



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

Working with Fathers from Rural and Small Town Communities

May 26, 2009

2pm – 3:45pm EST

Moderator:

Nigel Vann: NRFC Director of Training & Technical Assistance

Presenters:

Neil Tift: Native American Fatherhood and Families Association

Brian Clark: STRONG Fathers, York Community Action Corp.

Jasmine Cyprian McCoy, MSW: B.U.I.L.D. (Building Up Involved Loving Dads), Gwinnett Children's Shelter

Steve Mojica:, Fathers and Children Together (F.A.C.T.), Visiting Nurse Association

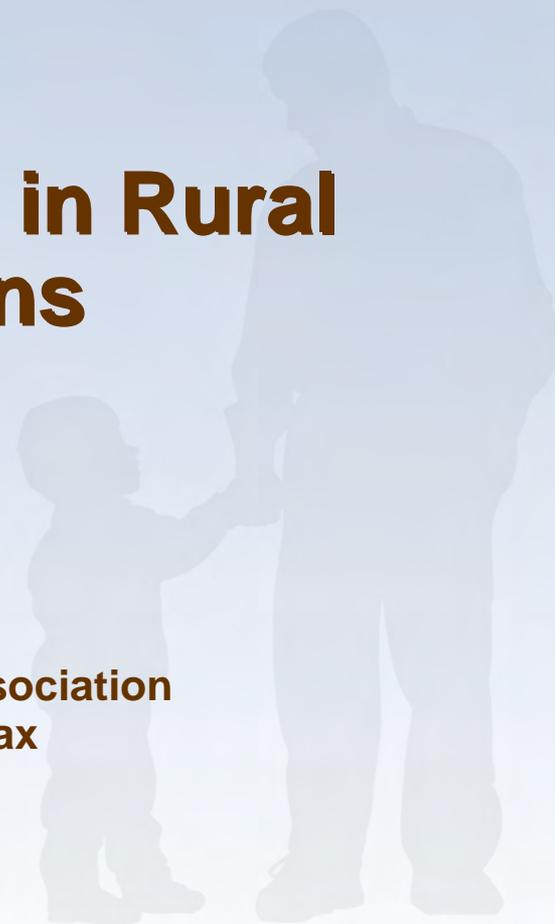




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Working with Fathers in Rural Areas and Small Towns

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Barriers to Services

- Lack of social services offering programs or services for fathers and men in families
- Mother-father relationship conflicts
- Limited opportunities to apply for or use services due to unique time constraints
- Dissatisfaction with prescribed fathering roles and responsibilities
- Personal definitions of masculinity
- The changing economy and its disproportionate impact upon men



Barriers for Non-Urban Service Providers

Address all the same issues as urban service providers with:

- fewer resources
- very limited public transportation
- over longer distances
- increased resistance, if services are seen as diluting resources for mothers
- more rigid community standards regarding gender roles and responsibilities



Promising Strategies for Working with Fathers in Rural Areas and Small towns

- Identify and gather representatives from organizations to partner in local service creation and promotion
- Provide affordable accessible legal information services
- Recruit service providers who can relate to the clients
- Offer select services that are man-to man, father-to-father
- Utilize an asset approach, rather than the deficit approach
- Develop and employ models of programs and services relevant to local fathers



Promising Strategies for Working with Fathers in Rural Areas and Small Towns

- Support Co-Parenting
 - Support mothers and fathers working together for the benefit of their children.
 - Respect maternal and paternal parenting styles
 - Promote win/win approaches to problem solving
 - Use a culturally competent, gender sensitive parent education curriculum
 - Promote co-parenting instruction and mutual support
 - Perform assessment of clients' histories; avoid assuming men are always the perpetrator



Promising Strategies for Working with Fathers in Rural Areas and Small Towns

- Create and maintain a father-friendly climate
 - Dedicate a specific area in the agency for fathers
 - Welcome fathers as warmly as they welcome mothers
 - Develop and publish a Dad's Directory
 - Publish a regional on-line calendar of fathering events
 - Sponsor drop-in discussion groups
 - Offer father-to-father role-modeling opportunities with mentors
 - Avoid distinguishing between court-ordered and voluntary clients.
 - Survey area fathers to determine their specific needs



Promising Strategies for Working with Fathers in Rural Areas and Small Towns

- Teach fathers, let them perform tasks on their own and then evaluate their progress
 - Offer affordable, safe father-child activities
 - Offer responsible male sexual behavior training and family planning
 - Make affordable counseling and therapy services available
- Establish a follow-up system to help track long-term successes



Promising Strategies for Working with Fathers in Rural Areas and Small Towns

- Acknowledge the individual, institutional and societal barriers
 - Assess state public policies and county procedures that negatively impact fathers and limit their involvement
 - Conduct a father-friendly audit of city or county departments
- Address the influence of family of origin issues
 - Parenting
 - Healthy relationships
 - Communication
 - Conflict resolution
- Educate fathers about the option of pursuing legal entrepreneurial opportunities



Promising Strategies for Working with Fathers in Rural Areas and Small Towns

- Focus agency outreach plans on the domain of fathers and men in families.
- Implement a comprehensive staff training component on
 - cultural competency
 - gender awareness
 - cross gender communication
 - men's and women's learning styles
- Provide instruction on how to effectively navigate the child support system, working with the local OCSE.
- Help staff address and reduce personal biases regarding low-income fathers and men in families.



Promising Strategies for Working with Fathers in Rural Areas and Small Towns

- Schedule home visits with both parents, as often as appropriate.
- Sponsor a Community Fatherhood Forum to determine needs of local fathers and to establish a community- or county-wide action plan to attempt to address identified major needs of local dads.
- Conduct focus groups to determine needs of fathers
- Use Local, National and Internet resources
 - National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse
 - State agency contact person to coordinate area fatherhood efforts
 - Community colleges and tribal colleges



Promising Strategies for Working with Fathers in Rural Areas and Small Towns

- Create awareness in the community
 - Create and implement a county-wide media campaign to let parents know about your fatherhood program as a local resource
 - Establish a Speakers' Bureau in your area of people willing to speak to community groups about importance of father involvement
 - Gather research information on fatherhood across a range of local issues and cultures



Promising Strategies for Working with Fathers in Rural Areas and Small Towns

- Involve the community
 - Identify and publicize strategies for the local business community to implement father-friendly practices in the workplace.
 - Organize your local civic organizations to volunteer at your fatherhood program functions
 - Identify area sponsors to help convene an annual county-wide conference on healthy fathering
 - Recognize local and state organizations that promote positive father involvement and maintain father-friendly environments



Encourage coordination of state, county or city department resources

- Youth organizations offer discussions or classes about
 - Healthy masculinity
 - Responsible manhood
 - Responsible fatherhood
- Domestic violence agencies coordinate efforts with fatherhood programs to provide specific services for male offenders and survivors and for boys who have been victimized



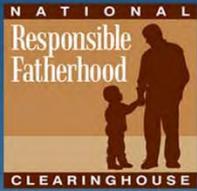
Encourage coordination of state, county or city department resources

- Culture specific social service agencies provide services specifically for fathers and men in families
- Churches and other communities of faith offer
 - fatherhood mentoring
 - co-parenting
 - male spirituality
 - marriage education and preparation
 - assistance to adolescent fathers
- Civic organizations recruit and provide male mentors, volunteer assistance and donations for programs serving dads



Encourage coordination of state, county or city department resources

- Office of Child Support promotes targeted services for non-custodial parents
 - supervised visitation
 - paternity establishment
 - Family mediation services
- United Way willing to include the category of “father’s services” on its databases, service directories and all information and referral systems
- Technical colleges provide vocational and educational services for fathers addressing job training and job skill development, and offer on-campus supports



Thank you!

For further information about
Native American Fatherhood & Families Association, please
see our website www.nativeamericanfathers.org



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From East Gish to the Williwacks: Taking Responsible Fatherhood Out of the Hood and into the Woods

Brian T Clark, Program Manager, STRONG Fathers
Sanford, ME





A Couple of Numbers

- Philadelphia County (Home to another Grantee)
Total Population: 1,448,000
Center City Neighborhood: 88,000
Population Density: 10,882.8/sq MI
- York County (Our Program Area)
Total Population: 202,000
Biddeford 21,500 Sanford 10,800
Population Density: 204.1/sq MI

York County is the second most populous county in the state.



Geographic Challenges

- Ways to Get the Word Out
- Lack of Other Services
- No Central Hang Out / Gathering Spot
- Population Distribution – Physical Distance
- Psychic Distance – We Won't Go There From Here



Cultural Challenges

- How to Silence a Coffee Shop in One Easy Step
- Where Everybody Knows Your Name
- Help vs. I'll do it on my Own
- No Context for the Message
- Not My Problem



Current Strategies

- Focus More on Individual Work
- Presentations to Child Care Professionals
- Shopper's Guide Paper
- Social Networking Sites



Current Strategies

- Word of Mouth
- Schools
- Head Start Fathers Involvement Programs
- Department of Health & Human Services
- Corrections / Parole Officers



Final Thoughts

Not just one kind of rural dad –

In the room, the issues are the same –

Invest them in something bigger -





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Fatherhood Services in Suburban Areas

Jasmine McCoy, MSW, Program Coordinator
Gwinnett Children's Shelter, Buford, GA





Gwinnett County Demographics

- Where is Gwinnett County?
 - We are a part of the Atlanta Metropolitan area
 - Located approximately 20-40 miles from Atlanta
- Estimated Population:
 - Gwinnett County - 789,499
 - Fulton County (Atlanta)- 1,014,932
- 15 cities within the County
 - several which are considered “small town”





- Land area in Gwinnett is 433 square miles
- 125 Public Schools
- Population is approximately 14 percent of the total Atlanta region
- 2007 census estimates reported
 - 51.7% White
 - 21.1% Black
 - 17.0% Hispanic or Latino origin
 - 9.2% Asian



Gwinnett's proximity to Atlanta

- Atlanta is the nearest Urban area to Gwinnett County
- [Map](#)



What is the difference between Urban and Suburban?

- Gwinnett
 - Inefficient transit system
 - Large amount of land area
 - Resources are few and spread out
 - Few sidewalks
 - Abundance of options
 - Grocery stores, Malls, Daycares, Restaurants, etc.
 - Very few “hang-out” spots
 - Easy to hide
- Urban areas
 - Efficient bus and rail system
 - Local areas where people congregate often
 - People are seen walking
 - Etc.



What is the difference between Urban and Suburban?

- **Clients**

- Clients in our community classes are just dads! Not rehabilitated drug addicts, ex-gang members, and parolees. Men seeking assistance with parenting, communication and life skills.

- **Clients come to us because they want to learn how to be the best dad they can be.**

- **They stay because they gain a social network of other fathers who's experiences they learn from.**



Steps to getting clients to attend

- 1) All classes are held in the community and in multiple settings
 - a. Locations vary and change
 - b. Open enrollment
 - a. We allow clients to start the program during any week 1-7. This way, we do not lose someone who may have been interested during week 4 because he would have to wait 6 weeks until the start of a new 9 week session.
- 2) Transportation assistance provided
 - a. Gas cards
 - b. Bus fare
 - c. Sometimes this means picking up clients prior to teaching the class



Steps to getting clients to attend

3) Incarcerated fathers

- 2 minimum security facilities
 - **Gwinnett County Work Camp**- Short term sentencing 0-3 yrs
 - Seen throughout the county doing work detail
 - Cutting grass and discarding litter
 - **Phillips State Prison Transitional Center** -Men who are at the end of their sentence with up to 1 year before being released
 - Re-entry facility
 - Leave the facility daily to work regular jobs and return to the facility in the evenings



Community vs. Incarcerated

- Community classes
 - Work intensively with clients
 - Upon request we provide in home skill building and co parenting skills
 - Work to involve family members
 - Mothers education
 - Family Communication Skill Building day
 - Next steps class
- Incarcerated classes
 - We are not a re-entry program
 - The jails do not have a good record of recognizing issues faced by incarcerated fathers
 - Our program seeks to teach information and attempt to connect with children and mothers of children who are in the county and surrounding areas.



Best Practice Strategies :Agency awareness

- Commonly termed as “Partnerships”
 - Agencies that are aware of our services and support us by allowing marketing and/or use of their facilities and distribution of flyers/brochures
 - **East Metro Health District**
 - 3 Local health departments
 - **Gwinnett County Parks and Recreation**
 - **GA Fatherhood Initiative**
 - Other programs like ours working with dads
 - **Boys and Girls Clubs**
 - **Head Start and Pre-K**
 - Must show father involvement



Agency Awareness cont.

- Referral resources
 - A very informal referral process
 - Its important that other professionals (caseworkers, Probation officers, etc.) do not have to take away from their work with a tedious referral process
 - Short, simple form indicating potential clients name, phone number and brief reason for referral that can be faxed or emailed. We do the rest!
 - Department of Family and Children services
 - Department of Juvenile Justice
 - Adult and Juvenile Probation



Effective Methods:

- Recruitment
 - Visit Partner Agencies regularly
 - Regular face to face Contact
 - Workers and Potential Clients
 - Create a family atmosphere in classes
 - Include special days that promote family involvement
 - Family Communication Skill Building Day
 - Mothers Education Day
 - Street outreach
 - Word of Mouth



Effective Methods cont.:

- Service delivery- clients
 - Clients choose amount of disclosure
 - Our classes are about the client
 - Provide very little “answers” instead use of suggestions or alternatives
 - Gain an understanding
 - Family of Origin
 - Teach clients how their family of origin impacts their relationships
- Service delivery-facilitators
 - Not interested in hearing themselves talk!!!
 - Knowledge of client
 - Family
 - Culture
 - Experiences
 - Continuous training
 - Educational barriers
 - Boundaries
 - Gender awareness
 - Methods to engage clients



More on Service Delivery

- Provide Dads with a reason

1. Let dads know our intent

- a) We are not saying that they are bad dads... But who couldn't use a little help?

2. Provide additional services

- a) Resources for job search/interview skills

- b) Co-parenting skills and Parent coaching

3. Recognize that Dads have a lot of input to share but they don't always get the opportunity

- a) Provide them with that opportunity



Effective Methods

- Team Work!
 - Staff the program wisely
 - Program staff are willing to work together to accomplish the needs of the program.
 - Clear understanding and purpose for:
 - Marketing
 - Evaluations
 - Staff must be willing to put in the work to see the results.



Thank you

Jasmine McCoy, MSW

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Building Up Involved Loving Dads- Fatherhood Program

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Commentary by Steve

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Steve's Bio

Steve has worked as a social worker with families of young children for almost 20 years. For over 15 years he has facilitated a weekly dads and kids group, Fathers And Children Together (FACT), of which there are 4 now in two Vermont counties. He has also co-facilitated batterers intervention groups and helped to develop a program for fathers with a history of domestic violence. Steve teaches parenting education to both moms and dads. He lives in Northern Vermont with his 'wife' and has 4 children.



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If you have questions that were not addressed during this Webinar, please submit them to your Federal Project Officer.

Thank you and have a great afternoon!