



Impact Evaluation of the Fathers Advancing Community Together Program in  
Contra Costa County, California

Final Impact Evaluation Report for the FACT Program, Rubicon Programs

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### Disclosure:

The nonprofit Urban Institute is a leading research organization dedicated to developing evidence-based insights that improve people's lives and strengthen communities. For 50 years, Urban has been the trusted source for rigorous analysis of complex social and economic issues; strategic advice to policymakers, philanthropists, and practitioners; and new, promising ideas that expand opportunities for all. Our work inspires effective decisions that advance fairness and enhance the well-being of people and places.

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**Structured Abstract:** “Impact Evaluation of the Fathers Advancing Community Together Program in Contra Costa County, California”

**Objective.** In partnership with Rubicon Programs (Rubicon), the Urban Institute conducted an implementation and impact evaluation of the Fathers Advancing Community Together (FACT) program to document program performance and assess participant outcomes. The program enrolled low- to moderate-income Contra Costa County residents who were custodial or noncustodial parents (fathers and mothers) of minor children and were interested in services to enhance their financial mobility. FACT provided parents a suite of parenting, relationship, and economic stability workshops, as well as support services and case management.

**Study design.** Urban used a quasi-experimental design to examine whether FACT had an impact on parents’ economic self-sufficiency and capacity to support family stability. The intervention group included all people enrolled in FACT between July 2016 and September 2019 who had an open child support case at enrollment. Urban collected administrative data from the Contra Costa County Department of Child Support Services to create a comparison group of parents who could have been eligible for FACT but did not participate in the program. Urban’s analysis examined six-month outcomes related to child support payment modifications, monthly child support payments, employment, and receipt of public assistance. The final analytic sample comprised 1,236 people.

**Results.** The overall impact of FACT was in the expected direction for three of the four primary research questions. FACT participants were more likely than people in the comparison group to have a child support payment modification (5.1 percent versus 1.4 percent); more likely to be employed (51.6 percent versus 39.1 percent); and more likely to have received public assistance (11.2 percent versus 5.6 percent) at some point during the six months after their enrollment in the program. There was no significant difference between the two groups in their average monthly child support payments during the postenrollment period.

**Conclusion.** The evaluation results align with Rubicon’s organizational mission, its core service offerings, and the supports provided by its large network of community partners. By documenting FACT’s program model and impacts, Urban’s evaluation adds to the evidence base of effective programming for low-income parents and seeks to inform future iterations of FACT and similar parenting programs implemented in other settings.

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## I. Introduction

### A. Introduction and Study Overview

California's Contra Costa County, one of nine counties in San Francisco's Bay Area, is a largely suburban and rural area that includes communities of substantial wealth. Yet a number of its cities have struggled for decades to recover from the disappearance of the industries that drove their growth during and after World War II. In recent years, social problems in the county have been exacerbated as new residents move there from nearby cities (for example, San Francisco and Oakland) owing to gentrification, rising housing prices, and high crime rates. Because of these challenges, many parts of Contra Costa County have high rates of family poverty (that is, families with children younger than 19 and incomes below the federal poverty level). For example, at 25.9 percent,<sup>1</sup> the poverty rates in southwest Richmond and San Pablo—both of which are in the Fathers Advancing Community Together (FACT) service area—exceed California's statewide poverty rate (17.6 percent) and the national family poverty rate (15.9 percent) (Bohn, Danielson, and Thorman 2020; Semega et al. 2019).

Furthermore, many parents in the FACT target population grew up in communities impacted by intergenerational poverty. Although economic-stability and other services are available to reentry populations and people participating in Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, few resources are targeted to the unique needs of parents in the county. Many of these parents are low income and struggle to balance the demands of searching for stable housing and employment against the imperative to establish (or re-create) connections with their children, whose well-being requires healthy parental involvement.

To support parents in Contra Costa County, Rubicon Programs (Rubicon) developed and implemented the FACT program. The program builds on Rubicon's Promoting Advances in Paternal Accountability and Success in Work (PAPAS Work) program for justice-involved parents, which was implemented from 2012 to 2015. Drawing on the PAPAS Work model, Rubicon launched FACT in July 2016 to serve low- to moderate-income Contra Costa County residents who were custodial or noncustodial parents (fathers and mothers) of minor children and who were interested in services to help them achieve long-term financial mobility. FACT provided services in three core areas: economic stability, responsible parenting, and healthy relationships. Urban describes these core areas in greater detail in sections II.A and V.A.

In partnership with Rubicon, the Urban Institute conducted an impact evaluation of the FACT program. Urban's evaluation focused on documenting program implementation, describing the barriers to and facilitators of effective implementation, estimating the degree to which the program led to better outcomes among program participants, and assessing whether the program was an effective model for low-income parents in Contra Costa County. For its evaluation, Urban reviewed program materials and conducted program observations, participant focus

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<sup>1</sup> "California Poverty by County and Legislative District," Public Policy Institute of California, accessed October 1, 2020, <https://www.ppic.org/interactive/california-poverty-by-county-and-legislative-district/>.

groups and surveys, and stakeholder interviews. It also analyzed program data from Rubicon and administrative data from the Contra Costa County Department of Child Support Services (DCSS). Urban previously partnered with Rubicon on Urban's implementation assessment of the six Community-Centered Responsible Fatherhood Ex-Prisoner Reentry Pilot Projects funded by the US Department of Health and Human Services from 2011 through 2015, including Rubicon's PAPAS Work program.

Previous research on responsible fatherhood programming has shown that teaching healthy parenting and relationship skills, providing economic stability activities (such as skills-building and job assistance services), and supporting parents and their partners and families can be effective in helping move families toward reunification and self-sufficiency. Furthermore, research has pointed to best practices for providing services to low-income parents, such as providing concrete opportunities for parents to practice information taught in classes, using incentives to encourage participation, and using targeted, culturally specific curricula (Bronte-Tinkew et al. 2007; Kaminski et al. 2008; Mathematica Policy Research 2014; Mbwana, Terzian, and Moore 2009). Although research has identified some characteristics that make programs effective, the evidence base is limited because of the scarcity of rigorous impact studies. To add to the evidence base on effective programming for low-income parents, Urban's evaluation was designed to provide information based on an independent and comprehensive implementation assessment, a thorough assessment of participating parents' outcomes, and the first rigorous examination of the effectiveness of the FACT program model for low-income parents.

This report presents findings from Urban's implementation and impact evaluation of the FACT program. The primary and secondary research questions are presented below. In the next five sections, Urban describes the intervention and comparison conditions, the study design, the analysis methods, the findings and approach for estimation, and the conclusions and implications of the evaluation findings.

## B. Primary Research Questions

This section presents the primary and secondary research questions that Urban assessed in its impact evaluation of FACT. The evaluation was registered on ClinicalTrials.gov (protocol ID number 09226-000-00; NCT03143439).

Urban's primary research questions concern the extent to which FACT is associated with better outcomes during the six-month postenrollment period among low-income parents in Contra Costa County who had an open child support case with DCSS. The specific questions were as follows:

- B1. Does FACT increase child support payment modifications?
- B2. Does FACT increase monthly child support payment dollar amounts?
- B3. Does FACT increase employment?
- B4. Does FACT increase receipt of public assistance?

### C. Secondary Research Questions

The secondary research questions build on the primary research questions with additional measures of relevant outcomes. The secondary questions were as follows:

- C1. Does FACT reduce the likelihood of receiving a court order for child support payments?
- C2. Does FACT reduce the dollar amount of court orders?
- C3. Does FACT reduce the likelihood of having an arrear?
- C4. Does FACT reduce the total dollar balance of arrears?
- C5. Does FACT impact the number of months in which individuals are on public assistance?



## II. Intervention and Counterfactual Conditions

This section provides a brief description of the intervention (i.e., the FACT program) and the services it offered participants. It outlines intervention conditions, intended content of the intervention, planned dosage and implementation schedule, intended delivery, target population, and the education and training of program staff. Additional details regarding the core intervention components appear in tables 1 and 2.

### A. Description of Program as Intended

#### 1. Program Model and Partnerships

The FACT program is a multicomponent intervention implemented by Rubicon in Contra Costa County, California, to serve low- to moderate-income custodial or noncustodial parents (including mothers and fathers) of minor children who are interested in services to help them achieve long-term financial mobility. The program provides services in three core areas—economic stability, responsible parenting, and healthy relationships—at Rubicon’s office locations in Antioch and Richmond. Across these areas, Rubicon offers workshops, case management, and referrals to Rubicon services and external supports. As lead agency, Rubicon provides the economic stability services and partners with **Centerforce**, a nonprofit community-based organization, to facilitate the responsible parenting and healthy relationship workshops and provide case management through fatherhood coaches. Across these two organizations, staff representing 14 different positions facilitate workshops and deliver services to participants; these staff include a program director and manager, site managers, fatherhood coaches, impact coaches, employment coaches, financial coaches, career advisors, workforce liaisons, staff attorneys, a wellness director and manager, a community connections manager, and ambassadors. The impact coach is a participant’s central **case manager** who connects them to Rubicon’s other **service areas** and provides **referrals** to services in the community.

Rubicon partners with an additional community-based organizations and two government agencies to implement FACT, including: **STAND! For Families Free of Violence**, which provides a 52-week anger management workshop, the **Contra Costa County Probation Department**, which refers prospective participants to FACT, and the **Contra Costa County Department of Child Support Services**, which refers prospective participants to the program, delivers presentations to participants during workshops, assists with modifying child support orders, and releases participants’ suspensions on drivers’ licenses.

#### 2. Core Program Components

The core component of FACT is the **Foundations Workshop** series, which focuses on economic stability. The Foundations Workshop series uses Rubicon’s own curriculum, which includes 17 sessions (i.e., curriculum topics or modules) to equip participants with knowledge and tools to achieve economic stability. The sessions are facilitated by two trained coaches, who also offer ongoing case management during the workshop period. The Foundations Workshop sessions are

facilitated for five hours a day Monday through Friday for two consecutive weeks, totaling 50 hours. Each of the curriculum's 17 sessions varies in duration (e.g., 75, 90, 120 minutes); however, participants attend sessions totaling five hours each day (from 9:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m.). After these two weeks, participants are encouraged to participate in the program's second core component, **Foundations Workshop Electives**, which begin during the third week and occur five hours a day Monday through Friday. Twenty-one elective sessions are offered throughout the week. The Foundations Workshop and Foundations Workshop Electives provide support in five service areas. In the first area, Rubicon's financial coaches facilitate **financial literacy** workshops and provide financial education services related to budgeting, securing public assistance, managing bank accounts, and investing. The second service area, **pathways to employment**, is a suite of employment readiness services such as resume writing, interview preparation, transitional employment, subsidized employment, and referrals to job opportunities. Participants receive support from career advisors, employment coaches, and workforce liaisons who foster and leverage partnerships with employers in the community to hire FACT participants. Employment coaches and career advisors help participants explore career interests and job readiness and facilitate a job club with participants. The third area is **wellness**, which includes a workshop during Foundations as well as individual therapy sessions and referrals to wellness services outside of Rubicon. The wellness component is supported by the wellness director and wellness coach. For the fourth area, **legal services**, Rubicon leverages its staff attorneys to review participants' arrest histories and justice system involvement, and to assist with expungement, appealing cases, and child support matters. The fifth area, **community connections**, includes workshops led by the community connections manager on topics such as restorative justice, civic engagement, and advocacy.

As part of the FACT program, participants are required to attend the responsible parenting (Back to Family) and healthy relationships (Couples Enhancement) components, respectively. **Back to Family**, a 24-hour workshop series, uses Centerforce's curriculum, which covers topics such as parenting skills, discipline, and parent-child communication. These workshops are offered for two hours a day four days a week during the three-week Foundations and Electives workshops. Centerforce fatherhood coaches facilitate Back to Family and **Couples Enhancement** workshops. Couples Enhancement uses Centerforce's curriculum on topics such as healthy relationships, communication, and conflict resolution. The Couples Enhancement curriculum is delivered over nine hours, as 45-minute sessions that occur alongside Back to Family workshops. Individual participants can attend the Couples Enhancement workshops; they do not have to have a partner to attend.

Lastly, **case management** is offered for up to three years to participants and is based on three key techniques: transformational relationships, coaching, and trauma-informed care. All FACT staff, including coaches employed by Rubicon and Centerforce, provide some level of case management and engage with participants through one-on-one appointments in Rubicon's offices or in the community, phone calls, text messages, e-mails, interactions in the computer labs at Rubicon's offices, or through ad hoc meetings as needed. However, impact coaches (employed by Rubicon) and fatherhood coaches (employed by Centerforce) provide intensive case

management for participants throughout their engagement with the program. The impact coach is responsible for developing an empowerment plan with participants to identify personal development goals and needed services for the removal of barriers, and has regular contact with participants on their caseload. Impact coaches, drawing on Rubicon's breadth of internal services, leverage additional supports for FACT participants, such as legal guidance from the staff attorneys, referrals to housing resources, health and wellness services, community connections and activism efforts, and men's and women's support groups. Furthermore, impact and fatherhood coaches both refer participants to external support services, such as housing, public assistance, child support, family reunification, visitation and custody support, and anger management classes. All program services and activities are depicted in the FACT program logic model (appendix A).

All coaches from Rubicon and Centerforce are trained in trauma-informed care, motivational interviewing, and coaching. Some are licensed clinical social workers and have bachelor's degrees. To onboard FACT staff at Rubicon and Centerforce before launching the program, Rubicon partnered with Leadership That Works to facilitate a three-day coaching training in May 2016 intended to teach Rubicon and Centerforce staff coaching skills and relationship-building techniques. The training informed Rubicon and Centerforce staff about various coaching techniques and tools they could use when working with program participants. Table 1 outlines the initial and ongoing training efforts for staff who facilitate the core workshops.

**Table 1. Staff Training and Development in Support of Intervention Components**

Component	Education and initial training of staff	Ongoing training of staff
Foundations Workshop	Facilitation Training – 4 days, 32 hours Equity and Inclusion Training – 1 day, 8 hours Coaching – 2 days, 16 hours Trauma Informed Care – 1 day, 6 hours	Case Conference – Biweekly Team Meetings – Biweekly Weekly Supervision – Weekly, 1 hour
Back to Family	List of Trainings: Parenting Inside Out – 4 days, 32 hours Breaking Barriers – 2 days, 16 hours Thinking for Change – 4 days, 32 hours	Ongoing Trainings Quarterly New staff training – 2 days, 12 hours Staff supervision Weekly, 1 hour
Couples Enhancement	List of Trainings: Managing Unhealthy Relationships – 2 hours Healthy Communication 101 – 2 hours Maintaining Lasting and Loving Relationships – 2 hours Dealing with Difficult People – 2 hours	Ongoing Trainings Quarterly New staff training – 2 days, 12 hours Staff supervision – Weekly, 1 hour
Foundations Workshop Electives	Facilitation Training – 4 days, 32 hours Equity and Inclusion Training – 1 day, 8 hours Coaching – 2 days, 16 hours Trauma Informed Care – 1 day, 6 hours	Case Conference – Biweekly Team Meetings – Biweekly Weekly Supervision – Weekly, 1 hour

## B. Description of Counterfactual Condition as Intended

The counterfactual condition was a comparison group of people drawn from an administrative dataset of people with open child support cases in Contra Costa County who did not participate in the FACT program during the study period. The comparison group did not receive FACT program services from Rubicon. By the study's design, Urban was unable to identify specific interventions that people in the comparison group may have received from additional sources during the study period (other than their involvement with DCSS for their child support cases). However, people in Contra Costa County (including FACT participants and people in the comparison group) generally had access to online resources through DCSS on family law/legal assistance, employment, and affordable housing.

**Table 2. Description of Intended Intervention and Counterfactual Components and Target Populations**

Component	Curriculum and content	Dosage and schedule	Delivery	Target Population
<b>Intervention</b>				
<i>Foundations Workshop</i>	Self-developed curriculum titled "Foundations"; 17 sessions	50 hours total; 5 hours daily Monday through Friday for consecutive 2 weeks	Group lessons provided at the intervention's facilities by 1-2 trained facilitators in every session	Custodial or non-custodial parents in Contra Costa County with at least one child under 18, low to moderate income, and interest in long-term financial mobility
<i>Back to Family</i> <sup>1</sup>	Curriculum covering communication, parent to child discipline, child support; 12 sessions	24 hours total; 2-hours daily Monday through Thursday for 3 weeks simultaneous to Foundations and Electives (see below)	Workshops facilitated by 1 fatherhood coach	Custodial or non-custodial parents in Contra Costa County with at least one child under 18, low to moderate income, and interest in long-term financial mobility
<i>Couples Enhancement</i> <sup>1</sup>	Curriculum covering understanding partners' perspectives; avoiding destructive conflict; and communicating effectively; 15 sessions	9 hours total; 45-minute add-on sessions to Back to Family classes Monday through Thursday for 3 weeks simultaneous to Foundations and Electives <sup>2</sup>	Workshops facilitated by 1-2 fatherhood coach(es)	Custodial or non-custodial parents in Contra Costa County with at least one child under 18, low to moderate income, and interest in long-term financial mobility. Participants were to attend the Couples Enhancement workshop with a self-identified partner.
<i>Foundations Workshop Electives</i>	Curriculum covering digital literacy; resume preparation; interview and communication skills; appropriate work attire; 21 sessions	Up to 25 hours total 5-hour sessions occurring Monday through Friday for 1 week following Foundations Workshop	Group lessons provided at the intervention's facilities by 1-2 trained facilitators in every session	Custodial or non-custodial parents in Contra Costa County with at least one child under 18, low to moderate income, and interest in long-term financial mobility

Component	Curriculum and content	Dosage and schedule	Delivery	Target Population
<b>Counterfactual</b>				
By study design, Urban could not identify the intervention components that individuals in the comparison group may have received, other than their involvement with DCSS for their child support case. The DCSS website in Contra Costa County provides general information and resources around family law/legal assistance, employment, and affordable housing.				

<sup>1</sup>The Back to Family and Couples Enhancement workshops were required to receive services from the program.

<sup>2</sup> As originally designed, Couples Enhancement was a daylong, 8-hour workshop for couples (i.e., FACT participants and his or her self-identified partner). FACT changed this to a 9 hour, 3-week workshop series in response to guidance received from the Office of Family Assistance to provide all participants the healthy relationships curriculum.

### C. Research Questions about the Intervention and Counterfactual Conditions as Implemented

As part of the impact evaluation, Urban conducted an implementation evaluation of the FACT program to describe program activities and services, how cohesive services were across program partners, and whether participants and their families received comprehensive services. Urban's implementation evaluation was guided by the research questions outlined in table 3.

**Table 3. Evaluation Research Questions**

Implementation element	Research questions
Fidelity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Were all intended program components implemented?</li> <li>• What was the content of the FACT program?</li> <li>• What was the intended dosage and structure of the core program components?</li> <li>• What were the unplanned adaptations to key program components?</li> </ul>
Dosage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How many workshops did FACT participants attend, on average?</li> <li>• How much content did FACT participants receive, on average?</li> </ul>
Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent did FACT staff, stakeholders, and participants describe the services as comprehensive, including responsible fatherhood, healthy relationships, and economic stability services, for program participants and their families?</li> <li>• What were participants' perceptions of the quality of FACT services?</li> </ul>
Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How did FACT participants appear to engage with the program content?</li> </ul>
Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What other services from Rubicon did FACT participants receive?</li> <li>• How well did the partnership to offer the FACT program function in Contra Costa County?</li> </ul>

### III. Study Design

This section describes the quasi-experimental study design used for the evaluation of FACT. The Urban research team analyzed the program's implementation as well as its impact on relevant outcomes among FACT participants related to child support modifications and payments, employment, and the receipt of public benefits. This section provides an overview of the study design, sample, and data collection procedures.

#### A. Sample Formation and Research Design

##### 1. Recruitment and Enrollment

Urban worked closely with Rubicon to execute a quasi-experimental impact evaluation of FACT. Rubicon recruited FACT participants directly at shelters in the Contra Costa County area and through presentations at monthly Parole and Community Team meetings for people recently released from incarceration. They also received referrals through word of mouth, through walk-ins, and from other partnering agencies, including DCSS, Centerforce, STAND!, the Division of Adult Parole Operations, and the Contra Costa County Probation Department. After being recruited for the program, prospective participants met with an ambassador and impact coach to learn more about it. Impact coaches met with prospective participants at least three times to begin fostering transformational relationships and to complete the necessary intake paperwork. Rubicon also implemented an alignment process it developed to help ensure prospective participants were a "good fit" for FACT, based on their backgrounds, motivations for enrolling in FACT, and potential barriers to engaging in the program. Alignment meetings occurred weekly and convened all program staff to discuss prospective participants and any concerns about their readiness for the program. If prospective participants were deemed not a good fit for FACT, they were referred to another service provider in the community.

If prospective participants were deemed a good fit for FACT, Rubicon's impact coaches met with them to complete the intake and enrollment process, which included reviewing the consent form (on which Urban was listed as the evaluation partner). Impact coaches then worked with prospective participants to obtain their consent to participate in FACT (and therefore in the evaluation) by having them sign a consent form.

##### 2. Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible to participate in the impact evaluation, parents had to be custodial or noncustodial parents with an open child support case at the time of enrollment.<sup>2</sup> They also had to live in Contra Costa County, have low to moderate incomes,<sup>3</sup> and have at least one child younger than

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<sup>2</sup> A parent in the impact evaluation could have multiple open child support cases with different statuses (i.e., a parent can be both a custodial and noncustodial parent, but on different cases).

<sup>3</sup> Rubicon does not use a defined level of income to determine program eligibility. Instead, it allows participants to self-identify as low- or moderate-income and broadly follows Contra Costa County's annual definitions of area median income.



18. The intervention group for the impact evaluation enrolled in FACT from July 2016 through September 2019. Urban limited the intervention group to participants with an open child support case for several reasons. First, Urban understood that Rubicon—based on the characteristics of PAPAS Work participants—enrolled a lot of participants with child support involvement. Second, Rubicon had an existing partnership with DCSS from the PAPAS Work program to provide services to mitigate participants' child support barriers. Third, a key piece of the transformational relationship case management was coaching and motivational interviewing with the parent to address their child support debt and responsibility. Fourth, DCSS had a comprehensive dataset with relevant outcomes and was willing to share it for evaluation purposes. Lastly, the sample criteria allowed Urban to develop a comparison group from the pool of people with open child support cases who did not participate in FACT but who were similar to the intervention group on several relevant case and demographic characteristics. Urban recognizes that the FACT theory of change (shown in the logic model in appendix A) points to broader program impacts than the outcomes measured and available in the DCSS data. Therefore, although the use of DCSS data may be a limited test of FACT's impacts, Urban used the child support outcomes to capture parents' economic self-sufficiency and their capacity to support family stability, both key objectives of the program.

### **3. Sample and Matching Process**

Of the 520 parents expected to enroll in the program through September 2019, Rubicon aimed to enroll at least 300 meeting the eligibility criteria for the intervention group. Rubicon targeted people with open child support cases by collaborating with DCSS. For example, DCSS referred some people with open cases to the FACT program directly, and Rubicon also modified its recruitment and enrollment processes to focus on people with child support cases.

To create the comparison group for the impact analyses, Urban obtained an administrative dataset from DCSS of custodial and noncustodial parents who had open DCSS cases at any point between January 2016 and September 2019 in Contra Costa County. These were people who could have been eligible for, but did not participate in, FACT services during this time frame. Urban requested and was granted a waiver from its institutional review board for obtaining informed consent from the people in the comparison group because the study met criteria for minimal-risk research.<sup>4</sup>

Urban then conducted 3:1 coarsened exact matching (CEM)—that is, each FACT participant was matched to three people from the comparison pool—to generate a comparison group of people from the administrative data that was similar to the intervention group on numerous baseline characteristics, including sex, race, age, number of minor children, custodial role, number of DCSS cases, and open length of primary case. Urban selected these categories to ensure the

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<sup>4</sup> This waiver was granted because the research activities met the four requisite criteria stipulated in federal guidelines: (1) the research involved no more than minimal risk to the human subjects; (2) the waiver did not adversely affect the rights and welfare of the human subjects; (3) the research could not have practicably been carried out without the waiver; and (4) the human subjects were provided pertinent information after participation whenever appropriate.

groups were equivalent on important demographic and case-level characteristics that are likely related to the study's outcomes. Appendix C provides additional information on the matching process and explains why Urban elected to use CEM to perform the matching.

Once each FACT participant was matched to three people from the comparison group, Urban created a "start date" variable based on the date that FACT participants enrolled. In other words, the FACT enrollment date became each participant's "start date," which was then assigned to the three matched people from the comparison group. This ensured that data on outcomes could be collected during the same time period for FACT participants and each of their matched counterparts. However, because Urban could not assign the "start date" to people in the comparison group until matching them, the research team was not able to include baseline measures of primary outcomes in the CEM procedure, and instead only matched on the demographic and case-level characteristics listed above. Appendix C offers more details on the approach to constructing equivalent groups, and section IV.C describes how baseline equivalence was assessed for the final analytic sample.

## B. Data Collection

This section describes the research team's methods and processes for collecting qualitative and quantitative data for the implementation and impact analyses. It discusses data collection for the implementation analysis and for the impact analysis.

### 1. Implementation Analysis

To answer the implementation research questions (see table 3), Urban thoroughly documented program performance from the perspectives of FACT staff, program partners, and FACT participants. Urban collected data from several sources to distill the core features of the program and determine whether it led to stakeholders having more positive views of agency coordination and cohesive services. For example, Urban engaged in **routine teleconferences** with the FACT management team to understand ongoing program performance, including successes and challenges in participant recruitment and engagement, service delivery, and overall program implementation. Urban also reviewed **program materials**, including brochures, curricula, and assessment forms. This informed Urban's understanding of how the program was designed and intended to operate, as well as how it changed.

In addition, Urban conducted **semiannual site visits** to Rubicon's offices and partner sites. During these visits, Urban conducted **semistructured interviews** with FACT program administrators and FACT staff providing direct services, as well as representatives from Centerforce, STAND!, and DCSS. Urban used these interviews to better understand the FACT program, implementation challenges, and how the program evolved. Urban also conducted **observations** of core program activities, including staff trainings, participant workshops, services and activities, and partner meetings to better understand how the program operated "on the ground." While on site, Urban facilitated **focus groups with FACT participants** to capture



their perceptions of the program, including how they heard about the program, the services they received, elements they enjoyed, and any service gaps or areas for improvement.

In addition, Urban administered two waves of **participant surveys**, one at program enrollment and another six months later. Lastly, Urban collected individual-level **program data** from Rubicon on a semiannual basis on all FACT participants. These data included participant demographics, results of program assessments (e.g., financial assessments), goals identified in participants' empowerment plans, dates of enrollment and exit, reasons for exiting, workshop attendance, service receipt, referrals to other services, and changes to housing, financial, and employment statuses. Table B.2 (appendix B) provides additional detail about the information collected for the implementation analysis.

### 3. Impact Analysis

For the impact analysis, Urban collected **administrative data from DCSS**, which provided deidentified, individual-level data for the entire sample of people in the intervention and comparison groups. These data included DCSS administrative child support records as well as data from other reporting agencies, including California's Employment Development Department, the National Directory of New Hires, and the Social Security Administration. Rubicon provided DCSS with identifiers for all FACT participants, which DCSS then linked to its records to identify custodial and noncustodial parents with open child support cases. Then, DCSS provided Urban with deidentified, individual-level demographic, baseline, and outcome data for these people in the intervention group. Separately, DCSS provided Urban with deidentified data on the universe of parents with open child support cases open at any point between January 2016 and September 2019 in Contra Costa County who did not participate in FACT, which Urban used to construct the comparison group using CEM. For the intervention and comparison groups, DCSS provided data on each person's full case history, including all previously opened cases and cases currently open in other counties.

The Department of Child Support Services provided Urban the final dataset for the impact evaluation with data through March 2020, allowing for six months of follow-up for everyone in the final analytic sample because FACT participants were enrolled in the intervention group through September 2019. Moreover, DCSS transferred these data to Urban using a secure file transfer protocol. Table B.3 (appendix B) provides additional information about the data collected for the impact analysis.

## IV. Analysis Methods

The following section describes the analysis methods, including the final analytic sample, the outcome measures used in the impact evaluation, and the equivalence of the intervention and comparison groups at baseline.

### A. Analytic Sample

As indicated in the consort diagram (appendix B), the final analytic sample for the impact evaluation included an intervention group ( $n = 309$ ) and a comparison group ( $n = 927$ ). The intervention group included people who (1) met the eligibility criteria for the impact evaluation, and (2) were able to be linked in the DCSS data. Out of the 718 participants enrolled by Rubicon between July 2016 and September 2019, 379 met these criteria. Of this group, 70 had missing or incomplete DCSS data (such as information about race, age, or gender), making it impossible to match them to anyone in the comparison group pool. Thus, these people were excluded from the primary analytic sample, resulting in a final intervention group of 309 participants.

Next, Urban matched the 309 FACT participants to people from the comparison group pool using the 3:1 CEM process described above. The comparison group pool comprised 63,603 people who had not participated in FACT, who resided in Contra Costa county, and who had an open child support case during the enrollment period for intervention group participants (i.e., July 2016 through September 2019; this allowed for six-month outcome data through March 2020). All 309 FACT participants were matched to three people in the comparison group pool, resulting in a primary analytic sample of 927 people in the comparison group.

### B. Outcome Measures

Drawing on the DCSS administrative data, Urban created six-month outcome measures for the primary and secondary impact analysis research questions. For the primary research questions, outcomes included (1) a measure of whether people had a child support payment modification, (2) the average dollar amount of monthly child support payments, (3) whether they had employment during the six-month postenrollment period, and (4) whether they were on any form of public assistance during the six-month postenrollment period.

For the secondary research questions, outcomes included (1) whether people received a new court order related to child support, (2) the total dollar amount of court orders, (3) whether people had a new arrear (at least one open case with unpaid child support owed to the custodial parent), (4) the total balance of new arrears, and (5) the number of months people spent on public assistance. A more detailed description of how each of these outcomes were measured is provided in tables 4 and 5.

**Table 4. Outcome Measures Used for Primary Impact Analysis Research Questions**

Outcome measure	Description of the outcome measure	Timing of measure
Child support payment modification	The outcome is a dichotomous measure of whether the individual had any child support modifications between enrollment and 6-months post enrollment (1 = Yes; 0 = No).	During the six-month period between enrollment and post enrollment.
Monthly child support payments	This outcome is a semicontinuous measure indicating the average dollar amount of monthly child support payments between enrollment and 6-months post enrollment in dollars.	During the six-month period between enrollment and post enrollment.
Employment	This outcome is a dichotomous measure of whether the individual was employed at any point between enrollment and 6-months post enrollment (1 = Yes; 0 = No).	During the six-month period between enrollment and post enrollment.
Public assistance	This outcome is a dichotomous measure of whether an individual was on any public assistance (e.g., TANF and SNAP) at any point between enrollment and 6-months post enrollment (1 = Yes; 0 = No).	During the six-month period between enrollment and post enrollment.

**Source:** Department of Child Support Services administrative data.

**Table 5. Outcome Measures Used for Secondary Impact Analysis Research Questions**

Outcome measure	Description of outcome measure	Timing of measure
Court order	The outcome is a dichotomous measure of whether there was a new child support court order during the six-month period after enrollment (1 = Yes; 0 = No).	During the six-month period between enrollment and post enrollment.
Amount of court orders	This outcome is a semicontinuous measure indicating the total dollar amounts of new court orders during the six-month period after enrollment.	During the six-month period between enrollment and post enrollment.
Arrear	This outcome is a dichotomous measure of whether there was a new arrear (an open case with unpaid child support owed to the custodial parent) at six months postenrollment.	At six months postenrollment.
Arrear balance	This outcome is a semicontinuous measure of the total balance of new arrears at six months postenrollment.	At six months postenrollment.
Months on public assistance	This outcome measure is a count of the number of months people were on any public assistance during the six-month period after enrollment.	During the six-month period between enrollment and post enrollment.

**Source:** Department of Child Support Services Administrative data.

### C. Baseline Equivalence and Sample Characteristics

As detailed above, Urban used CEM to select a matched comparison group that was similar in case- and individual-level participant characteristics to the intervention group. The research team assessed the success of this approach in achieving baseline equivalence using a significance level of  $p < 0.05$  and two-tailed tests of significance, using the chi-square test for dichotomous variables and two-sample t-tests for semicontinuous and count variables. To assess the degree of any observed differences, the team used Hedges'  $g$  for semicontinuous and count measures and the Cox Index for dichotomous measures to characterize the effect sizes.

Table 6 presents the results of the baseline equivalency tests. Baseline equivalence was examined on the covariates used in the CEM procedure, which included sex, race, age, number of minor children, custodial role, number of DCSS cases, and open length of primary case. Although some of these covariates were recoded for the CEM (for example, age was recoded into an “under 40” group and a “40 and over” group; see appendix C), table 6 presents these variables in their original form. Furthermore, Urban examined equivalence on the baseline measures of the primary outcomes of interest. These included whether people had a child support payment modification in the six months before they enrolled in FACT, the average amount of monthly child support payments, and whether they were employed or on any form of public assistance during this period.

The results from the baseline equivalency tests suggest that there was group balance on the covariates used in the CEM. People in the comparison group (38.89 years) were slightly older on average than those in the intervention group (37.82 years), but this difference did not reach statistical significance ( $p = 0.051$ ; effect size = 0.13). In terms of the baseline outcome measures, there were significant differences between FACT participants and the comparison group on the dollar amount of child support payments ( $p = 0.001$ ) and whether they received public assistance ( $p = 0.029$ ) during the six-month pre-enrollment period. The average child support payment was \$61.14 for FACT participants and \$101.87 for the comparison group, and 12.6 percent of FACT participants received public assistance, compared with 8.4 percent of the comparison group in the six months before program enrollment. It is unsurprising that differences existed in some baseline outcome measures because these were excluded from the matching procedure, and these differences underscore the necessity of controlling for these variables in the analyses.

**Table 6. Summary Statistics of Key Baseline Measures and Baseline Equivalence across Study Groups**

Baseline measure	Intervention mean (standard deviation)	Comparison mean (standard deviation)	Intervention versus comparison mean difference (p-value of difference)	Effect Size (Hedges' g or Cox Index)
<b>Matching and Independent Variables</b>				
<i>Sex (%)</i>				
Female	37.9	37.9	0 (>0.999)	0
Male	62.1	62.1	0 (>0.999)	0
<i>Race/ethnicity (%)</i>				
Hispanic	16.5	16.5	0 (>0.999)	0
Non-Hispanic white	14.6	14.6	0 (>0.999)	0
Non-Hispanic black	66.3	66.3	0 (>0.999)	0
Non-Hispanic other	2.6	2.6	0 (>0.999)	0
<i>Age (years)</i>	37.82 (8.95)	38.89 (8.10)	-1.07 (.051)	0.13
<i>Number of children</i>	2.49 (1.61)	2.51 (1.61)	-0.02 (0.854)	0.01
<i>Custodial role (%)</i>				
Noncustodial	35.0	65.0	0 (>0.999)	0
Custodial	35.0	65.0	0 (>0.999)	0
<i>Number of DCSS cases</i>	2.47 (1.58)	2.39 (1.53)	-0.08 (0.496)	0.05
<i>Primary case open length (days)</i>	3,658.8 (2548.67)	3,855.8 (2646.72)	197.0 (0.253)	0.08
<b>Baseline Outcomes (six months before enrollment)</b>				
<i>Child support modifications (%)</i>	2.6	2.5	0.1 (0.916)	0.02
<i>Child support payments (dollars)</i>	61.14 (162.48)	101.87 (197.65)	-40.73 (0.001)*	0.21
<i>Employed (%)</i>	46.0	42.2	3.8 (0.246)	0.09
<i>On public assistance (%)</i>	12.6	8.4	4.2 (0.029)*	0.27
<i>Sample size</i>	309	927		

Notes: p-values are included in parentheses; \* p &lt; 0.05

## V. Findings and Estimation Approach

### A. Implementation Evaluation

#### Key Findings:

Rubicon, along with its extensive network of program partners, implemented all intended core program components, including a three-week workshop series on economic stability, responsible parenting, and healthy relationships; support services; and in-depth case management. Though other components were implemented as intended, the healthy relationships workshop component was incorporated into the parenting workshops for an additional 45 minutes a day. Of enrolled participants, 77 percent completed the Foundations Workshop series and 56 percent attended the recommended 10 of 12 Back to Family sessions. Participants expressed a high level of satisfaction with the FACT program; of those who took Urban's six-month follow-up survey, 80.7 percent of participants reported they were "very satisfied" or "satisfied" with the program's suite of services. Throughout implementation, Rubicon continuously refined FACT program components to better recruit, engage, and retain participants raw numbers also need to be considered. Even with the high percentages of participants who started Phase II, these recruitment strategies alone would not have been sufficient to have met enrollment targets.

Drawing on qualitative and quantitative data collected through teleconferences with the FACT management team, the review of program materials, interviews with program staff and partners, program observations, focus groups with participants, participant surveys, and program data, Urban synthesized and identified key takeaways about program implementation, including implementation successes, challenges, modifications, and recommendations for improvements. Based on the results of these analyses, the following section presents key findings pertaining to program fidelity, dosage, quality, engagement, and context. Additional information about Urban's implementation analysis methods and research questions is available in appendix B.

#### 1. Fidelity

**Rubicon implemented all intended core program components, including a three-week workshop series on economic stability, responsible parenting, and healthy relationships; supportive services; and in-depth case management.** The economic stability and parenting components were implemented as intended. The economic stability component (Rubicon's Foundations Workshop and Foundations Workshop Electives series) met five hours a day, five days a week for three weeks, totaling 75 hours of workshops. The responsible parenting workshops (Back to Family) were offered concurrently with the Foundations and Electives workshops for two hours a day, four days a week for three weeks.

The healthy relationships component was not implemented as intended. Centerforce designed the Couples Enhancement workshop as a daylong (eight-hour) session for each FACT participant and their self-identified partner. However, in response to guidance received from the Office of Family Assistance in 2017, Centerforce incorporated the Couples Enhancement curriculum into

the Back to Family workshops, adding 45 minutes to each session. This helped ensure each participant received the curriculum on healthy relationships.

### *Program Refinements*

**Throughout program implementation, Rubicon continuously refined core components to better recruit, engage, and retain participants.** First, Rubicon refined its outreach approach to explain that FACT was for all parents, regardless of gender—that is, it described it as a parenting program, not a fatherhood program. This accorded with federal guidelines stipulating that grantees could not exclude women from enrolling in programs. This reframing of Rubicon’s recruitment “pitch” led to more mothers enrolling in the program, according to program staff. Although staff reported that having women in the workshops did not change group dynamics and even offered a welcome perspective, it did make child care a growing need for participants: Rubicon had neither the available space to accommodate children nor the resources to subsidize child care. Therefore, program staff referred participants to child care providers in the community.

Second, to meet the goals of the local evaluation, Rubicon focused its outreach on recruiting parents with open child support cases, who made up the intervention group for Urban’s impact study. According to program staff, narrowing recruitment to a specific target population was challenging to execute. One way that Rubicon responded to this challenge was to leverage its partnership with DCSS to refer prospective participants to FACT. To increase referrals, DCSS created and mailed postcards about FACT to people meeting the eligibility criteria. It also hosted Rubicon at its offices to learn more about FACT and created materials for its staff could use with clients.

Third, Rubicon and Centerforce made changes to their respective curricula and program messaging to better engage and retain participants. Back to Family sessions were scheduled to begin right after the Foundations and Electives workshop sessions ended each day as a way to retain participants for the parenting sessions. Relatedly, Rubicon changed its messaging around the FACT program, clarifying to prospective participants that it was a three-week program in full, not a two-week program (as previous messaging had communicated). Rubicon did this to increase participant retention and participation during the third week of workshops, which included Elective, Back to Family, and Couples Enhancement sessions. Rubicon also made continuous adjustments to the Foundations curriculum content to keep it relevant and meet participants’ interests. For instance, Rubicon refined the Structural Causes of Poverty, Résumé Basics, and Practice Makes Perfect Interviewing workshops to include more engaging activities and allow participants more time to practice the skills they learned.



## 2. Dosage

**From July 2016 through September 30, 2019, FACT enrolled 718 participants, 554 of whom (77.2 percent) completed the Foundations Workshop series, and 405 of whom (56.4 percent) attended at least 10 of 12 Back to Family sessions (the recommended threshold).<sup>5</sup>** During this period, the program delivered 77 series of Foundations Workshops and Foundations Workshop Electives and 76 series of Back to Family workshops.<sup>6</sup> All three workshop series were offered twice a month on average, once at the Richmond office and once at the Antioch office. The Foundations and Electives curriculum was delivered in 37 sessions. The Back to Family curriculum was delivered in 12 sessions, including daily, 45-minute add-on sessions for Couples Enhancement. The average Foundations session lasted 114 minutes and the average Back to Family session averaged 142 minutes.

The 718 enrolled FACT participants attended an average of 13.2 Foundations sessions,<sup>7</sup> 4.3 Electives sessions, and 8.6 Back to Family sessions. For Foundations, 6.8 percent of enrolled FACT participants did not attend any sessions. This number was higher for Back to Family, with 15.1 percent of enrolled participants not attending any sessions. On average, participants who attended sessions received 24.6 hours of content in Foundations,<sup>8</sup> 7.4 hours of Electives, and 20.2 hours of Back to Family.

## 3. Quality

### *Implementation Strengths*

**Overall, FACT participants expressed positive views of the program.** At enrollment, 92.8 percent of surveyed participants reported that they were “very satisfied” or “satisfied” with the suite of services offered by the FACT program. Though this decreased slightly, program satisfaction remained high six months after enrollment, at which point 80.7 percent of participants reported the same level of satisfaction.

In focus groups, participants reported that the program helped them improve their mindsets and thought processes, and participants felt confident and focused while in FACT. However, this was not always the case: some participants shared that the program encouraged them to reflect on their childhood trauma, causing them to feel angry and self-loathing. According to participants, workshops fostered a sense of family with other participants and with program staff. Participants described program staff as caring and having created an environment where they felt welcomed

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<sup>5</sup> Urban used program data collected on the entire group of FACT participants enrolled from July 2016 through September 2019; this was a broader group than the impact analytic sample.

<sup>6</sup> Urban defines a workshop series as: (1) Foundations, (2) Electives, or (3) Back to Family. Within each of these workshop series, there are individual sessions with unique topics. Each session varied in length.

<sup>7</sup> FACT participants may have taken Foundations and/or Back to Family sessions more than once while enrolled in the program, potentially raising the average number of sessions that FACT participants attended.

<sup>8</sup> The entire Foundations Workshop series was designed to offer 50 hours of content (five hours a day for 10 days). Each session therein varied in duration and attendance was recorded based on individual session length rather than entire five-hour days.



and not judged. In particular, participants attributed this to their initial interactions with the ambassadors, impact coaches, and fatherhood coaches, and appreciated the regular communication and contact with the coaches.

Participants also reported that although some workshops seemed remedial, the workshops still helped them develop communication, listening, compromising, child rearing, and coparenting skills. Participants spoke highly of the services FACT provided them, including job search assistance, connections to certification programs and training opportunities, referrals to housing options, and legal support. Participants appreciated the development of their empowerment plans and supports including bus and public transit passes, gas gift cards, and work clothing and equipment. Participants explained that the staff helped them become employment ready.

Likewise, FACT staff had positive perceptions of the program. They explained that it connected participants to many needed and even required services. For example, Back to Family workshops satisfied the requirement in child protective services cases that parents attend parenting classes. Rubicon also referred and connected participants to court-mandated anger management workshops at STAND!. Though program staff expressed mixed perspectives on the effectiveness of the alignment process, they identified successes with using an extended intake process. Meeting with prospective participants multiple times before their enrollment allowed staff to get to know them and build the necessary trust and rapport for developing a transformational relationship.

Lastly, program staff appreciated Rubicon's flexible approach to program implementation, which allowed for adjustments to better serve participants. Rubicon continuously examined the program, sought feedback from staff and participants, and made changes through its Program Implementation Committee. Staff reported that the refinements Rubicon made to the program content and schedule helped keep participants at the office for an entire day, making them more engaged in the workshop series.

### *Implementation Challenges*

**Program staff and participants identified several challenges related to program implementation.** First, staff explained it was difficult to "sell" the length of the program. Staff reported that some prospective participants felt that three weeks was too long when they could be working and earning an income. Therefore, staff tailored their recruitment methods to emphasize that three weeks would be an investment in one's career and future earning potential. Staff also found it challenging to engage with participants after the three weeks of workshops. To overcome this, staff stressed to participants that Rubicon's services were available for three years, and followed up with participants via phone calls, e-mails, and text messages.

The FACT management team also noted it was challenging for staff to fully implement the transformational relationship case management model. According to program leadership, some coaches tended to dictate next steps for participants, creating a transactional relationship rather than allowing participants to identify their own goals and their plans for accomplishing them.

Program managers felt that one reason the transformational relationship model may have been difficult to adopt was that staff felt pressure to find jobs for participants quickly for myriad reasons, such as a participant's probation officer requiring them to get a job or pressure from a participant's partner or coparent.

Another barrier to implementation involved participants' changing needs, especially those of participants who needed housing or substance abuse treatment, which the grant funding could not provide services for. Relatedly, participant characteristics changed, presented some challenges. According to staff, younger participants did not respond to the core curricula in the same way as previous participants, who tended to be older.

Participants also identified some challenges with the program. They explained it was challenging for them to practice and apply the skills and expressed difficulties recruiting their partners to attend the Couples Enhancement workshop, either because they did not have partners, because of their partners' locations, or because they were not interested or available (Couples Enhancement was originally designed to enroll and serve FACT participants and their partners).

#### *Recommendations for Program Modifications*

**Participants made several recommendations for refining the program to improve implementation.** Although staff explained it was difficult to “sell” the length of the program, some of the participants who attended focus groups suggested that the program could be longer and that Rubicon should offer more apprenticeships, certifications, and opportunities for on-the-job training. For example, they recommended increasing access to Rubicon's landscaping and janitorial transitional employment for more FACT participants. Participants also suggested that Rubicon offer basic computer classes so they can build skills such as typing. Lastly, participants voiced a need for additional support around substance abuse, addiction, and homelessness, which were areas that the grant did not allow Rubicon to use funds to address.

#### **4. Engagement**

**In Urban's observations of Foundations, Back to Family, and Couples Enhancement sessions, participants appeared engaged in program content and actively participated in group sessions.** Workshops were typically cofacilitated by two coaches and held with groups of eight participants on average. All participants were provided a binder that included the workshop curriculum and associated materials. Each pair of facilitators adopted a slightly different approach to the workshops, but the workshops Urban observed started with a group activity (such as a check-in) to see how participants were feeling. Much of the workshop curriculum relied on group discussion, which most participants engaged in. Participants also shared personal reflections or stories and asked questions. This was particularly evident during DCSS's presentation in one of the Back to Family sessions; participants often raised questions to better understand how the child support system works. The facilitators also incorporated group activities into the workshops, including a “tree exercise” that encouraged participants to identify (as a group) the roots and fruits of unsupportive and supportive relationships to draw

comparisons and contrasts. Another key group activity involved mock interviews, where participants rotated through them. The facilitators often closed the workshop with a wrap-up activity, such as “roses and thorns,” which encouraged participants to share something they appreciated (or something new they learned) as well as something that was challenging them.

## 5. Context

### *Referrals to Support Services*

**Through its vast network of partners, Rubicon referred participants to services provided by the core program partners—Centerforce, DCSS, and STAND!—and numerous other organizations and agencies including housing agencies, public benefit agencies, county shelters, public defenders’ offices, and homeless court.** These partners provided services including housing, vocational training, transitional employment, certification programs, reentry services, food assistance, job clothing and equipment, public benefits, and health services. Program staff made 451 external referrals to 55 unique agencies. The four most frequent referral agencies were DCSS (113 referrals), Contra Costa County Community Homeless Court (62 referrals), STAND! (43 referrals), and Wardrobe for Opportunity (88 referrals).

### *FACT Partnership*

**Overall, FACT partners described having positive relationships with Rubicon.** Many of the FACT partners had existing relationships with Rubicon because they had partnered on the PAPAS Work program. While implementing FACT, Rubicon facilitated routine meetings with key partners to firm up roles and responsibilities, discuss program updates, share participant success stories, and identify implementation challenges and solutions. Although partners said there were some initial challenges around the eligibility criteria, referral process, and communication generally, they expressed an interest in and commitment to helping FACT participants.

Many of Rubicon’s partnerships evolved and strengthened. For example, its partnership with DCSS added new elements to the FACT program, including (1) recruiting and sending referrals to FACT, (2) tracking FACT participants who met the inclusion criteria for Urban’s impact evaluation, and (3) providing data to Urban for its impact evaluation. These additional expectations presented some initial challenges around efforts to clearly understand the FACT eligibility criteria and recruit prospective participants; however, Rubicon and DCSS worked together to improve communication and reach an understanding about each other’s roles and responsibilities. Similarly, Rubicon’s partnership with STAND! evolved to better meet the needs of FACT participants. Traditionally, STAND! takes a clinical approach to its anger management workshops. However, Rubicon and STAND! found that this framework did not necessarily align with Rubicon’s vision and limitations around data sharing and attendance policies. Through conversations with Rubicon, STAND! adjusted its approach and made its workshops less clinical and more about accountability and engagement. Rubicon and STAND! reported that working together to shift the model strengthened the partnership.

## B. Primary Impact Evaluation

### Key Findings:

The overall impact of FACT was in the expected direction for three of the four primary research questions. FACT participants were statistically more likely than people in the comparison group to have a child support payment modification (5.1 percent versus 1.4 percent), more likely to be employed (51.6 percent versus 39.1 percent), and more likely to have received public assistance (11.2 percent versus 5.6 percent) during the six months after enrolling in the program. There was no significant difference between the two groups in their average monthly child support payments during the postenrollment period.

The results from the impact analyses support three of the four primary research questions listed in section I.B. FACT participants were more likely to receive a child support payment modification (**research question B1**). As indicated in table 7, 5.1 percent of FACT participants had a child support payment modification in the six months after enrolling in the program, compared with only 1.4 percent of people in the comparison group ( $p < 0.01$ ). The program also increased employment and the receipt of public assistance (**research questions B3 and B4**). The results suggest that more than half of FACT participants were employed at some point during the postenrollment period, compared with less than 40 percent of the comparison group ( $p < 0.01$ ), and they were twice as likely to receive some form of public assistance than their comparison counterparts (11.2 percent versus 5.6 percent,  $p < 0.01$ ). Conversely, FACT does not appear to have increased monthly child support payments (**research question B2**), as child support payments over the postenrollment period did not differ significantly between FACT participants and the comparison group ( $p = 0.698$ ).

**Table 7. Postenrollment Estimated Effects to Address the Primary Research Questions**

Outcome measure	Intervention mean or %	Comparison mean or %	Intervention compared with comparison mean difference (p-value of difference)
Child support payment modification	5.1%	1.4%	3.7% (0.001)
Monthly child support payments	\$76.55	\$98.09	-\$21.54 (0.698)
Employed	51.6%	39.1%	12.5% (<0.001)
On public assistance	11.2%	5.6%	5.6% (<0.001)
Sample Size	309	927	

Source: Analyses of six-month postenrollment outcomes from Department of Child Support Services administrative data.

Notes: P-values are included in parentheses. Estimates are covariate-adjusted. See table 4 for a more detailed description of each measure.

To arrive at these findings, Urban used regression techniques to estimate impacts of the intervention on the four primary outcomes. All models include the same set of **covariates** described in section IV.C to assess baseline equivalence between the intervention and comparison groups. These include individual sociodemographic and case characteristics as well as the baseline measures of the primary outcome variables, and are listed and described in greater detail in table 8 below. These covariates were selected because of their likely relationship with the selected outcome variables. This approach is in line with the principles of “doubly robust estimation,” which suggest that including matching variables as controls in regression models—even variables that are balanced between the intervention and comparison groups—allows for more precise estimates of the impact of participation in the program on the selected outcomes (Funk et al. 2011). Additional details on the analytic models used to estimate impacts are provided in appendix E.

**Table 8. Covariates Included in Impact Analyses**

Covariate	Description of the covariate
FACT participation	Participation in the FACT program (1 = Yes; 0 = No)
Sex	Sex (0 = Male; 1 = Female)
Race	Race (1 = Black; 2 = Hispanic; 3 = White; 4 = Other)
Age	Age in years at the time of baseline data collection
Number of minor children	Total number of custodial and noncustodial children
Custodial status	Custodial status for primary DCSS case (0 = Custodial; 1 = Noncustodial)
Number of cases	Total number of open and closed DCSS cases across the entire case history
Case open length	Number of days the primary DCSS case was open at the time of baseline data collection (if closed, this variable measures the time between the case-open and case-close dates).
Baseline child support payment modifications	Whether the person had a child support payment modification during the six-month pre-enrollment period.
Baseline monthly child support payment records	The average amount (in dollars) of monthly child support payments during the six-month pre-enrollment period.
Baseline employment	Whether the person was employed during the six-month pre-enrollment period (1 = Yes; 0 = No).
Baseline public assistance	Whether a person was on any public assistance during the six-month pre-enrollment period (1 = Yes; 0 = No).

Across models, Urban assessed **statistical significance** of the study’s findings based on a  $p < 0.05$ , two-tailed test. Following the tenets of an intent-to-treat approach, Urban included everyone enrolled in the FACT program in the final analytic models, even if they did not complete all or any components of the program.

## C. Sensitivity Analyses

### Key Findings:

Findings from the sensitivity analysis using different ratios for comparison-group matching were relatively unchanged compared with those from the benchmark approach. This suggests that the findings were robust to different specifications about the size of the comparison group.

To assess the robustness of the main impact results described in the previous section, Urban checked the sensitivity of the 3:1 matching benchmark approach by creating additional datasets using 1:1 and 2:1 CEM procedures and rerunning the analytic models for each primary outcome measure. As detailed in appendix F, the statistical significance of measures in the sensitivity analyses were similar to those in the benchmark analyses, and there were only slight differences between the results of these models. For example, the benchmark approach indicated that the child support payment modification rate differed by 3.7 percentage points between FACT participants and the comparison group, similar to the differences noted in the 2:1 and 1:1 models (3.4 and 4.8, respectively). Likewise, the 3:1 benchmark models found a 5.6 percentage point difference between FACT participants and people in the comparison group who received any form of public assistance after program enrollment. In sensitivity analyses, this difference increased slightly to 7.3 percentage points (2:1 CEM model) and 7.6 percentage points (1:1 CEM model).

## D. Additional Analyses

### Key Findings:

The analyses of the secondary research questions indicate that FACT participants were more likely to have an arrear six months after enrollment (64.8 percent versus 54.7 percent) and received public assistance for more months (0.21 versus 0.11) during the six-month postenrollment period than their comparison counterparts. However, there were no statistically significant differences in whether they received a court order, the amount of those court orders, or the total balance of their arrears six months after enrollment.

**Table 9. Postenrollment Estimated Effects to Address the Secondary Research Questions**

Outcome measure	Intervention mean or %	Comparison mean or %	Intervention compared with comparison mean difference (p-value of difference)
New court order	5.7%	5.9%	-0.2% (0.838)
Amount of court orders	\$20.16	\$20.55	-\$0.39 (0.594)
New arrear	64.8%	54.7%	10.1% (0.001)
Arear balance	\$18,982.71	\$17,927.24	\$1,055.47 (0.465)
Months on public assistance.	0.21	0.11	0.10 (<0.001)
Sample Size	309	927	

Source: Analyses of six-month postenrollment outcomes from Department of Child Support Services administrative data.

Notes: P-values are included in parentheses. Estimates are covariate-adjusted. See table 5 for a more detailed description of each measure.

The findings from the analyses of the secondary research questions are presented in table 9. Contrary to expectations, FACT participants were significantly more likely to have at least one new arrear six months after enrollment than people in the comparison group (64.8 percent versus 54.7 percent,  $p < 0.01$ ) (**research question C3**), though the total arrears balance did not differ between FACT participants and the comparison group (**research question C4**). FACT participants received public assistance over more months on average than their counterparts (**research question C5**), though this number was small for both groups (0.21 versus 0.11,  $p < 0.001$ ). This was unsurprising, given that only 11.2 percent of FACT participants and 5.6 percent of people in the comparison group received public assistance at some point during the six months after enrollment (see table 7 in section V.B. above). There were also no differences between groups on whether people received a new court order for child support (**research question C1**) and on the total dollar amount of child support court orders (**research question C2**). The methods used for the secondary outcome measures were identical to those described above for the primary outcomes and included the same control variables. More details are provided in appendix E.



## VI. Discussion

The overall impact of FACT was in the expected direction for three of the four primary research questions. Though there was no significant difference between the two groups in average monthly child support payments, FACT participants were statistically more likely than people in the comparison group to be **employed** (51.6 percent versus 39.1 percent) and more likely to have a child support payment **modification** (5.1 percent versus 1.4 percent) during the six months after their enrollment in the program. Urban also found FACT participants were more likely to have received **public assistance** (11.2 percent versus 5.6 percent) during the postenrollment period; however, these findings should be interpreted with caution. As indicated in table 6 (section IV.C), the effect size for the share of FACT participants and people in the comparison group on public assistance at baseline (0.27) was substantive. Even though Urban controlled for this in the regression models, it is unlikely that covariate adjustment completely mitigated the underlying difference between the groups observed on this baseline measure.

The FACT program was built on Rubicon's foundation of comprehensive services that help people become employment ready and prepared for long-term careers. Through Urban's implementation evaluation, researchers found that FACT was implemented as intended and in line with this mission. FACT offered participants an extensive suite of job readiness, financial literacy, and training services. It is therefore unsurprising that FACT participants were significantly more likely to be **employed** after enrolling in the program than the people in the comparison group.

Furthermore, although Rubicon's expanded partnership with DCSS introduced new challenges, the partnership continued to support participants. First, DCSS presented to FACT participants during one of the Back to Family workshops; the presentation focused on the agency's purpose the services it provides. Staff from DCSS also answered participants' questions after the presentation. Second, through case management, FACT program staff referred FACT participants to DCSS to modify child support orders and reinstate their licenses. These services and connections to DCSS may explain why FACT participants were more likely to have a child support order **modification** during the six months after enrollment than their counterparts in the comparison group.

A key piece to the transformational relationship case management was connecting participants to public benefits as a way to provide support while they worked toward achieving their longer-term economic stability goals. In addition to financial assessments, coaches screened participants and helped them apply for benefits, such as Medi-Cal and related supports like Housing and Economic Rights Advocates and the Alameda County Community Food Bank. Therefore, it was unsurprising that participants were more likely to have received **public assistance** and to have received it for longer periods than people in the comparison group.

In addition to these outcomes, program participants, staff, and partners expressed **satisfaction** with the program and highlighted Rubicon's network of partners, transformational relationship case management, and referrals to additional support services as key features that helped the



program meet participants' needs. Moreover, Rubicon improved agency collaboration and the delivery of coordinated services to participants by leveraging a large network of longstanding partnerships with government agencies and community-based organizations in Contra Costa County committed to serving low-income residents. Although many of these partnerships existed before FACT, the program gave Rubicon the opportunity to refine them as a means of expanding its service offerings. Rubicon's partnership with Centerforce in particular allowed each organization to leverage its respective area of expertise to ensure it was fully engaging and serving participants. This was evident in the appreciation and satisfaction that participants expressed toward the workshops: the workshops taught participants new skills, helped them change their mindsets, and connected them to much-needed services.

Rubicon also implemented FACT with intentionality and allowed participants to dictate their own goals. Based on the perspectives of staff, stakeholders, and participants, Urban noted a sense of intentionality regarding who Rubicon enrolled in the program (evidenced by its alignment process), how it trained and supported staff by emphasizing self-care and soliciting staff feedback, and how it modified the program to better meet participants' needs by changing curriculum content and delivery. Furthermore, Rubicon aimed to provide all participants transformational relationship case management that included wraparound services and referrals, led by participants' desire to change.

To build on these promising results, it could be helpful for Rubicon (and similar organizations) to refine their program models to ensure they continue to meet parents' needs. Based on the challenges involved in effectively recruiting and retaining participants, programs should consider implementing tiered services and tailoring services differently for people at different levels of readiness to engage in parenting, relationship, and employment services. For example, based on Urban's implementation assessment, it appears that the suite of job-readiness services that Rubicon offers FACT parents is intended for people starting their first job. In addition to these services, Rubicon could benefit from expanding and customizing its employment services to include resources for developing career trajectories, especially for participants interested in engaging with Rubicon in the long term and achieving upward financial mobility. Offering tailored services for different groups of participants could help programs better engage parents and meet their diverse needs more holistically.

### *Limitations*

Though these findings are promising, the study has some limitations. First, the impact evaluation was tested among a subset (though a majority) of FACT participants with open child support cases, and on a subset of outcomes that FACT was intended to achieve. Second, data collected for the implementation evaluation were self-reported and based on staff, participant, and stakeholder perspectives. Furthermore, key findings based on program observations were drawn during discrete site visits during the study period, not on a regular basis.

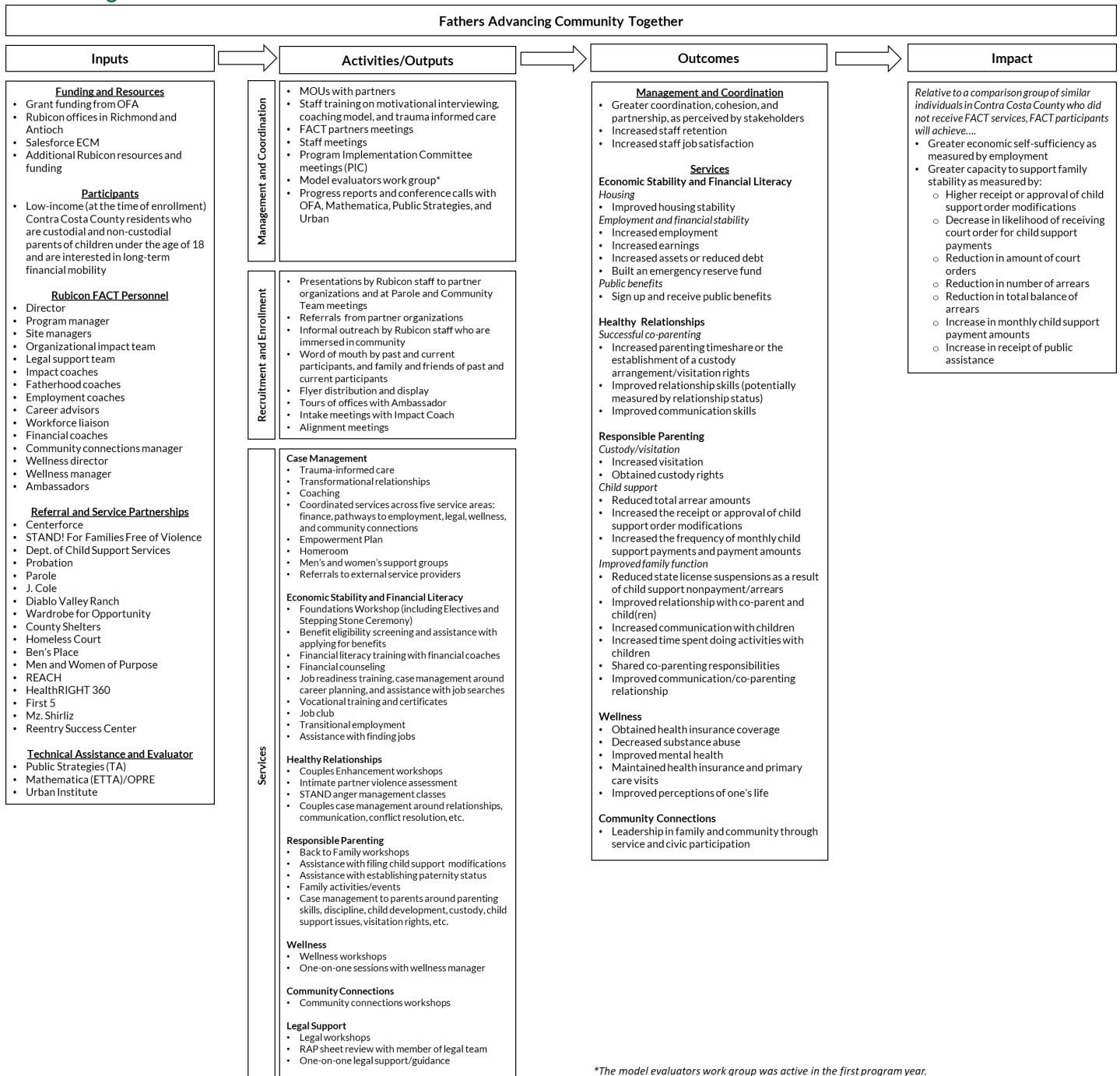
Another challenge involved the quality of DCSS administrative data. The department collected data for internal tracking, not necessarily to support an evaluation. The data required substantial

processing and recoding to make them suitable for this study. There were also some issues with data quality: Urban had to remove 70 people from the impact intervention group because of missing data. Relatedly, there were issues in achieving baseline equivalence (noted in section IV.C). Urban could not achieve equivalence between the intervention and comparison groups on two of the baseline measures of the primary outcomes. Urban could not create the “start date” variable for the comparison group until after people in that group were matched with people in the intervention group. In other words, Urban assigned people in the comparison group an “enrollment” date based on who they matched with in the intervention group, and it was impossible to measure outcomes at baseline until after Urban executed the matching procedure and knew what date to use as the reference. This underscores the necessity of conducting multivariate regression modeling to control for these baseline outcomes and other covariates.

A final limitation stems from the nature of the impact evaluation’s quasi-experimental design. Although Urban used a rigorous matching procedure to identify a comparison group of people who were similar to people in the intervention group on several factors, it is impossible to fully account for all group differences. For instance, FACT participants volunteered for the program and were likely highly motivated to succeed. Despite these limitations, we attempted in this report to thoroughly document FACT’s implementation and impacts, and it contributes to the evidence base on effective responsible fatherhood programming for low-income parents. Urban’s evaluation also highlights implementation challenges and solutions that can inform other organizations looking to design and offer similar parenting, relationship, and economic stability programs for parents and families.

## VII. Appendices

### FACT Logic Model



\*The model evaluators work group was active in the first program year.

## A. Data, Sample, and Measures

### 1. Implementation Analysis

Table B.1 below describes the implementation research questions and measures, and table B.2 describes the data collection sources Urban used to answer the research questions. To collect qualitative information, Urban held routine teleconferences with program leadership and reviewed program materials including brochures, curricula, and assessment forms. Urban also conducted semiannual site visits, approximately every six months, to Rubicon's office locations in Richmond and Antioch. Over the course of the evaluation, Urban conducted 10 site visits. Urban scheduled the visits in partnership with Rubicon and according to the program's scheduled activities (e.g., workshops, staff trainings, partner meetings, completion events). The timing and frequency of site visits allowed Urban to observe program operations at various points in time and to document how the program evolved. Urban cleaned, prepared, and analyzed qualitative data collected through review of program materials, teleconferences, program staff and partner interviews, program observations, focus groups with participants, and participant surveys to synthesize key themes and takeaways about the program, including implementation successes, challenges, changes, and recommendations for program improvements. Urban developed and used a coding scheme to systematically analyze the qualitative data (interview notes, program materials, etc.) using NVivo qualitative analysis software. One Urban researcher coded the qualitative data. Systematic analysis of qualitative data in NVivo identified key themes and findings about implementation. In addition, Urban analyzed the program data received from Rubicon in Stata and Excel software to calculate measures relevant to the dosage research questions, such as the average duration of each program component and workshop, average attendance for workshops, and percentage of participants who attended the recommended number of sessions. The full list of the implementation evaluation measures is provided in table B.1 below.

A key limitation of the data collected for the implementation evaluation was that it was self-reported data, and based on the reported perceptions of staff, participants, and stakeholders. Although Urban used program data to quantify a number of implementation measures, it is difficult to corroborate the qualitative data collected as it reflects stakeholders' perceptions and attitudes toward the program. However, Urban summarized and synthesized the detailed notes from stakeholder interviews and participant focus groups across different points in time, to identify the key takeaways identified by multiple people. Relatedly, key findings based on program observations were reflective of the research team's perspectives and impressions of program activities and operations. These activities provided insights into a portion of the FACT program; unfortunately, the researchers were limited by physical location and inability to regularly observe all program operations.

**Table B.1. Measures for Addressing the Research Questions**

Implementation element	Research questions	Measures
Fidelity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What was the intended dosage and structure of the core program components (e.g., workshops)?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number and type of intended services part of FACT</li> <li>Number of intended workshops in core FACT components (e.g., Foundations, Back to Family, Couples Enhancement)</li> <li>Intended length of workshops</li> <li>Intended frequency of workshops</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Were all intended program components implemented?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number and type of services delivered by FACT</li> <li>Total number of workshops delivered</li> <li>Average workshop duration</li> <li>Actual frequency of workshops</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What was the content of the FACT program (e.g., curriculum)?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of sessions and topics covered by workshops</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What were the unplanned changes to key program components?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Types of changes made to the program model as identified by program staff through stakeholder interviews</li> </ul>
Dosage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How many workshops did FACT participants attend, on average?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Average number (or percentage) of workshops participants attended</li> <li>Percentage of participants who attended the recommended proportion of workshops</li> <li>Percentage of participants who did not attend sessions at all</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How much content (e.g., hours) did FACT participants receive, on average?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Average duration of core program components</li> <li>Number of workshops delivered</li> </ul>
Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what extent did FACT staff, stakeholders and participants describe the services as comprehensive, including responsible fatherhood, healthy relationships, and economic stability services, for program participants and their families?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff's, stakeholders', and partners' perceptions and description of FACT services as captured through interviews</li> <li>Participants', staff's, and stakeholders' perceptions of implementation successes and challenges as captured through focus groups and interviews</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What were participants' perceptions of the quality of FACT services?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participants' satisfaction with FACT services as measured through focus group discussions and responses to participant survey questions at program enrollment and six months later</li> <li>Participants' recommendations for program refinements as discussed in focus groups and comments submitted in participant surveys</li> </ul>

Implementation element	Research questions	Measures
Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How did FACT participants appear to engage with the program content?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research team's perceptions of participant engagement during researchers' informal observations of workshops, based on participants' willingness to ask questions and contribute to group discussions (researchers are independent observers, not workshop facilitators)</li> </ul>
Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What other services did FACT participants receive?</li> <li>How well did the partnership to offer the FACT program function in Contra Costa County?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number and types of referrals made to other services at Rubicon (e.g., legal support, housing assistance, etc.)</li> <li>Number and types of external services participants were referred to</li> <li>Number and type of partnerships Rubicon has with community-based organizations and government agencies</li> <li>Staff's and stakeholders' perceptions of the nature and quality of the partnerships as captured through interviews</li> <li>Staff's and stakeholders' perceptions of how partnerships changed over time as captured through interviews</li> <li>Staff's and stakeholders' perceptions of whether, and how, the partnerships led to collaboration, coordination, and cohesive services for participants as captured through interviews</li> </ul>

**Table B.2. Data Used to Address Implementation Research Questions**

Implementation element	Data sources	Timing/frequency of data collection	Party responsible for data collection
Fidelity	Teleconferences; material review; stakeholder interviews; program observations; participant focus groups; program data	Monthly teleconferences; ongoing material review; semiannual interviews, observations, and focus groups; semiannual program data	Urban staff; Rubicon staff for program data
Dosage	Material review; stakeholder interviews; program data	Ongoing material review; semiannual interviews; semiannual program data	Urban staff; Rubicon staff for program data
Quality	Stakeholder interviews; participant focus groups; program data; participant surveys	Semiannual interviews and focus groups; semiannual program data; participant surveys at program enrollment and six months later	Urban staff; Rubicon staff for program data
Engagement	Program observations	Semiannual	Urban staff
Context	Material review; stakeholder interviews; participant focus groups; program data	Ongoing material review; semiannual interviews and focus groups; semiannual program data	Urban staff; Rubicon staff for program data

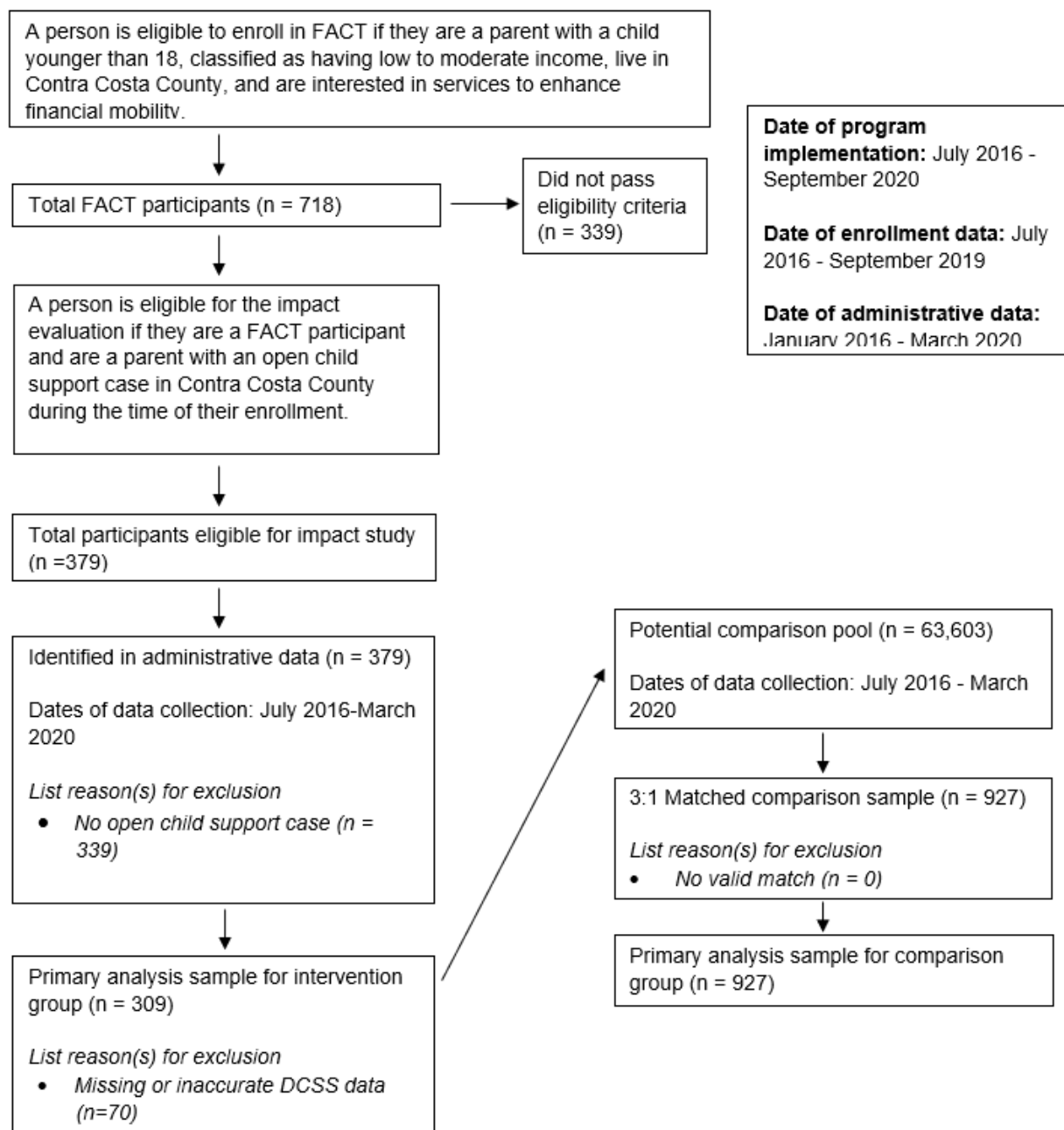
## 2. Impact Analysis

Urban's data collection methods for the impact analysis are summarized in table B.3 below, and figure B.1 presents a final consort diagram for people in the impact evaluation.

**Table B.3. Key Features of the Impact Analysis Data Collection**

	Data source	Timing of data collection	Mode of data collection	Party responsible for data collection	Start and end date of data collection
Intervention	DCSS	Enrollment (baseline) End of intervention (6 months after enrollment)	Data collection by DCSS and multiple reporting agencies	DCSS Staff	January 2016 through March 2020
Counterfactual	DCSS	The following periods corresponding to the matched individual in the intervention group: Enrollment (baseline) End of intervention (6 months after enrollment)	Data collection by DCSS and multiple reporting agencies	DCSS Staff	January 2016 through March 2020

Notes: DCSS = Department of Child Support Services.

**Figure B.1. Consort Diagram for Individual Clients**

### C. Coarsened Exact Matching Procedure

As described in section III.A. of this report, Urban used 3:1 CEM procedures to construct a comparison group that was equivalent on a number of baseline characteristics to the intervention group. Coarsened exact matching is a matching process that has the potential to “coarsen” or develop a set of bounds around certain values to identify and match people from a comparison group that are exactly the same (or within the coarsened values) as people in the treatment group



based on the matching covariates. The data in the current study were ideal for CEM as Urban had access to a large pool of potential comparison group people from which they could match the FACT participants. When practical, CEM often performs better than other matching procedures; research has shown that more common approaches, such as propensity score matching, can increase covariate imbalance while CEM is better-suited for causal inference (Iacus et al. 2012; King and Nielsen 2019).

To execute the CEM, Urban worked with DCSS to receive an administrative dataset on a pool of noncustodial and custodial parents who had open DCSS cases at any point between January 2016 and September 2019 in Contra Costa County who were eligible for, but did not participate in, FACT (approximately 63,000 cases). Urban leveraged the large number of people in this pool to match three comparison group people to each FACT participant. This allowed for the creation of a larger comparison group sample, thereby boosting the statistical power of the analytic model possibility of including baseline (i.e., “pre-enrollment”) measures of the outcome variables in the CEM procedure. However, this was not possible because the “start date” for comparison group people was not assigned until after matches were made. Thus, it was critical for Urban to control for these baseline outcomes in the multivariate regression models even though groups were equivalent on the other variables used in the CEM.

#### D. Data Preparation

The dataset for the impact analyses came from the Contra Costa County Department of Child Support Services. Rubicon provided DCSS with the names and other identifying information of all FACT participants to facilitate the identification of people who met the eligibility criteria for inclusion in the impact analysis (i.e., a FACT participant with an open child support case at the time of program enrollment). Urban then used Stata version 16 statistical software to clean and recode DCSS administrative records into the analytic measures described in tables 4 and 5 in this report.

Most of the covariates involved little data cleaning as they were already provided in the DCSS data (i.e., *age*, *sex*, *number of minor children*, and *custodial status*). Other data involved additional processing. For example, Urban recoded the *race/ethnicity* measure, which had included a more granular breakdown of racial and ethnic categories in the original DCSS data, into the four-category variable described in table 8. Furthermore, Urban had to process the data to create the two case-level covariates included in the impact analyses. First, Urban created the measure of *number of cases* by summing the number of all prior and currently opened cases in a person’s child support case history. Second, the research team created the measure of *case open length* by measuring the length in days between the primary case’s open date and close date. If the case was still open at the time of data collection, March 30, 2020 was used as a proxy for case close date. There were approximately 70 out of 379 FACT participants with missing sociodemographic information in the DCSS data. These people were dropped from the analytic sample and not included in matching procedure.

For all dichotomous outcome variables, and the baseline outcome measures, Urban processed the DCSS data to identify the presence of an outcome over the relevant period. For instance, the outcomes related to *child support payment modifications*, *employment*, *public assistance*, and *court orders* were coded as “1” if they were present or occurred at any point during the six-month postenrollment period (or pre-enrollment period for baseline outcomes), and “0” if not. Similarly, for the measure of whether there was a new arrear at the six-month mark, Urban coded “1” if an arrear was present in the sixth month after enrollment and “0” if not. To measure the dollar amount of *monthly child support payments*, Urban aggregated all monthly child support payments in the pre- and postenrollment periods and divided that number by six to identify the average monthly payments. The measure of the dollar *amount of court orders* was a summation of all payments required by court orders during the postenrollment period. The measure of the *number of months on public assistance* counted the number of months (ranging from zero to six) during the postenrollment period in which a person received any public assistance benefits. Finally, the *balance of arrears* was the aggregate balance of all arrears present at the sixth month after enrollment.

## E. Impact Estimation

This appendix describes in greater detail the analyses and equations used to assess baseline equivalence and program impacts.

### 1. Baseline Equivalence

To assess baseline equivalence, Urban conducted two-sample t-tests of mean differences on the semicontinuous and count variables, which included *age*, *number of children*, *number of DCSS cases*, *primary case open length*, and *child support modifications* at baseline. The equation for these t-tests was as follows:

$$t = \frac{\bar{Y}_f - \bar{Y}_c}{\left\{ \frac{(n_f - 1)s_f^2 + (n_c - 1)s_c^2}{n_f + n_c - 2} \right\}^{1/2} \left( \frac{1}{n_f} + \frac{1}{n_c} \right)^{1/2}}$$

where  $\bar{Y}_f$  is the mean of the intervention group (FACT participants) and  $\bar{Y}_c$  is the mean of the comparison group.

Urban also used chi-square tests to assess differences between the two groups at baseline on categorical variables, which included *sex*, *race/ethnicity*, and *custodial role*, as well as whether they received a *child support modification*, had *employment*, or received public assistance during the six-month pre-enrollment period. The equation for the chi-square tests was as follows:

$$\chi^2 = \sum \frac{(o_i - e_i)^2}{e_i}$$

Where  $o_i$  is the observed value and  $e_i$  is the expected value at the “i” position in a particular contingency table.

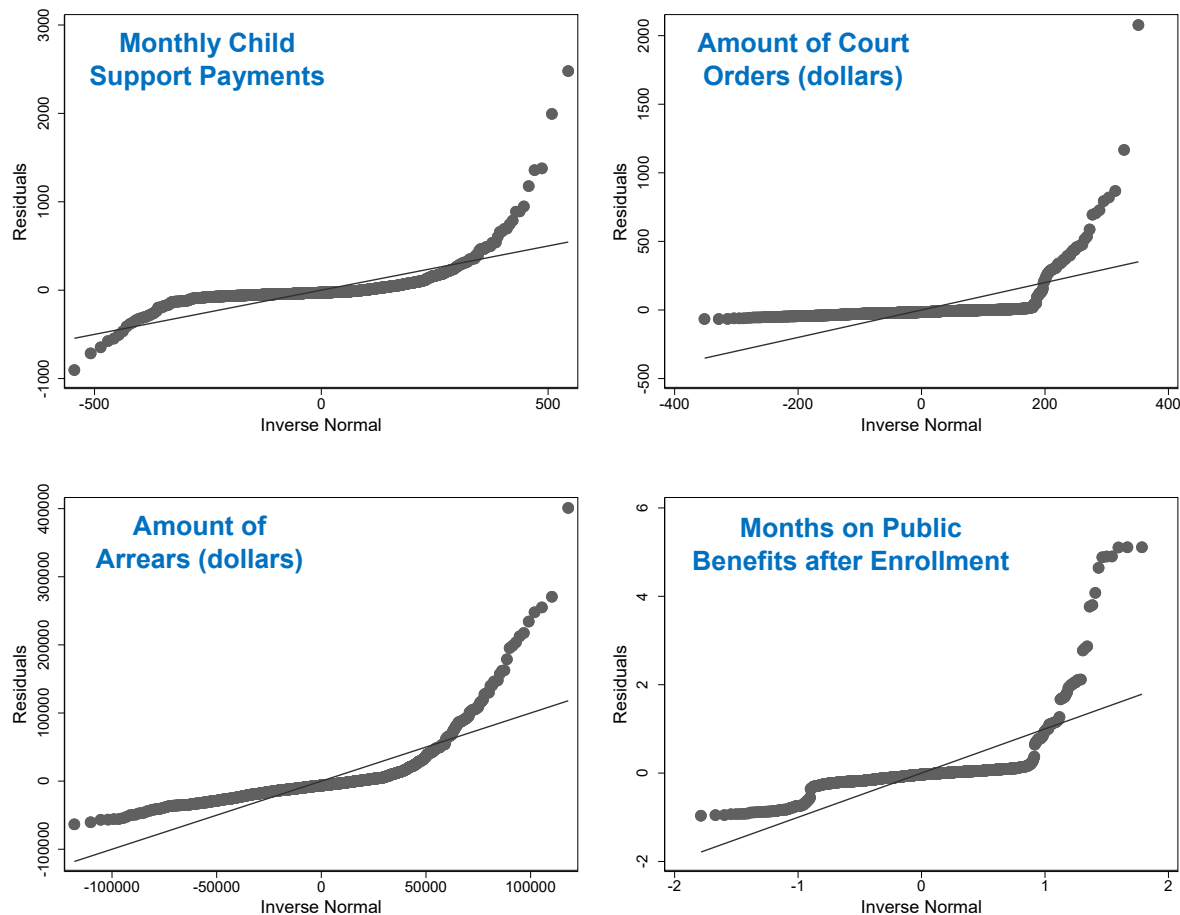
## 2. Impact Analyses

For the primary and secondary impact analyses, Urban used regression models to estimate the impacts of FACT, controlling for the covariates described in Table 8 of Section V.B of this report. The specification of each was based on the distribution of the outcome measure. For example, Urban used logistic regression to analyze the impact of FACT on all dichotomous outcomes, including *child support payment modifications*, *employment*, *public assistance*, *court orders*, and *arrear*s. These analyses relied on the following equation:

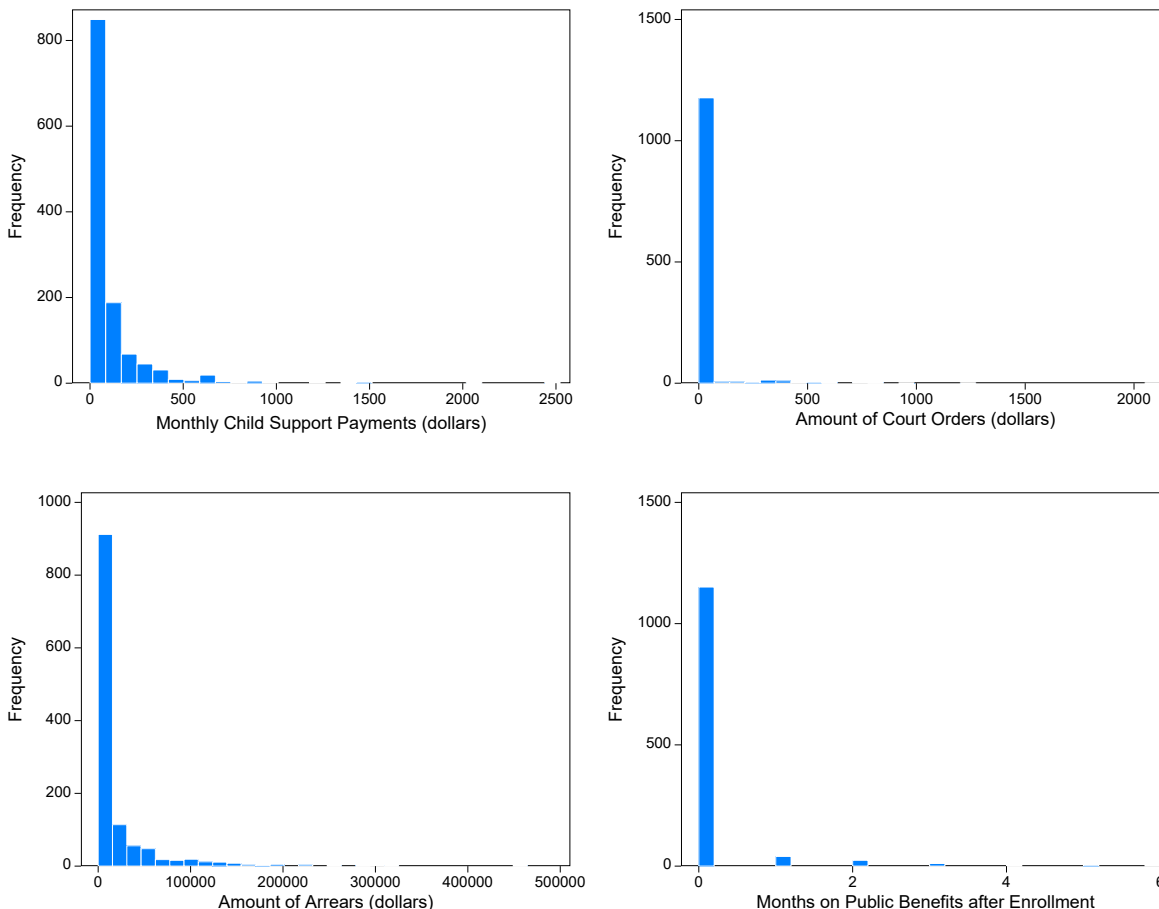
$$\log(Y) = b_0 + b_1(FACT) + b_2(sex) + b_3(race) + b_4(age) + b_5(child) + b_6(status) + b_7(cases) + b_8(CL) + b_9(CSM) + b_{10}(CSP) + b_{11}(empl) + b_{12}(public)$$

where  $\hat{p}$  is the expected probability that the outcome is present,  $b_0$  is the intercept, and  $b_1 - b_{12}$  are the regression coefficients for the covariates included in the models. These covariates include whether the person was a FACT participant (*FACT*), *sex*, *race*, *age*, number of minor children (*child*), custodial status (*status*), number of DCSS cases (*cases*), and open length of primary case (*CL*), as well as the baseline measures of the primary outcome variables: child support modifications (*CSM*), monthly child support payments (*CSP*), employment (*empl*), and public assistance (*public*).

Three of the remaining outcomes (*monthly child support payments*, *amount of court orders*, and *arrear balance*) were semicontinuous measures with a lower bound of “zero.” The final outcome (*months on public assistance* after enrollment) had a lower bound of zero and a higher bound of six. Given the discrete nature of these outcomes, Urban determined that Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression would likely be inappropriate for these analyses. To confirm this, the research team ran baseline models of these outcomes using OLS regression, then examined model residuals using quantile-quartile (Q-Q) plots. As indicated in Figure E.1, the residuals were not normally distributed as they deviated substantially from the straight lines in the Q-Q plots.

**Figure E.1. Q-Q plots of residuals from discrete outcome baseline models**

Because of this non-normality, Urban explored alternative ways to model these outcomes. Based on descriptive statistics, and the histograms of these variables depicted in figure E.2, Urban determined that they approximated count distributions (i.e., substantially right-skewed, non-negative integers, and a large percentage of zero values). Count models are better suited for data with these distributions as they protect against potentially biased estimates that OLS models would produce (see Long and Freese 2006).

**Figure E.2. Histograms of discrete outcomes**

The two most common types of count models are Poisson regression and negative binomial regression. Unlike negative binomial models, Poisson models must meet the assumption of equidispersion (i.e., that the conditional means equal the conditional variances). Urban conducted the likelihood ratio test of the overdispersion parameter, which was significant in all four models ( $p < 0.001$ ) and indicated that negative binomial regression was more appropriate for the four outcomes than Poisson regression. Urban also explored, but ultimately rejected, the use of zero-inflated Poisson or negative binomial models, which are specialized count models that account for an excess of zero values in the data. First, standard negative binomial models already account for high amounts of zeros by allowing for overdispersion. Second, and more importantly, zero-inflated models assume there is a separate process that generates excess zeros in the data. Thus, these models include two distinct parts, a logit model that predicts these excess zeros and a separate count model, each of which includes its own set of covariates. Because Urban had no theoretical rationale for separately modeling the zeros and the non-zero counts in these four outcomes, the research team elected to use standard negative binomial regression<sup>9</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> See Paul Allison, “Do We Really Need Zero-Inflated Models?” Statistical Horizons, August 7, 2012, <https://statisticalhorizons.com/zero-inflated-models>.

The negative binomial models for *monthly child support payments*, *dollar amount of court orders*, *arrear balance*, and *months on public assistance* used the following equation:

$$\log(Y) = b_0 + b_1 (FACT) + b_2 (sex) + b_3 (race) + b_4 (age) + b_5 (child) + b_6 (status) + b_7 (cases) + b_8 (CL) + b_9 (CSM) + b_{10} (CSP) + b_{11} (empl) + b_{12} (public)$$

Where  $Y$  represents the outcome of interest,  $b_0$  is the intercept, and  $b_1 - b_{12}$  are the regression coefficients for the model's covariates.

### A. Sensitivity Analyses and Alternative Model Specifications

**Table F.1. Differences in Means between Intervention and Comparison Groups Estimated Using Alternative Coarsened Exact Matching Ratios**

Outcome	3:1 CEM Benchmark approach	2:1 CEM approach	1:1 CEM Alternative approach
<b>Primary Research Questions</b>			
Child support payment modification	3.7%**	3.4%**	4.8%**
Monthly child support payments	-\$21.54	-\$23.40	-\$21.27
Employment	12.5%**	12.7%**	13.2%**
Public assistance	5.6%**	7.3%**	7.6%**

Source: Analyses of six-month postenrollment outcomes from Department of Child Support administrative data.

\*\* Differences are statistically significant at the 0.01 level

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