



W4. Understanding the Past to Improve the Future: Lessons Learned in Fatherhood Program Service Delivery

Wednesday, June 5, 2019
11:30 a.m. – 12:45 p.m.

Moderator:

- Tanya Howell, Family Assistance Program Specialist, Office of Family Assistance, Washington, D.C.

Presenter:

- Nigel Vann, Product Development Lead, National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse, Silver City, New Mexico

Tanya Howell: Good morning. My name is Tanya Howell and I'm one of six federal program specialists in the Office of Family Assistance. If you have any questions about OFA, Responsible Fatherhood, Healthy Marriage, please see us after the presentation. Welcome to Understanding the Past to Improve the Future: Lessons Learned in Fatherhood Program Service Delivery. Our speaker today is Nigel Vann. Nigel is the Product Development Lead with the National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse in Silver City, New Mexico. Nigel has served as a manager, trainer and consultant in the fatherhood field since 1988, including major projects in the US and UK. The focus of his work has been on helping public and private agencies develop services that recognize the need of mothers and fathers, help fathers enhance their parenting, co-parenting and employment skills, and improve child well-being. Since 2008 he has worked with the National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse where he currently oversees development of their products as well as webinars. Nigel has written eight published articles on fatherhood work and authored various content for the Clearinghouse including the *Responsible Father Toolkit*, *Resources from the Field*. Please join me in welcoming Nigel Vann.

Nigel Vann: Thank you very much Tanya. I have been asked to speak on effective services and the Fatherhood Toolkit and what we've learned from that work and in particular to speak on group facilitation. I'm going to walk you down a path to get there. The title for this session is very intriguing. I wish I had come up with it because we obviously have to understand the past. We don't want to be reinventing the wheel. It's not just programs that have to understand the past.

I think a big thing that we do in the fatherhood program is help fathers understand their past and their path to where they are now and that there is a way forward from that. There are a lot of broken men that we see in these fatherhood programs and a lot of times they are not as connected to their families as they would like to be. They are not the role models they want to be for their





children and they're trying to figure that out. Sometimes I'm not even sure they know they're trying to figure that out when we first meet. In a fatherhood program we help them figure that out and help raise that low self-esteem that Kate talked about in the plenary. What did she say?

Participant: Be something to be esteemed

Nigel Vann: Yes, something to be esteemed. That's what dads want to do and in a fatherhood program we empower them to do it. I've been very impressed by some of these speakers that we've had in the plenary and the key messages there. The task then is how do we implement that in the field? It's always much harder implementing it in the field than it is trying to frame what we need to do.

Take a look at these quotes, and I'd like a few people to tell me which ones of these are speaking to them.

[Following quotes from slide:

1. People don't remember what you said. People don't remember what you did. But they do remember how you made them feel. Maya Angelou
2. "It's important to think about how to have conversations about depression –because doing so can change lives." Dr. Sidney Hankerson, Mental Health and Black Men, 2012
3. "Children have never been very good at listening to their elders, but they have never failed to imitate them." James A. Baldwin
4. In every job that must be done, there is an element of fun. You find the fun, and the job's a game. PL Travers, Mary Poppins]

Participant: Number one

Nigel Vann: What exactly does that say to you?

Participant: In my personal experience and relationships, and I've read books about this, it's not about what you do; but, that your former spouse will always remember how you made them feel. So, the way you leave a relationship is something to be mindful of. Especially if you want to keep that door open.

Nigel Vann: I'd never actually thought of it in that way. That is very interesting.





Participant: It's kind of like in every job that must be done, there is an element of fun. It is a game.

Nigel Vann: That's right. There's been times when I've been dragging to get on a plane to go somewhere and I thought, "I don't really want to do this." But then when you get to this kind of conference, the passion bounces off the wall. That's why we are all doing this work and we need to feel that passion from each other to invigorate ourselves as well. So, it has to be fun. If it's not fun, you aren't going to come. Particularly if you haven't done well in High School, you're not going to come and sit in a class that's just droning on. We want to have some fun and learn together and think together and support each other. That's what it's all about.

Participant: I don't like number three. I think it is implicit that it is the necessity for a responsible father.

Nigel Vann: Yes, and a lot of men don't necessarily realize that, particularly young men. We don't realize that if we're yelling at mom that the children are taking that in, or they're cringing behind the door. "Mommy and Daddy are at it again." They need to see us arguing but in a responsible, respectful way.

Participant: I also think it takes it out of the realm of fathers verbally trying to instruct children or discipline children and puts the weight back on them to actually model the correction. They can avoid a lot of frustration and impatience by taking that in. Walk the walk and talk the talk.

Nigel Vann: I think a lot of dads are probably frustrated because they don't feel they can do that. We can empower them to do that.

Participant: I also like number one but I'm going to talk about number two. We're losing dads to the pressure, to suicide because they cannot have a relationship with their sons or daughters. That is something not many people are talking about. I believe I heard one person talk about it for only five seconds today.

Nigel Vann: Yes, I heard the same thing. It's a major issue. In fact, the person who asked the question, or the person who answered the question in the plenary session said that one in five men have some form of mental health or depression. It's something I've been hearing from fatherhood programs since the early nineties. They want to be able to help men with their mental health issues, even if it is to just acknowledge that mental health is something we can talk about. But it is very difficult to do within the realms of a fatherhood program. You almost have to have a partnership with a mental health professional. But the problem is finding a mental health professional who is really going to be able to work with the men we have in our programs.





Participant: Number one. Apologizing to a child is effective parenting. Sometimes you forget to do that. It instills in them an emotional and relational support that we have as a parent toward them. So, it allows them to come to us.

Nigel Vann: I think that's so important as well. I know as a dad when I would lose it and scream at my son I would regret it. There would be times when I was thinking, "Oh boy, I'm not doing what I'm supposed to be doing." But that's when you have to apologize.

I don't want to spend too much time on this. It's an opportunity to start thinking about what the issues are. If you wanted to use this in staff training or training you do with dads, you can put anything up there. If it was a longer training, I would put newsprint up on the wall in four different places and have people go choose the one that's speaking to them the most. Have four small groups, then I can ask you to talk more about what you're thinking. Immediately everybody in the room gets to talk and hear each other. Then you're off and running with a good training session.

This is the mission that I've been given for the day. We can talk about other things as well but essentially, we are going to look at what happened over the last thirty years. I'm going to highlight some things we have in the Fatherhood Toolkit. We're going to focus a little on partnership development, case management, the importance of staff training and support, and good group facilitation, because I think that is where you start having a lot of fun with the men and can really make an impact.

Here's where we look at the history and I'll tell you a bit of my personal history as we go through this. I am originally from England and came to America, Tennessee, in 1979. I went to East Tennessee State University where I received my Masters. I then moved to Tucson, Arizona where my son was born and my wife, at the time, received her doctorate. She got a job in Baltimore as a professor. A colleague of hers heard about a job with the Department of Human Resources in Maryland to manage a fatherhood program. I was the only one who interviewed and got the job. Since then, I have been doing fatherhood work in various capacities.

Doing this work and meeting people like you has become the passion of my life. I have had the benefit of going to programs all over the country and quite a few in England too. I've always been so impressed by the work that has helped fathers change their lives and change the lives of their children. What we haven't done such a good job of is documenting that, so we can really prove that.

Participant: Just out of curiosity, in England, do they have the same type of problems we have in America?



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Nigel Vann: Absolutely. We have the same problems all over the world. In varying situations, but a lot of it comes down to economics of money and opportunity.

Participant: What about their court system. Is it unbiased as well?

Nigel Vann: There are similarities and differences. The child support system there is different. It evolved on a slightly slower path than here. You don't get chased down quite so much for child support there and there is a much better safety net on the welfare side, so that makes a big difference. When they had the Labour government in charge, they had some very progressive programs working with dads; but, since then there's not been as much support. There are still some great things going on there.

I got involved with this work in 1988. Got hired to manage this program and at that time there had been this teen father collaboration project that was funded by the Ford Foundation and a few others, but mainly Ford. It was operated by the Bank Street College of Education and there are published reports on it. I believe there were eight sites around the country. When I started my job, I didn't know what I was going to do. I picked up a publication called, *What About the Boys?* At that time, you think about the context of how this field has evolved. Go back to the Second World War when we had a lot of men getting killed. We had a lot of widows. That's really the beginning of the American welfare system. You had the program that was then called Aid for Dependent Children to support the children of widows. Over time, particularly in the sixties and seventies, we started having a lot of unwed parenthood. That's when the welfare system started evolving. Now we're supporting single mothers, but the fathers are still alive. You had the child support agency form in 1975. It's more than a coincidence but, if you look at the wages of young men, particularly between the ages of 16 and 25, from the year 1975, they have consistently gone down. A lot of manufacturing, shipbuilding, and mining jobs disappeared. A lot of the types of jobs you could get if you dropped out of high school. It's not coincidental that people started having trouble paying child support as it started. There were a lot of people in the communities who were seeing the struggles that men and families were going through.

When I started in 1988 there were a lot of fatherhood programs at the community level. You didn't hear about it because a lot of people were just doing it without even getting paid. There were a lot of people stepping up and trying to help people in their communities. It was a very small scale, but I think this teen father collaboration picked up on part of that impetus. The teen father collaboration worked with teen fathers aged 15 to 19.

When I started working in 1988 that program was no longer funded but showed that young men were involved with their children. They would come to the program and were already involved with their children. They were men who wanted to be involved. They got some help and it showed that this is a viable thing to do and offer. I was able to talk to and visit some of the



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programs that were still around but didn't have the same funding. I'd been doing this for about six months and there was a conference in Chicago organized by a group called Parents Too Soon. They were working with young mothers, but they had a track to talk about young fathers. I went to all the sessions in that track. We would go around the room and introduce ourselves and I'm hearing the names of people that I have been talking to on the phone, because people around the country who are doing this work had come together. You talk about the passion and energy that you feel at these places. I'm not sure I've ever quite felt the energy and passion as I did that moment because people were connecting with each other. They didn't know other people were doing this.

From that, I got involved with the Young Unwed Fathers pilot project. There was an organization called Public Private Ventures based in Philadelphia. Sadly, they've gone out of business, but they did a lot of research projects looking into helping mainly youth. They did a lot of work with YouthBuild and youth mentoring programs. They received funding to do something with fathers around teen pregnancy. But then that evolved into; we're not going to try to prevent teen pregnancy with this project, we're going to work with young fathers because no one else had really done that. I was initially on the advisory group. I lived in Baltimore. They were based in Philadelphia. They offered me a job which I eventually took. I'm very glad I did, otherwise I wouldn't be standing here now. I don't know what path I would have followed.

We selected six sites around the country to do this project. It was a mix of foundation and federal funding. The Department of Labor was one of the prime funders, the Ford Foundation was the other big funder. But there were various foundations doing that. For that project we developed the Fatherhood Development Curriculum, which is still available through NPCL. It was also adapted for the Responsible Fatherhood Curriculum that was used in the Parents Fair Share project that kicked off around the same time.

I went to all six sites of the Young Unwed Fathers pilot project. I worked closely with them and learned from them. I still didn't really know anything, but I was learning from them while I was supposedly providing technical assistance to them. I also visited the seven Parents Fair Share projects as well. From those two projects we learned that fathers will come.

I remember one of my first presentations I talked about the fact that what we're learning from this program, and this was the time that the movie Field of Dreams had come out, is "If you build it they will come." It's hard to get them to come. But they will come, and they will stay, if it's real. You have to have something real for them. Even then, it's still very hard work because these men come with a lot of personal obstacles. That's what we're talking about; helping them understand their paths so they can move to the future.





There were a lot of organizational policies that got in the way of making this work. Some of the organizations received grants for these programs but didn't necessarily have the buy-in from all the key people. They had procedures that didn't necessarily fit working with men. We were trying to provide employment services for them. We were using what was then the Job Training Partnership Act programs. They weren't set up to work with men. We were sending men to these programs and they were not getting the services they needed.

Above all, there were public policy issues where the only real public policy that was dealing with men was to take their child support and put them in prison if they didn't pay. The first program I worked for was called the Absent Parents Employment Program and was started by two local judges. The only option these two local judges in Maryland had was to send these men to jail if they couldn't pay their child support, which was just ludicrous. They knew it was ludicrous, so they went to the state. They got the state to provide funding so we could do an employment program. I was managing the program. One of those judges went on to head the federal child support system during the Clinton administration and started changing child support. Child support has come a long way. It also had the Responsible Fatherhood demonstration where child support was working with child support dollars and welfare to work dollars to work with visitation and parenting. There were approximately nine projects around the country.

The Parents Fair Share project came right out of welfare reform that was happening at the time. We had the Welfare Reform Act in 1996. Leading up to that were welfare-to-work programs that only worked with mothers on welfare. You could get waivers to work with dads. The Parents Fair Share project had a lot of federal involvement and provided grant waivers to the sites that received those grants. They were working closer with child support and the federal employment system, but it was still a struggle. They also worked with older men. Therefore, they focused on employment. They focused more on child support. The only real success they could show at the end of it was for the harder to employ. It was the first one that had a control group. There was an experimental group. I sat at a few of these sites where they would do the intake with the father and you could see the staff getting really excited. He wants to be here; we're going to help him. Then they'd call New York and he'd go into the control group so they couldn't help him. It's really hard for staff when you're doing that. You have to do that kind of evaluation if you want to have the thorough results. It's hard on the staff person doing the work. They did show some gains in helping the harder to employ. Momentum was really rolling and there were a lot of good things happening. We were seeing this work and I was definitely getting to see it just by being at the programs and talking to the dads.

The Partners for Fragile Families was a big initiative of the Ford Foundation that had a lot of federal funding. You had to partner with child support. It was a real effort to show that if we partner with child support we can set different requirements for men while they were in the program. It didn't go quite as far as it could have, and partly because the Ford Foundation





became less interested. After 2001, 9/11 and the financial crash, a lot of the private foundations that had been supporting this work nationally pulled their portfolios. I was doing a lot of work in the San Francisco Bay area where we had a large grant for a five-year period with a foundation there. They were getting ready to go national. We were going to do the work nationally and they were going to fund a lot of programs. After 9/11 their whole portfolio went away. They didn't have that money anymore. So, we have to be grateful that OFA picked up the mantle after the Deficit Reduction Act of 2006.

We've had the Responsible Fatherhood and Healthy Marriage programs funded since then. I believe we're in the third grantee cohort now. What we're doing at this conference is fanning that fatherhood fire. As some of the speakers have been saying, it is there. We have to keep fanning it.

Personally speaking, I'm encouraged at how far we've come over time. You don't have to sell the need to work with fathers quite as much. I remember the first time I did a plenary at a conference, in California in the early nineties, after we'd started the Young Unwed Fathers project. It was a group that was mainly working with mothers and children. The feeling I was getting was almost like, "Why are you talking to us about fathers?" I have not had that feeling in a long while. You don't have to push as much.

Then I spoke at a child support conference in the South and it was the same thing. They'd put me up on the stage as part of the big group, to talk about fathers. But some of the questions they asked me, they couldn't understand that they had to think about helping fathers because their job was to get money. We really have come a long way.

It is so encouraging that we have all the federal support and this initiative, but yet we're still seeing that in a lot of local offices it's not happening as the feds want it to happen. We still have to push it and get local offices, and a lot of state jurisdictions to use their TANF money to encourage the workers to be more father friendly.

If you're in a child welfare or a child protection situation, find the dad, don't start putting the child somewhere else because dad's out there. It's not hard to find him. You have to find out how you're going to engage him.

I'm sure most people in the room can testify to the fact that these programs have a big impact on individual lives, but we still don't have enough data and evaluation that really says that for some policy makers. We have to keep building that. The personal obstacles that we saw with these men at the beginning with the Young Unwed Fathers pilot project are the same we are seeing in the programs now. In a lot of ways, it may even be harder nowadays. If you look at how the





economy's changing, and it's great to hear that we have all these jobs, but if our men can't get the jobs or if the jobs don't pay enough ...

I was very pleased to hear Clarence Carter say the reason all these people are out of the labor market is not just because of a 3.6% unemployment rate, because that's who we don't talk about enough and that's who we work with.

I visited a program in Dallas a couple of years ago. The housing situation in Dallas is so tough and a lot of the men they're working with have come out of prison, can't get jobs, can't get housing, and they're on probation and they're having to pay to be on probation. It's ludicrous. They're behind the 8 ball and the systems are just not set up to help them. We still have to keep chipping away at that to make it work. But yet, the men we get into our programs we can help. What worries me is all the other people out there who we're not able to help because you can only help so many. I'm still feeling positive.

Participant: With all your experience, I was wondering if you feel that there's a barrier right from the beginning. After that, if they're not married, the father is kind of left out things. We're trying to get the nurses and staff to establish paternity while the mom is still in the hospital.

Nigel Vann: Which they didn't do back then but yes.

Participant: I feel like there's no resources for the father to find out how he can become part of that child's life. It seems to be up to the mother if she wants him to see the child. Then they have to go to court. That's a lot of resources. It's expensive and I just think right from the beginning they're left out.

Nigel Vann: Yes. I really think that the most essential place to connect with dads is before birth, at birth, and after birth. It's also the magic moment. That's why the Partners for Fragile Families project that was working with Young Unwed Fathers was trying to build on that magic moment. There are programs out there for young fathers, but there's not enough. Is anyone here working with young men?

Participant: I am from Manchester, New Hampshire working with a couple of teenage parent programs. What I find difficult with this population is not only do you have the state macro systems trying to get help for these teens, but because they're minors, the responsibility lies on the parents and then what's difficult about some of my situations is that I have one set of parents who don't want to collaborate with the other set of parents. One family wants it this way and the other family wants it this way. Then you have these two teenagers that yes, performed an adult act, they have this beautiful child, they want to do what's right, but they can't access some of the resources when you're 18. I'm really trying to work closely with them, so they can maintain the





relationship, maintain their understanding of their child and their development, and being there having that bonding time. But it's definitely hard, especially for the teenage male. Trying to get his mind to understand the impact this will have on the rest of his life is hard, but is going to do what it takes in order to be a part of his child's life. I think it's the system that's really tough because they can't access TANF. They can't move out on their own, and have to rely on one of their parents. Then having this adds another layer. I think it's just going through the different layers in working with any father. I work with quite a few where some of those dynamics are really tough going back and forth trying to navigate "How do I get access to this? How do I get access to that?" It's a challenge.

Nigel Vann: It is, but it's such a crucial moment to try and intervene.

Participant: I'm the paternity establishment liaison for child support in Michigan. We sort of have a teen pregnancy prevention curriculum that we offer to all Michigan schools. It does not address birth control and contraception but sequencing your worries and thinking about what you have to do to get to child support. It's a great program. Texas has a great one too.

Nigel Vann: Yes, Texas does yes.

Participant: My name's Carter Patterson and I run a fatherhood program in Trenton, New Jersey called Operation Fatherhood. It's a program of UIH Family Partners. We work with young fathers. There is this one father in particular who is 16 years old and has four children. The challenge has been getting him to understand that "You created these lives and I know you still want to ride your skateboard and do things as a child; but, now you have to step up to the plate and you have to be a healthy father." Because we have a lot of dads in the program, we partnered him up with other dads that we mentored. We have classes on a daily basis from 10:00 - 11:00 a.m. I'm not going to sit here and say that it's been completely successful and that he comes to every session, but the fact of the matter is that we're there. We have the program and we have the resources to help him. We have helped him with the child support modifications and some employment issues. It's really up to him to grow as an individual with the other peers, mentors and other fathers we have on our program. It's been tough. It's not easy.

Nigel Vann: Thank you. I should also mention that the program that Carter is with was one of the sites in the Parents Fair Share project. There was a site here in Memphis that was part of that project. The more we can do to help young dads the better. A lot of times the family of the mother can be an obstacle because they're blaming him for getting their daughter pregnant. There's an awful lot of work there.

Participant: Did you say it was in Memphis? Which program?





Nigel Vann: Yes, the Parents Fair Share project in Memphis. I don't remember the name of the organization that ran that program though. As far as I'm aware, Carter's organization, UIH Family Partners in New Jersey, is the only organization from those first three demonstration projects that is still doing fatherhood work.

That has been the history of the fatherhood field unfortunately, because funding comes and goes, and then organizations close down. In that 1980s teen father demonstration project, there was a project in San Francisco that was operated by an organization that mainly worked with young mothers. They received new funding at least two more times. I mentioned I was doing work out in the Bay area in the late nineties. I worked closely with them again so that was at least their third iteration of having funding, but they don't have it anymore. It's harder to go back to the last century and find things that are still going on.

There are at least three people here [at the Summit] from Partners for Fragile Families project sites. Joe Jones from Baltimore, Wallace McLaughlin from Indianapolis, and Guy Bowling from Minneapolis, who is presenting this afternoon with a couple of his fathers.

I wanted to ask at the beginning how many of you are new to working with fathers, within the last couple of years? How many of you have been doing this for more than five years? More than ten years? 15 years? Keep standing. If you've been doing it for more than 20 years, keep standing up. If you've been doing it for less than 20, sit down. How about 25 years?

Participant: Not officially.

Nigel Vann: Tell us a little bit about your story.

Participant: I work for Friends Outside, just outside of Los Angeles County. We work with re-entry fathers and their families.

Nigel Vann: What have you learned in 25 plus years?

Participant: It's a passion that started for me when I started at Friends Outside. It just grew, and it's very much a social justice issue for me. That's what keeps my fire going.

Nigel Vann: One of the things I do for the Clearinghouse is organize and facilitate the webinars that we do every other month or so. We did one last year on the role of women in fatherhood and it was one of the top three attendances we've had for webinars. It created a lot of enthusiasm. It's a testimony to the work that women have done in this field. A lot of the programs in the past were started by women. It was women who were working with families and seeing the need to engage dads. Then we saw some power struggles in some of those programs because they would





hire a male. There was one of the earlier OFA grantees that was working with men in prison or coming out of prison in New York. All five staff were females. They went into the prisons and worked with these men. I didn't go to that program, but I've seen some very effective female facilitators inside prisons and out. It doesn't matter whether you're a man or a woman. It's "can you connect with the men."

Participant: You mentioned webinars. Under what organization are they and did you record them? Are they available?

Nigel Vann: The organization is the National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse, which I work for. You can download materials online at fatherhood.gov/webinars. We've been doing it since 2006. I've not been the voice on all of them, but I've been the voice on a lot of them since 2008. You can also download some of the later audio transcripts. The next one coming up is July 17th on co-parenting.

You hear talk about father-friendliness assessment of agencies that are working with families and may or may not be working with men. First impression, as soon as you walk in that door, the person at the desk has got to be welcoming. They can't be giving you a funny look, even subconsciously. Everybody on that staff has got to have some kind of father-friendliness training; otherwise, you've lost it before you begin. If you have a male doing street outreach, he has to make that connection then and there. He shouldn't promise, "I'll fix all your problems." And then can't. .

Participant: I'm Mervil Johnson from Workforce Board.

Nigel Vann: Mervil has a great little booklet that he produced on local services.

Participant: We're updating it this year. Workforce Board granted wave two of the Healthy Marriage funding. Fathers were always a strong improvement but as our program went along over the five years, by the end we almost had equal numbers of mothers and fathers in the fathers' program. In addition, the more we made the employment prominent, the greater the participation was. It was really a drawing card. I don't know if that was because we were a workforce-oriented organization, so I'm trying to find out what in terms of looking at the span in these programs, was there like a parent and relationship, fun with the children? Does that vary depending on the program emphasis on employment?

Nigel Vann: I think it certainly does depend on the program emphasis. It depends on what you're presenting. I'll let others speak to this, but I think when you're engaging with a man who is a typical participant in a responsible fatherhood program, he has two or three main issues. One is, if he's a non-residential parent, he wants access to his children. He has issues maybe with the





court, maybe with the mother. If he's paying child support he's really messed up about that. If he doesn't have a decent job, then he wants help getting one. One of those three issues, I think, are your hot buttons. If you're working with younger men, it's going to be slightly different. It's going to be, "How do I manage the relationship with her mother, her parents? How do I do anything?" So, there is a difference between the younger men and the older men. Somebody was telling me the other day they have a really hard time getting enough young men in the 20 - 25 age range because she said, "They're not ready yet. They almost need to go and get messed up a bit more before they'll come in." I think if you have some older men and some younger men together in a program, those older, wiser men who have been there, done that, can give a bit of advice to the younger men. That can be a big help because they'll listen to them more than you. Anybody see anything else that really brings men into their program? Yes Carter.

Carter Patterson: I think the one key thing is the messaging and the first person that the dads meet. When they come through my office it's warm. The messaging around the walls is positive, even with my clients' service specialists. I have several staff members and a lot of times I say, "Look, I do not want to see you banging away on your keyboard, I don't want you writing any notes. We need to take some time to build rapport." Then you also have to be intentional. I don't want you sitting across from a man. You need to come out from behind your desk and you have to sit next to each other, especially the way I have their offices set up.

Nigel Vann: Because that's how we talk to each other if we're men.

Carter Patterson: This is the way that we bond. A lot of times you have the men that come in spilling their soul, and you're there writing notes? No, he just told you everything, so you cannot be this robot of a person that has no emotion. You must keep a professional healthy balance. Share the fact that you are also a parent. You don't have to share details, but you have to put some skin in the game in order to build rapport. After you build that rapport, then when they leave, you can put the intake information into the database and go from there.

Nigel Vann: If you don't remember it all you can go back and get it later, right?

Carter Patterson: Absolutely. My biggest funder is the New Jersey Office of Child Support Services. A lot of times, if a man comes in and they have child support issues I can suspend enforcement activity, just because you are involved with our program. But they have to demonstrate actual participation. Then we send notes to our contract administrator. That's important. I think a lot of times the grassroots fatherhood organizations don't reach out to their state child support offices and that's where the men are.

I send client service specialists to actually work in the courtrooms. After the men finish going through with their session, they can actually go to interview rooms with my client outreach





specialists and do the fatherhood work right there. There are supplemental things we have. We have a partnership with a dentist, a dress to impress room, free haircuts, bus tickets, and bus passes. All of these things to make the man whole again.

The staffing pattern is really important. I have Bill who's here with me. He's like, "Pop Pop!" A lot of times the men go into the office with this older gentleman, and it's like, "Man, that guy just talked to me like he was my dad." I have a young man who is a millennial and also females on staff. All of that is very important. You just have to be intentional with your messages.

Participant: How do you fund it?

Carter Patterson: Through the New Jersey Office of Child Support Services

Participant: If you can do it, we can do it. I need your card, please.

Nigel Vann: Remember you can also use the app for the conference to get each other's contact info. Again, that underlines how important it is to be able to help them with the child support stuff. I think we're still struggling with co-parenting, a bit, right? We've known from early days that we need to address it. The Parents Fair Share project had a mediation component, very low use for that.

Participant: I just want to add a little more to what he said about those who actually work with the fathers. I train the staff who work with the fathers. Staff learning how to build trust, maintain trust, sustain trust is so important, and so are body language skills. Empathy training, because it's not just the first impression, it's the ongoing relationship that keep men coming back.

Nigel Vann: Absolutely. It's what I said at the beginning, you have to be real and treat each other with respect. Staff should be modeling what they're expecting the fathers to do with their children. LD Bennett said something very interesting yesterday. She said, "If you want to engage your clients, you have to engage your employees." I think that's the words she used. We have to walk the talk.

One of the things I will always remember is I was visiting a program with one of the staff and a couple of the young men in the program. The staff member was driving all of us somewhere and a good-looking woman was walking along the street and he makes a derogatory remark about her. I'm thinking, "What have you just been talking to these men about in class? You have to keep yourself switched on all the time. You have to walk that talk."

Participant: We were talking yesterday in session about the sustainability piece, which is really big, and for many people here it's a relatively new program. That means they probably started





them during the Obama administration, when there was more focus on boys and men and all the banter. I remember years ago when Joe Jones and all the guys got together. We were talking about the need to make children and families the focus of fatherhood, so that generating support could be easier because the majority of grant makers support children and family programs.

We talked about a search we did where we found 5,500 grant makers for children and families in the private sector and two for fatherhood. The need to make the connection between the responsible father and his value to children and families, is very important in the private sector and increasingly important in the government space.

Participant:

[Most of this comment was inaudible. The gist of it seems to have been as follows:] It was good to hear all the federal people speaking yesterday about fatherhood. But there doesn't seem to be enough cross-agency communication or support at the local level. The best support for local work often comes from local foundations.

Nigel Vann: What we need to do at the grassroots level is help the feds push that up because if you're not getting that support from the local agencies, then the feds will help you. I was talking to a director who helped their program connect to their local child support office because they weren't being responsive. It's a very good point about the local foundations as well. I mentioned that a lot of the national foundations have pulled out of this work since 9/11, but there is still a lot of funding out there in the communities from the local foundations.

Participant: Foundations are far more interested in child and family welfare at the local level.

Nigel Vann: Yes

Participant: I'm Faye Nelson from Alabama, Deputy Commissioner over most financial programs that you are talking about. Child support, childcare, snap programs are all under my area of responsibility. In Alabama, we fund over 20 fatherhood programs with our TANF funding. I don't know if anybody's tapped into that resource in your states. TANF allows a great deal of flexibility in how those dollars are utilized. They go through different processes for funding. You need to make those connections at your local level with your TANF programs because there are dollars that will support fatherhood programs. We've been funding fatherhood programs through our TANF dollars for years, and we are expanding that into other areas of our state. So that is a resource that could support sustainability for your programs if you face losing that source of funding.

Nigel Vann: Yes, it can be a hard conversation to have at the local level but it's very important to have. I can testify to how effective some of those programs are. I actually went with Tanya to





visit some in Alabama. There are a few states that have been able to plug into those TANF funds, but not very many, and that's a big pot of money sitting there that is earmarked for this as Susan Golanka explained yesterday.

Participant: We just learned about TANF programs yesterday.

Nigel Vann: That really led to the funding for the OFA and Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood work, with the focus on formation of two parent families, prevention of out of wedlock pregnancies and, employment.

I am getting tight on time here, so I am going to run through a couple of these. It's very important to have partnerships in the community because you can't do all this under one roof. A few programs have services all under one roof. These slides are going to be available afterward.

We mentioned mental health at the beginning. Certainly, you need someone to help men get jobs, and acquire job skills. You also need someone who can help them improve their educational skills in order for them to pass the high school equivalency. The Fathers Support Center in Indianapolis was part of the Partners for Fragile Families project. They have a partner with the education community come in and do high school equivalency for as long as it takes to get them their equivalency diploma. Then they have graduation ceremonies where the families come and it's a major achievement.

Other programs have helped men go to community college, to a four-year college, to really support them so they can do the kind of things they may never thought they could do.

Participant: Does OFA consider the actual grant opportunity to allow us to spend more money on mental health?

Nigel Vann: Yes, but at the moment you can't use OFA grant funds for services like mental health.

Participant: I think it would be easy to just put that in there, but it is harder to do it. We have to follow where the funds are and get that work done.

Nigel Vann: I have to deflect that question to Tanya.

Tanya Howe: Yes, we've talked about it. During the second round we realized that there were a lot of programs that connect with other federal agencies, or fellow funders. There is a restriction with fatherhood funds. Because there's funds already out there that allow you to reach out and pay for mental health services, we can't use the fatherhood funds to do the same thing. But again,





it's a topic that can always come back up. We have a new branch Chief, Seth Chamberlain. I'm one of two of us that have been there since 2006, so these conversations will come back around. But as it stands now, no.

Participant: In the past we did an announcement on extra points to those that were in good standing that had been funded in a cohort. 500 points or something like that. But for this round we haven't had that conversation.

Nigel Vann: Certainly, for those who have not received OFA funding, stay tuned. I believe you are on our listserv now, so you will get notification if those funds become available. The RFP will probably come out this time next year

The main thing I want to point out, and it's repeating what I already said about not just encouraging the client but encouraging the employee. You need to have staff who are not just trained, but supportive and can take issues to each other and to their superiors. We don't want to burn people out.

One of the things we've been doing at the Clearinghouse is developing tip cards. We have tip cards for practitioners, and we have tip cards for dads. For the tip cards for dads, you can go on our website, download them, and print them off. We have tip cards for expectant dads, new dads, dads of toddlers, preschoolers, pre-teens, and I think we're going to be doing teenagers next.

This one's on group facilitation so it has most of my main tips. For more information, go to our toolkit, there's a section on group facilitation with various links.

I'm going to make a few very quick points. First, it's important to understand your role as a facilitator is key to what's going to happen with this whole process. If you get men into a group session, and you don't make it fun, then you're going to lose them. But, you also have to make sure you're informing them. You have to have in your mind what it is you want to get across. If you want to use the curriculum, you have some activities to use. If you're conducting an activity, you have to know what your end goal is. If you have people break into small groups, you have to be very clear what they're going to do even before they get there, otherwise, you're going to lose time because everyone's confused as to what they're supposed to be talking about. You also have to make sure that you manage the reporting process so that you fully process and see that people are walking away with what you want. As you go through an activity, you are going to go off on tangents and you want to go with those tangents because you want to talk about what is important to the men in the room. Sometimes you're going to stay with that tangent if it's important for everyone, but at some point, you probably need to pull back and try and get to where you're trying to go for your takeaway message. You may or may not get there, in which case you need to come back and do it next time.





There are at least four basic roles that you play as a facilitator. First you have to engage the group. That happens before they come in if you've had a chance to talk to them. But if not, as they walk in the door you have to engage them so they feel welcome. You have to make sure you're giving them information. You have to do that in different ways, so they can take that in, in different ways. You're not going to just give them bits of paper or write things on the board. Use videos and personal testimonies from people. You want to have them do some role playing. You want to get them involved. You don't want them just sitting there writing stuff down.

The curricula where you have people writing stuff down doesn't really work for me. You have to make sure you involve everyone. You're always going to have somebody who talks too much, so you have to find a way of getting them to share the time. You're also going to have people who don't say very much. They're often the ones that are really taking it in. You don't necessarily want to put them on the spot, but over the course of time, they are going to get more involved and most likely have more to say.

The hardest thing is to help them apply this in a real-life situation. That's where I think having these opening and closing rituals, which most programs do, so that they know what they're going to do when they first come in, and they know what they're going to do when they leave. Some programs will have people go around and give their yays and nays, what's been good since they were last here, or what's been a bit of a struggle. At the end, some programs just have a group hug. Some programs want to hear what the takeaway is. You want to make sure one way or another that the dads are getting what you think they are getting. When they come back next time you want to pick up and say, "We talked about the importance of not shouting at your children so much. How's that going? Have you found that it's worked better?" How's that relationship going with the mother? Did she let you see the children this week?"

It's also important to think about the stages of group development, because groups do go through various stages. When you first get a group of men together it's a bit chaotic. No one really knows what they're doing there. You have some guys who aren't really accepting you. They're uncomfortable in this environment. They don't really know what's going on. You have to go with that. You've really got to use your engaging skills. You have to make them feel respected and welcomed.

There's going to be various storming going on as you go through, because people are trying to figure out what's going on here. You have to use your skills of involving and engaging them. Gradually you're going to get to the point where people start getting it, "Oh, this is what we do in there. We're going to come in, there's going to be something fun happening, then we're going to do something a bit more serious. We're going to talk about this, we're going to do that." Maybe other people are going to come in, but things are going to happen. I'm going to walk away and





I'm going to have learned something. Then I'm going to come back next time and I'm going to talk about that a little bit. The more you do that the men will just take over.

One of the best sessions I remember is sitting in on one in California and this guy came in at the beginning and had this whole story about how he'd been trying to see his children and went over to the house. The mom wouldn't let him in, and they had gotten into a big screaming match. He was totally at his wits' end. He was expecting the group to say, "It's tough, this and that." The facilitator almost physically pulled back. He didn't say a word. He waited for the group to talk. The group started saying, "Well, what were you expecting? You've told us this and that and you have to go at it slower." They spent 10 or 15 minutes counseling him on how he could have managed the situation. The group was performing. They had bonded as a group, and shared their deep stuff. They trusted each other and they trusted the facilitator and the facilitator trusted the group.

The hardest thing is probably when the group starts coming to an end. You have to send them off on their journey. In a good program, they can keep coming back for more, maybe even keep having sessions. But you have to be able to push them to go and do what you've been talking about. You've helped them understand their past. You've helped them get new knowledge, and new skills. They want to be good dads now and you have to help them go and do that.

I want to leave you with a summary of the key points. We have to learn from previous work. You can draw on tips and activities from our toolkit, fatherhood.gov/toolkit. You have to have relationships with trust and respect with the fathers.

One thing I pretty much always ask fathers, and I've done a lot of training sessions where we'll have a panel of fathers who have been through a program. I'll always ask them, "What kept you coming back to this program? What was the best thing about this program?" I always say to the group, before the fathers come in. There's at least one word I expect to hear. It's a four-letter word. What do you think the four-letter word is that most men are going to say about what they got from the program?

Participant: Food

Nigel Vann: They will say food, but they will also say love. They feel loved, that's what you gave them and that's why they kept coming back. That's what they'll then give to their children. You have to have experienced partners in the community. You need a supportive environment for staff. Walk the talk. Model that respectful behavior. Most importantly, help the dads on their own personal journeys with the goal that we're here to improve outcomes for their children.

I want to hear what your takeaway messages are.





Participant: In your training, make sure there's some cultural training. Number two, do not bribe your dads. Don't bribe them with gas cards, because unless you have an unlimited amount of resources, as soon as the gas cards run out, they will not come back and they will tell everybody else that they don't get us no more.

Nigel Vann: Thank you and certainly the cultural piece. We do have a section on that in the toolkit. You have to be able to talk to who you're talking to. You have to know who you're talking to. You have to empathize and be there for them.

Participant: I'm walking away with several things. There's money out there for people that are looking. It's just a matter of looking and knowing who to look to. This man right here taught us a lot about how to develop coalitions and have strategies within our community that we don't know about and someone else does.

Participant: Do you have a particular program that you put out? We use 24/7 data. Is there another one that you specifically use?

Nigel Vann: No, we don't. We have talked about developing a curriculum through the Clearinghouse, but we have not gotten there yet. This toolkit is the closest to that.

Thank you very much.

