



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



## NRFC Webinar Series

# *The Intersection of Parenting and Relationship Skills: Fathers as Teachers and Role Models for their Children*

## Transcript

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**Moderator:**

- Nigel Vann, Product Lead, National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse

**Presenters:**

- Elizabeth "Liz" Karberg, Child Trends, Bethesda, MD
- Shawndi Johnson, Children's Bureau of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA
- Carter Patterson, UIH Family Partners, Trenton, NJ

**Host:** Good day and welcome to the Intersection of Parenting and Relationship Skills Webinar. Today's program is being recorded. At this time, I'd like to turn the webinar over to Nigel Vann. Please go ahead, sir.

**Nigel Vann:** Thank you very much, and welcome, good morning, good afternoon, on this fine summer's day with wherever you are joining us from. Again, this is the National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse Webinar, "The Intersection of Parenting and Relationship Skills: Fathers as Teachers and Role Models for their Children." It's quite a mouthful, but I think it's an important topic.

We've done webinars before on parenting skills and done webinars on relationship skills, but we've never talked about the two together, so I think today is going to be an interesting conversation, and first of all for those of you who haven't joined us for a recent webinar, let me just say a little bit about what you're seeing on your screen. You'll see there's a chat box on the left, and we certainly welcome you to and talk to each other in the chat box if you have a question for the presenters which we'll get to at the end of the webinar, and if we don't get to all the questions, we always try and post responses as much as we can afterwards, and you can put those questions in the "ask a question" box in the bottom right-hand corner.

Next to that box you'll see some downloadable resources. You can download today's slides as a PDF file. You can also download presenter bios and we have a helpful resources document that you may find helpful, and then there's various web links in the bottom left-hand corner there. You can see web links for each of our presenter's organizations and Twitter and Facebook as well as email for the Fatherhood Clearinghouse. As the operator said the webinar is being recorded, and the recording of transcript and all presentation materials will be posted on our website in the next few weeks, and so we always encourage you to check back and review there, and you can also find recordings and the materials from all our previous webinars at [fatherhood.gov/webinars](http://fatherhood.gov/webinars).

So, let me just move this on to the next slide and it's going to give you a quick overview of the National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse. Again, we're always surprised how many times we get first time people joining us, so if you are joining us for the first time and haven't heard so much about the Clearinghouse, we are funded by the Office of Family Assistance, who have been funding this Clearinghouse and various Responsible Fatherhood and Healthy Marriage programs since 2006. Here at the Clearinghouse, we provide resources for fathers, programs that work with researchers, policymakers, and anybody else who's interested in this topic, and those of you who've been with us before, you'll see that the slides have a slightly different look. We went through some enhancements for the website actually around Father's Day, so if you've not been to the website since Father's Day, I encourage you to take a look.

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It looks different, you've got a different starting page, and we're in the process of organizing the language you find things, and it's going to get easier and easier I think to find things, and we're going to have more and more things actually for fathers on there. So, this time slide just shows you how to get in touch with us, how to find the website, how to find our Responsible Fatherhood toolkit, which is a very popular piece for practitioners looking for tips, how to find the webinars, how to contact us via email. That is a relatively new email address - we changed it a few months ago, so that's how you contact us by email. And I always encourage you and fathers, father you work with, and mothers if you have any questions contact our National Call Center at 1-877-4DA-D411. We have trained mediators on the end of that line. They can actually talk to and fathers and mothers on separate lines, or together if they've got any issues, and you can also engage with us via Facebook or Twitter.

So, on today's Webinar - and we're going to get into this whole issue of parenting relationships skills - I've been reflecting on this a little bit as we think about the webinar, and you know I've been doing this work now for 30 years, and in the early days that seemed like a lot of programs were really more focused on manhood issues and helping guys get on their feet, you know, so they could be there for their kids. But it wasn't always the case that these Fatherhood programs actually have the time to talk to them about parenting or relationship issues. In fact, we didn't even start using the term "healthy relationships" until late 90s early 2000s. So, the very first program I worked on was for the Maryland Department of Human Resources. It's called the Absent Parents Employment Program and that's pretty much what it did. We just didn't have resources to do any more than help guys find jobs. The program was started by a couple of judges who'd got tired of having the same guys to jail for not paying their child support, so that was the whole focus of the program: help guys get jobs so they could pay the child support, and the judges didn't have to send him to jail.

But I got, you know, I got a bit more involved in other programs around the country after that. I used to ask those Fatherhood programs, "are you really doing fatherhood work?" You know, if you aren't talking about parenting, you know, are you organizing activities with the kids? If you go to a program for mothers, you see kids there - you don't always see kids at a fatherhood program. So, I think we do have to intentionally talk about these issues, and I think that, you know, we are doing that a lot more now than we used to, and it's not the practitioners weren't aware of the need to engage moms and help dads to navigate these complicated family relationship situations. It's just that there's always been a limited funding, and that came and went with demonstration projects and short-term grants, and we still got a lot of those same kind of issues. Although, we have come a long way. There's more fatherhood programs than ever, and, you know, they were also quite a lot in the 80s and early 90s, although and not everybody realized that, and since 2006, as I mentioned, OFA has been a consistent funding source, and just in talking to people who work with families in general, is much more understanding of the importance of involving dads. So the field has certainly come a long way, and I think we are doing a lot more around parenting relationships than we used to, even if the main thing that may bring a lot of guys to a program is help with employment, help with child support, help with navigating issues with mom or getting more access to kids.

Anyway, with all that said, what we're going to do today is take a closer look at ways in which Responsible Fatherhood programs are working through child well-being by helping dads enhance their parenting relationship and co-parenting skills.

We've got three great presenters here. I'll tell you a bit more about them before each of their presentations, but we're going to be joined by Liz Harburg from Child Trends which is an organization that works very closely with Clearinghouse, they're a part of our products team. And then we have Carla Patterson from UH Family Partners in Trenton, New Jersey, and Sean D. Johnson from the Children's Bureau of Southern California in Orange County, California. I think you're going to enjoy what they have to tell us.

So before we bring Liz up we're just going to have a quick poll question - we can get the poll question Enzo - we ask these poll questions just to get a sense of who's on the line and help presenters sort of see you, you know, we, we can't see you like if you were in the room, so if you could just say, if applicable, you know, if you are providing direct services, do you cover provide parenting skills, relationship skills separately, together, just parenting skills, just relationship skills or none of the above? I'll just give you a few seconds to respond to that.

It looks like most of you are providing both, and it's pretty much evenly split as to whether you're doing that separately or combined.

So, thank you very much for that, and I'm now going to clear the slide for Liz, who is someone I work very closely with. She writes a lot of materials that you see on the website. She's a fatherhood expert and in the parenting and family dynamics research area of Child Trends. She studies parenting and co-parenting with a focus on fathers, child development, and family formation factors. She's worked with various programs for fathers including some of the OFA Responsible Fatherhood grantees, a number of programs



working with young fathers, Early Head Start, and Head Start programs. She's evaluated fatherhood curricula and contributed to father engagement and co-parenting measurement research, and she's also the main author of co-parenting resources and best practices for service providers. That's included on the helpful resources that you can download. And she's also a relatively new mother of a young lad called Charlie who I haven't met, but sounds like she has been doing a great job with Charlie. So, she's got a lot of expertise to share here so, the time is yours, Liz.

**Liz Karberg:** Thank You Nigel. So, I'm going to start us off with some background and research about why relationship skills are important to promote in fatherhood programs. As many of you know, the Office of Family Assistance recognizes the importance of healthy relationships for supporting father's roles as parents. It's one of three priority areas OFA requires Responsible Fatherhood grantees provide services Around. The others being parenting and workforce development. The implication is that these three topics are necessarily linked and essential for fathers to parent well, but programs do have discretion in terms of how they offer services around these three areas.

So that said, as Nigel mentioned in his introduction, the topic of this webinar is the Intersection of Parenting and Relationship Skills. So, we're really focusing on two of these three priorities, but relationship skills, as I will talk about in the next few slides, are broadly applicable and can improve not only romantic relationships and co-parenting relationships, but also parenting and workforce readiness.

Another thing to keep in mind is that, according to a recent evaluation, the Pact Study which I'll talk about more later, fatherhood program participants are least likely to attend healthy relationship services and receive fewer hours of healthy relationship content compared to parenting and workforce development. And so, just one quick definition before I go on: co-parenting, for those of you who are not aware, is the ways that parents and parental figures relate to each other in their role as a parent. It is distinct from a romantic relationship and the parenting role, even if the co-parent is the same as the romantic partner. This is one aspect of healthy relationships; one component of a healthy relationships that is often covered in both healthy relationships and parenting content within Responsible Fatherhood programs.

So, there's quite a bit of research showing that when fathers have good parenting and relationship skills, including a supportive co-parenting relationship, children benefit, and fathers benefit. Fathers are more and better involved with their kids, they're more likely to pay child support, and their own well-being improves.

As many of you know, and we'll hear about this more from Carter and Chandi, there are certain life circumstances and characteristics that make it more difficult to build healthy relationships, and these characteristics and circumstances are common among fatherhood program participants. This points to ways that we can help these fathers. We can't change whether they grew up without two married parents or whether they themselves are married or not, or their family complexity. We can change, among other things, their relationship, co-parenting, and parenting quality by teaching them relationship skills. These same skills may also promote employment readiness.

Although many programs are providing services to improve parenting and healthy relationships, rigorous intervention research to inform exactly how programs do this is limited, but there are some lessons learned from the limited work that suggests the best ways to improve parenting, co-parenting, and relationship quality is by improving these broadly applicable relationship skills, including communication, self-regulation, conflict management, and problem-solving.

There are other skills that are important to promote, but not explicitly supported by the research that I'm going to discuss today, like learning to empathize. So this is not an exhaustive list of the important skills programs should be promoting. And just to illustrate the overlap between skills that promote healthy relationships and parenting, the Pact Evaluation categorized services around parenting as those that build skills to promote nurturing behaviors – which, according to developmentalists, might include things like learning to empathize with a child, self-regulating anger or the desire to lash out with the child, and appropriate communication, as well as age-appropriate activities and nonviolent discipline.

So, some of this requires explicit parental parenting education, but the aspects that require skill building draw upon the relationship skills that I'm going to be talking about. In the next few slides I'm going to present findings and lessons learned from two key interventions: The Family Foundation's Program, and the Pact Evaluation.



The Family Foundation's program was designed by Mark Feinberg and his colleagues at Penn State University and included a four-year evaluation component. So, keep in mind that because this is done out of Penn State, the sample is not urban, and it tends to be white and middle-class, which has some implications for how well it applies to the Responsible Fatherhood Program participants more generally. The program provided services for expectant couples over eight sessions, four which were prenatal and four of which were postnatal. The program aims to improve parenting, co-parenting, healthy relationships or the romantic relationship, and child outcomes by teaching self-regulation, conflict management, problem solving, communication, and support strategies to foster joint parenting. Parents were randomly assigned to an intervention group which received Family Foundation's programming, or to a control group which received information about quality child care. The resources we provide in the "Helpful Resources" link include the citations for this, and it's also at the bottom of the slide. And, this program also has a website, if you're interested, which is linked in the "Web Links" box: [famfound.net](http://famfound.net)

Parents who received the Family Foundation's program showed more positive co-parenting, lower levels of maternal depression and anxiety, lower levels of negative father-child interaction, and infants in the intervention were more easily soothed. These effects were also stronger for parents with less education, pointing to implications for Responsible Fatherhood program participants. The researchers also tested intervention impacts at several points in time, including up to three and a half years after families receive the intervention, and found that the positive impacts were long-lasting. So, these findings suggest that relationship skills can improve parenting and parents' relationships, namely co-parenting.

The Pact Evaluation included four federally funded Responsible Fatherhood programs and two federally funded Healthy Marriage programs. I'm going to focus on the Responsible Fatherhood program evaluations, but just know that the Healthy Marriage one also exists. And again, the "Helpful Resources" link below includes the citation for the evaluation, and it's at the bottom of the slide. So, the programs in the Responsible Fatherhood Evaluation, some of them included services once a week, some in a more intensive daily format, and I'm going to focus on the services around healthy relationships and parenting. The healthy relationship curricula focused on education and communication skill building, so that's one relationship skill that this evaluation really focused on, whereas the Family Foundation's focus on five relationship skills.

The parenting curricula focused on education around the role of fathers, child development, teaching nurturing, parenting, and communication skills, typically within the context of co-parenting.

Pact researchers found that Responsible Fatherhood services improved Fathers' engagement in age-appropriate activities with their children and their nurturing behavior, but did not impact co-parenting, mental health, or fathers' contact with their children - and I should say fathers' mental health. They did not look at mothers' mental health. As I mentioned before, fathers were less likely to attend relationship skill building services than parenting or workforce development services, so the researchers did not evaluate romantic relationship outcomes in this evaluation.

So, the Family Foundation's program was developed to improve parenting relationships by teaching one set of these broadly applicable relationship skills, namely communication, self-regulation, conflict management, problem-solving, and strategies to foster joint-parenting. The Pact Evaluation evaluated Responsible Fatherhood programs as they exist, and the relationship skill that these programs consistently taught was communication. Both of these evaluations are important for informing what Responsible Fatherhood programs do, what outcomes they impact, and how they can be improved.

So, there are several recommendations from these evaluations that I want to highlight. So first is to integrate relationship service, or, I'm sorry, relationship skill-building into parenting and workforce development services. These services are utilized more by federally funded Responsible Fatherhood program participants, and possibly the same is true of non-federally funded program participants, as well. So, dads are more likely to get relationships skill-building if it's integrated into these other services.

Programs can focus on promoting the Family Foundation skills, which explicitly are relationship based, so, you know, the self-regulation, communication, conflict management, problem solving, and joint parenting, or they can also provide soft skill training, which can be part of workforce readiness services. We have a link (also in the "Helpful Resources" document) about promoting soft skills or job readiness skills for workforce development. These skills include things like teamwork, communication, integrity, self-control, and dependability. You'll notice overlap between these skills and the relationship skills that I've been talking about. And sometimes fathers are more amenable to learning these skills in the context of getting a job, but learning how to communicate well with an employer, for example, should translate to learning better communication skills and strategies with other people, such as



their child, their partner or their co-parent. The Pact Evaluation also recommends including legal and mediation services to help fathers with custody, child support, and learning to co-parent more effectively. Along these lines, the Pact researchers recommend including mothers and program activities to, again, help promote these healthy relationship skills that fathers are less likely to receive.

There are some limitations with these evaluations, though, that I want to make sure I mention. The Family Foundation's evaluation was of a specific curricula or intervention that could be integrated into existing fatherhood program services, but would require extra class time.

Considering the Pact Evaluation suggests fathers may benefit most by including relationship skill-building in existing services, namely for parenting workforce development, this might not be the best way to engage Responsible Fatherhood populations, and also was not a value evaluated with populations similar to most Responsible Fatherhood program participants. On the other hand, the Pact Evaluation examines programs as they exist with applicable populations, but it's really difficult to take away actionable steps for improving services from this evaluation, and by that, I mean we know that Responsible Fatherhood programs improved fathers' parenting (at least the ones that were evaluated), but we know very little about how they did this and how struggling programs can improve their own services based on the evaluation.

However, up next, we have two practitioners who are going to speak about what their programs do and how they integrate these skills into their services. And quickly before Nigel introduces them, this last slide has Child Trends' website which again is also linked in the web links. They have a lot of great **free fact sheets (22:36)** and other written products about fatherhood, healthy relationships, and more. So those that would not already be on the fatherhood.gov website, you can find there. And if you have any questions, feel free to contact me. My email is up on the slide ([ekarberg@childtrends.org](mailto:ekarberg@childtrends.org)). Thank you.

**Nigel Vann:** Well thanks, Liz. That's a great job of really setting the stage for this conversation, and, you know, I want to underline how important it is that we have this kind of research out there, and particularly I think a key takeaway that we heard from Liz is the importance of trying to integrate talking about relationship skills into the other services and the soft skills with employment is a prime example.

As Liz mentioned if you look at the "Helpful Resources" list, we do have a Clearinghouse brief that we did last year, and Liz was one of the authors of that on preparing fathers for workforce success, and really talking about the importance of not just the job training but of helping guys with the soft skills that are totally applicable to relationships and talking to your kids. And you can also find the link on the "Helpful Resources" to more about the Pact Evaluation, which although, as Liz mentioned, has limitations, it is really one of the first studies that's getting in-depth, having a look at them what the impact of fatherhood programs is, because that's been, I think, one of the things that has held us back in terms of getting more consistent funding, is, you know, if you work with dads, if you visit these programs, you know they're making a difference in the lives of fathers and their families and their children, but it's not always easy to fully document that or document what it takes to make it happen here. So, we got to keep plugging along with that, and we really need and appreciate the support of people like Liz to help us do that.

So, with that, let me move the slides to Shawndi's opening slide. So Shawndi is the program manager with the Dad's Matter Program at the Children's Bureau of Southern California. He's been there since 2016 and has a lot of experience prior to that working with children and families. He worked in a group home for quite a while. He's managed social service and nonprofit programs focused on issues such as grandparents raising their grandchildren, which we see around the country as a growing issue. He's worked on family reunification issues in cases where there's been reports of abuse and neglect. He's worked with children special needs and new mothers and a bunch of father involvement activities before he came to the Children's Bureau, and he's really used that experience to really move the fatherhood and the parenting conversation forward in his own home base of Orange County, California. He's used several evidence-based curricula to provide services to families, including the "Keys to Interactive Parenting," the "Nursing Child Assessment Satellite" training, and also the "Supporting Father Involvement" curriculum which he's going to tell us more about, which I think is a very promising curriculum for others who may be interested. And finally, he's got two children. He has a ten-year-old and a young man who's just turned 12, so, I believe it was over the weekend he turned 12. So, with that Shawndi the time is yours.

**Shawndi Johnson:** Thanks, Nigel. You have an incredible memory. Yeah, my son turned 12 on Sunday, and so we had a weekend full of 12-year-olds, video games, pizza, and lots of ice cream, so I'm still coming down off of that, but yeah, I'm Shawndi Johnson with the Children's Bureau, and I'm going to talk to you a lot about the pairing or the co-pairing (we call it co-pairing) intervention curriculum called SFI.

But before that, I'm going to jump into a little bit about my agency, Children's Bureau. Children's Bureau Southern California been around since 1904. It was formed by a volunteer group which were started to advocate for some legislation to protect children, and, you know, 114 years later we're still in the same business. We have a mission to protect vulnerable children through prevention, treatment, and advocacy, and as of this year we employ over 300 staff. Our home base is in Los Angeles. We call it Magnolia Place. We spin out services out into the Lancaster Valley and of course out in the Orange County, where the Dads Matter program exists. Dads Matter came about in 2015 as we became a Responsible Fatherhood grantee of OFA, and what we do is we aim to serve 300 at-risk fathers in Orange County. And when we say at-risk we mean at risk of low paternal involvement due to certain factors including being young of age, living in impoverished conditions, or being an immigrant status.

Our program, we serve fathers and father figures, we serve their partners by providing parenting or co-parenting workshops. We have an integrated financial literacy economic stability component to it. We have job training partners. We offer case managers and other support services including, like a lot of the other grantees, you know, food and child care transportation services to all the workshops, or too many of the workshops. When we first, when Children's Bureau first became a grantee, our original model was to provide our services through Family Resource Centers that we were the lead agency in, and there were four in Central Orange County.

One of the things that we have experienced through errors in our original plan, we were going to service those communities in our plan to provide workshops. Of course, who were attending the Family Resource Centers, and I say of course, because the kind of landscape of them, mostly moms attended those Family Resource Centers, and so moms are going to be a significant driver in terms of recruitment for our classes. But we didn't really realize at the time - this was a couple of years ago, I feel like - it seems like it was a decade ago - we realized that the message that when mom was going to deliver the message to recruit for dads at home even though they went home with the message that sounded like, "Hey there's this great opportunity for you to go to a class that's focused on fathers, why don't you go down to the Family Resource Centers?" What the fathers actually heard was, "you're not doing a great job as a father or representing this family or leading this family, and so you're failing."

And so what we realized very early on in 2016 was that fathers wouldn't come to a class by themselves, or our classes were very poorly attended, and we didn't experience a lot of success for those fathers. And when those fathers came in, we had to spend a lot of time fighting that initial reaction because they felt they were forced to go to that class, and of course, all the other grantee services are voluntary. But what we did experience, what we realized, is that when fathers came out with the moms for the couple's version of the class—even though that they were still a little bit apprehensive—they were much more comforted that their partners were with them, and so we were able to do a lot a good work. So, just wanted to kind of frame that, where we started.

The evidence-based curriculum that we use as an intervention is called "Supporting Father Involvement," I'm going to refer to it as SFI for the rest of the time. It was developed and tested by doctors Carolyn and Philip Cowan and Doctors Kyle and Marsha Pruett. The Pruett's, they're over in Connecticut, and our team worked closely with them in terms of getting our getting our facilitators and our staff trained to use it. And back in 2003 it was distributed, the SFI curriculum was distributed, in California by the Department of Social Services and Office of Child Abuse Prevention. And I am going to mention that our facilitators are generally mental health professionals. And with all the grantees, the kind of topics that come up in many if not all the father involvement, the Responsible Fatherhood grantees, the type of topics that are covered at times can be really heavy when you start looking at, you know, past histories. They've identified role models and things of that nature. Everyone makes sure that we're doing our due diligence and have the appropriate support on-site for them to kind of take them through that journey, and to return them to a place where they can be back functioning and going back into their home. That's another reason why we offer case management services as well, because through our Family Resource Centers and through a lot of other community agencies, our case managers are able to provide those linkages for mental health support services.

I'm not sure if you guys have ever heard of Simon Sinek. He's not really related. I don't think he has anything online or any literature regarding father involvement, but he does have this really great TED Talk that's called "The Why," so if you get a chance to take a look, look for it on YouTube. "The Why," they have a long and extended version of it or a shortened version of it, but the gist of it is -



and he's talking about product sales and things of that nature - Simon says (I know it sounds kind of funny, sorry), Simon says that people don't buy what you do. they buy why you do it. And so when fathers are coming into our services, for us it's all about why they're important. A lot of our fathers haven't been told that they matter in the first place, hence the name Dads Matter. They haven't been told why they matter, so for our fathers – and our fathers again come from all different walks of life - from either, they've been mandated to take a parenting class, they're in a state of crisis or distress in their current relationship, they're at a place in their life where they figure something is off and they're not quite sure about it, and they're coming for support. We actually get more fathers coming in in that state than looking for the job readiness skills that we provide.

But we like to kind of start, this quote taken straight from the curriculum. It's one of my favorite quotes. Not that I ever recite it verbatim to any of our participants, but the gist of it informed the basis of our overall program philosophy, and I'll read it really quickly: *"A father's involvement does not operate to the exclusion of a mother's relationship with a child. Fathering is uniquely different from mothering and equally beneficial to the child's development."*

So, while we're having these initial conversations, whether by phone, whether it's actual workshop intake or whatever with the father, I'd like to focus on a couple of the two words that stick out to me from this quote. One is uniquely, and the second is equally. And I'll start off with equally. For us our philosophy for our program, our fathers are as just as crucial to parenting as mothers are. A lot of our fathers have never been told that their involvement - they may, let's say even if they have heard that they matter, they don't realize how much they matter. You know, if anybody's ever heard of the first thousand days in a child's life (and that starts from conception to about a little bit after the second birthday), there's more cognitive growth than any other point in your life. And during those, during that time, that crucial time where no one ever thinks back you know ten years later to that period leading up to two years of age, at just would took place during that time. If you have a child that has access to both, two different, you know, to both parents, to the father's influence of learning, mom's influence on learning, the child has so much more, so many more opportunities to develop, you know, skills that will lead to potential success. Whether it's academic, whether it's in self-esteem, or, you know, all the social-emotional things are wrapped around. The kids have an opportunity to be more, the kids have opportunity to be more curious which would lead to being more adventurous and ambitious and have better problem-solving skills.

So, talk to fathers about their influence in there, and when I look at the word "uniquely," the act of fathering and mothering look different in general. And again, generalizations, but the act of giving it given a toddler a bath from a mom's bath time experience, which is maybe more soothing, to a dad's bath time experience, which may be ramped up a lot more, you could have some, you know, I believe I saw a picture on the web where a father is creating, you know, hats with the bubbles and beards with the bubbles on the baby and things like that. The experience of fathering and mothering in so many different aspects are, now, they look different, and a child being exposed to both of those influences have an opportunity to learn at a much greater rate, and have opportunities for different types of success going on as they grow older.

And as a social worker by education and by experience, I really enjoy like, the system's view of things, and this is one of the things that resonates so much to me about the SFI curriculum, as it focuses on five domains I really believe have an impact and a ripple effect of a father's ability to be involved with children. Including the first one, individual characteristics of a parent, which you know of course, knowledge of child development, self-esteem, predisposition for stress, other things.

Number two, the parent-child relationship quality – self-explanatory.

Three, a couple of co-parenting relationship quality, and when I say this, I stop and say, "you know, it's not a leap to say that the stronger the co-parenting of a couple relationship quality is, then the higher the father involvement is, and, in the converse, the more dysfunction that occurs within that relationship, and there's a strong ripple effect and impact on father's involvement or lack of involvement."

Or, we look at generational expectations and family patterns. This is one of the most exciting parts of the curriculum for me, because we're really looking, we're able to explore and see some examples of the role models from the messaging that our fathers have throughout their life, so we can really see where they form the values of fathering, where they have their images.

And then we also look at the balance between social support for family and external influences. So, for this, and, you know, it'll definitely wrap around a little bit later. So, when we talk about, you know, fathers who work a lot, so we talk about employment, we talk about different resources, you know, folks, fathers and our families in general who don't have a ton of resources, whether



economic or social, in terms of stress, you know, they show the symptoms of stress and stress a lot more when they don't have those resources and support.

So SFI, the parts of co-parenting, you know, I mentioned earlier that we had, that we use mental health professionals for our facilitators. But I didn't mention that we use two facilitators so, we have co-leads, we have co-facilitators. We call them our group leads and they're typically paired male and female.

What's important for this is because a lot of our participants haven't had the experience (life experiences) to see what, you know, functioning relationship looks like, so our, this is our really one of our first introductions to be able to provide that kind of didactic - I can never say that word right, I can spell it though - role modeling perspective, and so they get a chance to kind of, when they're hearing different perspectives, it's a really great thing to see a relationship that's not based on power. Or a lot of our fathers have come into our program and that's only been their, that's only been their experience, so when they are able to get a chance to see this and be able to see people kind of problem solve on the fly, kind of go through, taking turns, sharing responsibility, it definitely provides some great role modeling for them. And I'll talk about some of the activities that kind of relates to this when we get to the relationship piece.

And then we have, I didn't mention also that we have two versions of the way that we do our, that we introduce our interventions. So, we have a couple's version, where the fathers are invited to bring in their partner their, you know, their spouse, their partner, co-partner, whoever it is into the class with them, and then we have a dads' or a fathers' and father figure version of it, of the curriculum as well. The curriculum is the same, the difference is the types of activities that the participants engage in.

The both, the iterations of the, you know, of the workshop series has an integration piece, and for our integration piece what happens is there are two weeks, I believe there's, I didn't mention that there was a, it's a 32-hour curriculum. And so, it's, the way it usually goes is if we go in a weekly basis, it's two hours a week, and so 17 weeks. So, in weeks, I believe weeks five and thirteen, what we do is we introduce our integrated piece, and we bring in your families.

And so, for the couple's version, they bring their kids and they get a chance to separate out, do some separate activities, and then work with you, and bring, come together and work with the kids. And then for the Dads' Club version, they're able to bring in their partner. I mention this especially because for a dance club version, whether they're in a romantic relationship, whether they're not a custodial parent and they have a dysfunctional relationship with their, you know, with their ex-partner. For the ones who are in a relationship, they're invited to bring their partner, and I think it's important because when we look at outcomes, you know, relationship distress goes down on the whole on the large majority for the participants of the couple classes.

For the dads' couples, it can actually spike up some, some distress within that relationship, because what happens is you have one person that's going on a course of learning and the other person is not included in that journey, right? And so, when you have a person who's going home with more information, that's kind of like the telephone game because sometimes they go home with their version of the information. So, we have an integration week and their partners come in. It's an opportunity for us to then kind of fold in, kind of put them both on convergent paths, and it creates more alignment going out so that their partner can see and hear exactly the types of things that we're talking about within the classes, the types of activities that we're going through, because they get a chance to participate in their own activities and then together. And then for, I would say, in large part for all the iterations of the curriculum or the intervention, it's great because what the integration we provide in a really strong way, are the perspective. And that's one of the things that's we're going to talk about on the next couple of slides.

Oops. I think I'll skip one, I apologize about that.

Okay, so when we look at parenting skills, it's really important for us, for the fathers that come into our services and in our care, is that there's no judgement when they walk in the door. Whatever stage they're in, and whatever part of their fatherhood journey, they need to know that they matter, and that's what the most important thing for us. And also, again - going back to the *why* they matter - so we do a lot of skill building focused on perspective taking, perspective taking so they can they can get a visual of what their parenting, the impact that their parenting has, you know, on their entire family, on the kids. And so, from, you know, there is an image not clearly displayed where we have a super duper, I mean superhero dad activities. We do a lot of media and videos where we do debriefing and discussion afterwards. And we talk a lot about quality versus quantity.



And going back to fathers who work a lot, who have 10 minutes a day to spend with their kids, as opposed to fathers who may have significantly more time, it's not the time that you have, it's how you use the time. We really, we really talk and work with our fathers so that they can see the benefit of creating memories, and what that looks like. And what we do, and we always tell them, it's not what we're telling you to do you have to go home and do, you're the expert on your kid, and so we do activities so that they can, you know, I think at the bottom it says how well do you know your kids. We do activities where they get a chance to share what they know about their kids and it goes beyond just the basic "what colors do they like," you know, "what's their favorite food," but it's "what activities do they like," "how does your kid, how do you see your kids see you," "what do you want your kids to say about you now," "what do you want your kids to say in five years," "what do you want your kids in ten years." So, it's a lot of, it's a lot of really cool things like that.

For relationship skills, what we like to focus on is: what's at stake and what does that mean? So for us, relationship quality we know can predict father involvement, so it may need, we have to kind of tailor our, you know, our conversations or, you know, the different types of families that we have in different types of situations. So, but practicing and building on the skills by, you know, communicating positively, practicing "I" statements. Again, in similar ways that we do the skill building where we show videos and we have discussions, we do it with the couples, as well. You know, couples who don't have a lot of time or focus all the time on kids because they don't have boundaries think that every time that they touch it's leading to, you know, leading to sex. And so, we do activities where they experience non-sexual ways of touching, then send them home with activities. Again, talk about positive approaches to communication and why it matters.

And why it matters for families in general? It's pretty common-sensical when you wrap it around like this, but it's to reduce stress and conflict, to improve communication, and increase overall involvement.

But building bridges, so how this all wraps together with parenting skills and relationship skills: we don't ask people to, our fathers, our participants, to go outside of their strengths. We want you to focus on strengths, first. Not, that doesn't mean if you're, you know, if comedy is your strength, that and that's your go to, it may be appropriate for a lot of times, we try to work with them on, it can't be your go to every time, but we try to focus on if you spend more the time focusing on your strengths, then you're going to experience success more often than not. So what we do in, and building upon those strengths, we ask folks to look at situations from other angles. Again, the perspective taking. We try to have them focus on where their endgame is, what the endgame is going to be, focused on the destination and whenever possible, take a breath. And taking a breath for us is, talking to folks and our father about not being reactive, about being responsive and what that looks like.

So the overlap between, we talk to them a lot about the overlap between, you know, your soft skills. So, how parenting and relationship skills, they aren't all that difference, however, there are significant differences because you don't want to talk to your spouse or your partner like a child, and you don't want to talk to your child like your partner, so making sure that we're focusing on those. We do a lot of role modeling. We get a lot of opportunities to do some role-playing in those situations, and then we focus on things like, of course, these are skills that are transferable in general and able to be generalized between both parenting and relationships. You know, not doing the blame game, creating structure. So if you're having a problem with, as a couple, of finding time to have personal time together, and that doesn't always mean sex, it means trading structure, maybe having appropriate bedtimes for your kids, because having your kids stay up until eleven o'clock means in order for you to have quality time with your significant other, which is important in the formation of your, in the strengthening of your relationship, then you either got to stay up super late and then impact the next day. You're all exhausted, tired, lack of, you know, lack of internal resources, and it leads to fewer coping skills, so focusing on healthy life habits.

So, all these things continue to build upon each other. Choosing roles based on strengths, not gender. So, a lot of times we have family members, and then, "I'm going to take out the trash, I'm going to do these things because I'm a man and that's always been the way it's supposed to be." Well, my wife doesn't, my wife, I don't mind doing floors, my wife hates doing floors, so I do floor, she does a trash, and that's something that we're able to have that dialogue. So, we introduce a lot of, you know, evidence-based research stuff, but we also ask them "what works for you?" and think about it.

So, and, that's where being able to step outside and apply things not just based from which you think, but from your partner, having conversations with your kids, being able to incorporate those kind of conversations and dialogue, and of course communicating positively. It's something that we promote and that we practice within all our classes. Really quickly - I think I'm out of time so I won't go into this -



**Nigel Vann:** Yeah actually, Shawndi, I'm sorry to interrupt perhaps we could just leave the story of Big Chuck, and we could come back to that in the Q&A. I know we want to hear about that. Make sure we have time for Carter to get through his slides first and then we'll come back to that.

**Shawndi Johnson:** For sure, Nigel, it's on you, and you're going to introduce Carter, and I appreciate your guys' time.

**Nigel Vann:** Sure, great, thanks. And we can leave it on that slide for a minute. If we can just pull up the next two poll questions pretty quickly.

We just have two yes-and-no questions for you. We'd just like to know how many of you out there are providing any services at all for the mothers. Just do a quick yes-or-no on that.

And it looks like the vast majority of you are, that's great to hear. Right, and if we could then just flip to the next poll question in there.

And now do you provide co-parenting services and are you able to do any work where your help the dads think about co-parenting, do you do any work with mom and dad together in mediation.

And while you're responding to that let me just point out that I see - and you may not notice this - like Shawndi - but there's a lot of people in the chat column who are interested in getting hold of the parenting activities, and we also had a question asking if they came from a specific curriculum. I'm assuming they come from the supporting father involvement curriculum, right?

**Shawndi Johnson:** Yes, they do.

**Nigel Vann:** So, are people able to get those activities without purchasing the curriculum? How does that work? Just real briefly.

**Shawndi Johnson:** Yes, totally, what I can do is I can, it's a great thing about the Pruett's and the Cowans' is they want the information out there, and so there are certain aspects about, about curriculum that we can definitely share. And I'll confirm it with them. I'm going to do a call with them for some training, coming up soon.

**Nigel Vann:** Okay that's great well. What we'll do then, we'll save the emails everybody who's indicating in the chat box that they're interested, and then we'll put you all in touch, so you can do that. And I'd also like to point out, you know, in our Responsible Father toolkit that I mentioned at the beginning of the webinar, we do have a number of downloadable activities there that come from most of the main fatherhood curricula. And so actually Shawndi, we could also talk about perhaps adding some of these in there as well. But there's some great stuff in there. One other thing - well no, I'll come back and mention this again later because I, I do want to make sure we get Carter his time here, and also to just remind you that you can download these slides, so you'll have all the information for later.

So, let me bring Mr. Carter Patterson to the stage here. He's got 23 years of social service and nonprofit management experience. He currently manages over \$500,000 of federal, state, and privately funded projects. He's a frequent speaker on topics such as fathering, trauma theory, workforce development, and effective co-parenting. I actually met Carter because he was at a, at the Child Welfare League of America in April. I didn't meet him there, I met his supervisor and she put me in touch with Carter later. We were both doing workshops, but I didn't make it to his.

So, I've been very impressed with what I've heard about what's going on there. I actually went to that program when it was in his early days back in the 90s. so it's great that it's still going. And he's also received various awards for his work and you can read more about that in his bio. He's got four kids of various ages, starting at seven and the oldest has just graduated college, I believe he said. So anyway, the time is yours Carter.

**Carter Patterson:** Yeah, alright, thank you very much, Nigel. So, the way that I would like to present, you know, the, the slides is, it's definitely going to be from the father's perspective as teachers and, of course, as role models for the children, because a lot of the work (99% of the work) that we do is definitely supporting fathers.

So, let me - I wanted to talk a little bit about that organization. So UIH Family Partners is the oldest child welfare organization in the state of New Jersey. We're a hundred and fifty-seven years old. So, we were formed a little bit, you know, a few - there was a group of ladies here in Mercer County in Trenton, New Jersey, who - actually, we started off as an orphanage, you know, oh so long ago. And then we eventually evolved into a residential home for teen moms, and then right around the early part of 2000, we started doing fatherhood specific work.

And I guess, you know, I would be remiss to say that for the past 20 plus years, we have had consistent funding and support from the New Jersey Office of Child Support Services. So, I'm all too often, especially around, child support, it tends to be very heavy-handed on the enforcement, but I think with our program and what we represent and what we - the resources that we're allowed to provide for the fathers, it kind of lessens the impact of it being so heavy-handed on the enforcement. But, we're an actual resource for the fathers that come through our doors. So, we see a little over 500 dads a year, and there's a difference, a lot of different ways that we engage the dads.

And so, through workforce development - which I've kind of renamed economic success because everybody gets so tired of workforce development, because the whole idea, especially when men come through the door, so much of their fathering and the parenting and the traditional role of the dad was the breadwinner. So, a lot of guys are interested in employment and so we kind of, the messaging around doing proper fatherhood work has a lot to do with how you frame the language. So, workforce development is now economic success.

We do parenting and relationship skills education. Child support modification, which we work very closely with our primary funders through the Office of Child Support Services just to be able to do that, just to be able to have the guys understand what the child support order is all about. And then a lot of times, you know, helping them navigate the horror stories. I mean, there's stories of men who are paying child support for children who they actually have custody of, and just being able to help them modify those orders and walk through all of those very complicated and technical steps to get those orders modified so that they can, so there can be some equity in how the child support gets distributed.

The two things, that I want, what I'd like to kind of bring forward on this slide was "family reunification" and "wrap around case management." What is family reunification? Well, a lot of times, if there is a dad who's had, who's been recently released from a long period of incarceration, there needs to be communication. There needs to be new ways on how to re-engage with your family. Because what happens is, if you spend a decade away, when you come back home, things have changed. Relationships have evolved. The children have gotten older. So, family reunification really deals with helping the dads create *quality interactions* with their children. Not like, you know, "we need to come and see you every day, see you every day," but because a lot of times there's a transitional period that needs to happen.

So, the family reunification piece on with our fatherhood program is important. And the wraparound case management: the wraparound case management is something that I love. I used to, the way that I like to frame that is that we're wrapping a warm blanket around the men that we're providing support for. There's nothing wrong with that because people like to feel supported and it's our philosophical approach about how we deal with the proper handling of that.

So, as we're moving on here - so when we talk about increased fatherhood involvement, the key component to child family outcomes, there's this missing piece. The missing piece is this: child and/or fatherhood absence needs to be dealt with as a national health crisis, because what happens - the language is very important - if the father is not involved in the children's life, it's not just the symptom of a failed relationship. Fatherhood involvement is absolutely necessary to the healthy development of each and every child, and it's only in America on that we don't treat it as such, and every other country, you know, they realize the importance of having the father, they call it the father effect. You know, there's healthy, healthy brain development, there's healthy social, pro-social skills that the children get from having dad's presence in their life. So that missing piece, that missing piece is that fathers an absence needs to be treated as a national health crisis as it is.

So, what we're looking at, is one of my favorite, she's Margaret Mead. One of my favorite quotes of hers, "*the primary task of every civilization is to teach young men to be fathers.*" So, through our work, we've worked a lot with the different, a lot of different social service agencies here in New Jersey, but part of the work that we've done is specifically targeting young fathers through the juvenile justice commission. That is - there are a little over three hundred young men who are locked up in the state of New Jersey who,



there's a large percentage of them who are fathers. Who, they're not getting the proper skills, the skills that they need from when they're released, and eventually released back into society. That they have an idea about what it means to be a father, right? And not only what it means to be a father, but then the effective communication with the mother of the children and making sure that those communication channels are always open, constant, and free-flowing.

Focus on healthy relationships. On staff here at the Father's Center, we've hired a licensed clinical social worker. So, what happens if, you know, during our counseling sessions, when the men, if emotions start to run a little high, we start to, and the rawness of the emotion comes down, and we want to be able to make sure that, you know, we can properly and clinically deal with kind of closing those wounds and not sending fathers and men on back out there to the streets unprepared and actually giving them solid, solid communication skills.

You know, so, just a really quick story, there's, one of my dads, this gentleman is 16 years old with six children. And, you know, I know that's hard to believe but, you know, this is what's happening in today's society, and so how to be able to help him balance the fact that he still wants to be a kid - he's still a child himself - but now he has this awesome responsibility of these six children that he's brought into the world. And so being able to have open and honest conversations, not only with him, but also his support circle, is very important with the work that we do.

Moving on, and so one of my favorite slides - this is the Foundation Moment, Creating Positive Outcomes for Children. And so, with this piece here, with this specific slide, the Foundation Moments stand in direct contrast to the aces. I'm sure the social workers and the clinicians and the professionals and the positive practitioners have heard of adverse childhood experiences. Well Foundation Moments are the good things, not necessarily the bad things and the things that traumatize the individuals, that scar them and shape their personalities for the rest of their lives. But let's look at creating foundation moments. I'm going to tell you a really quick story.

So, my ex-wife of mine wanted to do something great for the children, and so she's had this idea about taking them to Disney World. I was like, you know, I don't want to spend that much money, right? So, but, what happens is so, you know, the wife always wins. And so eventually we took all of the children to Disney World, and at time they were three, five, and nine. And so, as it - push the fast-forward button - so fast-forward, they're all adults now. Now that they are all now 22, 20, and 18. And so I asked them, what was your most memorable childhood moment? None of them said anything about going to Disney World, and we spent \$10,000 to get there.

What they did remember was we used to turn off all the lights in the home. I gave them disposable flashlights and I would act like that little monster from Lord of the Rings - I think they call him Smeagol, right? And the kids would run through the house screaming, knocking over furniture, it was just - it was a blast. But that's the kind of stuff, that's the kind of foundation moment, that's the kind of memory. So as adults, when I asked them about what was their best childhood memory, lo and behold, what comes up: "Oh daddy, you remember when you used to run around the house with the flashlights and you acted like Smeagol? I remember that, that was my best memory." That's a foundation moment, and these are the kinds of quality interactions - it did not take thousands of dollars to create this foundation moment with my beautiful children. It took, you know, three dollars and some dollars for flashlights. So, moving on.

So, when we look at some of the things that work, some of the things that work for us is the curriculum. So, the curriculum is from the National Fatherhood Initiative, and we use 24/7 Dad, 24/7 Dad on both versions, both the AM and PM versions have been extremely helpful in structuring the groups, and it's also (as far as the subject matter is concerned) leading the conversations with the men around communication around what does it mean to be a man. And there's also really good outcome measurements that the curriculum offers. They offer it, and obviously we pretest them and then post-test them, and a lot of times, you can see that the needle has moved and they have gained some basic understanding about what it takes to be a man and you know just the basics of communicating effectively with their co-parent.

Also, another piece that we use is on the Understanding Dad, which is actually for the moms, so it was, it's a mother's group that is run as a cohort to the 24/7 Dad, so that we can kind of get an idea about, you know, what are the problems? We can kind of isolate some of the more on challenging issues, and then we can kind of give rise to that together, so they can learn together as a family unit. So that was the curriculum, and so, bringing it all together.



And so, the pictures that I have that are on the slides are pictures from actual families. This gentleman came in with his brand-new baby and his wife, and he was looking for parenting skills. You know, this was a former student of mine in another life, but when they're coming together with this family unit, we're able to kind of address them all at once.

So, we talked about things like showing and handling feelings, communication skills, their father's role, discipline, children's growth, working with mom, dealing with anger, sex, love and relationships, and fun with kids. And these are sections of that evidence-based curriculum of 24/7 dads, which is absolutely effective. One of the things that I would like to add to this is that we also have a support group that we call Master Dad. I call it Master Dad because a few years ago I got some funding from Janssen Pharmaceutical, and we had the support group called the Community of Health. Well, nobody came to Community of Health, but when I changed the language, when I changed the message, and when I changed it to Master Dad, who would imagine? I mean I start to get more and more guys that are coming and more and more guys who are asking questions about "Oh! Well, what is this Master Dad class?" Nobody took Community of Health, so one of the lessons or the kind of takeaway from that was that language matters and the messaging matters.

So, the outcomes: so, I mean I can talk numbers. I can talk about the hundreds of gentlemen on that we've found jobs for. But I wanted to talk specifically about the two things here. The parenting skills - again let's reflect on this picture, because again these are not stock pictures, these are pictures that actually come from a living, working, and breathing fatherhood program. Now this picture - I call it, this is my thousand-dollar picture, right? It's a picture of a dad interacting with his young son, and so what I did was - in retrospect maybe shouldn't have done it - but we bought a bunch of kiddie pools, right? We went to Five Below, we filled the kiddie pools with toys and trinkets, like from the Dollar Store and some lower price stores, and then we filled the kiddie pools with sand. And let me tell you, you know, - well, first of all cleaning it up was a mess, that's a whole different story - but the fun, and the children who are interacting with their dads. We called it Digging with Daddy. And so, the kids are digging around in the sand, reaching the toys, and it was almost like they're finding treasure after every hole that they dug. And then the dads, kind of, interacting with the kids - it was absolutely priceless.

Things like this, creating these quality interactions between the children, their parents, their dads, and even some of the support people around them - you can't put a price on things like this. But it's so important to be to provide you know space for family engagement activities.

And then the last piece on this program outcome is Caring for Self. Just like I consider fatherhood absence a national health crisis, men do not take care of themselves. It goes from prostate cancer, there's a high level of prostate cancer in African-American men, there's high blood pressure, there's diabetes, there's poor diet, poor eating habits. I mean there's a whole plethora of health-related issues because men do not take care of themselves. That is absolutely a part of being a good parent. That's absolutely a part of communicating and having insight to your own health and well-being, because in order to, you have to keep yourself healthy and well in order to be the best for your children. So, Caring for Self is absolutely one of the things that I'd like to bring out in that one.

And so, moving on - so Changed Fathers = Changed Families. The interesting thing is just, because, you know, we deal primarily with men who are from a lower economic scale, but just because I deal with all types of dads, so when I do these things called Lunch-and-Learn at these in these Fortune 500 companies that surround on the city of Trenton in Mercer County, and I sit there in those corporate lunch rooms and I talk to the men about fathering issues, you know, it's interesting some of the things that come up, because if you are, you know, a college graduate, and, you know, you have a four bedroom home in an affluent suburb, that does not mean that you're a good father. Nor if you're a poor father, does it mean that you love your children any less. It is about the quality of the interaction that you spend with your children.

So, Changed Fathers Changed Families. It's only - we can deal with the lower economic ladder and deal with all of the kind of issues and the barriers and the challenges that they have. And there are some universal themes that go for whether or not you're a rich dad or whether or not you're a poor dad, but I think the fact that we had this program, and we have these resources available, and we have talented staff members to be able to go out into the community to be able to talk to people about what it means to be a present and consistent force in your children's life, that is the most important thing. Changed Fathers = Changed Families.

Celebrating and Enhancing Fatherhood. And so, a lot of times what needs to happen is that - if we sat here, and if I sat here in my office and waited for the fathers to come in looking for resources, we would not have a program. So, a lot of times, my client service specialist, and then even me sometimes, we would go out to where the dads are, so we're going to the barber shops, we're going to



the gyms, we're going to the Pop Warner football games, we're going to the Little League football games, we're going to the basketball games, we're going to the nursery schools. You have to be able to take your programs and services and to go where the men are. Because again, if you're waiting for the dads to come to you, you probably won't have a very successful program. Until it gets established, it gets word of mouth, and you gain credibility in the community that you're a part of, then and only then will the men start to come there on their own. But primarily, a lot of times, you have to make sure that the program and the resources, you have to go, you have to meet the men where they are.

So that's about it. My name is Carter and I run a fatherhood program. Thank you.

**Nigel Vann:** Thank you very much, Carter. Yeah, no, I really enjoyed a lot of the points that you and Shawndi made actually. You know, I think the whole idea of creating family memories and those foundation moments is just so important for all of us, you know, even if we're creating memories that aren't necessarily positive memories even, you know, just to know that Uncle Bill maybe did this and that and why he did it, you know. And so, just so that, to have that family story so we know our history.

And also, the, what you said about the importance of messaging, and that's just so important. And interestingly, you talked at the end about you can't just sit there and wait for dads to come in. Our next webinar actually in September is going to be on recruitment, so we'll be talking about that and we'll be talking about the role of barbershops and those kinds of things.

Did want to mention a couple of things again from our helpful resources list that you can download. Shawndi was talking about the importance of modeling and opportunities for parents to practice skills and Carter, as well. We do have a brief there from 2014 where we actually have some information on programs that are doing those things, because I think it's so important to be doing things actively. That's how we remember things, that's how we help people.

And, got a couple of questions, if you've got any more questions please do send them in, but now we're just going to have a little bit of a conversation with each of the presenters here, give you a chance for some final thoughts and we will get back to the story of Big Chuck before we get done here.

First of all, Liz, there was a question came in for you, talking about the evaluation studies that you mentioned, and somebody wanted to know were any African-American men involved in the study. I'm assuming the answer to that is yes, but if you could just talk a little bit about who some of the people in the studies were?

**Liz Karberg:** Sure, so for the Family Foundation study, the sample was mostly white. I don't know the - I don't remember off the top of my head the exact numbers, but it was north of 80%, I believe were white. In the Pact Evaluations, there were far fewer white fathers participating, those federally-funded Responsible Fatherhood programs, and the majority of them were African-American.

They had a separate the Pact Evaluation that was more qualitative for programs serving Hispanic populations, so I think, you know, there are different sets of resources coming out of those studies that can speak largely to African-American and largely to Hispanic fathers participating in these programs, but the results that I talked about were the parts, included the part, of the study that was largely with African-American populations.

**Nigel Vann:** Great, okay, and then also - and the same person, I believe it was, who asked the question - or maybe was somebody else - but wanted to know, based on these research studies, but I'm also going to ask this question to Carter and Shawndi because this is certainly one of the more common questions we get, you know, in terms of fatherhood programs. Did the evaluation studies, first of all, Liz, say anything about what helps to keep dads engaged? You know, why do they stick with these programs?

**Liz Karberg:** Oh yeah, I feel like their practitioners could probably say more interesting things about that.

**Nigel Vann:** But does the Pact study get at that? I think there is some information that if you want to look at the Pact Evaluations, right?

**Liz Karberg:** Yes, so I mean, in general, I think appealing to, you know, if fathers are coming in more so for the parenting and the workforce development services, and so kind of, you know, helping them with what they're coming in for is important. Also, kind of making sure that everything they do, you're taking it back to the parenting really helps motivate them to stay. So, you know, they



might come in for help getting a job, but providing education around why that's important for their children and for their role as the father is something that we've heard time and again, and I think this is in the Pact Evaluation as well, is what really keeps them there. So yeah, I would love to hear from Shawndi and Carter, if there are other things?

**Carter Patterson:** Yep, alright so if I can, so what keeps the guys coming back here is something that cannot, I mean, the things that we can affect are the staffing patterns, obviously, the staff has got to be able to connect on an authentic and sincere level with the men that we're providing services for. The messaging around the office is important. The images that they see. You know, how they, what was their first engagement like when they first came through the door, you know, was it warm, was it inviting, was the intake process, was it pleasant? But, I think the thing that kind of keeps our guys coming back, because we do have a group of men that they constantly come back to help us and to mentor and to be like peer bridge builders for other men, is the fact that they've created authentic and sincere relationships with the staff members here who've kind of helped them achieve some of their goals.

So, I know that's that kind of nebulous, but what happens is it's like, if you have sincere staff members who are absolutely committed to the work and they do not treat it as a nine-to-five job, but they treat it as a life-calling or something on that they are committed to, that's the magic. There's no other way around it. That's the way that we found that we got the guys engaged.

**Shawndi Johnson:** From our groups, I will actually say that everything that Carter said is spot-on, I would add also, you know, just the integrity of what you committed to provide to them, making sure you meet that. But one of the things that our fathers don't get a chance to do, and this is one of the things – when, when I have an opportunity to talk with fathers – men, in general, come together, they will talk about many things, they will not talk in a group format outside of these types of venues about parenting about relationships and about these struggles together. And to have an opportunity to do that and gain perspectives - our goal is also form Community, because what we tell them is, "Hey, we're contracted, you know, we're funded through a certain time. You're going to have these connections that you've made for the rest of your life if you choose to use them."

So, the stronger the group is, and the more they're able to share their perspective, the more the buy-in that the fathers receive. So it's not so, you know, the services that they originally came in for, you know, that's the cake - the icing on it is the community that they walk out with. And then I also even say for like our whole support team there are certain things that I didn't have a clue would make as much of an impact, so some of the support services like, you know, the food - and I'm not talking about going out and buying you know high, you know, high-end, spending tons of money, \$10 per person type food – but working with vendors and bringing in, being consistent about what you provide, your childcare staff, making an environment, if they bring their children, an environment where their kids are engaged and learning, as well. You know, and of course, you know, Carter, you know, championed, you know, the staff, not just being a, not just being a job, you know. Our case managers to our facilitators are all contracted, so in order for them to be there they want to be there, because it's taken time outside of their personal time. So, everyone has a buy-in for the cause and support for this, so yeah, that all helps keep people there.

**Nigel Vann:** Yeah, that's great guys, yeah, you know, I always say, yeah, I mean I think what keeps guys there, you do something that's real for them, you know, you actually make a difference, and then they live their lives differently, and other people see that, and that brings them in as well.

But I'm, you know, I've done a lot of training sessions where I am, I have a panel of guys as part of the training who've been through a program, and I'll always ask them what kept you in the program? And there's one word that comes up almost every time and that word is "love". They feel loved, they feel nurtured, they feel family, you know, exactly what you guys just said. I mean that's what this is all about, and I think that's what keeps people doing this work, as well as that the passion for folk doing that.

So, we do have a few more questions that have come in in the left-hand box, so I don't know if we're going to have time for all of them. And I do still want to get back to Shawndi's story about Chuck but, let's see. Oh, there was another question about the SFI curriculum and the answer to that is yes, it is available, and we will get back to people with how you, how you can get that. So, anyone who's asked for that in the box, we will.

You can also get in touch with Shawndi by his email which will be up on the next slide, if I can pull that up for you now, and there you go ([Shawndijohnson@all4kids.org](mailto:Shawndijohnson@all4kids.org)).



There was a question for Carter about how you do your employment, and then there was a general question about the role of family literacy, and if you address that. Perhaps we could take that first, so this is probably a question for Shawndi and Carter more than Liz, but and feel free to chime in, Liz. But, one of the folks in the chat box asked, "What is the role of family - what is the role of family literacy in the presenters' work?" So, do you talk about that with the dads and do you talk about reading with their kids, those kinds of things?

**Shawndi Johnson:** We talked about different types activities, and of course, there are some community agencies that we collaborate with. I'm blanking on the names right now. United Way, where they have, you know, read-with-your-kids kind of campaign type of deals, and we, you know, our goal is always to empower the families, and so, you know, we talk about different options that they can use. Whether it's, whether it's reading, whether it's an audio book, whether it's taking time to draw, you know, being, playing to your strengths. So that's how we kind of approach it.

**Carter Patterson:** You know, what we've done here in Trenton was we got a master woodworker – his name's Phil Ritter - and he built these awesome little libraries for us. Those little libraries are now, they now live in five barber shops here in Mercer County. Those little libraries are filled with like little toys and books. I've gone out to provide some education to the barbers to say to the dads who are sitting there sometimes two or three hours (depending on whether or not you have an appointment), to say to the dads that are sitting there, "Hey man, go in the little library, grab a book, and read to your child, right?"

And so, it is the barbers who are kind of pushing the, the customers to go grab a book out of the little library and then what happens is that that little library also becomes a resource, because I did mention that also put toys in there, too. So sometimes guys they don't like to go to see their children empty-handed, so they always have a place to go to either get a book or a toy to be able to take to have these quality interactions with your children that's based around reading,

**Nigel Vann:** Great, okay, yeah. And then Liz did you want to say anything about that? Perhaps mention the piece we did about reading with your kids, I know there's some resources in that product.

**Liz Karberg:** Yeah, yeah. And just quickly, I know the Pact Evaluation did look at how Responsible Fatherhood programs improved father's knowledge of age-appropriate activities and engagement and those activities – all self-reported. So that would include things like reading the, you know, books that are, appropriate for your children's literacy level and doing those types of literacy activities with them.

And but, the Clearinghouse also has a product that Nigel and I worked on about reading to your children and kind of engaging in these literacy-promoting activities. So, we know that sometimes depending on the language capabilities, or, you know, educational experiences of fathers, that sometimes it can be intimidating. Maybe they don't feel confident their ability to read out loud or whatever the problem might be. As Carter mentioned, maybe they don't have access to all the books that they would want to be able to share with their children. So, we have a resource about, like, other activities that you can do with your children to promote literacy. Things like reading street signs as you're passing, naming and labeling in the grocery store when you're shopping together, other ways to get shared reading opportunities with your children. And I believe there are tips for fathers and practitioners available on the website around that.

**Nigel Vann:** Great, okay. I'm just taking these back, so we can hear a bit about big Chuck. I'm going to move these slides in a minute, Shawndi, because I know we haven't got much time left. The final slide, gives folks a chance to - if you have to leave before we get done because I know we're getting very close to time, you can click on a link on the final slide –

**Shawndi Johnson:** ...story about Chuck. Chuck is only 5'6", not a big guy, but his personality is huge, and I would say, he would say this was fair to say, he's had a lifetime of using that big personality and a lot of times without thinking about using that big personality – would just come out. And so, relationship - two kids later - dysfunctional relationship, made some questionable choices that led to him being separated from his family. Reunited with his family, his wife was still, had a similar personality to Chuck. So, going through a lot of support services in the community. Came through Dads Matter - so the week, this was literally three weeks ago, we went through useful "I" statements, exercises, and really did a lot of role-playing.



So, class on Thursday night, on Sunday he had a, you know, visit with her where she was coming to church and things didn't go well with parking. And she came up and she was ready to engage. Now I should have prefaced this by saying that this is from Chuck's, this is Chuck's version, I haven't heard his wife's version. But she comes up and she's yelling and she's ready for Chuck, to be Chuck, and Chuck stops, and he looks at his kids faces and they're waiting for him to do what their parents always do, and he didn't do it. He took a deep breath and he turned around and he talked to her.

Whatever happened after that, they ended up in church and being able to go to lunch afterwards. And when he shared that, it was just the pride in his face that he had, and he was kind of beaming, because he was doing that thing that we talked about. He was getting to that place of being able to be in a response place and not a reactive place. And that's what we're always talking about in, you know, in the workshops, so we're just really excited about, you know, this step of his journey.

**Nigel Vann:** Yeah that's great, and I was going to give everybody a chance to talk about a success story, so I'm glad we got time for that.

It is time, but, I'm, I do want to give each the presenters just a chance to leave us with one final thought. I think the only question we didn't get to was about the employment piece of the UIH. Is that something you could talk about very briefly, Carter? Or would you prefer to provide that information later on? We can post it.

**Carter Patterson:** Yeah, I can provide that information, because it's pretty cookie-cutter. It's, you know, our entry-level credentialing program. And our evidence based job readiness and career development curriculum. So yeah, I can post that separately.

**Nigel Vann:** Okay, that's great, yeah. And if the person who asked the question would like to leave their email, we can always just send that to you directly. So, anyway, yeah, I know if - go ahead.

**Carter Patterson:** No, I was just going to say I know the individual that posted it, so I'll send it him.

**Nigel Vann:** Oh, yeah, okay, cool. That's great, great. Okay, so I'll give everybody chance just for one final quick takeaway thought, and then we'll call it a day. So, Liz, do you want to leave us with a final takeaway?

**Liz Karberg:** Sure, I guess it's just, I'm struck by - I think I said this multiple times in my talk but - just the takeaway from my research into this is how broadly applicable these skills are. And so, you know, a lot of the evaluation work that Pacts did found that fathers might be less receptive to certain services, especially around relationships. But as Shawndi and Carter spoke to, learning, problem solving, and conflict management and anger management and communication can be taught in a number of different ways and really can impact huge parts of their lives, and broad parts of their lives. So, I guess that would be the big takeaway for me.

**Nigel Vann:** Great, thanks. Shawndi?

**Shawndi Johnson:** Mine is short and sweet; we can focus on the why when we're talking with these, you know, with our fathers and our participants. They really will, the things, they will be able to see perspective and I think that just, that's a game-changer for a lot of folks.

**Nigel Vann:** Wonderful, wonderful. Carter?

**Carter Patterson:** In regards to fatherhood work, if you go into the work with an attitude of "I'm going to save you," you'll fail. The only time, the only thing that we can do is provide opportunities for self-determination. That's what makes a consistent 24/7 Dad.

**Nigel Vann:** Thank you very much. I appreciate all of your expertise, and all the wisdom that's been shared today.

And thank you on behalf of everybody who's there, and I realize we've covered a lot of stuff here, so I encourage you to perhaps come back and at least look through the transcripts and see the resources after we post them, and that will be, you know, in the next month or so. We will have all that up, so do keep checking back.



And keep on sending your questions to our email address which I'll pop back to quickly here ([Help@FatherhoodGov.info](mailto:Help@FatherhoodGov.info) ). You can always send us an email there - always want to hear from you, we want to keep these conversations going.

And do either click on that evaluation form link while it's up there, look to leave us feedback ideas for future webinars. As I said, we're going to talk about recruitment next time in September. And thank you very much for your time, and everybody have a great day, bye-bye.

**Host:** And that does conclude today's Webinar. Again, thank you for your participation.