. Next slide.

And so just to recap those stages of adoption, and as you're listening to all the presenters today, if you can kind of see how the collaboration even between our three organizations has helped not only each our organizations individually move to areas of implementation, but we've able to help other organizations along way to do the same. And that - it's - so that to being - it's all about relationships.

And we value our partnership with Circle of Parents and Conscious Fathering as we engage fathers and improve the wellbeing of our nation's children. And thank you for this opportunity.

Nigel Vann:

Well thank you very much Becky. That was a model presentation of how to really present a case and perfectly timed. I take my hat to you. That was wonderful.

I'd like to say that, you know, I think that the sort of key point that Becky's making there is something that I've been saying in various ways as well. And some of you - if - I'm sure some of you heard me say this.

But I do think as Becky's saying, you know, the important work that you all do. It's - it can be framed in these terms -- that what you do once you've got guys engaged; you really do help them do this self reflection; you help the awareness grow so that they can start removing some of that damage. And then you can start providing them with some new schools - some new skills and new tools and end up helping them implement them. And that's exactly what Becky was saying there.

So that was very good presentation Becky. Thank you very much.

So then let's then move on to our final presentation, which is Deondre Bedgood, who is the Training and technical system's Coordinator with the Circle of Parents, and based in Chicago, Illinois.

I don't know Deondre as well as I do Bernie or Becky, but I do feel like I started to get to know him a little bit. We got to talk at one of the recent roundtables. And we've had a few phone conversations in preparation for today's webinar. And one thing I'm certainly sure of now is that on the sites he's working with around the country have got a great resource at their disposal.

He builds on over 20 years experience on volunteering and advocating for physiologically, socially and economically challenged individuals. And now provides training in TA to the local sites in the more than ten states that are in the Circle of Parents grant project. And he's going to be telling us more about that.

He also serves as a mentor in a number of projects for young men and women in the Chicago area.

Prior to his work with Circle of Parents, he worked as the Employment Coordinator for the Lawyer's Committee for Better Housing, and was the Director of Career Services at the Illinois School of Health Careers. He's also been involved with community programs, helping homeless men and pregnant teens.

And earlier in his career he served five years in the U.S. Army. I'm looking at his picture and haven't met him in person. I wonder how he's crammed all that into his life. But he's also got a B.A. in psychology and a certificate in domestic violence and sexual assault. And a substitute teaching certificate. And plans to complete an M.B.A. in the fall of next year.

And before I turn it over to Deondre, let me just remind you to send us some questions. I think we got a couple of questions so far, but please send us some questions for the presenters, which we'll be getting to after Deondre's presentation.

Mr. (Bedgood)?

Deondre Bedgood: All right. Thank you Nigel. Thank you once again for this great opportunity to come and speak on behalf of fathers. Just listening to Becky as she was going through a history, that's something I'd like to engage men. As you said I work across the country overseeing a lot of different programs. And one of the things I really tell them, I tell them my story.

I'm one with - that did not grow up with a father. I didn't have a dad in the home. One of the first in my family to get a degree, advanced degree or anything of that sort to go to college. So there's a lot of things that I see with the men, the challenges that they have that I'd like to share with them and giving them just part of my story that some things are possible.

Just get into it with Circle of Parents. You can go to the next slide for me. With the Circle of Parents, where we collaborate as Becky was just talking about -- and Bernie



-- with the collaboration that we have with NFI and with Parent Trust and with Conscious Fathering. We look at collaborating with a lot of different groups across the states as you see here.

And one of the things that we address is how we can strengthen families and promote child development and enhance involvement responsibility of fathers. And we do this through local home visiting programs through a lot of these different states. For example, Healthy Families America, Parent as Teachers, Healthy Start, Early Head Start and Nurse Family Partnership. So collaboration is one of the key things that we really use and the work that we're actually doing. You go to the next slide.

And here is, as Nigel was saying, some of the grants that have been awards the last couple of years through the 11 states. And something I just will key in within local home visiting programs as I said, and then education and support services are a combination of Conscious Fathering program classes, which is through Parent Trust, Washington Children and Circle of Parents father groups. Go to the next slide.

And the population served. Let's get right into it. We serve young men under 25, unmarried, poor or underemployed, don't have a high school diploma or advanced education. They lack positive role models. They don't understand their role as a father. They don't even understand that they actually have a role. And just lended knowledge of child development.

So - and with many other barriers, as far as domestic violence and things like that as well. And we do provide training and we have a domestic violence consultant that work with us as well. Next slide.

And this is just some little data that I wanted to give everyone just so they can see classes and groups provided -- 406. What we have there as far as 39% in Conscious Fathering classes, 61% Circle of Parents groups. And those are basically open discussion topic-based, dealing with fathers and families.

And then fathers in target population -- and that's expecting dads or fathers of babies under 12 months. So we have served 506.



And the grant year that we work with is 12-month calendar year. And it just shows you the other demographics of married, biological fathers, expecting fathers and so on. Next slide please.

And here I want to get into this a little bit -- Conscious Fathering surveys. One of the things that we do, we do a retrospective survey. And just to keep - just to continue to understand that we're working on the organizational individual, and that's across the states. So a lot of this is best practices that I found throughout the United States.

And one of the things that we have, we have with the Conscious Fathering survey through Parent Trust is where we ask these different questions before they begin to engage. And I'll say -- if the program year started within October, we don't go all the way to the end when they completely finish. It may have been - this survey may have been given to them again around May.

So we see the significant change as the first item -- I feel confident in my skills as a father. Out of 100 men, 87% say they do see that they was improving. And then the change, it would be from a (unintelligible) scale from one to seven. So you'd say 2.83, close to 3, change. But I'd like to jump down to number 6.

And my colleague Bernie really pointed this out real well. And it really hit home even more. So I'll just say enjoy the partnership and collaboration when you have someone you can collaborate on these different things.

I know what steps I can take to calm a crying baby -- 89% said improving out of 102. And then look at the change -- almost 4% more said - so that right there means that we're really doing some work and really stopping child abuse, shaken baby syndrome and other different things. Helping young men deal with the stress factors of having a child. Next slide please.

And so on - as I was stating, we provide help for fathers in the following areas -- knowledge of child development; parenting skills; relationship with the mother of the child; skills and self-management; knowledge of community resources. Next slide please.



Okay. Now we're going to jump into daddy time. And this is something we're looking at -- what are you doing to save time -- as I put up there. And we'll see. Can you really save time when you can - when you began to nurture and care for a child? Next slide.

And point impact of dads. Fathers tend to spend more time in playful physical activity with their children. And that there's research believe that this helps them learn to regulate their emotions and resist the urge to act on aggressive impulses. And that fathers tend to encourage independence and achievement.

And this is just different child games that we have for different aspects of child development. As I heard both my colleagues say -- you know, hold and rock and sing to young babies; take them outside on nice days; talk to or hold and touch your babies; just engage them in many different ways. And the goal is - we always have to let them know the goal is to help them with their coordination and motor skills and recognize this. And these are some of the things as well that dads do not know that they have a role in that, in helping the development of the child. Next slide.

And then the game plan to help dads get involved. And I guess I put game plan on there. When you really dealing with dads I like to put it - it's kind of more in a sports reference or something -- to have a game plan; let's get a strategy; or something like that. Many expectant fathers expecting to be that they're - that they did not need to get involved to - with their child until years later when they could walk, they can talk and they could things such as that they don't have to bond right now.

That - so we really look at really letting them know that they can bond with their partner while she's pregnant. That that is the most important time that they can begin to bond.

How to get involved -- DVDs; videos; send - seek out other mentors; other men that may be around that have children; different groups as Circle of Parents that we have; discuss your concerns, fears, apprehensions about fatherhood -- with your partner as well. And you got to be honest. Willing to communicate.



I think communication is one of the key things. And that's one thing that we have definitely with our - with group meetings is where people can come and share and speak to each other, because communication is one of the greatest things that people can talk things out and see things from different perspectives. Next slide please.

Relationship building. This is definitely key. Relationship building with the mother, with the child. And they - just to say - I was saying your parenting role takes on greater impact starting at birth. Babies understand the difference between the father and a mother. And I always stress to men that you got responsible for everything as well as a parent. The only that you can't, you can't breast feed.

And tell men don't be afraid to get involved. The more times they're around the baby because the more comfortable you become. Pitch in with those tasks that you don't like -- late night feedings; changing the diapers; use bath time as like a special duty or another bonding time where you can play with your child in a bath. And that gives the mother more time for her to do other things that she need to do.

Play with the child in your way. Dads talk different than mothers and mothers talk different, so continue to be who you are as you engage your child. Next slide.

That guy could make mommy happy -- is something I was laughing at. I would say -- okay (Kenny) -- because really how can we really make mommy happy? Take initiative with kids. Some things you - be - not have to be asked to do. Take on a regular chore.

Arrange different date nights. That's something that we see as a classic example as the President look at - due to busy schedules running the country, taking time to have a date night with his wife.

Giver her a night off each week. It may be a night that mom could just stay home or go to the spa or whatever it is that she's not being called on for every moment with the child.

And then reach out to her first. You can always just reach out to her and ask her -- are there different things that you need? There may be times that she feels a little bit down, so you can help the mother out with other parenting duties -- just reaching out to her.

Communicate a bond or fulfilling a wish. That is some things that you don't understand as a father that you want to become better at, and that's something that the mother will appreciate even more.

And then be affectionate. You could definitely be affectionate with the mother, with the child. And even be affectionate in front of your children. Your children love to see affection from their parent. Okay. Next slide.

Okay. And that's - that is - this is our national staff that we have here where we get to provide a big network of different things to our - to all our partners and other people that we collaborate with.

So that is all I have right now.

Nigel Vann: Thank you very much Deondre. So we've got a couple of questions that have come in and I have a couple of other questions that I'd like to pose as well. So - but do let me encourage you to send in some additional questions if you'd like. We do have time to address them.

But the first question that came in was for Bernie. Are you back with us Bernie?

Bernie Dorsey: Yes.

Nigel Vann: Yes. And this says -- although men can't breast feed, are they made aware that if the mother pumps and bottles the milk that they can still contribute to the process?

Bernie Dorsey: Yes, absolutely. And in fact we've talked quite a bit during the feeding discussion. We talked quite a bit about, you know, how mom can actually pump the milk, how the milk can be stored and then how to prepare the bottle.



We begin with the breast feeding part of it mainly because these are in hospital-type settings. And typically, most birthing hospitals or birthing entities now are really wanting to encourage breast-feeding. And so we want to make sure that our - what we're telling the men is in line with what the hospitals are telling them. And so that answers that one.

Nigel Vann: Okay, thanks. Yes, you know, I think my son is now 24. When he was little and I - one of my fond memories - because his mother used to pump the milk. And so I can remember being up in the middle of the night, or in the daytime when she was out, and its a great bonding time when you get to feed them that milk. So we should certainly be talking about that with our dads.

Bernie Dorsey: Yes.

Nigel Vann: A question for you Becky. In terms of the curriculum that you mentioned for the mother's training and encouraged dads to be more involved. Can you say a little bit more about what that is and what some of the activities are to encourage the moms to help with dads be more involved?

Becky Graham: Sure. It's a downloadable module that you can get off of our Web site. It's www.fatherhood.org/modules. And then you can - when you go to that page it will - you'll see Mom as Gateway as one of the modules you can download.

It's a three-session, that talks about like the role of the gatekeeper, as far as defining gate keeping and then doing - there are some activities. It takes about, oh, about an hour, hour-and-a-half to do each of the sessions.

And then the set - and the next session starts with a check in from the last session. And then talking about the mom's problems that stir up gate keeping.

Then the third session is to minimize excessive gatekeeping. And then again, you do a check in from the week before and you develop - then you work on developing new skills in co-parenting. And try new gatekeeping skills. And then you wrap up.

There's some activities with it. It's just a great way to get the conversation going about the fact that there is gatekeeping going on in our culture. And, you know, women are trying to be all things, and it - and we want to hold on and keep as much control as we can so that we can do as much as we can. And it can get us into trouble.

Nigel Vann: So be careful about that, yes.

Becky Graham: Yes.

Nigel Vann: Deondre, I know that the sites you work with, you know, a lot of them are doing home visiting, so I'm sure this is a big issue there. Can you think of any examples of ways in which this has been dealt with in the field?

And how do you get moms to really buy into the fact that it's okay for dads to feed the babies, okay for dads to be more involved?

Deondre Bedgood: Well I have to give a lot of the credit to our Conscious Fathering class as well. Once we get them within Circle of Parents and we can engage them in Conscious Fathering classes, that's where they definitely get to go through a lot of demonstrating how to do different things with lifelike dolls, where they can be - demonstrate -- how to cuddle a baby; how to burp a baby; how to bathe a baby; and have those different building things where they become more comfortable with their skills. And it's about skill building. And it shows the mother there as well.

If we have both of them in class, shows the mother where the dad is participating and really taking ownership and actually doing it.

Nigel Vann: Great. We've actually just had a follow-up question come here which is directly for you Deondre. And this person is asking -- some fathers have reservations about bathing female children and changing their diapers. How can we help this quandary?

Deondre Bedgood: Well I think that goes continue building that trust and building that relationship. The relationship piece is key thing. And to get that father to feel comfortable and let them know that he's a part of that as well. And that's even with the mother.

Address both of them together and get them to just come together and not have a divide saying -- well, if it's a male child you have to change him; if it's a female you have to change it. Just show them they are one on the same equal things.

Nigel Vann: Yes, yes. You know, this is sort of an issue that came out a little bit. I did a session at the recent (Renti) Roundtables on parenting skills, and this came up in terms of adolescent teenage girls. And how the dads stay involved and not sort of shrink away from their daughters as they start changing physically. And I a lot of the answer to that is what you do when they're little. You know, if it's early bonding, that really permits on so many levels the future relationships that dads can have with their kids.

Deondre Bedgood: Yes.

Nigel Vann: So in terms of how we talk to men about these kind of issues - and this is a question for each of you if you'd like to chime in but...What are some ways to, you know, practitioners out in the field there can actually engage guys?

You know, when you're trying to recruit guys for your program, what are some things you could talk about to grab their interest, so they realize that maybe there is something here that will be useful for them in terms of getting ready for parenthood or getting more used to the child development stages their children are going through? So I'll throw that to anybody who'd like to answer.

Becky Graham: I think that - think one of the places to start is to kind of ask them about their own - what they remember themselves. Their own development. Because I know for a lot of the dads that - we use the Doctor Dad program as a re-entry program for - in a lot of the prison systems. And one of things that can happen when the dads are taking this class is they can start to relate some of their experiences, or what they're learning, with their own experiences as a child.

Sometimes dads were - the dads experienced being beaten or - because they weren't - and they realized it was because they weren't feeling well. And they - but their parent reacted in a very adverse way. So sometimes these experiences can come to the surface when they're learning about their own child's development.

And as practitioners, we need to be kind of on the alert that there may be some experience - negative experiences that if - have an opportunity to look at that, they could - it can perpetuate itself into the next generation.

Nigel Vann: Yes, absolutely, yes. Anybody else for their input on ways that you might talk to dads? You know, just to encourage them to come to your program and talk about these kind of things.

Deondre Bedgood: Well this is Deondre. Well Nigel, one of the things that we do with Circle of Parents is we have a mutual self-help support group. And that's just a way of building each other to sharing peer-to-peer leadership and those different things. Where you really get men to come in and engage each other in - as a support group to each other. And a lot of those things can be discussed. Some are directed and some are not directed. It may be open discussion.

And you can just tell them that we're going to come and begin as groups here, and everything that stays within this group be confidential, that we're going to kind of help each other do it. We don't have anybody there that's clinical. No one is there to - going to fix you or anything like that. But this is a time where you can come together and seek out other perspectives and things to help you move along.

Nigel Vann: Absolutely. It's the real magic of what happens in a group program, yes.

Bernie do you have any...

((Crosstalk))

Bernie Dorsey: Well I just - I mean, I really agree. I don't think I could probably add to much of substance on there other than maybe just reiterate that it really does become kind of a trust level. And whether it's in a group setting, in a class setting, when the men get around each other and that dynamic begins to build, then hopefully these types of issues can come up because they're very common men's concern around caring for their female - or their female children is a universal thing.

I mean, it's the elephant in the room that, you know, people really don't recognize that men have to dance through. And it's interesting too because Kyle Pruitt did some work years ago that really discovered the fact the more involved a man was in his infant child's day-to-day care, the less likely any dark side of that relationship would develop later on.

Becky Graham: Yes.

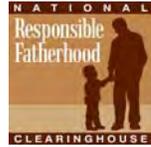
Nigel Vann: Yes. Really, yes. It's just so important. One of the key points I know you make a lot doing these about, you know, the - preventing shaken baby syndrome. Well would you like to just talk a little bit about how you address that with the expectant dads?

Bernie Dorsey: Well one of the things that we really have to acknowledge around shaken baby syndrome -- and I concentrate a lot on that as one of my prevention focuses because it's 100% preventable -- 3/4 of the perpetrators typically are men -- boyfriends; biological fathers; step dads. And often times that shaken baby syndrome really results from the frustration of the caregiver.

And so what we try to do is let men understand that, you know, there are these certain things that could potentially be causing the crying. But there may be a point, and we talk about this in the class that there may be a point no matter how much you love your child where you approach the threshold of character. And when you get to that point you need to be able to say that at this moment I need to put my baby down in a safe spot and walk away.

And, you know, it's really critical that every man that we are exposed to understand that as much as we love babies and we love children, we would never harm a child. But we have to recognize that we all can get to that point. We normalize that frustration. And then encourage - give them some steps to set the baby down and walk away.

And I think the thing that - one of the things that I have to say I'm really very proud of is that, you know, we have taken men from this role, as I mentioned in my presentation, of, you know being potential perpetrators to we walk through with them



how to talk to somebody else about caring for your baby and having a plan - we call it having a plan to deal with frustration.

And so we literally show them, you know, here's how - when you're leaving your baby with somebody, don't say -- hey, don't shake my baby. Because the person can't link to that. But if we teach them to talk to people about, you know, if you get frustrated, set my daughter down, call me, I'll come and we'll get through it together. And you can kind of see that, you know, as I mentioned earlier that, you know, moms or dads, we want to keep our children safe.

And so if we give the - a man the opportunity to really see how - what his role is around keeping his baby safe, then they sit up a little taller in their chair. Their chest kind of pooches out a little bit. And you can just sense that, you know, whether they believe everything that you've said and can envision themselves doing everything that you've talked about up to that moment. When it comes to being an advocate for their child's safety, they definitely can see themselves in that role.

Nigel Vann:

Yes, thank you. Yes. And I've heard Bernie sort of make that point in a number of settings and he uses a personal story as well to emphasize that. You know, it's a good example I think of how you can use personal stories to show that, you know, we're all human, we all have these issues. But then how are we going to deal with them when they come up?

Let me ask a question for either Deondre or Becky. You can, either of, you respond to this. But in terms of the kind of issues that do come up with fathers of young kids, what do you think is one of the prime things that - once they get comfortable in these groups, what is one of the prime things that we need to be thinking about how we're going to help them deal with it?

Deondre Bedgood: Well this is Deondre. Well one of the things that I just speak at many different programs was one of things to do too out of all the states that we currently work out of, I do actually - actual site visits. And one of the things I find just going across the country always is building self-confidence with the men. Building self-confidence in what they're doing and making it - making them continue to understand that it is a great impact. And to just think to continue to look at getting - doing things better.

And it's just the thing of not to - I guess, give them some type of praise for what they're actually doing and that continues to build confidence, because I think confidence is one of the biggest things you could really encourage.

Nigel Vann: Absolutely, yes.

Becky Graham: I agree. I think it's the question. Do I have what it takes? And that's, you know, that's an area that - but I think all our whole culture is struggling with right now. And just defining, you know, what - how do we work this together as mothers and fathers. And helping dads to recognize that, you know, it's - how does our culture define fatherhood and what does it look like and how should they be - see themselves in the context of a small child; so those are challenges for our dads and our organizations.

Nigel Vann: Yes, yes. You know, Becky mentioned this a little bit in terms of working with dads who are incarcerated. But obviously a lot of the folk who are listening to this, they are working with fathers, you know, across the board. Some dads are, you know, in the home with their kids but a lot of dads aren't. So - either because they're incarcerated or just because the kids live with the mom and the dad has some access and visitation but maybe doesn't see the child on a regular basis.

And in terms of addressing these important issues where we want to help men, even if they can't be bonded, we want to help them understand child development and parenting skills for young children. Can any of you sort of address how practitioners can get there, you know, with dads who aren't necessarily seeing their kids on a regular basis?

Deondre Bedgood: Well this is Deondre again. And I was just in Colorado up in Larimer County, and we went to visit one of the prisons there. And it was just amazing as - like I definitely enjoyed the time I do get out and I get to go engage men when I'm not in the national office, just doing other research and sending other things out to different states and local organizations.

But one thing with - then once I engage the men the biggest question I ask them - when I begin to ask them about their child and the things that made them happy. You

saw full different disposition in the men. You saw the man just light up. We saw them light up and that really just gave me another indicator that until you get them to tap into something like that and we can change the trend.

If they can think about their child, what impact it is that them being there away from their child how it makes them feel, because the way they felt, they felt good talking about their child. But if you're not there your child will never know.

So I think one of the things that we can do is always bring it in to the child and the connection with the child and the father, the father and the child. Once we get that, really build that connection there I see things changing. I'm optimistic.

Becky Graham: Yes. And I think that...

Bernie Dorsey: I think...

Becky Graham: You know this is such a - even though, you know, some of us have been doing fatherhood so to speak for a long time now, it's - as far as our culture really grabbing a hold of it and kind of going back to see stages of adoption, yes. I think as a culture we're really only in the first awareness and interest really getting down into what do we do. How do we do this? No one really has cornered the market exactly. It's really one dad at a time.

It's, you know, these fathers attending different workshops. Fathers attending father daughter dances. Just mothers recognizing that the stronghold that they've had in the arena of their children and letting go a little bit more of that. So it's just a very open field for developing new ideas and creative ways to communicate that dads matter.

Nigel Vann: Yes, yes. Any thoughts on that...

Bernie Dorsey: Yes. I agree with that. I was just going to say I totally agree with that Becky.

And I think it's so much of the conversation that's really fascinating to me is that we still perceive in some circles, not in all circles, but there's still this - kind of this perception that if we really encourage dads am I relinquishing something. So am I

really - if I really encourage the dad - if I relinquish some of my control over the baby, then am I really somehow undermining my own importance?

And my hope is that as time goes on we really begin to shift this thinking around the fact that, you know, focusing on the child, acknowledging that children need moms and dad. And the reality is that those two functioning in harmony really increases the enjoyment of both. But that ultimately, father's involvement is good for motherhood, that it's a threat. That's...

Becky Graham: Amen.

Bernie Dorsey: Yes. I really hope that that's a message.

Nigel Vann: Great, yes. And that may actually sort of answer my final question here Bernie. But before we move to just getting the poll questions out, I would like to give each of you the opportunity to just leave us with one final thought. And I'm thinking particularly, you know, in terms of that, you know, if you wanted to convey one important piece of information to an expectant father or the father of a young child, what would that be?

Bernie Dorsey: Well for myself, I think the most important thing that that man needs to understand is that despite his own history, despite whether his role model was good, whether it was bad, whether it was nonexistent that he should never allow that to predetermine his own definition. That he needs to own that definition.

That doesn't mean that he doesn't need to look at repairing those past wounds. But that does mean that he has the opportunity to create his own trajectory.

Nigel Vann: Very well put, yes.

Becky Graham: I would say to just encourage him in knowing that he has what it takes.

Deondre Bedgood: Well, what I would say is be willing to be a father. Be willing to be a father. Be willing to take the steps to make some mistakes, to question yourself, to question others. But be willing to be a father. A father does - is not perfect. A father's not always going

to right. But be willing to be a father. And being willing to be a father is addressing all of those things and being vulnerable.

Nigel Vann: Yes. And just getting ready for the journey and enjoying the journey, yes. Well I thank you all very much.

Let me know - ask Matt to come in and present the poll questions for the audience.

Matt Crews: All right. Thank you very much Nigel. If everybody would just take a quick look at the screen, we have a series of four questions we're going to ask just to see how we're doing.

The first one is -- I have a better understanding of ways to engage with expectant and new dads. And you can choose one of the four - five choices up there or you can click No Vote if you have no vote - or no opinion in this matter. Give everybody a minute. All right.

Second question -- is the advice and suggestions of ways to help fathers increased the understanding of child development and age appropriate parenting was helpful to me? Once again, we have strongly agree, agree, unsure, disagree or strongly disagree and no vote at the bottom. Give everybody one more moment.

All right, Question number 3 -- I received information that I can present to expectant dads and fathers of infant and toddlers. Your five choices again are to your left and the sixth one, no vote, at the bottom. All right.

And lastly, Question number 4 -- in general, the information presented will be helpful to me. You strongly agree, agree, unsure, disagree and strongly disagree. All right.

I thank you all for your participation and I'll throw it back to Nigel now.

Nigel Vann: Okay. Thank you very much Matt.

So let me remind you again that if you did have a problem downloading the PowerPoint slides and you would like access to them before they're posted on the



U.S. Department of Health
and Human Services
Administration for Children
and Families
Office of Family Assistance

NRFC Technical Assistance Webinar Working with Dads Prenatally and Early Years



Web site, please let me or Matt know and we'll arrange to get those to you. And I will be sending out the handout that Becky referenced.

Also let me remind you, no webinar in August because we have the other OFA Grantee conference. And again, I look forward to seeing project directors and evaluators there.

And please come up to me and suggest any ideas for future webinars. We're always hoping to make these as accessible and meaningful for where you're all at with your programs, so we do need that feedback.

And in September the focus is going to be on working with stepfathers, fathers in multiple partner fertility situations as well. And again, if you'd be interested in sharing any work you're doing in that area, please let me know.

So with that let me ask you to give a big round of applause. They can't hear it but please give a big round of applause to our presenters. I think they did a great job today. We'll see you all down the road. Thank you very much.

Operator: We thank you for your participation and ask that you please disconnect your line.

END