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NRFC Technical Assistance Webinar



“Responsible Fatherhood in the Context of Marriage: Promoting Healthy Marriage Activities with Couples or Single Fathers”

Moderator: Nigel Vann, NRFC Director of Training and Technical Assistance

Presenters:

Gardner Wiseheart, Fathering Program, Healthy Families, San Angelo, TX

Andy Sagvold, Council on Crime and Justice, Minneapolis, MN

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Webinar Transcription (provided by Global Crossing)

Operator: Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse Technical Assistance Webinar. During the presentation all participants will in a listen only mode. If any time during the conference you need to reach an operator, please press Star 0.

As a reminder this conference is being record Tuesday, June 23, 2009. I would now like to turn the call over to Mr. Nigel Vann, Senior Director of Training and Technical Assistance. Please go ahead sir.

Nigel Vann: Thank you very much. And good afternoon, good morning to everybody. I hope that you all had a good Father's Day weekend. I thought I would begin today by just sharing a brief quote from President Obama Father's Day speech.

He said, "In many ways I came understand the important of fatherhood through its absence both in my life and in the lives of others. I came to understand that the hole a man leaves when he abandons his responsibility to his children is one that no government can fill.

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We can do everything possible to provide good jobs and good schools and safe streets for our kids, but it will never be enough to fully make up the difference. That is why we need fathers to step up to realize that their job does not end at conception. That what makes you a man is not the ability to have a child but the courage to raise one."

Obviously I can't deliver that quite the President but I think it does underline the importance of the work that you all do out there to help more fathers stand up and to equip them with the tools to be the best dad that they can be and also to be a good partner to their child's mother.

And that's what we're going to focus on today on how we teach couples and individual fathers healthy marriage skills. How we help dads recognize and address key relationship issues. But before we go any further let me passengers it over to Matt Crews just to provide a logistical overview. And then I will come back and get us rolling here.

Matt Crews:

All right, thanks Nigel. Just real quickly I want to go through how you can ask a question. If you have a question that comes up during any of our Presenter's presentations, you can actually send them via the live meeting tool. And when you do this you'll get a standard response back to let you know that we've gotten your question and it will also free you up to ask a second question.

So please, don't hold back if you have anything that you'd like to present. At the end of all the presentations today, we'll get back together with all the presenters and pose these questions. If your question is not address, we will do so afterwards as a follow up. But please send as many in as you have and here's how you ask a question real quick.

You look at the top of your toolbar, you should see a button that says Q&A, simply click on that button, type in your question and hit Ask. It's pretty simple. You can also use this if a presenter is too quiet or if you did catch something, please feel free to send it to us as well. And finally, just a couple of quick technical issues.

Aside from the Question and Answer Tool, if you'd like to take your presentation full screen, if the character format is a little bit too small perhaps you're viewing the presentation with more than one person, if you hit the F5 on your keyboard that will take the presentation full screen. And if you hit the F5 button a second time or the Escape button that will take you down to the original format.

You have to be in the original format in order to ask a full question, keep that in mind. But after you have asked your question you can go back to the full screen. And again, if you're interested in those slides from the presentation today and you didn't receive them earlier you can email the Clearinghouse at info@fatherhood.gov and we'll get those to you. So I want to thank you all for participating and let me get it back over to Nigel.

Nigel Vann:

Thank you very much Matt. I trust that everybody got the announcement from Robin McDonald last week about the August Conference dates. In case you didn't the conference is going to be in DC at the same hotel as last year, August the 11 through the 13. If you didn't get that info do let us know and we'll make sure it gets forwarded to you.

So I think as most of you know, I've been involved in this fatherhood work now for over 20 years, but it's probably 10 to 12 years of doing this work before I really recognized that if your goal is to increase child wellbeing you can't do this just by working with dads, you've also got to address the relationship that dads have with the moms of their children.

Ideally this means you're going to work with moms and dads together or separately to help increase the communication skills, their healthy marriage skills. And in some cases, you know if you don't have the program capacity to work with mothers as well, then you can begin to address these issues just by working with the dads around their awareness of key relationship issues, getting in touch with their feelings, how to communicate that to their partner, etcetera.

But ideally, we do need to find ways to include mothers. And I think sort of irrespective of whether you work with dads on their own or with couples, I think the actual process of the work that you all do does tend to be the same. You know



obviously to start with you've got to be clear about what your goals are. Why you're doing this work and what your measured outcomes you hoped to be.

And then you got to get folks in. You got to get dads in, you've got to get couples in. So you've got to create a welcoming environment, a culture of trust so you can bring folks in and keep them there because they are getting something meaningful.

And I think one of the ways that you do that is you, and I think this is a real similarity between the work with dads and the work with couples just in terms of how this whole process works. I think one of the key things you do, and one of the things we're going to hear about from the Presenters today, is you help provide new insights to the participants. You help them go through that process of self reflection, looking at how our personal history impact who we are today.

So we increase our awareness for our own feelings, we increase our understanding of our self, of our partners, of our children. And then that creates the basis on which you do the real work.

I think part of the problem of the fathers who have failed over the years is that we don't necessarily get enough time to do the real work because we spend a lot of time just on meeting dad's and maybe where they are with their needs and if we don't have them in the program for very long, we don't have enough time to get to the real work. And the real work is to teach new skills.

And so in terms of talking about healthy marriage, what we really want to focus on is how do we teach folks relationship skills? How do we teach communication skills? How do we improve those relationships so the kids do better?

And that's really the crux of what we're going to be talking about today. Is how do you get folks in? How do you keep them in? How do you provide these new insights? And how do you teach these skills? So we have three Presenters today who are going to help us walk through this process.

The first Presenter is working on the Building Strong Families project. The other two are fellow Grantees. So let me go ahead and introduce you to our first Presenter who

is Gardner Wiseheart. Gardner is the Program Director for the Dads Make a Difference Program, which is a program of healthy families in San Angelo, Texas. He's the Founder and Director of that program. And he's provided training around working with dads to several other healthy families programs nationally.

Healthy Families focuses on work with parents of young children and like I said they are part of the Federally funded Building Strong Families project which works with young unmarried parents prenatally or early months.

And Gardner has been doing this work for a long while too, he's been this work for more than 25 years and I've had the pleasure of knowing him for a chunk of that time. I've had the opportunity to work with him a couple of times. I think he's someone who's truly described by his name. He brings a very wise heart to this work.

And besides his direct service work with dads and couples, he's co-authored a Father-Child Interaction curriculum matched for dads. He's a former Vice President of the National Practitioner's Network of Fathers and Families. And he's served on numerous National and State Fatherhood Advisory Boards. So with no further a due, let me passengers it to Gardner to pass on some of these wise experiences. Gardner.

Gardner Wiseheart: Thank you Nigel. We'll see just how wise this may be. And I want to welcome everybody out there and thank you all for joining us today.

Healthy Families is, like Nigel said, a healthy marriage program and we're part of the Building Strong Families Research Project. But we began our program back in '92 as just a family support program. At that time for us family support was a practical matter really just meant mother and child. Just like most family support program support programs around the country. It wasn't that dads were intentionally excluded, we just weren't sure how to strategically engage and retain dads in the program.

But recognizing that dads were around, we started developing strategies for engaging fathers around '93. And I guess over the last 14 or 15 years, our program has evolved from working with moms through engaging moms and dads with

programming for each almost like two separate programs into working with mom and dad as a couple.

And so when we were invited by Mathematica and ACF to become part of the Healthy Marriage Research, we kind of viewed the Healthy Marriage Initiative as a continuation of what we've been doing. Since we'd been working with moms and dads as a couple long term, we'd obviously dealt with relationship issues.

But what the Healthy Marriage Initiative did was add structure to our work with relationships. And it gave what we were already doing kind of added value. It's been another step in our journey to provide services that support and encourage healthy child development.

Next slide. Over the last four years as part of the research, we've worked with over 500 couples, average of the moms have been around 20, the average age of the dads is around 22.

Next slide. The program participants are mostly low income, overburdened moms and dads. Less than 35% have a high school diploma, about 80% have earned less than \$12,000 in the last year. And about 50% of either or both partners have children by different partners. About 30% have other children together. And probably about 78% are living together as a couple.

Next slide. Some of the couples have more difficult backgrounds and some have more personal resources. Next slide. We have early access to our folks. We screen all the births at both hospitals in town and recruitment and admission begins at the hospital. And then continues at the couple's home in a kind of a relaxed easy conversation where we'll tell them about the program and invite them to be a participant.

Our experience as well as the research shows that the birth of the child is a real window of opportunity. It's a time when dads are receptive to the intervention and support and it's also at this point mom and dad are most likely to be in a relationship and open to working together.

We have about an 85% acceptance rate, but we have a big leg up since we've been working with dads and couples for awhile. Before our adaptation to the Building Strong Families Research we had about a 97% acceptance rate. This rate has gone down since we've joined the research because as part of the project the dads and couples are required to commit at the intake and actually sign a commitment. Before we could take a month or two to reach out to the dad and couple and bring them in.

Next slide. We spend about 50% of our efforts with moms and dads on the first two and about 50% on the third one. Something that we've found is that while work and employment issues are important concerns for dads, getting connected to the child can be a really powerful motivator.

When we use a specific father child interaction curriculum maps for dads that we've developed here and it's proved to be pretty effective. We use this in dads groups as well as in home visits. It supports dads interacting in developmentally appropriate ways. And supports bonding and it gives specific how to information about father child interactions.

We found this information is really empowering for dads and supports a positive healthy growth for the kids, but it also plays a huge part in addressing issues in moms and dads relationship. There's a lot more to father involvement than dad just being present. Its all about how dads around that's important for kids.

Next slide. We primarily work with couples in home visits and groups and we do very little office based context. Next slide.

Home visits are structured and focused. They're based on the needs of the family and it's within the context of the goals of the program. And they're aimed at supporting mom and dad individually and as a couple. The home visitor forms a close trusting personal relationship with the couple.

And it's a constant over the 18 months they're in the program. Although they're very down to earth and relaxed, the home visitors are highly trained and there's a lot of supervision and there's a lot of intensive support so that these folks can bring out the best in every family.

Their role with the family is that it's pretty much kind of a supportive knowledgeable friend. A lot of the home visits will occur in the evenings or on weekends and based on the family's needs and their schedule. And we have about 97% of couples that regularly participating in these.

Next slide. Couple Time, which is our relationship group consist of 20 two hour weekly sessions and the groups have between 8 and 10 couples. And they're very relaxed and intimate and the groups will begin with a family style meal and where we laugh and joke and catch up with each other.

And then after dinner we move into an area for a session. We have about an 80% attendance and completion rate with the couples and it's really interesting because moms are usually the most excited to get started but generally it's the dad who keeps the couple coming back. We use an adapted Love's Cradle curriculum by Guernsey and Ortwein with some of the topics covered include communication skills, conflict resolution, recognizing and dealing with emotions, extended family relationships, finances, marriage, among other topics.

We also do a moms group and a dads groups as well as some special targeted groups like anger management and employment. Next slide.

Since we started working with fathers and evolved into a working with couples, we've had time to kind of learn and regroup, make some mistakes and we've evolved kind of a systematic strategic approach, it's been pretty effective.

Through this evolution we discovered what we are calling guided principles, kind of program values if you will. It's proved to be really helpful for us. For us they've been the difference that makes the difference. We begin with a focus on what's best for kids. The over arching goal for us is to improve outcomes for kids and father involvement and relationship skills are critical pieces regardless of the parents living situation.

Research is really explicit about the benefits for kids of having a father present and connected as well as the value for kids in supporting moms and dads relationship. By



focusing on what's best for kids, fathers and couples become a piece of a bigger picture of what's best rather than being part of some problem. When you have this focus on what's best for kids, your better positioned to not get drawn into those he said she said kinds of drama that often times develop.

One of our dads once pointed out, no matter how thin you slice it, there's always two sides. Instead when you have this focus on kids, you can have a cleaner clearer focus on how well the system works and what each individual can do about improving relationships for themselves, as a couple and most importantly for the child.

And from a child's perspective, having a mother and father who demonstrate they care about you, they're emotionally connected and are working together for your best interest, that really, really matters.

Recognize the value of supporting moms and dads relationship regardless of their living situation. Even when couples are not romantically together, they're still connected through the child and they need relationship skills. Each are probably going to go on and form other partnerships, so your work can go on and reverberates out.

So be sure that your staff members are familiar with all the research that's regarding the effects of parental relationships on childhood outcomes and all are on board. And this sometimes this is harder than it appears as issues can up that need to be work through. But it's really important that everybody is congruent with this belief.

And then the next step is to really demonstrate your commitment to this value. That the quality of the relationship between mothers and fathers is critical to producing positive outcomes for kids. So be sure that your program structure, the physical environment of your office, all these things support the services you offer. And all reflect an orientation to mothers and to fathers and emphasize the importance of supporting that couple's relationship again regardless of their living situation.

Use positive and persistent out reach to engage both moms and dads. There are lots of good reasons why people don't always engage right away. Some have trust issues with good reason and some don't understand what you got to offer. Some folks have



had bad experiences with social services in the past or just been let down. And in marriage and couples programs, men sometimes believe that to participate means there is something wrong with me.

Having a structured strategy for creating engagement is an important approach. And some of the things you need to look at I think are to decide how much time a worker should spend each week creatively reaching out to the person or the couple. What's the feedback structure? What's the role of the supervisor? When do you give up? And how do you reflect, how do you learn from the experience?

For us we found that some of that the more difficult to engage folks seemed to be the ones who get the most out of the program. And then develop relationships with both moms and dads by focusing on individual as well as couple strengths. Just like Nigel said at the beginning this is about creating a culture of trust.

The magic in the program are the relationships that we develop with the moms and the dads we work with. And by developing a trusting relationship with both mom and dad individually as well with them as a couple you can have a stronger foundation to work from when the tough issues come up.

And it's through these relationships that we support moms and dads to gain new insights and increase their understanding of themselves and their partner. In developing the relationships it's important to respect and appreciate the uniqueness of each person. Find out what's important to them. What do they value? What do they want? You may have a good idea what they need, but start where they are.

Underscore the talents and abilities and competencies of each person. And work in partnership with the parents rather than in some kind of expert role. And then involve each person in the process of learning rather than telling them what they should do.

This is a priority for us and we spend a lot of time and use specific strategies for developing a trusting relationship based on their strengths as individuals and as a couple. And appreciate that developing a relationship with fathers may be slower and may require a different approach than with moms.



Next slide. Appreciate how gender impacts what you do. Men are different than women. And I can hear that out there everybody going kind of duh. But men generally have different communication styles, needs motivational patterns and values orientation. And it's important to recognize how these differences can play out in working with men and fathers and how they can impact relationships.

Working with these issues can really be the difference that makes a difference. It's also important to not to fall into stereo-typing but rather recognize patterns and potential.

Now you communicate with dads and moms and how you expect them to communicate with you can make a big difference. So it's important to recognize some of those differences.

For example knowing that men have a more difficult time than women accessing feelings, it's not that we can't get in touch with our softer side, but sometimes if we start with what we think then it's easier to move into our feelings.

Dads can be slower to engage and it may take different strategies with dads than with moms. Men don't readily accept help or support in the way programs traditionally operate. And some guys may have doubts about how a program is relevant to their needs.

Some of them often times will see getting into a relationship skills group as trying to fix a problem with them and groups can be seen as counseling. It's important to demonstrate that what you have to offer is relevant to them in a way that they get. Another area that gender impacts what we do is in parenting.

Often times there's a tendency to judge father by the arch stick of mother and yet we know from research that moms and dads parent differently. Dads bring a particular style to parenting that has significant consequences for healthy child development.

Mothering and fathering are complementary. It's (cough). This is an area that can be empowering for dad and support couple relationships when parents learn these complementary styles of parenting.



To utilize specific community resources that fit the needs of the participants. In order to increase family functioning and decrease from the stressful situations that arise with individuals and relationships we need to recognize the needs that individuals and couples present and have resources that support family development.

Programs need to network and collaborate with a wide array of community resources that can provide services beyond what your program can provide. And the mental and physical health, drug and alcohol treatment, job training and placement, education, those kinds of things.

I'd like to suggest in doing this that you eliminate the word referral from your vocabulary and think of the service as connecting people to resources. Making a referral is easy. You just tell somebody were to go. The real magic is in getting somebody really connected to a service.

It's important to spend time helping folks figure out where there going, what do they want to accomplish, how to do it. And then support them connecting with the resources that will move them forward. That may mean going with them, smoothing the way. You know its all about teaching them to fish so that they can learn to do it themselves in the future.

Its slower, it's more time consuming but in the long term its better for everybody. And then provide on going support for your program and staff with training and technical assistance. You don't have to reinvent the wheel. There's a whole lot of knowledge and experience that's available to support you, your agency, your staff as you move towards successfully engaging and working with dads and couples.

And just like the dads and couples by taking advantage of the resources, you can better navigate the challenges and move forward. I want to thank everybody for listening. And Nigel, I'll turn it back to you.

Nigel Vann: Did you read the quote board Gardner?

Gardner Wiseheart: No I was letting that settle in for folks.

Nigel Vann: Okay, well thank you. Well I certainly appreciate, you know everything you said there and I was making copious notes. There was a couple of things I would like you to underline that you said. You know the fact that you said that its often the mom that's excited to get started, but usually it's the dads who keep couples coming back and your point that having all the staff on board, the importance of demonstrating commitment to this throughout the agency, engaging dads around trust issues.

Structuring your out reach time, I think that's a really important issue and the fact that you pointed out that often we should give up too soon, because the harder to engage ones can be the ones who end up getting the most out of the program.

Gardner Wiseheart: And boy that's so true.

Nigel Vann: Yes and starting where they are, involving everybody in the process of learning and getting to that real magic where you sort of help folks get connected to those services, but also get connected to their own feelings so they can figure this out for themselves ultimately.

Let me just ask you one question Gardner before I go on to Andy. I just wonder if you could perhaps just talk a little bit about a particularly tricky issue that may have come up with some of the couples you worked with. Can you think of one couple in particular?

Gardner Wiseheart: Yes there's a variety of different kinds of tricky issues. A lot of the, an issue that comes up has to do often times with jealousy. We have so many folks who have kids by other partners. And trying to maintain a relationship in the interest of the kids with that other partner can create some problems with jealousy with the current partner or husband ort wife.

When we have through the relationship that we've established by keeping a focus on the best interest of the children, we can discuss what it is about the jealousy and kind of one of the things that folks learn is how to fight fair. How to bring up issues before they become World War Three. How to talk about, not only talk about things but talk through things. And that's been an important issue.

That gets accomplished sometimes in group. Some couple are open enough and willing enough in a group to bring these kinds of things up. And other people can give feedback and then we can normalize that issue and let folks know that its not surprising.

Sometimes these discussions take place within a home visit or with the worker and working through these issues by focusing again on what's in the best interest of the children. And each of the couples being able to express their feelings for each other and separate out the different issues that are involved there.

Does that speak to your question?

Nigel Vann: Yes, no that's great. No thanks. And if there's time at the end we can come back to thinking about some of those issues. But I just wanted to sort of bring it up now while we have a little bit of time. So, yes, so thanks Gardner that was great. Thanks.

Gardner Wiseheart: Sure.

Nigel Vann: So just let me move on and introduce our next Presenter who is Andy Sagvold. Andy is the Assistant Director for Prisoner and Family Projects with the Counsel on Crime and Justice in Minneapolis, Minnesota as you see o the screen there.

The counsel on Crime and Justice is one of the Priority Area five grantees so that means they're working with incarcerated dads around Healthy Marriage issues. They're also working with their partners in the community as the dads prepare for reentry.

Andy is the coordinator of the Federal project. He's worked with the Counsel for Crime and Justice for over five years. Prior to that he was an Investigator for the State of Minnesota for over seven years and he worked directly with victims of sexual abuse for the Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault. He also developed a statewide Statutory Rights program while he was in that position.



So as he says in his bio, with over 14 years of experience working with offenders, crime victims, families, criminal justice professionals and at risk populations he continues to be invested in a career dedicated to public safety, equal treatment and second chances. And actually you know I got to talk to Andy a little bit at one of the recent Round Tables and that kind of passion really comes through when you talk with Andy. So he has got a lot to offer I think in terms of the presentation here.

I want apologize to Andy, he had sent a couple of photos that we hope to get on the slides here because it was really nice those pictures of Gardner I think it really puts a face on what we're talking about. So apologies to Andy that we don't his pictures, but I'm sure he can paint a good picture of this work forms that he's doing with dads and moms. So Andy take it away please.

Andy Sagvold: All right, well thanks a lot Nigel. I appreciate it. Hello to everyone, I hope your all doing well and I appreciate you joining in on the webinar today. And just to let everyone know up front I could seriously go on and on for hours about this project so if anyone has additional questions that I didn't have a chance to get into, certainly be in touch with me and I'll get you the information you might desire on that.

So quickly I wanted to just get an overview of the Family Strengthening Project out to everyone, but prior to doing that let me just quickly say that the Counsel on Crime and Justice here based in Minneapolis, Minnesota has been around for over 50 years.

And not only do we work with prisoners and their families but we also work with victims of crime and do a lot of research regarding the collateral effects of the racial disparities that are unfortunately present in our criminal justice system.

I think that perspective that the Counsel brings is important because we not only understand the issues that are facing the prisoners and their families and children, but also don't overlook the concerns surrounding crime victimization.

And just real quickly as Nigel had stated, you know a lot of my professional experience has not only been working with prisoners but also with crime victims. And I think that especially when working with the Department of Corrections to have an



understanding that we also take a look at the victimization concerns gives us a little more clout.

So that's just a quick background about the Counsel on Crime and Justice. Specifically the Family Strengthening Project works solely with families that are impacted by incarceration.

And what we do in the project is actually work with the guy while he is in prison up to two years while he's in prison and then currently work with his significant other and the children and the community. And then once he is released from prison our work with the entire family and the community will continue for one year after he gets out.

So the components of the Family Strengthening Project include family case advocacy which again is mainly focusing on the building a report with the clients, discovering what their strengths are and reinforcing those strengths. And also kind of coming to a determination as to what is needed especially for the family and the community to help them be stabilized now that they have lost of their family members to incarceration.

So the family case advocates work in conjunction with our family and relationship therapist. So we have licensed marriage and family therapists on staff as well. Everyone that is involved in the project will work with family case advocates. And if they chose they can also participate in our relational counseling component of the project. And I'll get into that in more detail down the road.

Other components of the project would include actually offering a parenting class in the prison and also a parenting class in the community. The parenting classes in the community is a very similar curriculum which was developed by the Counsel several years ago, its entitled Families and Focus.

The nice thing about that is that its actually both the guy on the inside and his partner in the community are getting some of the same tips regarding discipline, things of that nature and what we're discovering is that those couples then during their visits in prison or telephone conversations will often discuss a lot of the content that's covered in those classes.



In addition to that we offer a relationship strengthening class that's offered in the community for the women and in prison for the men as well. And again ideally the hope is if they can both take those classes at the same time, that's going to be another way for them to stay connected and work on any relational issues that they might have given that they're both privy to the same curriculum.

Some additional components of the Family Strengthening Project would include partnerships with several agencies in the area here. One is Big Brothers-Big Sisters. So again now that the dad is unfortunately not home a lot of times the mom might be interested in having a mentor set up for the child if they're age appropriate.

So what we'll do then is partner with Big Brothers-Big Sisters who has a specific program that works with kids that are dealing with incarceration of their parent. So we partner with them to be able to get that additional support for the kids in a mentorship role.

We also partner with financial agency that is the participants wish, they can meet with that person both in prison with the guy and again in the community with the women to do some financial planning, get advice on how to improve credit scores, repairing credit, setting up budget plans, things of that nature.

The third partnership which is a part of the program as well is with Goodwill Easter Seals which many of you I'm sure are familiar with since they are a National organization, and they provide skills training and employment readiness for individuals.

So we are able to refer our guys who get out of prison to Goodwill Easter Seals so that they can more or less get skills training for those guys that unfortunately didn't have much of a work history prior to the incarceration. It's a really nice way to be able to soon after they get back into the community to get them rolling on discovering some different ways that they can utilize their skills in the employment arena.



I think that's about it. And trust me that's a lot to keep track of here for the families that we're working with. If you want more information about any of those components or anything that I'm going to cover again please certainly be in touch.

So I wanted to next just quickly explain a little bit about the holistic family strengthening project involvement versus just merely participating in our classes. We have about 139 families right now that are fully enrolled in all components of the Family Strengthening Project.

In addition to that we have actually offered parenting and relationship education to over 600 folks in the community and prison since the grant award. The difference here is for example anyone can attend the prison parenting or relationship classes on the inside, they don't necessarily have to meet the eligibility requirements to be in the entire Family Strengthening Project.

So for example let's say that a guy is in a significant relationship, he wants to learn some more about, you know how to strengthen that relationship but he has five years let's say remaining in prison or maybe his partner does not live in the seven county Metro area. Those are two examples of where he would not meet the eligibility for the full program participation yet he could still participate in those classes.

So again, hopefully that's a clear explanation as to the numbers of the folks that actually just take the class and then those that are fully enrolled in all components of the Family Strengthening Project.

One really nice thing is now that we're about two and a half years in we have a growing number of evaluations that are really, I think in an excellent manner showing the impact of all components of the program. Just a quick example of that, and again if anything further is needed on this just let me know, but we had gathered information on 599 fathers and 81 mothers would had graduated the parenting class.

To the question of I learned about positive discipline methods in class, the guys in prison actually 98% of them agreed or strong agreed that they learned about positive discipline methods in class. That's compared to the community parenting participants who 89% indicated that positive discipline in the class were learned.

A quick other example, one of the questions on both the post evaluation that's provided to the class participants and the pre evaluation is asking about the relationship with their child and whether that's improved since being in class. And again, for the women in the community that are participating in the class 94% indicated that they strongly agree or agreed that their relationship with the child has improved since being in the ten week class.

Where as even in the prison population there's a 88% of those guys that are indicating that the class has help them stay connect to their children, understand what stage of development their in which enables them to better correspond with those kids.

Next slide please. All right. One of the things that I wanted to really take a lot of time or some time at least to focus on is some of the ways that we found it beneficial to actually get as many participants as we have. And I think the key there which has been stated previously by Gardner as well is to really involve the entire family.

Our perspective on recruitment is that we really wanted to be able to impact these families soon after the guy was actually sent to prison. There's a lot of statistics out there that indicate, I think its 85% is the divorce rate for relationships that are dealing with incarceration.

And our idea was that if we could get these guys and of course their partners soon after they went to prison we'd have better odds of keeping that family connected and helping them to actually strengthen the relationship and the parenting skills there.

The way that it's set up in Minnesota here is that everyone who goes to prison actually goes to the Saint Cloud facility and then from there they're transferred out to the nine other facilities in Minnesota. So what we do is actually present the information regarding the Family Strengthening Project as a part of the initial prison orientation.

So literally a lot of the guys that we're able to connect with on this have been in prison three or four days before they've learned of the Family Strengthening Project.



And that information is presented to them as a part of the prison orientation as I'm sure we can all imagine its super fun where they explain here are the rules and regulations, here's how you get your canteen, and by the way here's the Family Strengthening Project.

So again, the introduction soon after incarceration I think is key prior to those relationships having more time to dissolve. The way that we've actually set things up which has gotten a lot of respect Nationally as well, so that's good news, is that we actually created a letter which when we meet with the guy in prison if he's initially eligible for the program, meaning that again he's going to be in the seven county Metro area, he has at least six months remaining in prison but no more than two years you know has a significant relationship, has a child, etcetera, etcetera.

If those initial eligibility requirements are met, then we will go up to Saint Cloud usually a week or so after getting that application and meet with the guy first. Prior to meeting with him we do a thorough check to make sure there's no order for protection, there are no contact orders that would involve the family that he wants to participate with him because obviously there would be a concern that if he mailed information out to the partner he might actually be violating that order and we also could be in trouble as a third party contact.

So we definitely want to clarify that there are no order for protections or anything of that nature in place prior to meeting with the guy for the initial pre intake meeting.

So at the time of the pre intake meet, you know obviously we explain more about the project but the key portion of the meeting is actually having the guy write a letter which is partially created by me explaining to the women in the community why we're doing this program, what the components of the program are, etcetera, etcetera. But what's key is the portion of the letter that's actually written by the prisoner himself.

So literally what happens is the prisoner will complete his portion of the letter which is sent to his partner in the community and then he himself from prison will send that letter again, partially created by him along with the project brochures and contact information out to the partner in the community.



We believe that's really key because it's showing the partner in the community the guy in prison initiative to change and be there to help support his family etcetera.

I thought it be interesting, I'll just read a very short exert from one of the letters that again is partially written by the prisoner and partially written by me which is sent to the partner in the community.

So the beginning of the letter, you know goes on to explain what the Family Strengthening Project is. You know that's there's about 2.5 million with a parent in prison, etcetera, etcetera. The portion of the letter written by the guy can generally look something like this. Here's what he wrote to his partner in the community.

Baby I told you a little bit about this on our visit and the next step is they want to contact you in person over the phone to see what we need help with. I really want to grow as a family and I feel this could be very beneficial to us because it could help us find a place to stay when I come home and better jobs me and you baby. I would love to see what they have to offer and we should give it a try at least until I can make it out to actually be there to support you and our kids myself. Love always, your honey sweet husband and then of course his name which I wont read.

But hopefully that gives an idea then what the women in the community is actually receiving in the mail and then generally in our experience within two days or so of receiving that letter and the brochure, the woman then contacts me to ask more questions about the project. And once she signs the consent for services form then they are both fully enrolled in the entire Family Strengthening Project.

I think another key point that I wanted to bring up was I think it's really important to have eye catching brochures and materials that can be sent out to the perspective partner in the community. And the reason behind that is almost every single call that I receive after they have received the mailed letter from the prisoner is that they cannot believe that there's a project out there that actually is willing to help them with the incarceration.

And I think that a lot of people might get the information and if it doesn't look professional or well put together, its going to be difficult to get calls back on that



because people are apprehensive. I think people are even doubtful of the fact that there's actually programs out there that want to work with these families.

So I think that that's key. And I also wanted to mention that cold calls are definitely not an effective means of connecting with the woman in the community. One thing that we've set up is that at the time the guy sends the brochure and the letter partially written by him to his partner in the community that same day he'll send to us a consent to contact his partner form which he signs so therefore he's giving us consent to call his woman in the community, you know using prison lingo of course.

That allows us to then 14 days or so after the letter has been sent out to the partner in the community, if she has not called us yet we'll call her once and only one time just to say did you get the brochure, the letter from your partner? Do you have any questions? Are you interested in the program? A lot of times the woman are interested and they're just so busy being suddenly a single parent, etcetera that they haven't had time to get back in touch with us.

There's other woman when we call them for the one call that say absolutely not, I want nothing to do with that guy etcetera. So that really varies. But I think that that is very important to not make a cold call from a third party but rather to follow up on a mailing.

As far as including the entire family the only additional that I'd like to say on that is again, I think that its very important that the family and the community sees the dad's desire to change and kind of what he's going to do to make himself better for the family when he gets out.

And that is one way that you can show the entire family is going to be connect to the services and not just the man or the woman. Next slide please. Actually I'm not sure I put this slide exact right spot but I'll cover it here. As far as lessons learned, I'm going to get into these in a little bit more.

But I think one thing that I really wanted to emphasize here is that I believe it's very important to have project consent forms. We have run into so many stories that we should serious be writing books on a lot of what we're running into here because



we're so a meshed with these families for seriously up to three to four years in some circumstances.

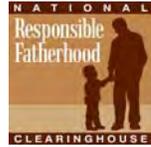
The importance of the project consent forms I think the key to that is that we have some very specific and delicately worded language in there that kind of forewarn them that we're wanting to work with them as an entire family, that there might be some things that either the man or that woman wants to share with us but they don't want the partner to know. We want to make sure that we're kind of covered in that arena.

Let me just again read here quickly from our consent for service document. We say, at the Family Strengthening Project we believe open communication is a sign of a strong and healthy family. Even though we will often meet with you separately especially during the period of incarceration, we can most helpful if you will allow us to communicate with other members of your family so we can provide consistent services, improve communication and make sure we are all working on common goals.

By signing this consent form you are giving us permission to share information you give to us with other members of your family. We also understand that there maybe times you want to tell us something but it doesn't feel safe for us to share it with other members of your family. If that happens please let your FSP staff person know about your safety concerns so we can work with you to come up with a good way to handle the situation.

Again, I think that's key. One example of that is one of the families that's been participating in the project, actually they might have been our fifth family to enroll, so we've been working with them about two and half years. He is still in prison until next fall. Well during the course of working with them his partner in the community actually became pregnant.

Well obviously this child was not his, yet they're in a committed relationship and, you know what do we do with that information once we learned that? What actually happens quite frequently is that we're going to review that consent form with them once again to let them know we may need to share this stuff with your partner if we're



not going to we have to come up with what the safety plan is going to be so that this issue can be dealt with.

So in the circumstance where the woman in the community was actually pregnant, it worked out well because both our relationship counselor and our family case advocate had a great relationship with both individuals and we've actually now been able to work with them individually and together on how they can deal with the infidelity in this relationship.

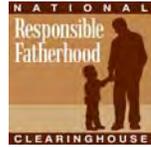
So again even though that information, the woman in the community didn't necessarily want us to share, once we discussed that with her she understood that he's going to find out anyways why not take the last several months of his incarceration for us to help address that pretty serious situation.

So again, I just wanted to point out the importance of the consent for services document in our opinion. Next slide please. All right. So I'm going to speed it up here a little bit. One of the key points as well when we came into this we didn't really actually understand how much interest there would be in the licensed marriage family and therapy component.

And I want to just toss out some different ideas on how that may have come to (foriston) one of the things that we do is we developed a relationship between the family case advocate and the both of the participants for a significant amount of time prior to the introduction of the relationship component unless of course the family brings that up as something they want to get working on right way.

I think that because the report is developed with the advocate, the participants have less concerns about getting involved in the relationship therapy which historically some of the populations that we're working with have not been real excited about relationship counseling. So I think that this has really actually worked out well.

We believe that family counseling would not be adequate if we didn't have the family case advocates because it's really hard for these families to work on relational issues if they can't see their families or meet their immediate needs.



So I think that's important. I'd like to point out too that we utilize a tool which I'm not going to get into due to time as deep as I would have liked but we utilize a tool called Faces. And on a later slide you'll see the website for that.

The reason that tool is we want to assess what the family looks like on scales regarding unbalanced and balanced behaviors. What does a family look like when we first get involved and then when they're done with the project one year close to release, what does the family look like now? That's actually the Face is going to be utilized as an assessment tool.

More importantly, though for the purposes of initiated the interest in the relational counseling, the Faces is really kind of viewed interestingly by the participants as kind of a dating game. More or less what will happen is the partner in the community will complete the Faces assessment which is a ton of question regarding whether or not the family is balance, cohesive, are they disengaged, chaotic, rigid, etcetera, etcetera.

So those questions are then answered by one partner, then the other partner. When the therapist is introduced they come out and meet with the participants to actually explain what the Faces assessment showed.

So again, the women especially in the community are really interested to see what this tool shows they need to work on, things of that nature. And the we allow the opportunity for the counselor to a foot in the door to interpret these Faces and it seems like they then realize, oh this counselor seems cool, this could be something that we could benefit from, And I think that that's been one of the reason that portion has been successful.

Next slide please. The goals of the relationship counseling are pretty wide spreading. More or less it's going to allow these couples to privately voice what their concerns may be. Even more importantly a lot of times what I talk to couples about is that it gives them the opportunity to address concerns with a license professional and not have to ride home in the same car afterwards.



You know to say I didn't know that you thought this or whatever, but it would actually give them an opportunity for at least six months and a lot of times up to two years to individually work together on the relational issues. So I think that that's key as well. Next slide please.

So the family counseling as I stated earlier works the same way as the family case advocacy, most of the sessions are going to be held individually with the man in prison and the individually with the woman in the community. Once they're released then it is more of a formal couple setting where the relationship counseling occurs.

We have two licensed marriage family therapists on staff and thankfully four marriage and family therapy interns because of the great interest in the family counseling component of the SFP.

I should note that we cannot address mental health issues. Rather the focus is on relational issues. It might be individual relational issues but we don't focus on individual mental health concerns. And those are going to be referred out to a list of providers that we have or for the guys on the inside, to the GOC Behavioral Health Unit.

Next slide please. Just real quickly on Faces, if anybody wants to check out that tool, it was created by (David Olsen) out of the University of Minnesota. It's at, well you can see that on your screen, faces4.com. Next slide please.

Here is a picture of the circumplex model. So everything that the family answers is actually charted on this circumplex model and then when we go out to meet with the families or I should say the relationship therapist go out to meet with the families, this is what they focus on with each of the individuals which again then peeks their interest in the relationship counseling component.

Next slide please. I should also mention that we have a separate consent form that we created for the Faces document. We want all the families to be willing to do the Faces assessment however they don't have to if they want to obviously. To date I think every single family has been willing to complete the Faces document. But we

wanted to have a separate consent form so that they were aware of what the use of the tool was going to be, confidentiality etcetera.

All right. Next slide please. Just real quickly I'm going to go over our relationship classes. Again it's a 10 week course offered both in the community and in the prisons. It's the same curriculum in both settings and again as I mentioned earlier I think it's really good for them to have another means to discuss the relationship issues that they are addressing.

As far as incentives, the guys in prison actually have absolutely no incentive to take the class so its quite interesting that there's a waiting list for the class so that's good that the word of mouth is spreading that the class is obviously beneficial because they're not getting anything for participating.

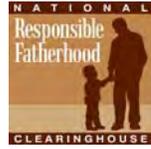
The women in the community do get benefits for participating. We provide them with transportation to the class, we take care of their children during the class depending upon their age, it's either a child care set up or we'll work with them on some educational components. So its free child care of course a light mean and then they would be entitled to upon graduation to not only get a certificate but a target stipend.

And again, those incentives are offered in the community because obviously these women are very busy taking care of the kids and what not. We don't expect them to come here for 10 weeks without getting something in addition to the education and support in return.

I think that is about it for my time. Again if there's anything additional that anyone would like, please do be in touch with me or through Nigel and I will get you that information but I really appreciate everyone's interest and the new programs that we're trying to get rolling here to actually address the concerns of incarceration that are widely spread in our nation unfortunately. But thanks again. And I wish everyone well.

Nigel Vann:

Thank you very much Andy. And there will be time to come back and have a bit more conversation with you before we get done here. So let me move on and introduce our



next Presenter, Mr. Annette Wallace who is Project Director for the Fatherhood Healthy Marriage Initiative at the Family and Children's Services in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

And they are one of only six single activity Healthy Grants which obviously creates a little bit of a conundrum in terms of how do you do fatherhood as a healthy marriage single activity. And Annette is going to address that a little bit I think. I had the pleasure of going to her program last year and sitting in on one of the sessions with couples and had a very good turn out and I was very impressed with everything they're doing there.

So we look forward to Annette sharing some of that process. And she's been in private practice as a licensed professional counselor working primarily with couples for the last 11 years. She's a trained facilitator for the Oklahoma Marriage Initiative PREP, Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program as well as their versions that Within My Reach and Within Our Reach.

And she has facilitated over 20 or more relationship workshops with more than 500 couples in Oklahoma. Her previous work at the Family Resource Coordinator at the Tulsa County Court House involved working with divorcing parents and that's given her a heart for helping dads better connect with their children. And that's certainly what we need in this work.

As you've seen her bio, she stresses that she has been happily married for almost 15 years. So it is my pleasure to introduce Annette so she can share some of her expertise in this area as she works couples and dads. Annette.

Annette Wallace: Well thank you Nigel. And hello everybody from Tulsa, Oklahoma. As I was sharing with everybody it is hot here. But I was just wanted to share with everybody kind of our process of how we started and where we are today. And it was kind of difficult for those of you who are in priority three with the single activity. I was scratching my head in the beginning wondering how do I go from fatherhood to couplehood? How do we do this?

I know it was for the first, I don't know, the first year it was a little confusing on how do I teach couples, healthy marriage staff and bring fatherhood to it but I think we've



finally figured it out by using the curriculums that we have the Within Our Reach and Within My Reach.

For those of you who are familiar with it, the Within Our Reach is for couples who are at high risk lower incomes and the Within My Reach are for individuals, men who we don't work with incarcerated dads but we have worked with dads who are involved in the Domestic Violence Programs and they don't come with their mates, so we're able to offer this program to them and then they can take it home and build stronger relationships with their partners if they are safe relationships.

So let's go ahead, next slide please. And I've already kind of gone through that. There was a lot of confusion. So if you'll go ahead and move onto the next slide I'll get started.

You know it started with how do we market our workshop? We found out real quick that most men aren't likely to initiate going to what we call the touchy feely. I wondered how effective I would be as a women directing a fatherhood program but I found out real quick it really takes both a male and female perspective to make this work well.

So I started out thinking I'll market to women. I'll market it to the women and the couple relationship but then what I found out, I just got a room full women and their partners weren't coming with them.

And so our best plan was marketing of the couple, market to couples versus just men or women. And you know the best gift that we can give our children is the harmony between their parents. And so that was my first foot in the door in recognizing, ah this is how I do it. Is that, you know I can help these children in our community by helping both their parents, not just their mother, not just their father.

And then advertising. We got some help for this. This was real difficult for us to figure out how do you advertise to couples but draw in the men? What type of verbiage do we use to draw men in? The verbiage as was mentioned earlier I think by both the previous Presenters was, you know men and women they're languaging is different.



Well so we did have to get help. So we created this wonderful advertising that appealed to couples but we used phrases like creating balance between work and home, happier in the workplace, you know they're going to be more successful if their relationships at home are better.

You can be less stressed. We tell them that your love life is not neutral, meaning that everything, your life at home really impacts every area of your life so if things aren't good at home, they're not going to be good at work or any place else.

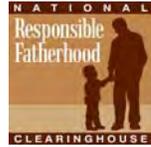
So there's going to be less stress in your life if your relationships at home are good. You're more focused from personal goals, meaning life isn't all about work that everyone has some personal goals that they want to achieve and if you're happier at home you can be more focused.

And then our last line we have on there is you actually do live longer. If things are good at home, if there's harmony at home, there are stats out there that show that people live longer.

So our marketing was important. Who we market to, how we advertised it. And then our incentives and I think again the other two Presenters covered a lot of what we do. We provide meals at our workshops. And we even found out that what we served really made a difference. We now have men that teasingly tell us they come back to our workshops just for the meal that we provide.

So we provide, you know stuff that men typically like, heartier meals versus the little sandwiches. We also provide child care during our workshops, so their kids are right here with them if their kids need them and they can check on their kids and that seems to be a real incentive for our couples to come.

And then we also we provide Wal-Mart cards, \$20 Wal-Mart cards because what we ask of them is that after, six months after the workshop we want to see if the workshop is still benefiting them, so we contact them or we at least we have a researcher do that and we ask them if they participated in that we'll send them a \$20 gift card and then we'll do it again in a year.



And as everyone knows Wal-Mart also provides gas so they can use it as a gas card. With Tulsa being fairly small we don't have a huge need for transportation believe it or not. People tend to be able to find their way, but in case they do need help with transportation, we can provide them with like a bus token or taxi fair or something like that to get them back and forth.

So we try to help eliminate any barriers that might prevent them from coming. And the other thing we do is we provide our workshops not just at our location but throughout our community. We identify central places and we go out to the community and offer them. And again being real successful with that.

Next slide please. The workshop, the workshop itself how we've managed to bring about the fatherhood message in the workshop is we sprinkle the message throughout the workshop. Even though it's a couple's workshop we sprinkle the fatherhood message throughout it. And what I mean by that is we start out with our paperwork. The first night we have all this paperwork, consent forms and all that we have to go through. And we explain that about the importance of both the roles of both the mothers and the fathers.

And I always tell them I think that most people agree that we most often, we have a lot of programs out there for moms. And we are just now getting to the point to where we're offering workshops for dad and dads are being identified more and more.

And as Nigel shared I used to work at the court house for the last five years and even there up until probably more recent years and I'd say within the last three or four years, the mothers were often awarded custody. The mothers were most often offered or thought of as the more nurturing parent. And again that's beginning to change because I think they're seeing some of our cultural woes are due to having the fathers not active in parents lives and I think that mothers and everybody is starting to see that.

So our paperwork we talk about that both of their roles are very important but we're really going to focus on the dads. There's going to be things we're going to talk about that's going to be just specific to dads.



And the way, a couple of ways we do that is we use quick tips. I don't know if any of you have just these little cards that we always have out on the table every week we have new ones. And they'll be topics like being a good father. Ten ways kids can do better when both parents are involved. And ten ways to be a better dad.

And there's lots of them that we offer, but those are just samplings of some of the quick topics that we just having lay out there on the table and encourage them to take those home.

We also have a bookmark that we had made called the Joys of Being a Father. And encourages them for fathers to read to their kids, it's a bookmark and there is just information on the bookmark on one side of it on the Joys of Being a Dad.

And then on the other side we're advertising a workshop called the 24/7 Dad that dads can participate after the workshop. We don't give them a lot of information up front in the beginning about that workshop because most fathers aren't real interested in it in the beginning. And we found that once they've gone through the workshop then they are a little more interested in it. So we kind of wait until the end of it to give them more info about the 24/7 Dad.

And then we have a little video that we show. Some of you may have already heard of it or seen it, but it's called Children See, Children Do. And that's a very powerful short video that's really about role modeling and the impact that that has. And we do show that in the workshop.

And then the male and female presenters. You know my suggestion and the thing that's really worked for us the best is we always have a male and a female presenter. I just think that if you're going to teach the couple then you need to have both. And it's interesting sometimes the opposite sex will connect with the opposite sex presenter

But we find that they one, will connect with one of the presenters, they just always do and that's just been a whole lot more effective than having either two males or two females presenting.



Okay, the next slide please. And then that moves me into our curriculum. I talked about the workshop, just the basics of the workshop, our curriculum for those of you who are familiar with PREP, then you might know the Within Our Reach and Within My Reach are written by the same researchers.

And we use the curriculum although it's a very strong couples communications curriculum we use it to spread the fatherhood message. There's one piece in there called Expectations.

And Nigel really helped us out with this. And it's been very effective. What we do in the Expectations there's, in their workbook they have like a six or eight pages of different conversations they can get into to talk about what their expectations of the relationship are. But we've done a little different is we've divided the group into men and women and we've asked them, we asked the women to either draw a picture or make a list or whatever of their expectations are of their partner as a dad.

What do they see as their role, their significant other, their role as a dad? And we have the men do the same thing. And it has been a very powerful tool for them to look at what are their expectations. And believe it or not we actually, we have lot of tears that go on both for the male and female because since we all know not all of them had good experiences with their fathers.

And so some of them aren't sure what the expectations are. Or they have very strong expectations. And the real exciting thing was, was to find out that the males and the females both had very similar expectations of the role of dads. So that's been great.

There's also a concept called the Deciding Versus Sliding. And that's about are you making clear decisions about things in your life or are you just sliding into them. And some example of that are getting pregnant. Did you just slide into that or was that a decision that you made? And so as you can probably guess one of the things we talk about is are you sliding into fatherhood? Are you being the dad that your dad was and that could be good or bad.

Because you know no other way or are you going to make a clear decision the kind of dad that your child needs? And how do moms help with that? How do they support



that role? And again, that's been a very powerful thing. That's a question that we ask just about, well we ask it every week at the very beginning, what are some of the things you did this week? Did you decide or did you slide? And then we ask what did your children learn from you this week?

And then we have hidden issues and road mapping. I'm not going to go into those a great deal because I think you have a good idea of how you can use your curriculum to tie in the fatherhood piece as you are also strengthening the relationship.

Next slide please, thank you. Again, I think it's real important that if you are mostly a female staff or you're a female running, let me tell you, you bring a great perspective but it's also important to bring the male perspective.

There's two females on my staff, me and another one and the I have a male. And we laugh often because the other female and I will get together and think we've put together this really great piece and we're just so proud of ourselves and then we bring in our male counterpart and he's laughing and going, you're not really going to say or do that are you?

And so it brings about a really great discussion about why that, you know how we do think differently. And how that's not going to impact the fathers the way that we think its going to being female. So I really, really enjoy and appreciated the male perspective. Another way to do that is poll men, you know I'm fortunate to work in an agency, in a bigger agency, our agency has been around for about 80 years now and the agency as a whole offers all kinds of services.

So I may just go stand outside the door of one of our other workshops and say, hey what do you think of this advertisement? Which one of these appeals to you? What do you think of this idea? Would you be drawn to a workshop or drawn to this brochure? I would just poll men and ask them their thoughts on it.

And even after we've taught a workshop I will ask men specifically about the curriculum. What about the curriculum drew into it? Or what didn't? What spoke to you the most? Was it too touchy feely? Did we do too much? You know talk to me about your thoughts as you went through this workshop. And I failed to mention that

our workshops are two hour. We offer them one night a week for six weeks for two hours.

So they're with us for about 12 hours by the time the whole workshop is completed. And I think one of the other Presenters also talked about my next comment here, it says asking questions, not feel questions. And as you've said its not that they don't feel, they do, and often explain it that often times for men information goes in through the brain and out through the heart.

And for women it goes through the heart and out through the brain. It's just we, you know we're not so different it's just how we process the information. And you're going to appeal to them a lot quicker if you ask them think questions. What do you think of this? Versus, how do you feel about this?

And then that brings me to my last slide. This is the 24/7 Dad curriculum, at least it's my brain just went down. It's the chapters in the book that we go over. But as I said at the end of the workshop, this is where I really start advertising the 24/7 Dad.

My experience has been that men aren't real keen about coming to the workshop. In fact one of my funny stories is I usually go around the room and ask them what do you hope to get out of this workshop? And it didn't take me long to learn not to ask that question because the first guy said, well I hope to get out this workshop.

So I knew real quick not to ask that specific question. But by the end of the workshop they are asking for more. What more is there? Is there anything else that we can come to? And that's our opportunity to bring up the 24/7 Dad and to tie it into the curriculum and say, you know they're making a decision now to become, you know to improve their fathering. To look at their fathering skills and their more bought in to going to this men's workshop then they were in the beginning.

And so that's our program. We also offer other relationship courses afterwards that we invite them to for couples such as like we'll do an hour and a half workshop on the five love languages or his need/her needs or you know I think there's like six of those that we have in a series for couples to join us.

And in all of those we advertise the 24/7 Dad as well. And it has increased our participation in it by slowly introducing this workshop versus bringing it on in the very beginning. So that's all I have. I appreciate everybody's time and attention and I hope to see you all in Washington in a month or so.

Nigel Vann: Well thank you very much Annette. You brought a smile to my face with the piece about asking dads what they want to get out of the workshop. And I suspect there are few other people too. But I think you also hit the nail on the head there guys don't know why they want to be there, what they're going to get out this to start with. But by the time you're done with them they do. And they're getting a lot out of it.

So actually move to the Q&A section. We got about 15 minutes for this so let me just ask you a couple of follow questions Annette. You mentioned that the quick tip cards. It might be helpful for people just to hear how you put those cards together. How you get that information?

Annette Wallace: Well a lot of it is, well as I said Family and Children Services has been around a very long time. We've done a lot of work out in the community so this is just information we've had around for a long time. But also just Googling the internet and looking out there, there is just tons of information plus the National Fatherhood has a great website that we go into and look at some of their information and pull from it to make up the quick tips.

Nigel Vann: Okay. And also I'd like to point out, you know on the Clearinghouse website, you know there's a tip of the day there and you can pull those down. So that's another way that people could do that. So yes I think that's a great idea.

One more thing Annette and then I got a couple of questions for Gardner and Andy as well for them. I really liked what you said about the fact that you and your female colleague were coming up with some ideas and then your male colleague would come in and say that doesn't make sense. Can you give me an example of that? That might be interesting to folks too.

Annette Wallace: I was trying to think, this just happened a while back and I was afraid you were going to ask me that so I was trying to pull together that conversation we had. It had to do

with an activity that we were going to do and I think it was the road mapping but I honestly Nigel cant come up with the specific. I just remember our male reaction to it. He just cracked up laughing.

Nigel Vann: Obviously it helps to have the male input perhaps particularly when you're working with either couples or dads are their own and Healthy Marriage issues if you have co facilitators who are make and female it's just so powerful because you can model.

Annette Wallace: Yes.

Nigel Vann: A lot of the folks we work with, you know may not have experienced that because as they were growing up.

Annette Wallace: Right, right.

Nigel Vann: A couple of questions that came in for Gardner after your presentation Gardner. So let me bring those up now. The question says, what are the specific strategies you are referring to in developing a trusting relationship with couples.

You know you made that point about how you got to build the trust and the questions is obviously using a collaborative approach is important and non expert role. Something specifically that you can share? And you can make this sort of general as well, just you know how do you develop this trust so you get beyond that point where we heard Annette talking about the father who wanted to get out of there?

Gardner Wiseheart: Sure. Well it's basically its just meeting people where they are. And not trying to be an expert or trying to tell them what to do. But to meet with them and to kind of fit into what do they want? We present information to them in a way that they get, in a way that kind of shapes being a, you know folks, young couples care about their relationship, they care about their kids.

And want to know more. And so to enter in, in that area and then to find out what they're interested in so that we can direct them in ways. The strategy we do a lot of structured supervision in support of the workers.

We have a lot of training, some of the strategies have to do with communication strategies and how to have literally how to have conversations with people so that we can normalize situations. We can help them understand better their relationship as well as to how to get along with their child.

As far as the question about collaborations? Nigel?

Nigel Vann: Well that was part of the question the person asked you. That obviously to use that collaborative approach and be the non expert.

Gardner Wiseheart: Okay, collaborations with the couples and the individuals not collaborations with other agencies. I'm sorry.

Nigel Vann: Exactly, yes.

Gardner Wiseheart: Yes again, its just building, its building on strengths, following through, doing what we say we'll do. And meeting them where they are.

Nigel Vann: Yes, its being real, its just sort developing a real relationship right?

Gardner Wiseheart: And it's going back and not expecting one time and then its going to be trusting from there on out. It's continually following up. Continually building on that.

Nigel Vann: And you know one thing I like that I think all three of you, you talked about is really putting the focus on the kids, putting the focus on the entire family and how all of this is going to benefit and how you are there to help.

So one more specific question for you Gardner and this says, do you have challenges around partners being in relationships but feeling ambivalent about the relationship at the same time? And Andy I'll focus to you after Gardner answers. Did you get that Gardner?

Gardner Wiseheart: Yes. And I think initially certainly that happens because often times folks are in that relationship, it's a romantic relationship and then a child comes along that maybe



they weren't expecting. And so the ambivalent comes out of, hey wait a minute what's going here?

And when that surfaces to address it directly, to talk with people to normalize it, to let folks know that these are some of the feelings that folks go through. And that they have a choice. Kind of like what Annette was talking about in terms of deciding not sliding.

How do you want your child to grow up? And what do you want to do about it? And dealing with those issues and not trying to go gloss over that ambivalence, recognizing, dealing with it and moving with it.

Nigel Vann: Great, yeah, it's the same thing, being real with people, right. And just helping them move from where they are and putting the focus on the kids.

Gardner Wiseheart: And it may mean introducing them to other folks who have had those feelings and successfully work through them in different ways. It may mean the ambivalence there with the partner but not with the child. And that's certainly an issue that comes up as well.

So we keep...

Nigel Vann: So for that are trying - I'm sorry go ahead.

Gardner Wiseheart: Oh I was going to say we keep folks connected with the child and support their relationship whether it ends up or moves towards marriage or whether it ends up moving in directions that where they separate. They're always going to be related through that child.

And their relationship issues are very important to maintain a healthy relationship with the child and for the wellbeing of that child.

Nigel Vann: Yes. And just to remind people, you know the population that Gardner is working with in the Building Strong Families Program, they're not married when they come into the

program. So they are at that point where they really are filling a lot of this ambivalence probably yes.

And Andy you sort of expressed this to a certain extent, but is there anything that you'd like to add to that? I'm sure these issues come up with the guys who are involved in your program.

Andy Sagvold: yes, definitely and I think that's quite commonplace for the families dealing with incarceration because it gives them an opportunity to more or less not be together day in and day out, maybe acting in an unhealthy way as far as the relationship goes.

We're actually really open to addressing what that ambivalence might be through not only the relationship counseling but also through the family case advocates work with the families.

And a lot of the times what we've discovered is that it's just not an understanding what is the relationship status right now because I'm not home? So we do a lot of work in trying to clarify that for both of the partners.

I would like to add too as Gardner had mentioned as well, you know once both of the participants sign the consent for services and they're in the Family Strengthening Project, if they in fact decide not to be in a committed relationship any longer, we still work with them but on the individual issues and maybe to better their future relationships with a focus staying on their co-parenting together.

So you know there's a lot of circumstances where I think through the work with our program mainly the woman in the community is starting to discover that this is not a healthy relationship and we can start to work together with both couples more or less on how to break up without there being safety concerns in the mix.

So yes that's definitely an interesting component that we didn't necessarily expect.

Nigel Vann: Yes. Thanks. Let me pose another question for Annette. Some is asking Annette how do you get men who are there in Tulsa to come into your workshop, into your facility?

How do they know about your organization? I know that was something that you did gaffe with a little bit in the beginning, yes?

Annette Wallace: Yes they know about our organization because again I'm real fortunate to be part of the organization that's been around in our community for about 80 years. So when they hear Family and Children, most of our community is familiar with it to begin with which is helpful.

But as I said our most successful strategy in getting men here is to appeal to the couple. Our advertising, even the color of our flyers and the verbiage on it are really directed towards men but women are drawn to it because it talks about relationship strengthening, I mean it's the verbiage that I think draws them both here.

But I didn't have a lot of success in just advertising to men or just advertising to women. Well I did have success but I was just drawing in women. And so it's appealing to them as a couple.

Nigel Vann: Okay. This question is posed I believe for Andy but feel free for anybody else to jump in as well. Its just asking is there a class or a course for the children who are in the program. I think this is probably coming out of the fact that Andy you talked about the entire family. So even its not part of the grant, are there any services available for the children?

Andy Sagvold: Yes, actually, you know a lot of times there's a ton of staff discussion about ways that we could more directly be involved with the children. But as most of the listeners know the purpose of this grant obviously was to Healthy Marriage and Fatherhood.

And the hope is that if we are able to work with these parent in turn that's going to make the children healthier. But there are some of the children depending upon the ages who have been involved in the relationship counseling component as a family counseling component, so that's been very interesting for those kids that are involved in the family counseling component.

Other than that, everyone who participates in the community parenting or relationship class, again they would be able to bring their children here so we do a lot of work with



them depending upon what their age groupings are. You know on issues that relate to self esteem, dealing with having your dad gone, things of that nature. So they get an educational component there.

I should note though however that the large majority of our family strengthening participants are very young. So many of the kids that come in for the classes with the moms are literally under the age of two. So we don't have a lot of opportunities to do too much work with those children that are very young.

Nigel Vann: That's interesting. And I'm assuming that's the same to the program in Texas Gardner right?

Gardner Wiseheart: Yes it we have, where we have, when couples are coming in for group, we provide child care and we've got the child care separated between the toddlers and the infants, the toddlers and the grade school kids.

One of the things that's really important is that kids have fun while they're in the child care and that's one of things that keeps parents coming back. And with the older kids, we have some educational things that are done with them and some activities that they participate in but it's geared around having fun.

Nigel Vann: That's what we want for the dads and the moms too right.

Gardner Wiseheart: Yes we will be alert in those situations to pick up on safety issues, to pick on concerns that the kids have and while we're not going, we don't do counseling, we have some resources to get them connect into that.

Nigel Vann: Okay. Let me say one more question and then whoever like to can respond to this but, you know you've all talked a little bit about the fact that its hard for guys to in touch with their feelings, you know and that we don't want to start out asking questions about feelings, its better to ask question about what do you think. I'm just wondering if you can think of any sort of specific instance or offer any general advice as to ways in which the work you do really helps men to get it. How do you help with getting in touch with our feelings?

Annette Wallace: One of the tools that we use in like our curriculum is called the Road Mapping. And actually we just ask them to draw a picture like on a time line of significant events that have occurred throughout their live span. And they have the choice, we say you don't have to share that with us, you know this can be private or you can share it or take it home and share it with your partner.

And we do often times ask them just how that went for them as a couple. And that always has brought them really in touch with it. It starts out something just, you know like they're doing a graft and it created a lot of reflection and therefore helped them really get in touch with their feelings about each of those events that occurred in their life.

Nigel Vann: Cool anybody else want to add to that?

Gardner Wiseheart: We do some similar things both in groups and in working with dad as well as the couples in home visits that have to do with kind of reflecting on where have they come from. It's not quite as organized as the road mapping that Annette is describing but thinking about what are some issues for them that have been important but focusing with dad on how their father was for them, the good, the bad and the ugly.

And by bringing up some of those issues they begin to recognize some of those feelings that they had in growing up and it comes out of a discussion that focuses on where they've been.

Again by thinking about that it moves them more towards, well I really like how Annette said earlier in terms of it comes in the brain and goes out the hear. Where with women (unintelligible).

Nigel Vann: It sums up the work in a lot of ways, it really does. Andy briefly have you got any additional thoughts on that?

Andy Sagvold: I think that really that, I mean largely I think that depends on the report that's built with the, you know who is working with them on staff. Seems like because we're working so long with these couples I think in comparison to a lot of the other sites that

we don't really need to force, dig what those issues are going to be because in time they're going to come out once that report is built.

Another thing I think that kind of relates to that is there was a lot of concern our first couple of relationship classes in the prison that, you know guys were spilling their hearts regarding a certain situation and then another guy in the class would go back to his unit and say so and so said this. So we actually altered the intake form for the prison relationship classes.

Asking them to be willing to share their personal circumstances but that they don't have to. But that's the one thing we're enforcing is that whatever is discussed within that two hour class remains within the class. And it actually seems like just that simple wording in our intake forms has kind of stopped that problem from occurring thus allowing these guys to be much more open within the relationship classes.

Nigel Vann: Okay, great thanks. I'd just two more questions for Annette that just came in. I'll ask these Annette but I do need to go to Matt to do the poll questions in just a minute. So if you could just answer these real quickly, if not I'll ask the person to email you to this. The first one is where do you find child care providers for your classes?

Annette Wallace: Well we have what's called our, its called the (CHBS) The Comprehensive Home based Services in our agency and all of those employees have been screened because they do work with kids a lot and a lot of them are looking for a little bit of extra work. So they provide child care for us here at our location.

Nigel Vann: And finally I think this question is directed at you Annette because they're asking when do you show the video Children See, Children Do?

Annette Wallace: Sometimes we show it twice. We show it in the very beginning and then at the very end of the workshop to drive that point home. It just takes on a whole different meaning once they've been through the workshop then it did in the beginning. So we show it at the very beginning to talk about how we are role models for our children and children are watching us. And then again we bring that back up at the very end.

Nigel Vann: Great, good idea, good idea. Okay. So I'm going to go to Matt for the poll questions and if there's time after that I'll just ask each of you if you could say just one sentence. You know if you could say one thing about teaching Healthy Marriage skills to couples or to dads what would that be? In just one sentence if there's time I'll ask each of you to say that when we come back.

So Matt if you could walk us through the poll questions.

Matt Crews: Absolutely, thank you Nigel. Everybody we'll take a look at the screen. I have four brief question I am going to ask you just so we can get some feedback on how we're doing. The first question is I have a better understanding of general strategies to teach couples healthy marriage skills. And answer by clicking to the left of the color boxes saying your choices are strongly agree, agree, unsure, disagree, strongly disagree and at the bottom you can choose no vote.

So again that I have a better understanding of general strategies to teach couples healthy marriage skills.

And if everybody is ready we'll go to the next slide. The next one is the advice and suggestions concerning ways to work with individual fathers around healthy marriage issues was helpful for me. And again you're faced with the same options, just like you did on the last slide. I'll give everybody a minute to answer.

All right. The third, I have a more complete understanding of effective recruitment strategies and general lessons learned from work with couples and fathers. Again you're faced with the same options. So I'll give everybody one moment. Again that was I have a more complete understanding of effective recruitment strategies and general lessons learned from work with couples and fathers.

All right. And finally the advice and suggestions of ways to help fathers recognize and address key relationship issues was helpful to me. And the options changed a little bit right here you have, very helpful, helpful, unsure, of little help and of no help at all. And then at the bottom of course you have no vote as well.

I'll give everybody one moment.

All right thank you for your participation today and I'm going to slide it back over to Nigel.

Nigel Vann: Thank you very much Matt. So Gardner, Andy, Annette any just one sentence that you would like to leave people with? A little bit of wisdom?

Andy Sagvold: This is Andy. One of the things I really do believe that this could be a way to reduce the (unintelligible) and increase public safety by actually trying to involve the entire family. We've had about 38 of the guys in the project released and back in the community right now and a lot of them have talked about how landing back in the community knowing they had a support system, knowing more what their partner expected was very key in them keeping straight.

Sort of speak. So again, I think that if we can give these guys and these families hope we're going to see a major decrease in the (unintelligible) rates. And just real quickly out of the 38 guys that have been released that are part of the entire Family Strengthening Project, only 1 guy has committed a new offense and 7 have violated the terms of their release. And those violations trust me are based some kind of iffy things. But regardless that is looking very good at this point in time. So I just wanted to say I think that this could be something that really addresses the (unintelligible) issues.

Nigel Vann: Okay, thanks. (unintelligible) just the one sentence but the one sentence would have been its going to help reduce (unintelligible) and really be a way to move this program forward into other areas, right.

Andy Sagvold: Exactly.

Nigel Vann: Appreciate it. Annette?

Annette Wallace: Well I'm thinking that I was going to answer your questions but this is something that we say clear through our workshop, it's the best gift that you can give your child is to love their parent. And that's a message that we just thread clear through our

workshops is the best way to help your child is to love each other and bring that harmony into your home.

Nigel Vann: I like it thank you. Okay, so let's go to Mr. (Wideheart) for a final bit of wisdom.

Gardner Wiseheart: Well I would just echo Annette. I mean its all about kids. Moms and dads are conceived by their children and by focusing g on the relationship skills and a bring a piece to the best interest of the children.

Nigel Vann: Okay. Well I appreciate it. I enjoyed all of you, you did a great job there. Can we just say again to those who weren't on at the beginning of the webinar I did remind you or asked you if you got the email last week from (Robin McDonald) with the dates for the (unintelligible) Conference and it is going to be in DC same hotel as last year, August 11 to the 13. And if you didn't get that, let me know and I'll make sure it gets to you.

So we'll catch you all the next one and hope to see you in August. Thanks everybody. Bye-bye.

Annette Wallace: Good bye.

Gardner Wiseheart: Bye.

Nigel Vann: And the presenters can stay on, we'll have a chat.

Operator: Ladies and gentlemen, that concludes the conference call for today, we thank you for your participation and ask that you please disconnect your line.

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