



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



NRFC Webinar Series

Working with Fathers in Rural Areas and Small Communities Response to Questions

March 16, 2016

Moderator:

- Nigel Vann, National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse (NRFC)

Presenters:

- Mindy Scott, Senior Research Scientist, Child Trends, Bethesda, MD
- Sean Brotherson, Professor and Extension Family Science Specialist, North Dakota State University, Fargo, ND
- Derrick Dease, Executive Director, Man 2 Man Fatherhood Initiative, Bennettsville, SC

This document addresses questions presented, but not addressed, during this NRFC Webinar. For questions addressed during the webinar, please refer to the Webinar Transcript. For more information contact NRFC via email at info@fatherhood.gov.

Submitted Questions:

Does government assistance include TANF benefits within the equation? (We have a high number receiving those types of benefits).

Mindy Scott: The measures we presented in the webinar only looked at receipt of food stamps and subsidized housing. However, the Current Population Survey (CPS) data we are using does have additional measures of the types of public assistance received from state or local welfare offices, including TANF. We are thinking about adding this as an additional indicator in the infographic.

Do you face attendance issues with fathers who work (i.e., conflicts with work schedules/changing shift times)?

Derrick Dease: Attendance issues due to schedule conflicts are a challenge that we have positioned ourselves for by having staff accessible to those who cannot attend group sessions provide one-on-one counseling sessions. This accommodation allows the fathers to meet with staff to get caught up on what they have missed by meeting when they are off from work, on weekends, or when is otherwise convenient.

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How do you draw the fathers in to your program, what kinds of outreach tools can be used to reach the fathers in the community?

Derrick Dease: We provide staff trainings to partner agencies such as the Department of Social Services. During these training sessions, we provide insight on the benefits of partnering with our program to provide a holistic approach to meeting the needs of families and children in care. We also provide community workshops and meet with local pastors to help them understand our program services and the impact of father absence in families. Our best draw for fathers is other fathers that have been served by our program. They return as mentors and are able to share their experience and thus provide credibility to hesitant fathers.

I would like to partner with local employers to assist our fathers who are in need of a job. Do you have any suggestions on how I could go about establishing a relationship with employers so we can refer fathers to them?

Derrick Dease: We start our pitch to potential employers by helping them understand the type of “work ready” individual they will receive from our program. Our goal is to help meet their employment needs and help them understand the advantage of hiring fathers from our pool of men versus any place else. We also assure the employer that we provide case management to support fathers in areas such as counseling and transportation, and we provide tools or gear that they may need in order to be best employee that they can be. Employers have expressed that oftentimes keeping reliable workers is a challenge because employees often face their own challenges outside of work that can affect their attendance and quality of work. They also like the fact that they can shoot us an email or call if a client that we have sent is facing challenges.

Derrick, can you say more about your dads not being “deadbeats” but “dead-broke” and how that perspective helps the families and dads you work with?

Derrick Dease: It is very important that the fathers feel empathy from the staff. They often feel misjudged and know that others may view them as “deadbeats.” We have discovered that just because a father is not consistently paying his child support at the rate the court ordered, it does not mean he is deadbeat. Some are misplaced workers, have health issues impairing their ability to find work, are underemployed, and/or lack job skills which prevents them from competing in the job market. Our goals are to understand their plight before forming a judgment. Our next step is to help them believe by presenting possibilities and creating a realistic plan of action with steps. This approach will help increase hope, while helping a father understand that his role in his children’s life is paramount, and helping him see the possible adverse effects if he is “missing in action.” We sometimes see instances where the mothers of the children act as “gatekeepers,” so we also help them understand that keeping the father away for personal reasons will, in the end, create emotional, psychological, and financial obstacles for the child.

What are your obstacles in retention and completion of your 24-week program?

Derrick Dease: We understand that everyone will not be able to attend every session. Therefore, we provide the opportunity for clients to attend make-up sessions with staff in the form of one-on-one sessions. Our core areas of services are Parenting, Economic Stability, and Healthy Relationships. If a father is able to complete his “One Man’s Plan”—a set of goals that he has set for himself—and at least five of the eight parenting and economic stability sessions, then we believe that he has the tools to succeed. Upon completion of services, he has the opportunity to continue to receive support from the staff as needed.