



# Working with Fathers in Rural Areas and Small Communities

March 16, 2016



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# How to Ask a Question

**Chat with fellow Webinar attendees here**

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**To ask a question to presenters, type a question here**

Meeting Layouts Pods Audio

Chat (Everyone) NRFC Webinar Slides July 2015.pptx Draw Stop Sharing

Strengthening Literacy and Father-Child Relationships through Reading

July 15, 2015

Downloadable Resources

Name	Size
Presenter Bios July 2015.pdf	539 KB

Web Links

- www.fatherhood.gov
- Strongfathers.com

Ask a Question

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# National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse

- DHHS/ACF Office of Family Assistance funded national resource to support fathers and families.
- Resources are available for dads, fatherhood programs, researchers, and policy makers.
- Visit the NRFC: [www.fatherhood.gov](http://www.fatherhood.gov).
  - [www.fatherhood.gov/toolkit](http://www.fatherhood.gov/toolkit) for *Responsible Fatherhood Toolkit*.
  - [www.fatherhood.gov/webinars](http://www.fatherhood.gov/webinars) for archives of all our webinars.
- Contact us: [info@fatherhood.gov](mailto:info@fatherhood.gov) or [Enzo.Ferroggiaro@icfi.com](mailto:Enzo.Ferroggiaro@icfi.com).
- Encourage fathers or practitioners to contact our national call center toll-free at **1-877-4DAD411 (877-432-3411)**.
- Engage with us via social media:  
**Facebook: [Fatherhoodgov](https://www.facebook.com/Fatherhoodgov) Twitter: [@Fatherhoodgov](https://twitter.com/Fatherhoodgov)**

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# Our Goals Today

Share information about:

- How responsible fatherhood programs in rural areas and small communities may be both similar and different from those in larger urban areas.
- Outreach and recruitment in rural areas.
- Services designed to meet the needs of fathers in small communities.
- Lessons learned from work in rural areas that might be applied to work in larger communities.
- Resources for more information.



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# Today's Presenters

- Mindy Scott, Child Trends, Bethesda, MD.
- Sean Brotherson, North Dakota State University, Fargo, ND.
- Derrick Dease, Man 2 Man, Bennettsville, SC.



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# A quick look at rural America\*

- More than 59 million people live in rural America.
  - 18% (nearly 9 million) are poor.
    - Cf. central city pop. where 20% poor, suburbs 12%.
  - 25% of rural children are growing up poor.
- Rural communities often geographically isolated.
  - Human capital, financial capital, supporting institutions often scarce.
- Economic challenges - loss of blue collar jobs, lack of investment in poor areas.
- 50% of rural Americans live in chronically poor communities.
- Population declining in many areas, but growing in some “amenity rich” areas that attract second home buyers.



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\*Information drawn from Community Development in Rural America: Collaborative, Regional, and Comprehensive by Cynthia M. Duncan.



# General Observations from previous webinars and roundtables\*

- Rural communities defined by the land; small communities often defined by industry or education.
- Employment opportunities may be defined by economic fortunes of one industry or employer.
  - Large employers often very community minded.
- People choose to live in rural communities.
- People tend to know each other, may be suspicious of outsiders.
  - Expect people in key positions to know each other.
- Individuals tend to be more “self-reliant” and less used to seeking out support from social services.
- Rural people move to the rhythm of a less hectic speed of life, but often participate in community events.



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\*Ideas from NRFC Webinar, 2009, *Working with Fathers from Rural and Small Town Communities* and grantee discussions at 2008 OFA Grantee Roundtable, Denver, CO.



# Working with Fathers in Rural Areas and Small Communities



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March 16, 2016



# Why focus on rural areas and small communities?

- Rural communities face different challenges and present different opportunities than urban and suburban communities.
- To learn more about the experiences of fathers in rural communities and how programs can better reach and serve these fathers, NRFC is:
  - Hosting this webinar.
  - Conducting interviews and observations with programs in rural areas.
  - Preparing a demographic portrait of rural men and fathers.



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# Demographic portrait

- Child Trends conducted original analyses using the Current Population Survey (CPS) 2015.
  - Nationally representative of the U.S. population.
  - Released annually with high (90%) response rates.
- The data tell us about fathers living with children in rural areas and their economic and social well-being.
- Future analyses will also focus on fathers who do not live with their children.



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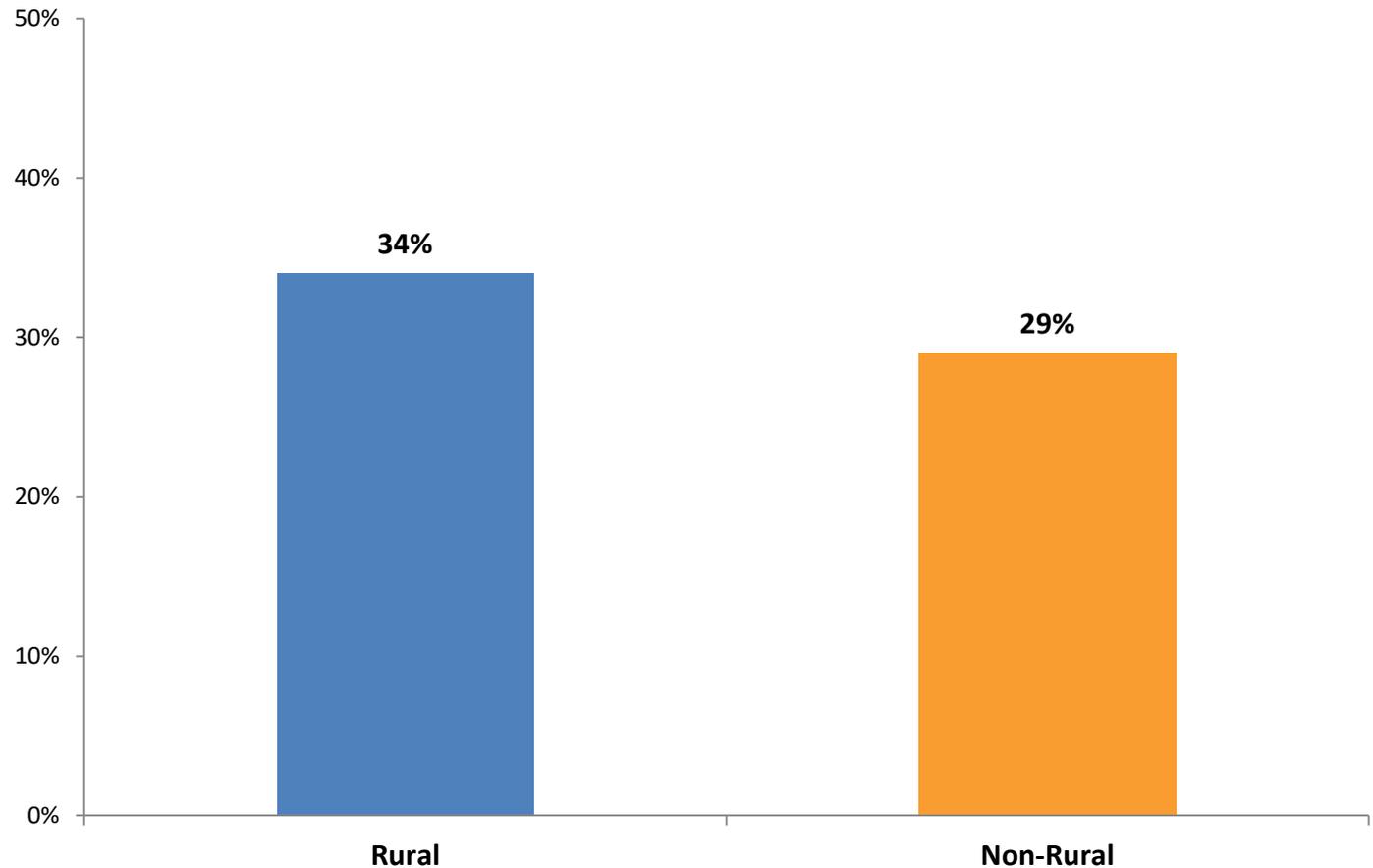
# Definitions

- Unit of analysis: fathers' (aged 18-44) households
  - Households with adult men who identify a son or daughter living in the same household. May or may not include a female partner.
  - This is a conservative estimate (about 30% of all men).
- Some results based on all children's households (those who live with any combination of adults like single mothers, married parents, single fathers).
- Rural = U.S. counties without one or more urbanized area (50,000+ people).
- Children = minors (<18 years old).





# A higher proportion of men are fathers in rural than non-rural areas

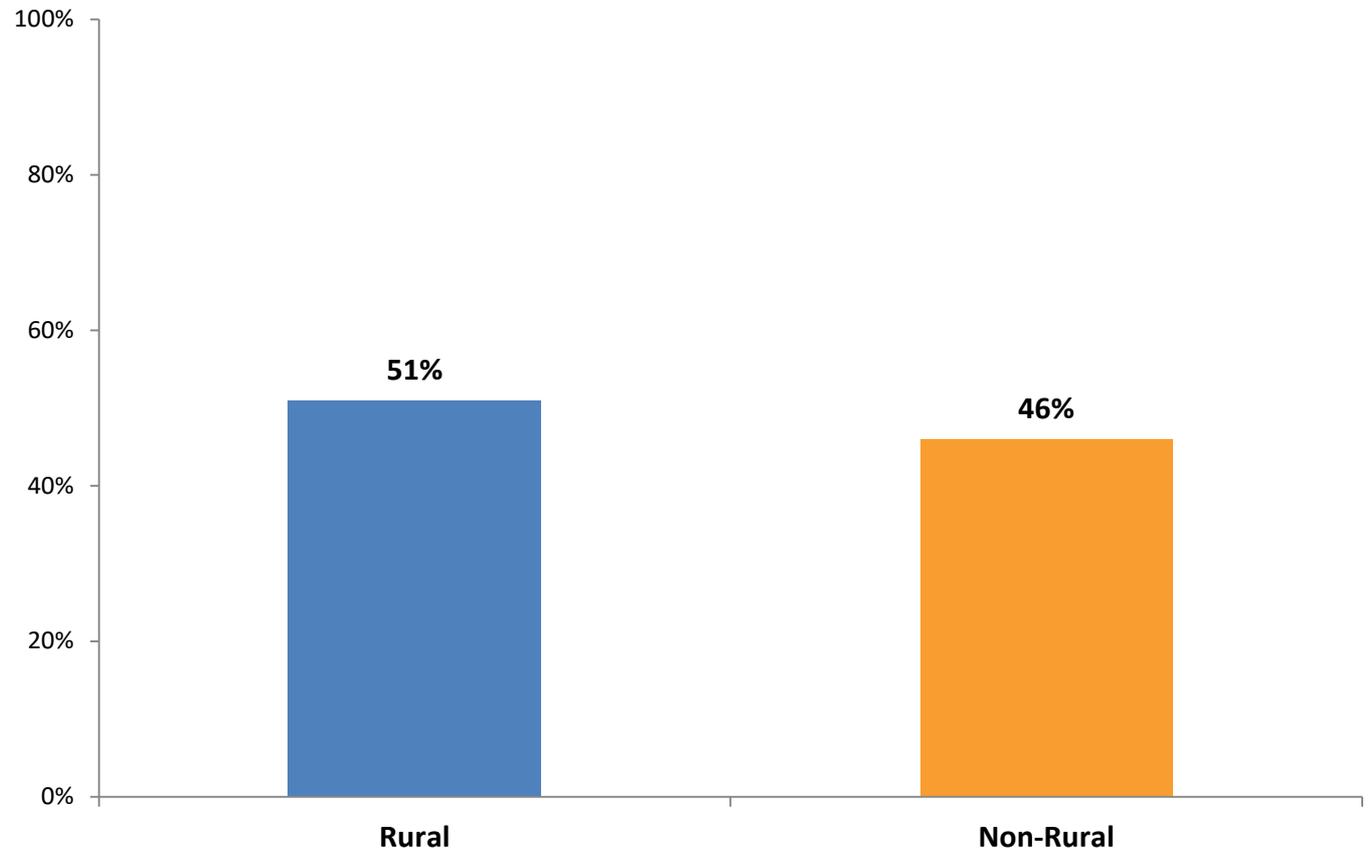


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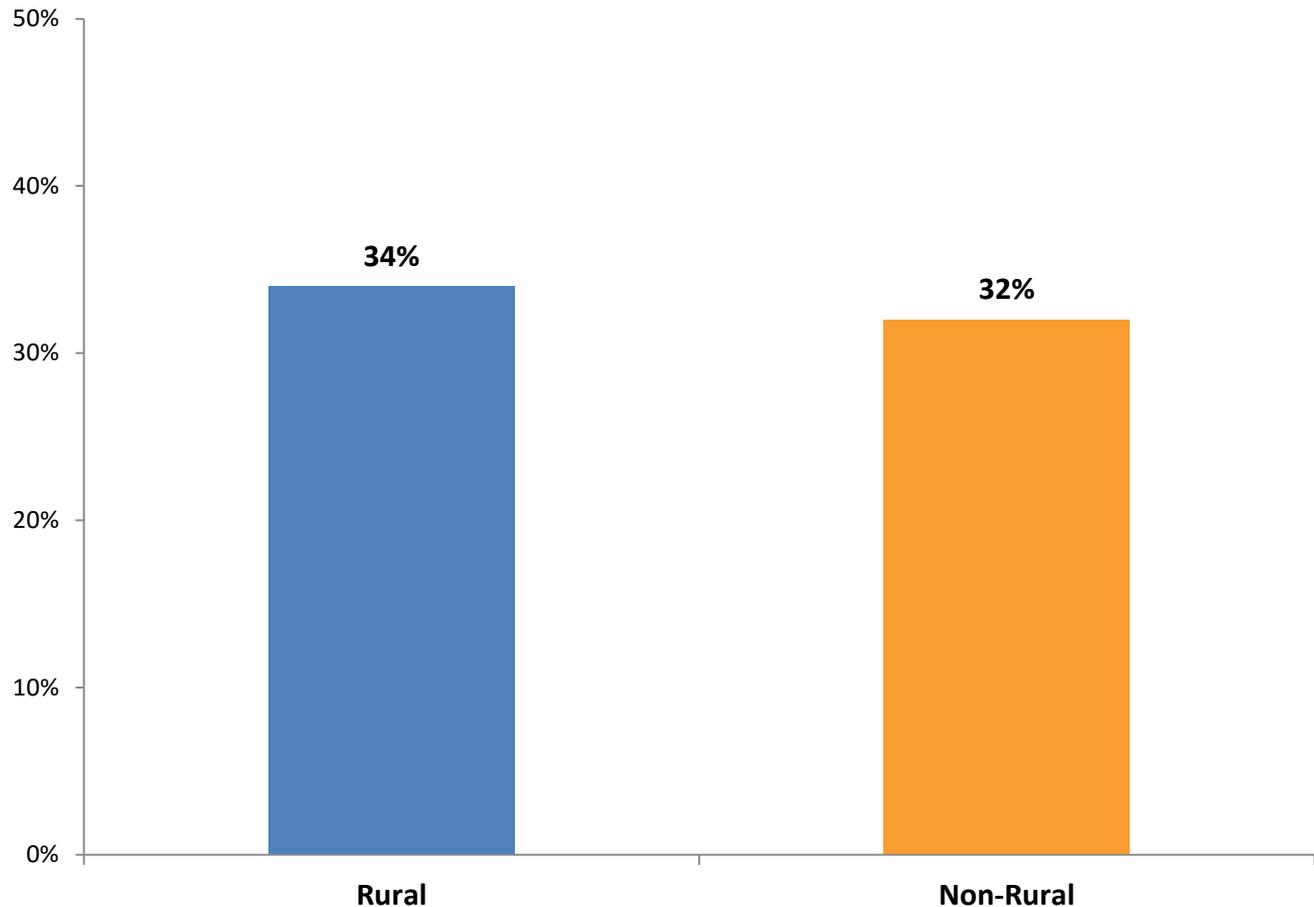


# More rural men's households have children than non-rural men's households



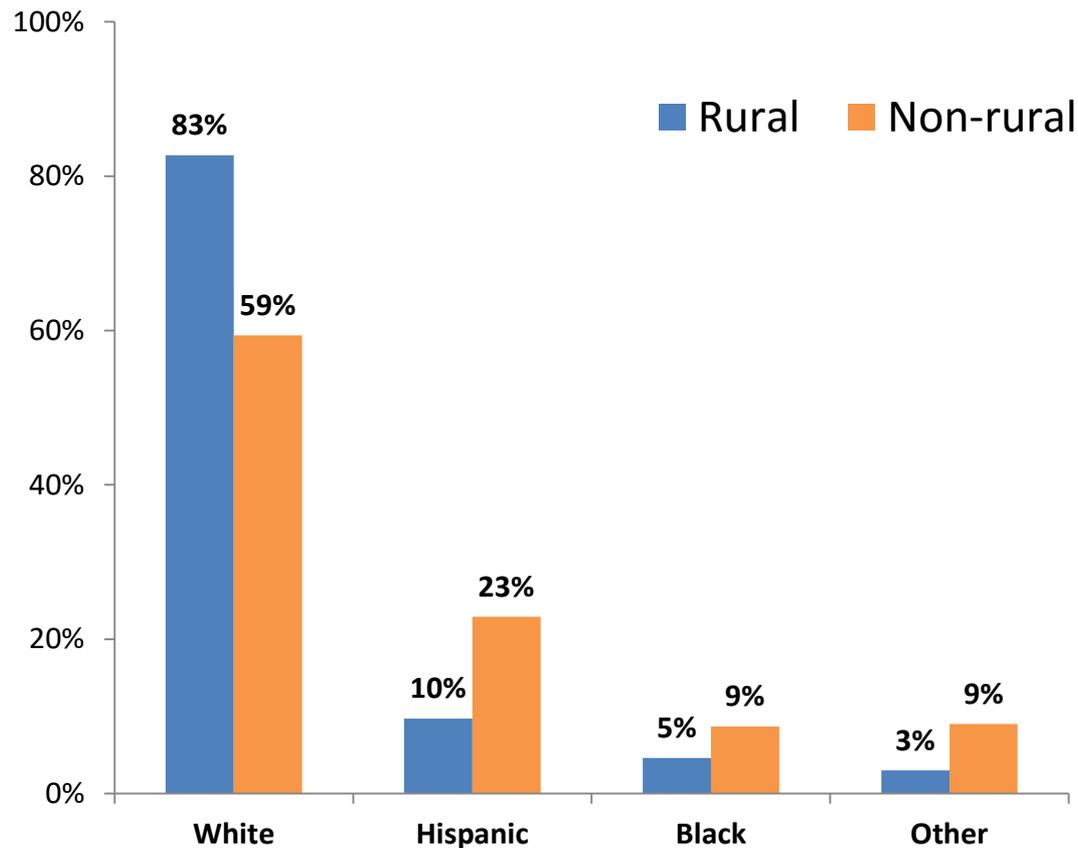


# More children in rural areas live without a father



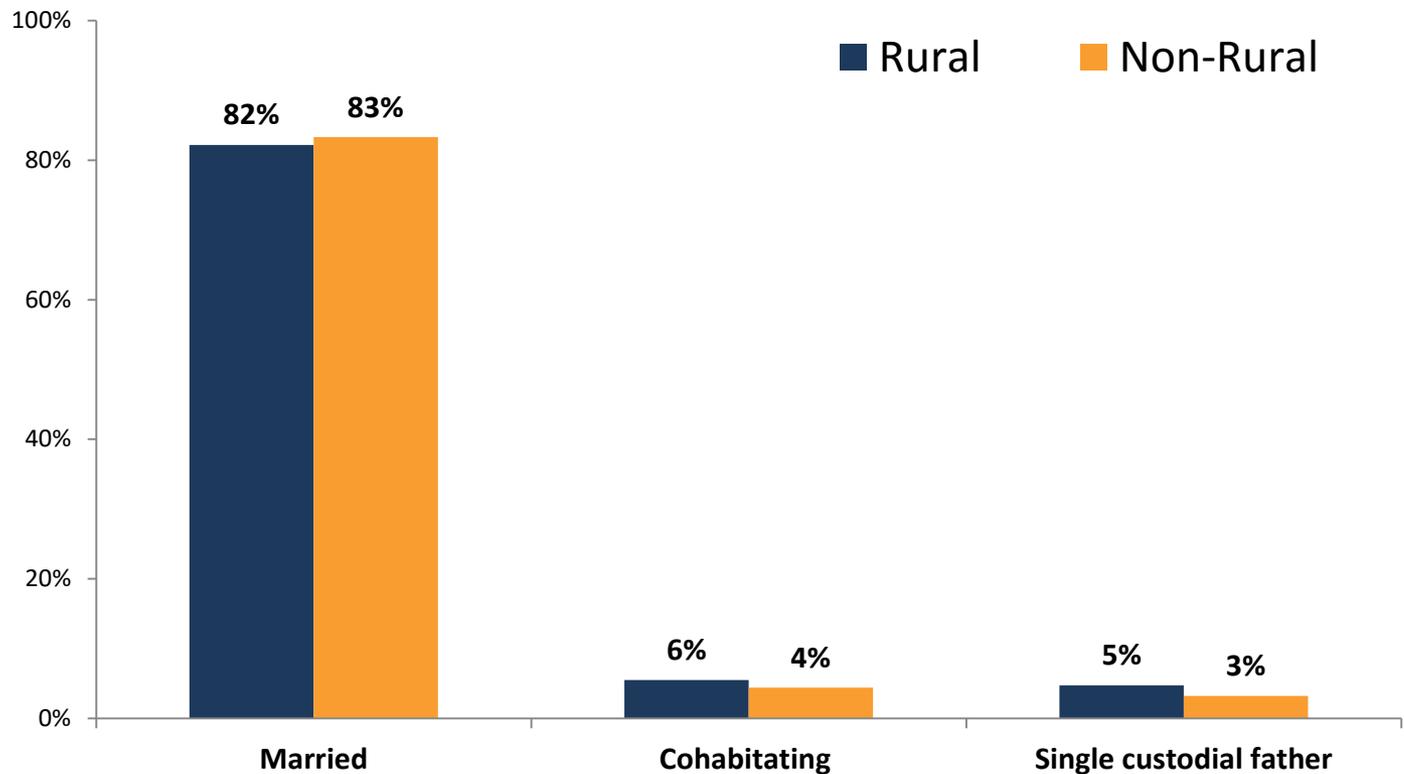


# Most rural fathers are non-Hispanic white



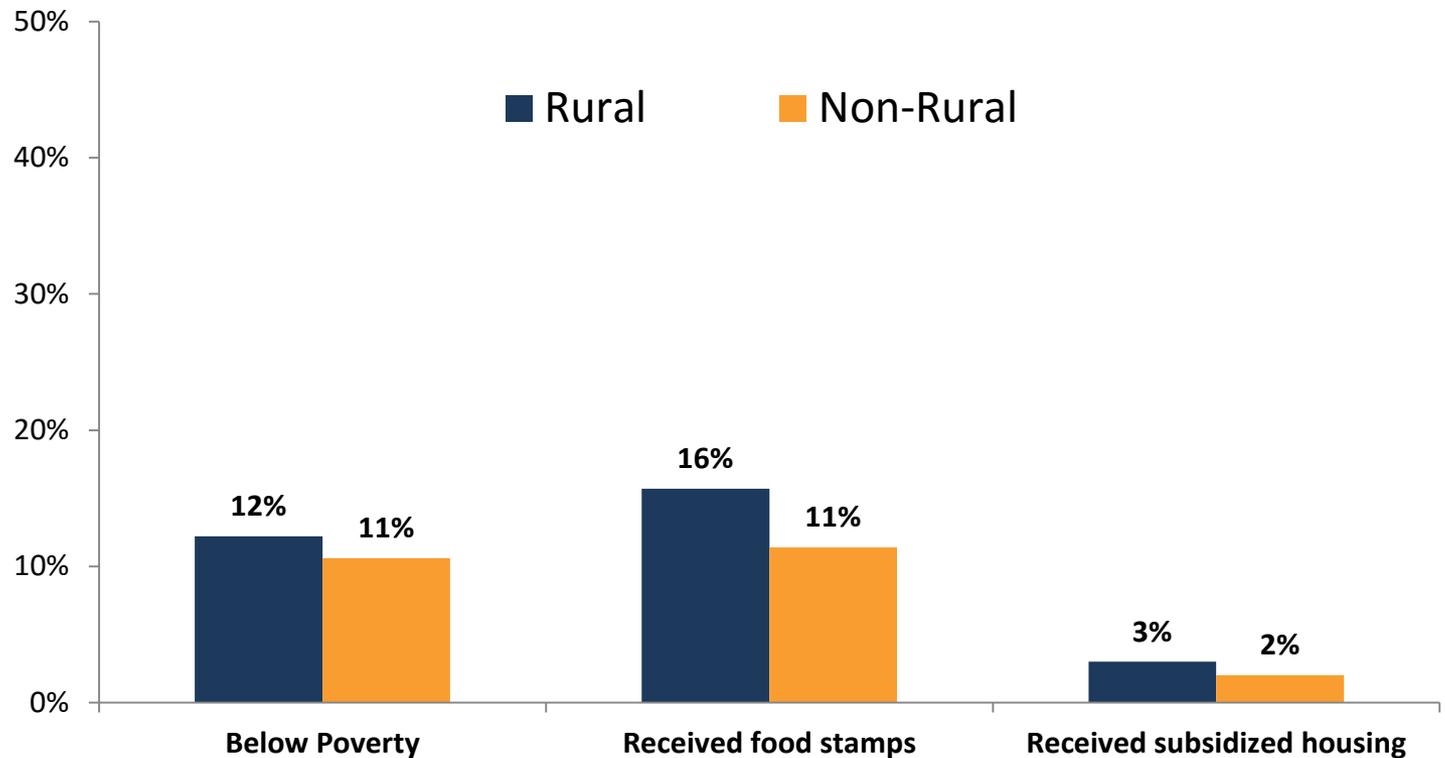


# More fathers in rural areas are unmarried (cohabiting or single custodial fathers)



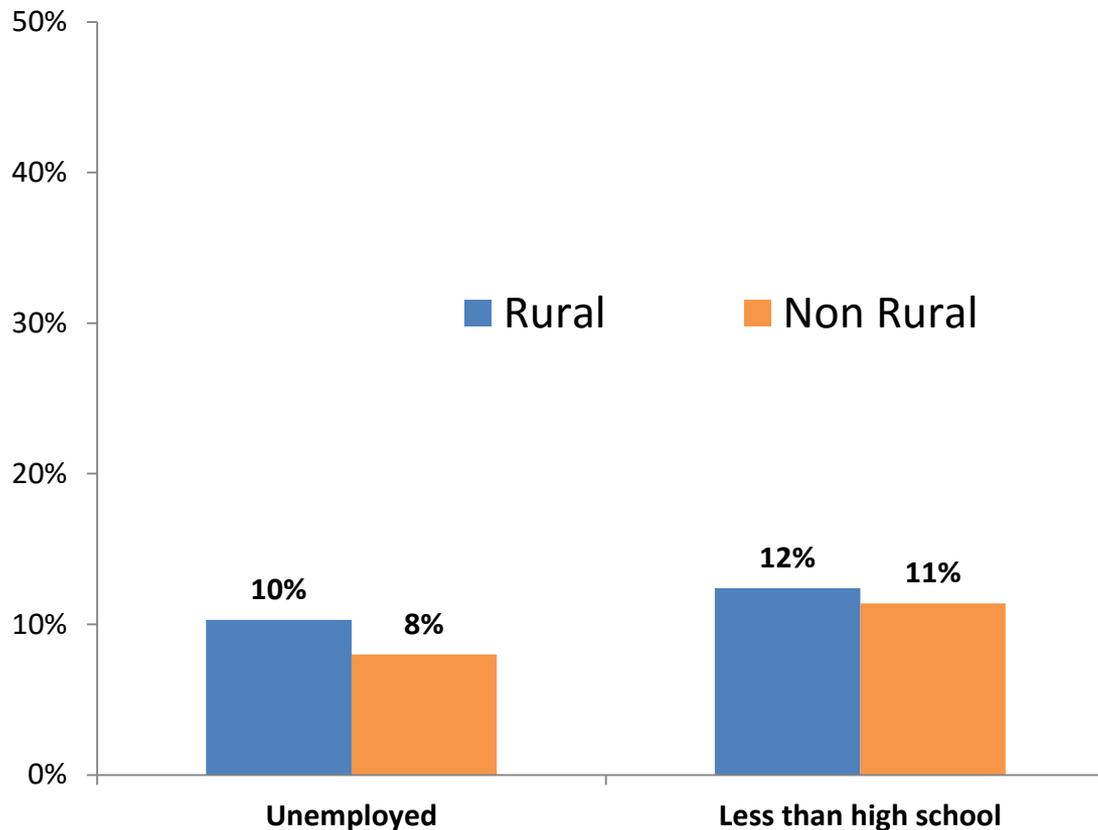


# More rural than non-rural fathers live in poverty or receive government assistance





# More rural than non-rural fathers are unemployed and have low education

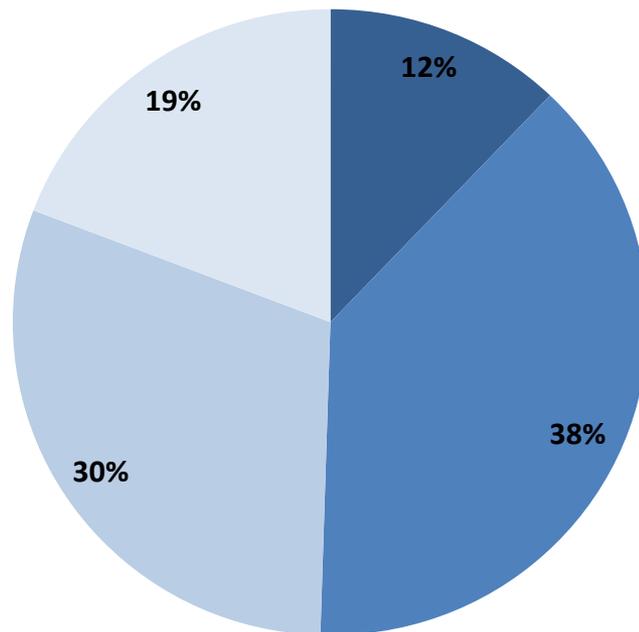




# Fewer rural fathers go to college than non-rural fathers

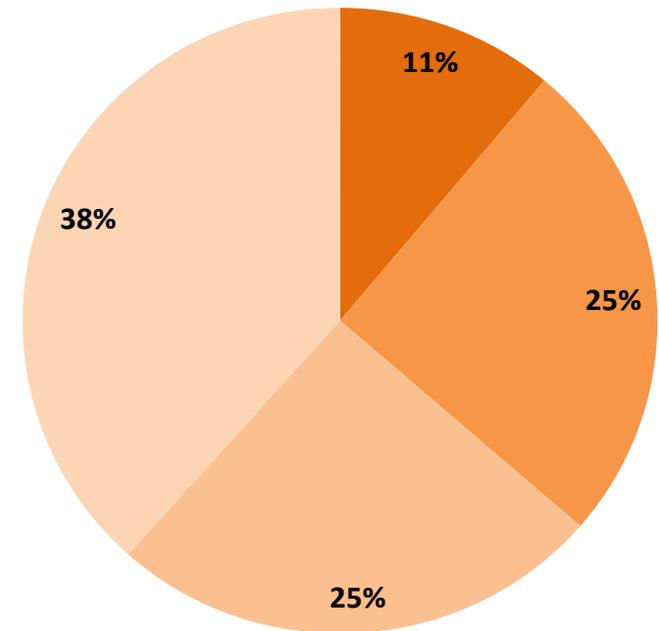
## Rural

- BA+
- Some College
- Less than high school
- High School/GED



## Non-Rural

- BA+
- Some College
- Less than high school
- High School/GED





# What does this mean for programs serving dads in rural areas?

- Results highlight that rural fathers may be more likely to face adversity and disadvantage than non-rural fathers.
  - More likely to live in poverty, and receive food stamps and rental subsidies.
  - On average, less educated and have higher rates of unemployment.
- Research suggests that these economic and educational risks are linked to:
  - Unemployment (Shildrick, MacDonald, & Webster, 2012).
  - Mental health problems (Kuruvilla & Jacob, 2007).
  - Alcohol use (Mossakowski, 2008).
  - Drug use (Iritani, Hallfors, & Bauer, 2007).





# For more information:

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- Child Trends website: [www.childtrends.org](http://www.childtrends.org)



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March 16, 2016



# Fathering Today

- What expectations do you carry for fathers today?
- What do you believe would encourage attitudes and behavior that make for being a good father?
- What happens when we invite fathers into the lives of children?
- What adjustments must be made to assist fathers in rural areas and small communities?

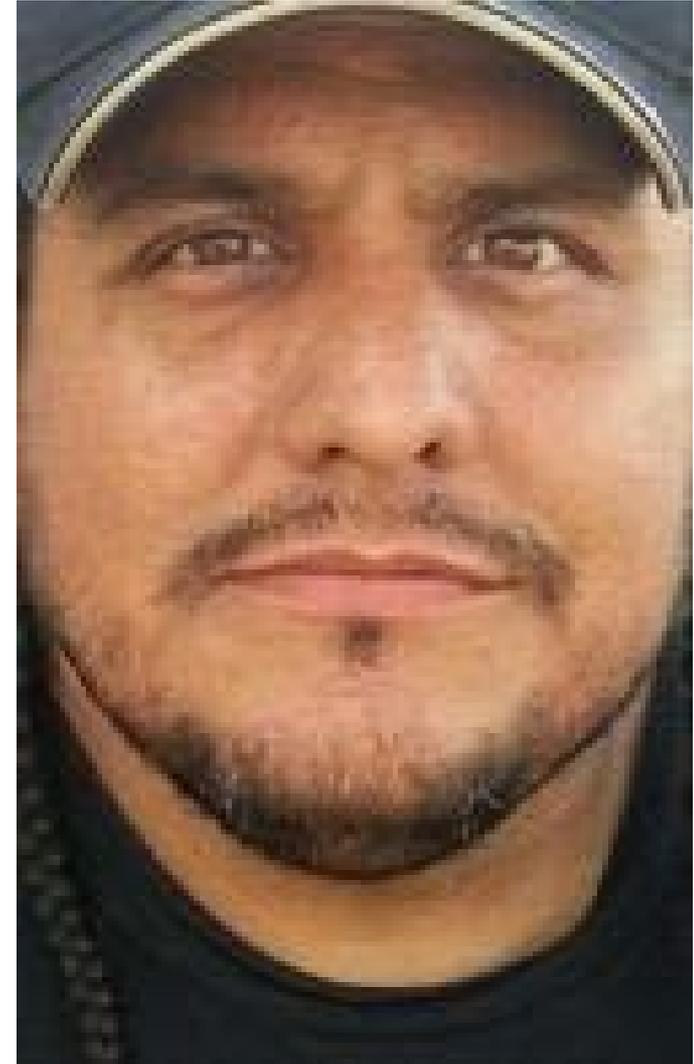
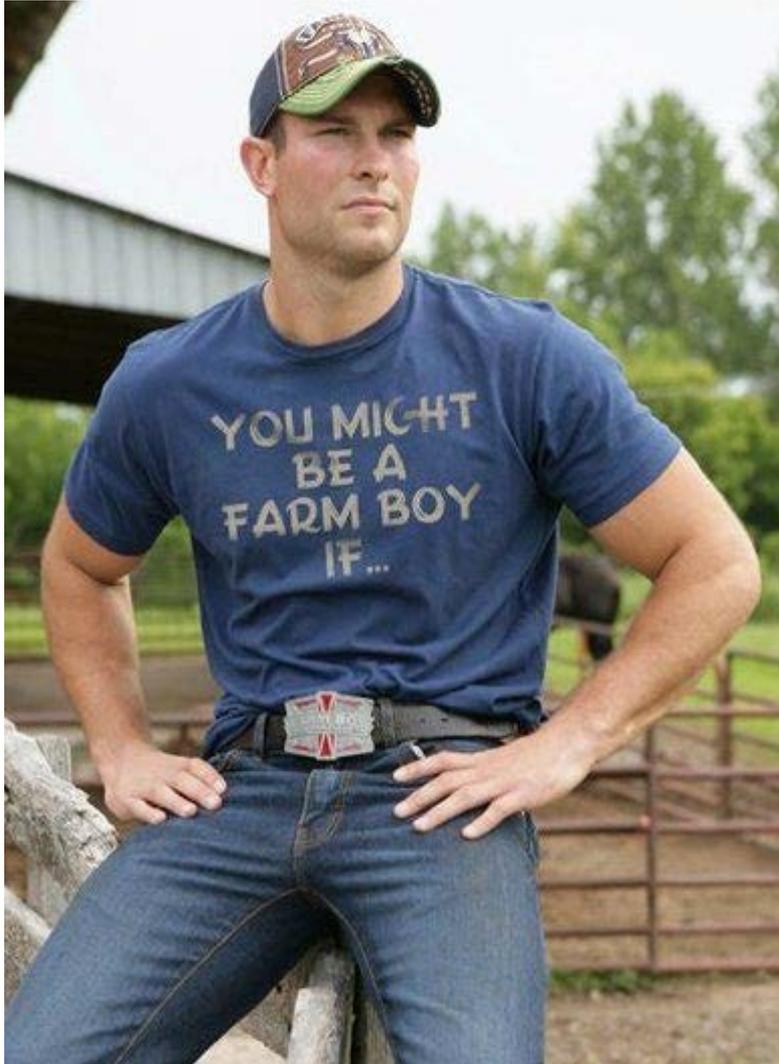


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# Fathers on the Frontier?





# Lessons from the Dakota Fatherhood Initiative

- The Dakota Fatherhood Initiative was a grassroots collaboration of various programs and individuals from North and South Dakota who work with fathers in various settings.
- Objective: Promote responsible, involved fathering for the benefit and well-being of children and families.
- Timeline: 2002 – 2012.
- Setting: Work with fathers and father figures across the Dakota region and upper Midwest.
- Focus: Macro vs. micro level suggestions.





# Lesson 1 - Begin with Assessment and Understanding of Context

- What does research and public dialogue tell you about the issue in your region/community?
  - Teen parenting issue? Military deployment issue? Other?
- What needs to be learned about the issue of father absence and father involvement?
- What is the attitude of potential communities of interest toward the issue?
  - Oregon - fishing community; small coastal towns.
  - North Dakota - native tribal communities.





# Lesson 2 - Identify Community Stakeholders and Assess Interest

- What individuals or community groups might have an interest in the issue?
  - E.g., state Head Start collaboration office.
  - Small town - maybe 2-3 key employers (workforce issue).
- What level of interest exists among individuals or community groups about the issue?
  - Be sensitive to limited resources.
- What particular areas of interest regarding father involvement exist among individuals or communities of interest?





# Lesson 3 - Focus on Productive Community Partnerships

- Rural areas and small towns work in partnerships - don't burn bridges.
- What individuals or community partners would like to make a difference on this issue?
  - Faith communities - often important in rural contexts to families.
- How can you work together in specific ways to advance the cause of father involvement and family well-being?
  - Sioux Falls Community Foundation - Interest in community-specific father involvement initiative.
  - Sioux Falls, SD - Skyforce pro basketball team - sponsored community night for fathers and their children, 2,000+ attended with the promotion (Krispy Kreme partner also).





# Lesson 4 - Provide Resources and Training to Further Goals

- Rural areas and small towns may have limited resources.
  - May need to provide, train, and develop what is needed.
- What particular resources would be useful to promote father involvement? What is lacking?
  - Father Times newsletter - early childhood settings in rural areas (Head Start).
- What particular training is needed or desired by those who can influence fathers?
  - State and local correctional system - linked with NFI programs on working with incarcerated fathers and families.





# Lesson 5 - Understand Barriers to Father Involvement in Rural Areas

- Work & Economic Stress - heightens provider role + cultural emphasis (more traditionalistic).
- Relationship Conflict or Life Stress - diminishes male motivation to engage.
- Time or Logistical Availability - taking time out (season, shift work, etc.), conflicts, transportation & child care limited.
- Personal Attitudes - male pride, dads may feel parent education/support only for inadequate parents.





# Lesson 6 - Adapt Program Design to Rural Context

- Content, Format, Delivery - plan what is possible vs. what is ideal.
  - 16-week program? Four-week version developed for rural ND.
- Staff & Support - inclusive, involvement of male facilitator invites comfort level (farm mediation staff).
- Location - reach men where they are in rural contexts: workplace, church, home, email, etc.





# Lesson 7 - Integrate Father Support Efforts into Existing Settings

- With time and resource challenges in rural or small town contexts, father support efforts should seek to link with existing partners and fit into existing pathways of support.
- The “outsider effect” in rural settings - wary of experts coming in to change things, often still an “outsider” after substantial time - the “voice of local authority” is valued.
  - Work with local support systems, resource persons (Cooperative Extension Service - local agent, etc.)
- Seek integration into existing approaches used in rural contexts.
  - Backpack home from school - father-friendly parenting newsletter.





# Lesson 8 - Use Best Practices in Rural Settings

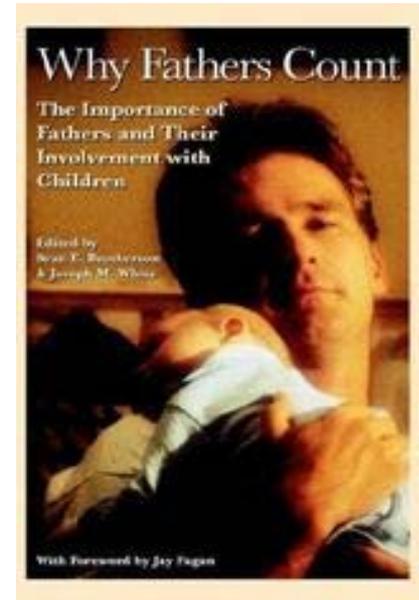
- Send information directly to men. Invite them to participate.
  - Involve children and significant others in the invitation.
  - If you want dads to matter, acknowledge that moms matter too.
- Identify fathers' interests and capacities.
  - Develop program approaches to match.
  - Include engaging activities, interaction with kids; not just discussion and support.
- Notify fathers well ahead of scheduled events.
  - Be aware of time or work-related constraints that may limit involvement - adjust as possible.
- Create an ongoing dialogue to receive input and feedback.





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- United States Department of Agriculture's Cooperative Extension System, Family Life Specialist Directory:  
<http://nifa.usda.gov/resource/family-life-specialist-directory>
- Why Fathers Count: The Importance of Fathers and Their Involvement with Children (Sean Brotherson and Joseph White (eds.)- available online).



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March 16, 2016



## Where We Are: Marlboro County, South Carolina



- Land area: 480 square miles.
- Population (2010 Census): 28,933.
  - 60 people per square mile.
  - 51% Black, 41% White  
4.5% Native American, 3% Hispanic.
- Unemployment rate (April 2015): 9.9%
- In South Carolina:
  - In 2013, 41% of babies were born to unmarried mothers (U.S. Census).
  - 76% of teen births are to unwed mothers.
  - More than half of all children live part of their lives in households without fathers.





# Man 2 Man - Marlboro County, SC

- Part of a network of six fatherhood programs across the state, coordinated by the South Carolina Center for Fathers and Families.
- We have provided services for fathers in rural Marlboro County for more than 10 years. We understand their situation and help them:
  - Heal family relationships.
  - Practice healthy parenting.
  - Gain productive stable employment.
- In 2014, our network of programs served 1,487 fathers.
  - Man 2 Man served 205 dads and helped about a third of them get better jobs.
- We are a resource to the community and to businesses seeking ready-to-work employees.



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# Quick overview of our program

- Most fathers learn of the program by word-of-mouth or referrals from community partners.
  - About 30% court-ordered as part of jail diversion program for non-payment of child support.
  - 93% unemployed, 28% report “hostile” relationship with the mother of their children.
- Goal-oriented program.
  - Intake includes full assessment of client needs.
  - Fathers and program staff work together to fashion a personalized “One Man Plan.”
  - Weekly peer support group in three locations.
  - 1-on-1 meetings address individual needs and goals.
  - Father/child events provide opportunities for fathers and families to spend time together.





# Curriculum topics



## ❖ Responsible Fatherhood

Importance and benefits of father involvement

Self-development and life skills

Role of men in communities and families

## ❖ Parenting and Co-Parenting

Understanding child's needs

Communicating with your child

Helping children learn

Developing co-parenting skills

## ❖ Healthy Relationships

Understanding healthy relationships

Improving communication skills/conflict resolution

Benefit of marriage

## ❖ Economic Stability

Job readiness (including GED, Work Keys) and retention skills

Debt management

Navigating the child support system

## ❖ Men's Health



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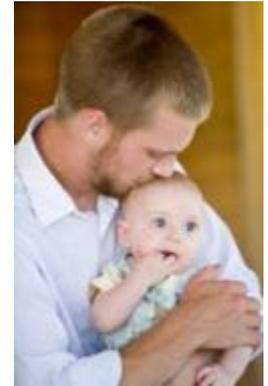
# We are a resource to the community

- By helping fathers heal family relationships and practice healthy parenting, we help DSS Caseworkers:
  - Identify more placement options.
  - Preserve family connections.
  - Increase visitation of non-residential parents.
- Healing family relationships benefits children.
  - 80% of children in foster care come from a single parent home.
  - Children do better when their parents and care-givers practice good co-parenting skills.





# Healing Family Relationships through services and partnerships



Focus on child well-being to:

- Improve school performance.
- Avoid drug abuse & criminal behavior.
- Delay sexual activity.
- Reduce teen pregnancy.
- Increase knowledge of family medical history.
- Preserve cultural and family ties.
- Improve self esteem.



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# Barriers to Employment

- Lack of Job Skills & Work History.
- Health and Wellness.
- Attitudes and Behaviors.
- Ability to Conduct an Effective Job Search.
- Interview Skills.



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# We work with employers

- We are a resource not only to fathers, but also to businesses seeking able-bodied men to work.
- We help identify fathers who are ready to work and have the skills needed to be a reliable employee.
- Our staff provide on-going job coaching to help a father deal with issues that arise at work.
- We can help with transportation until he can find reliable transportation on his own.



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# Economic Stability Services

- Job Boot Camp.
  - One week employment preparation training prior to job placement.
- Partner with Local Community Colleges.
  - Continuing Education Programs.
- Partner with Industrial training programs/companies.
  - Certification courses include Forklift Training, Heavy Equipment Operator, and NCCER Certification.
- Partner with local manufacturing and poultry businesses for job placement.
  - On a case-by-case basis, some companies will hire clients with past criminal activity if the program speaks highly of them.





# For more information:

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- Man 2 Man website:  
[http://scfathersandfamilies.com/programs/man\\_2\\_man/](http://scfathersandfamilies.com/programs/man_2_man/)



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# Implications for Outreach\*

- It's all about relationships.
  - Find the influential, connected people who can help spread the word and endorse your program.
  - Search for connections between people, businesses, agencies, and churches.
  - Leverage connections - people who are known personally by you, other staff, board members, and partners.
- Raise community awareness. When people think of fatherhood/family they should think of you.
- If there's a community event, be there.
- Be prepared to hold classes in different locations to accommodate fathers' schedules and situations; go to where fathers are and places that are familiar to them.



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\*Ideas from NRFC Webinar, 2009, *Working with Fathers from Rural and Small Town Communities* and grantee discussions at 2008 OFA Grantee Roundtable, Denver, CO



# Contact:

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- Comments, questions, suggestions for future webinar topics, information or resources that you recommend.

## Today's presenters:

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- Sean Brotherson: [sean.brotherson@ndsu.edu](mailto:sean.brotherson@ndsu.edu)
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