

Collaboration Network Calls Document

July 19, 2005: How to Measure Success in Fatherhood Initiatives? Evaluations and Outcomes

I. Welcome and Introductions

Mike Vicars, Region V Child Support, and Kathleen Penak, Region V Head Start, welcomed the participants on the call and participants introduced themselves.

Region V:

Erb, Heather - Head Start
Lawrence, Linda - Child Support
Miller, Constance - Child Welfare
Penak, Kathleen - Head Start
Thomas, Joyce - Regional Administrator
Vicars, Mike - Child Support
Vogt, Robert - Development Disabilities
Yamagata, Hich - Child Care

Illinois:

Carter, Mary - DCSE, Marion
Fitzgerald, Daniel - *
Kelly, James – Illinois Fatherhood Initiative, Chicago
Pargin, Shannon - Southern Illinois University Carbondale Head Start, Carbondale
Reed, Cathy - Southern Illinois University Carbondale Head Start, Carbondale
Roseborough, Alex - A.T. Roseborough and Associates, Fathers, Families in Transition, Chicago

Indiana:

Frame, Lori - Area Five Head Start, Logansport
Mockabee, Delores - Family Development Services, Indianapolis
Moore, Thelzelda - Indiana Family and Social Services Administration, Indianapolis
Moussou, Fey Fey - CAN I/Head Start, Fort Wayne
Smith, Melanie - Ohio Valley Opportunities, Inc. Head Start, Madison

Michigan:

Bailey, Richard – Battle Creek Head Start, Battle Creek
DeKraker, Brian - Eight CAP, Inc., Greenville
Fort, John - Wayne County Dept. of Health and Community Services, Detroit
Pletcher, Bob - Community Action Agency of Jackson, Jackson
Wilson, Duane - Michigan Fatherhood Coalition, Detroit

Minnesota:

Hayne, Jan - Dad's Make a Difference, St. Paul
Lockwood, Angie - Tri-Valley Head Start, Crookston

Collaboration Network Calls Document

Oberweiss, Molly - Dad's Make a Difference, St. Paul
Tift, Neil - National Practitioners for Fathers and Families, Minneapolis

Ohio:

Bishop, Mary - Akron Summit Community Action, Inc., Akron
Jackson, Tommy Ray - Wayne Medina Head Start, Wooster

Wisconsin:

Hamilton, Jerry - Midwest Center on Workforce and Family Development

Booz Allen Hamilton:

Baker, Dean
Green, Vander
Rakov, Lois

** There were other participants whose names or organization names were not captured clearly on the call and we'd like to add you to the participant list. Please e-mail Rakovlois@bah.com with this information. Thank you.*

Lois Rakov, Booz Allen Hamilton, introduced the presenter, Mr. Neil Tift.

Mr. Neil Tift is the Director of Professional Advancement at the National Practitioners Network for Fathers and Families (NPNFF) in Washington, D.C. His responsibilities include providing staff training, technical assistance, and consultation to support the development and expansion of fatherhood programs for local, state, and national organizations and government agencies. Mr. Tift is also coordinating the creation and implementation of professional standards of practice in the emerging fatherhood field.

Prior to his work at NPNFF, Mr. Tift was the Director of the Resource Center at the National Fatherhood Initiative (NFI) in Gaithersburg, Maryland. From 1990 to 1998 Mr. Tift was the founding Director of the Fathers' Resource Center in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The center helps men to find the inner resources to be the kind of father their children need.

Mr. Tift is a founding member of the Board of Directors of the National Practitioners Network for Fathers and Families (NPNFF). He also serves on the Boards of Directors of the National Parenting Coalition and Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies in Alexandria, Virginia.

For 21 years, Mr. Tift served as Adjunct Professor of Family Studies at Metropolitan State University in St. Paul, teaching ethics, child psychology, and human service administration. He also taught family studies at the University of Minnesota and at Century College. Neil is a licensed family mediator, along with his wife Denise.

Mr. Tift has written several chapters and numerous articles on fatherhood and related issues. He contributed to the text *Working with Fathers*, writing the chapter on

Collaboration Network Calls Document

developing support groups for single fathers. Mr. Tift co-authored *Mediation for Dads* and recently contributed to the textbook *Intervention for Fathers*.

Mr. Tift earned a Master's Degree in Counseling Psychology from the University of Saint Thomas in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Mr. Tift is the father of three, the grandfather of five, and a foster father of many.

II. Topic: How to Measure Success in Fatherhood Initiatives? Evaluations and Outcomes

Mr. Tift began his presentation by noting how critically important the fatherhood initiatives and working with fathers are. He referred participants to the FOUP Project Survey, written by Sarah Myott, Council on Crime and Justice, which Mr. Tift recommended as a good starting point to start the discussion on evaluation of fatherhood programs and which conference call participants had received prior to the call. He explained that this is a survey about participant's knowledge and beliefs in parenting, the extent of openness and/or problems in communication, and the father's frequency of contact with the child. He called particular attention to the survey itself, which is prefaced with the objective that "...we need to know how effective our services are. This survey is to help us determine what we are doing well and what requires improvement."

Mr. Tift recommended that this survey be reviewed and questions could be derived from it that would help in participants' surveys and evaluation processes. Mr. Tift explained that evaluations can be of any length. He recommended that people pull out the questions from the survey that they feel are relevant. He also suggested that pre and post tests could be given. How long and how often evaluations are done often depends upon how much time staff have.

Another source recommended by Mr. Tift is the Responsible Fatherhood Management Information System (RFMIS) that is available on the Department of Health and Human Services website: <http://fatherhood.hhs.gov/guidebook03/index.htm>.

Mr. Tift explained the importance of determining up front the indicators of success and that whatever these are; they should be things over which fathers have control. He put forth examples of both process and content evaluations. He gave examples such as if the goal and a determiner of success is to improve relationships of the father with the child's mother, the evaluation or survey needs to be worded so that father's have control over the outcome such as "I will be respectful on the phone" or "I will be punctual." The fathers need to feel that they have control over their lives. Those in the agencies and working on these programs work with the fathers, as the fathers themselves, establish their own goals. Many fathers feel that every resource developed "for me" has been punitive. Instead we need to look at the father's strengths and assets.

Collaboration Network Calls Document

It is important to realize that programs can help fathers achieve the goals that are set by the father. Evaluating the results will aid in analyzing the program and its benefits to the fathers and children. The following are examples of important goals:

- **Maximizing the number of fathers able to achieve financial stability** – Programs can help fathers prepare for, obtain and maintain employment.
- **Aiding Fathers in Achieving Control in their lives** – Mr. Tift explained how many fathers see themselves as victims. Past programs had a tendency to focus on the negative behavior of the fathers. Newer programs have adopted the philosophical approach, which focuses on the father's strengths and helps fathers to obtain the goals set by the father himself. This in turn helps retain fathers in the fatherhood program because they feel respected.
- **Improving Lifestyle Values, Orientation, and Choices** – A Father may want to be a presence in the child's life, but what does that mean? This is especially difficult if the father did not have his own father present in his childhood. The man in the program was never taught how to be a father, if his father did not serve an active role in his childhood.
- **Recognizing How Men Think and Problem Solve** – Mr. Tift discussed the gender differences in communication styles. It is often difficult for women in fatherhood programs to understand that men communicate differently and problem solve differently. Men also approach decision making differently. One example that Mr. Tift gave was that men often have more of a tendency to challenge or debate information that is given. This may be discouraging to instructors (especially women instructors) who are not familiar with the learning styles of men. Programs must give fathers time to mold and shape the information into their particular situation.

Mr. Tift suggested three important topics for staff training:

- Understanding male/female communication styles;
- Understanding male/female parenting styles; and
- Understanding male/female learning styles.

In addition, the training needs to be done within a cultural context. He emphasized that one style isn't better than another, but the styles are different and there are variations in styles. It is important that those organizing father programs are aware of the gender differences in style and that they are aware of the additional layer of cultural differences.

Mr. Tift discussed how to evaluate the process and content of the fatherhood program and the importance of such an evaluation, a program needed to have established guidelines. In discussing how to measure success and evaluate outcomes of fatherhood programs, he suggested that one method in measuring success is to examine what has changed in the father's life since he has entered the program. Another method is to compare fathers that have completed the program to fathers who have not.

Collaboration Network Calls Document

Suggested guidelines would help the program and the participants. For example:

- **Consider Social Economic Status** – The results of experiences and messages delivered starting from the father’s childhood and those affecting his current situation.
- **Set Healthy Parameters for Parenthood** – Programs need to focus on the desired behavior that is to be changed.
- **Set Guidelines for Eligibility** – Decisions should be made on whether eligibility should be based on age or social economic considerations or other identified factors.
- **Establish Program Focus** – Programs must focus on the individual fathers and not fathers in general.
- **Emphasize Recruiting and Retention** – Programs must be able to recruit and retain fathers. This is achieved by helping with problems the father, himself has control over.
- **Improve Relationship with the Mother** – Programs may be able to help the mother and the father work together for the sake of the child.

According to Mr. Tift, understanding how a man parents is an important aspect of a successful program. The program must see fathers as assets to their children and families. Rephrasing a program title from “Teaching Parenting Skills” to “Enhancing Parenting Skills” will be important both for recruitment and retention. Programs need to show “Paternal Nurturing” and not attempt to teach “Maternal” methods. A difference between “Paternal” and “Maternal” nurturing is how mothers and fathers hold their baby. By the time an infant is 30-days-old, a father has used four or five different ways to hold the baby. Women, at this time, usually have one or two different ways to hold the child. Fathers also tend to help children regulate emotions, where mothers tend to help children express emotions. He gave the following example for “Paternal Nurturing” where fathers tend to step in later than mothers to help a child with a frustrating behavior.

Mr. Tift witnessed a grandfather, a father, and a four-year-old boy walk into a shopping mall. The father and grandfather opened the big glass, walked through and left the little boy outside. The two watched the boy struggle and get frustrated with the door, until he finally opened it and joined his father and grandfather. The little boy was praised and patted on the head for a job well done.

Mr. Tift commented that this story illustrates, among other points, that men tolerate frustration longer than women. The important thing to realize is that people observing the behavior can make wrong observations, such as lack of interest or caring.

To conclude the presentation on evaluation and outcomes, Mr. Tift entertained a number of different questions from call participants. Participants asked about workbooks or other materials. Drawing on available community resources and on books such as *Fatherneed* by Dr. Kyle Pruett were several suggestions. In addition, Mr. Tift indicated that participants could contact him for more information on training and

Collaboration Network Calls Document

tools available. He emphasized again that men must be part of the solution in enhancing fatherhood initiatives. Men have strengths that need to be recognized and built upon initially in the agency's development of guidelines and in whatever evaluation method or tool is selected.

III. Possible Topics for future Collaboration Network Calls

Lois Rakov presented a list of different possible topics for the focus of future calls that have been suggested at various calls by participants.

- Reading Makes a Difference for Fathers and Children
- Partnerships and Collaboration in Fatherhood/Male Involvement Programs to Enhance Funding
- In-service Training and Staff Roles in Father/Male Programs
- Revisiting "Fatherhood" curricula
- How the fatherhood initiative empowers/affects women
- Fathers as resources
- Continuing partnerships and collaboration relationships after funding for a program runs out: How to continue the momentum of partnerships and collaborations
- Grandparents and Kinfolk – particularly Grandfathers in parenting young children
- Access and Visitation: What dads and moms want to know: Updates on policies, programs and challenges
- Healthy Marriage Initiatives
- How Fatherhood Initiatives empower women

Call participants discussed various topics and then agreed that they would like to have the following topic for the next call: "How the Fatherhood Initiative Empowers Women." Participants made several suggestions for possible speakers on this topic.

IV. Discussions

Participants discussed a question raised by a call participant about Child Support. The question and discussion concerned how states are handling reducing child support debts and if they are forgiving arrearages under particular circumstances. More information as to how states are handling innovative repayments will be brought up at the next call. (The Head Start/Child Support Liaison Chart is attached to this document.)

Kathleen Penak concluded the meeting by asking the participants to determine the topic, date, and time for the next Collaboration Call. The participants set the date and time for the next meeting as **November 2, 2005, at 1:30 PM CT, 2:30 PM ET**.

Collaboration Network Calls Document

V. Further Evaluation Materials

For more information and example of surveys used to evaluate fatherhood programs, review the attached information, which was referenced by Mr. Tift during the Collaboration Network Call.

You may also want to check out the Responsible Fatherhood Management Information System (RFMIS) that is available on the Department of Health and Human Services website: <http://fatherhood.hhs.gov/guidebook03/index.htm>

Throughout his presentation, Mr. Tift referenced the following document as an example of a survey that could be used by a Fatherhood Program.