

# Fanning the Fatherhood **FIRE**:

A National Fatherhood Summit  
June 4-6, 2019 | Nashville, Tennessee



Family-focused  Interconnected  
Resilient  Essential

## **W3** **All in The Family: Engagement Opportunities in Child Welfare**

### **Presenters:**

**Dr. Matt Stagner, Vice President,  
Mathematica, Chicago, Illinois**

**Scott Baumgartner, Researcher,  
Mathematica, Washington, D.C.**

**Dr. Jennifer Bellamy, Associate Professor,  
University of Denver, Denver, Colorado**

# Understanding fathers and how to engage them: Insights from the PACT evaluation



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## PACT Responsible Fatherhood Evaluation Characteristics

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- Four fatherhood programs participated in the evaluation
- Sample size: 5,522 fathers enrolled from 2012-2015
- 50% randomly assigned to receive the program

### Process study

Examines how RF programs were structured and operated as well as fathers' participation in the services offered

### Qualitative study

Focuses on understanding the broader contexts of fathers' lives through three rounds of in-depth interviews with a subset of fathers assigned to the program group

### Impact study

Examines the effects and changes that program participation had on the fathers who received the program compared with those who did not

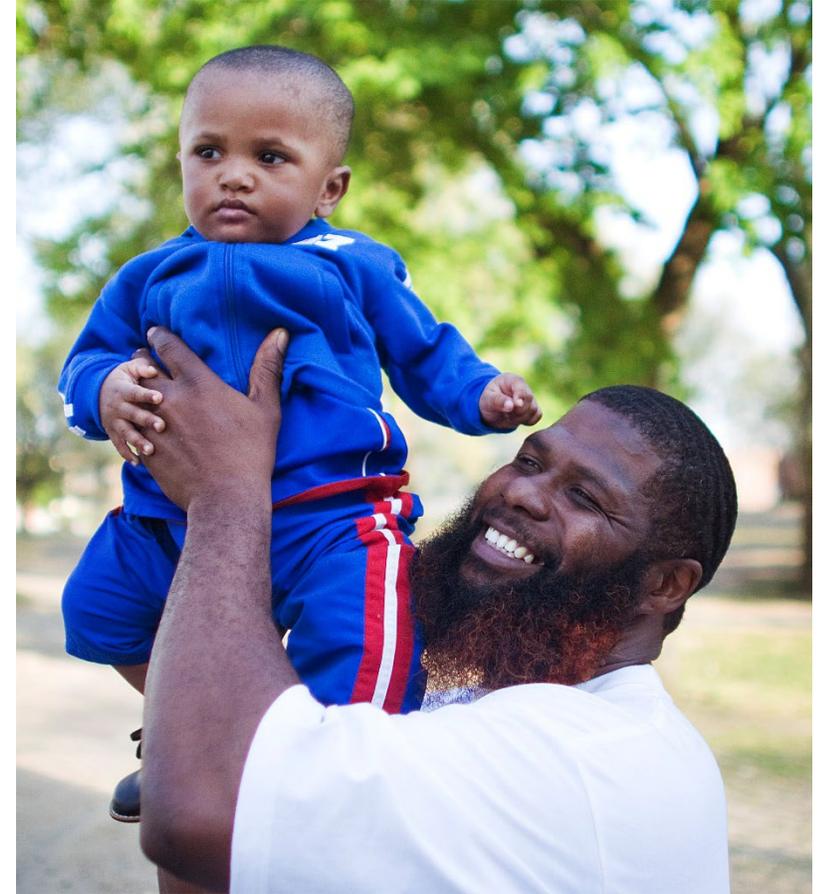


# Fatherhood: a Catalyst for Making Positive Life Changes

- Fathers are motivated to be involved in the lives of their children, but face barriers to doing so
- Fatherhood prompted a new outlook and desire to change course
- Enrolled in RF programs to “be a better father” and gain greater access to their children

*...I'm not going to be no help to my kids in prison or dead.*

*-- Michael*



# Early Lives Marred by Trauma



- Grew up in poverty, with early and frequent exposure to drugs and violence
- Presence of a positive father figure was rare

*So a lot of our clients have seen things as children no child should ever have to see. A lot of them have had things done to them that no child should ever have to endure. And some of them were asked to take on adult roles long before they had an understanding of how to navigate an adult world. And it's left them confused and broken. -- Group Facilitator*



# Father Involvement Affected by Co-Parenting Relationship

- Fathers often described their relationships with mothers as contentious, including presence of gatekeeping behaviors
- Few fathers had parenting time agreements or court orders granting them visitation or shared custody
- Small improvements in co-parenting relationships opened the door to more communication and involvement for some fathers

*She leaves me out in the dark about literally everything—doctors and all, medical and dental. She doesn't tell me anything... She makes it really hard to be a dad.*

*-- Mitchell*



# Fathers wanted to support their children, but also had to support themselves

*[I want to] make sure I can pay my child support but at the same time still have money to live and do the things I need to do to support myself.*

*-- Xavier*

*[Child support was] taking all of it... I stay in this little room and and I got some roommates so I pay \$80 a week in rent... and then I drive a Ram pickup, it sucks gas, and then I buy me a little food, but I can't even live paycheck to paycheck.*

*-- Andre*



# Fathers felt like the child support system did not work for them or their families

*You're not just paying for your children... for [every] \$100, they might see \$30 or \$40... they should see \$100, but no, you got to pay [the state].*

*-- Levi*

*If I was to choose [the mother] or the system, I would probably choose her... I know that it's all going to her for [my son].*

*-- Darnell*

*I think if you pay child support... that child should have to spend a circumstantial time with the father or mother, whoever's paying child support.*

*-- Kyree*



# How did RF programs engage fathers?



# VIDEO: Provide relevant and meaningful services



*RF program staff describe their approach to meeting fathers' needs*

<https://vimeo.com/245232650/23cea0f63c>



# VIDEO: Understand where dads come from



*Halbert Sullivan (Father Support Center) discusses the importance of hiring staff who have backgrounds that are similar to program participants*

<https://vimeo.com/262580735/3314db503d>



# Encourage supportive bonds between fathers

- On average, fathers had few supportive friends and family members
- Programs provided opportunities to socialize and peer support groups
- Two programs had fathers complete core program activities together as a group



# Address systemic and legal barriers through partnerships

- Promising features of partnerships with child support
  - Co-location with child support enforcement office
  - Dedicated child support enforcement case managers
  - Incentives for program participation, including arrears reduction and license reinstatement
- Two programs provided legal services through partnerships and other funding sources



# VIDEO: Partnering with Child Support



*A Ramsey County (Minnesota) child support enforcement caseworker discusses the agency's partnership with The FATHER Project*

<https://vimeo.com/262855139/42847a20a5>



# Summary of Key Points

- Fathers in PACT were motivated to play a positive role in the lives of their children, but face personal and societal barriers
- To engage fathers, the RF programs in PACT:
  - Provided relevant and engaging services
  - Established safe and trusting environments built on relationships
  - Treated fathers with compassion and respect
  - Offered a range of supports to address individual needs



# Fathers and Continuous Learning: Project Overview and Goals



# Touchpoints Contributions

- Touchpoints are opportunities for father and paternal relative engagement across the trajectory of a family's involvement with the child welfare system
- Moves from discrete services to a comprehensive approach
- Acknowledges interconnected relationships across services
- Identifies efficiencies and opportunities
- Touchpoint characteristics: Authority, Actors, Duration, Cascades, and Challenges



# Touchpoints

## 1. Early Touchpoints

- Prevention; Intake, report, and screening; Initial system response and legal determination; Differential/alternative response

## 2. Ongoing Touchpoints

- Courts and hearings; Direct services provided by child welfare case worker; Coordination and planning meetings; Involvement in child's life

## 3. Other Touchpoints

- Visitation; Foster care; Exit-oriented services



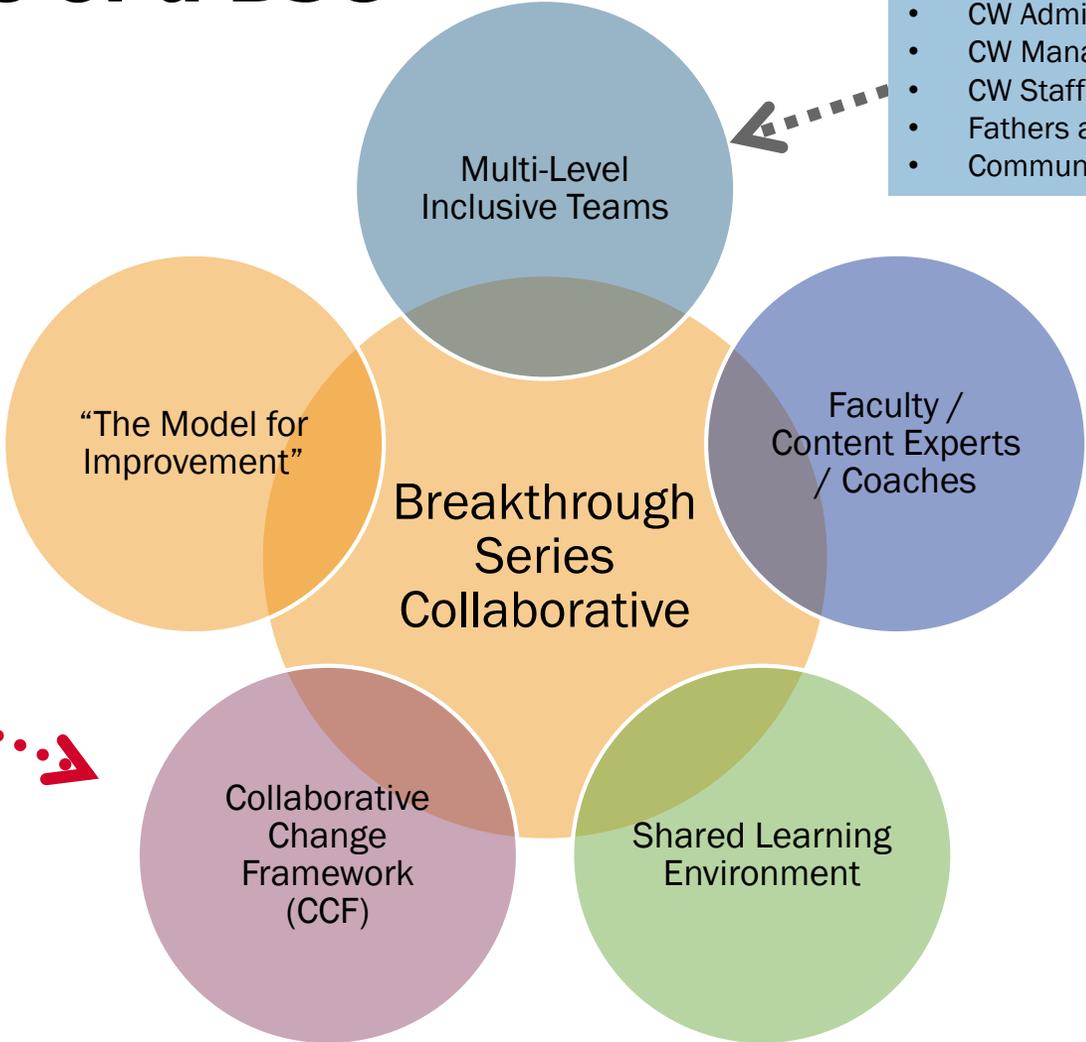
# Strategies for Engaging Fathers and Paternal Relatives

1. Partner with Fathering and Father Engagement Experts Staffing
2. Training
3. Making child welfare office more father friendly
4. Services
5. Discussing the importance of fathers with mothers



# Continuous Improvement Approach: Five Key Elements of a BSC

**Integrates  
Foundational  
Work on  
Touchpoints,  
Prior  
Research  
along with  
Expert Input**



- CW Administrator
- CW Manager
- CW Staff
- Fathers and Paternal Relatives
- Community Partner





# Questions and Answers

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## Stay in touch with us!

### Contact Information:

**Matt Stagner** | [mstagner@mathematica-mpr.com](mailto:mstagner@mathematica-mpr.com)

**Scott Baumgartner** | [sbaumgartner@mathematica-mpr.com](mailto:sbaumgartner@mathematica-mpr.com)

**Jennifer Bellamy** | [jennifer.bellamy@du.edu](mailto:jennifer.bellamy@du.edu)