



A Seat at the Table: Piloting Continuous Learning to Engage Fathers and Paternal Relatives in Child Welfare

Final Report

May 2021 (Revised May 2023)

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Contract Number: HHSP233201500035I/HHSP23337025T

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OPRE Report 2021-62

May 2023

Note of revision: We updated the report to correct terminology.

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Acknowledgments

We sincerely appreciate the efforts of Pooja Gupta Curtin and Katie Pahigiannis, our project officers in the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation; and our other federal partners, Toya Joyner (Office of Family Assistance) and Matthew McGuire (Children’s Bureau). We also thank all the team members at each of the Fathers in Continuous Learning sites for participating in our interviews and focus groups and for sharing their time and expertise in many other ways. We thank our Breakthrough Series Collaborative consultant, Jen Agosti, our Faculty Coaches, and our Mathematica team, including Sarah Palmer, Jill Spielfogel, Candice Talkington, James Wholley, and Douglas Ortiz. Effie Metropoulos and Carol Soble provided excellent editing, and Sheena Flowers, Dorothy Bellow, Laura Sarnoski, and Aunsara Dennis provided supportive graphics and outstanding production assistance. We also thank Pamela Holcomb for reviewing drafts of the report.

This project is supported by the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation in the Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) under contract number HHSP233201500035I/HHSP23337025T. This information or content and conclusions are those of the authors and should not be construed as the official position or policy of, nor should any endorsements be inferred by HHS or the U.S. Government.

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OVERVIEW

Introduction

Research continues to link a father's positive involvement in the family to outcomes that reflect children's well-being (see, for example, Cabrera, Volling, and Barr 2018; Lamb 2004). When child welfare agencies successfully engage fathers in their children's cases, the agencies create a connection that can also improve children's outcomes. Relatively few studies have addressed the specific benefits of involving paternal relatives, but support from extended family is linked to children's well-being (for example, Erola et al. 2018) and to protective factors (for example, Corwin et al. 2020). Even though involving fathers in child welfare services can have a positive impact on their children's well-being, and there is a deepening focus on parent engagement in child welfare, fathers are not well engaged in child welfare services.

The Fathers and Continuous Learning in Child Welfare (FCL) project used a methodology known as the Breakthrough Series Collaborative (BSC) to improve placement stability and permanency outcomes for children by engaging their fathers and paternal relatives. A BSC is a continuous learning methodology developed by the Institute for Healthcare Improvement that is used to test and spread promising practices to help organizations improve in a focused topic area (IHI 2003). It has five key elements: (1) the Collaborative Change Framework (CCF); (2) inclusive multilevel teams; (3) a Shared Learning Environment; (4) expert faculty; and (5) the Model for Improvement.

Six Improvement Teams representing five state or county child welfare agencies participated in the BSC. Throughout this BSC, each team identified, implemented, and studied a unique group of strategies to engage fathers and paternal relatives. Teams developed processes to collect, organize, and report data to gauge whether the engagement strategies were producing improvements on specified metrics. This pilot study report describes insights into the implementation of a BSC and potential strategies for increasing father and paternal relative engagement in child welfare.

Primary study aims

The FCL pilot study was designed to:

1. Document the implementation of a BSC in order to achieve the goal of improving placement stability and permanency outcomes
2. Document how the teams worked with system partners to plan, test, and adjust their engagement strategies

Purpose

The implementation of the BSC methodology in health care settings is well known and documented. Although the BSC has been used in child welfare settings, little is known about the implementation process and resource needs. This pilot study was funded by the Office of Family Assistance and directed by the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation in partnership with the Children's Bureau, all within the Administration for Children and Families in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. It focused on providing nuanced information about the preparation for a BSC, the components of a BSC, the early stages of implementation of a BSC, and its aims, short-term outcomes, and sustainability. FCL is conducted by Mathematica and the University of Denver (referred to as the Mathematica/DU team).

Key findings and highlights

After engaging in the BSC, Improvement Team members considered themselves more knowledgeable and identified cultural shifts and changes in their own behavior and the behavior of others in engaging fathers and paternal relatives. These changes were fueled by dedicating protected time and effort toward the BSC and staying deeply committed to engaging fathers and paternal relatives.

Improvement Team members reported that the BSC could be strengthened even more by increasing protected time away from the competing demands of daily work, getting stronger guidance from the BSC team on data collection and community partner engagement, and engaging staff other than those on the Improvement Team. All Improvement Teams planned to keep using elements of the BSC after it formally concluded. Work on father and paternal relative engagement will continue by drawing on the BSC experience, building successful engagement strategies identified through the process, relying on sustained leadership, and furthering the beginnings of a cultural shift.

Methods

The pilot study methods used both qualitative and quantitative analyses. Data included interviews and focus groups, observational notes, and structured assessments collected over the course of the pilot study period.

Interviews and focus groups were conducted during site visits. The Mathematica/DU team conducted six site visits: four were conducted in person, and two were conducted virtually because of the COVID-19 public health emergency. The Mathematica/DU team took observational notes during Shared Learning Environment activities. Structured assessments included a site self-assessment that teams completed twice to report their site's current level of engagement for fathers and paternal relatives, and an implementation assessment that all team members completed twice to indicate each individual's confidence level on certain aspects of engaging fathers and paternal relatives.

Appendix

- Appendix A. Learning Session Activities
- Appendix B. Learning Session Evaluation Analysis
- Appendix C. Strategies Organized by Focus
- Appendix D. BSC Instruments
- Appendix E. Development of the Collaborative Change Framework
- Appendix F. Pilot Study Instruments

Related documents

Piloting Continuous Learning to Engage Fathers and Paternal Relatives in Child Welfare—Executive Summary

Citation

Fung, Nickie, Jennifer Bellamy, Eliza Abendroth, Diletta Mittone, Roseana Bess, and Matthew Stagner (2021). *A Seat at the Table: Piloting Continuous Learning to Engage Fathers and Paternal Relatives in Child Welfare*. OPRE Report # 2021-62, Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. Background

Research continues to link a father's positive involvement in the family to outcomes that reflect children's well-being (see, for example, Cabrera, Volling, and Barr 2018; Lamb 2004). When child welfare agencies successfully engage fathers in their children's cases, the agencies create a connection that can also improve children's outcomes. Even though involving fathers in child welfare services can have a positive impact on their children's well-being, and there is a deepening focus on parent engagement in child welfare, fathers are not well engaged in child welfare services.

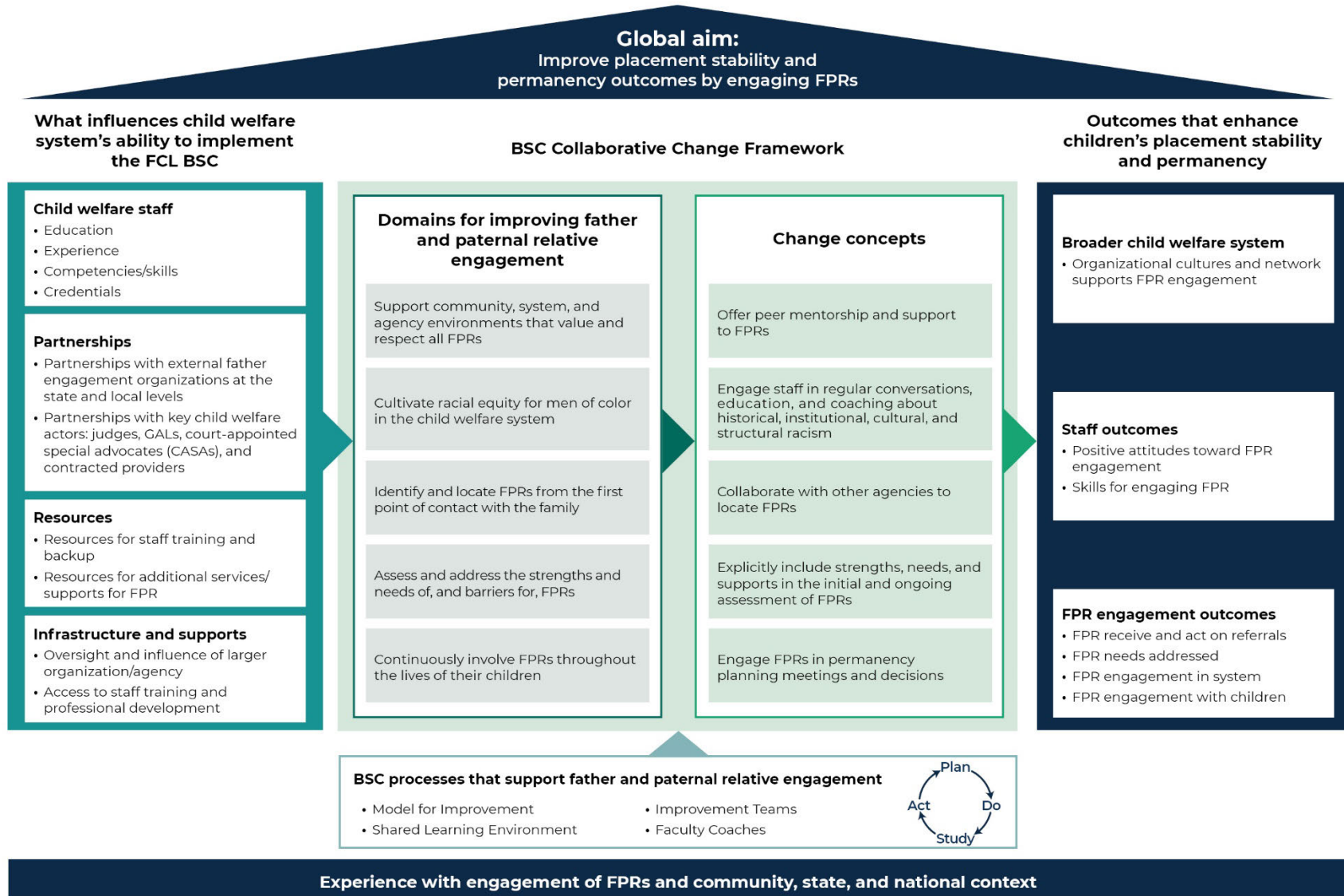
For example, when the fathers have been identified in child welfare cases, children spend fewer days in foster care and are more likely to be reunified with parents (Burrus et al. 2012). When fathers participate in court-ordered reunification services such as parent training classes, children are also more likely to be reunified with their parents (D'Andrade 2017). Successfully engaging fathers in child welfare services can positively affect children's externalizing behaviors, cognitive and academic development, and familial support (such as child support and visitation) (Amato and Gilbreth 1999; Greene and Moore 2000; Leon et al. 2016; Pruett et al. 2017). Relatively few studies have addressed the specific benefits of involving paternal relatives, but support from extended family is linked to children's well-being (for example, Erola et al. 2018) and to protective factors (for example, Corwin et al. 2020).

Amid a deepening focus on parent engagement in child welfare, data from Child and Family Service Reviews (CFSR) reveal that fathers are not well engaged in services. Although the CFSRs highlight practice concerns involving both mothers and fathers, research indicates that fathers are not as engaged in child welfare (JBS International 2019). This work suggests that agencies are less likely to search for fathers when the father's location is unknown. Similarly, fathers are not as involved in case planning as they could be, and are less likely than mothers to receive accurate needs assessments and appropriate services. Overall, they receive fewer direct contacts from caseworkers than mothers do.

To create a culture in the child welfare system that prioritizes thinking about and engaging fathers and paternal relatives, the Fathers and Continuous Learning in Child Welfare (FCL) project is designed to test the use of the Breakthrough Series Collaborative (BSC) methodology (1) to improve placement stability and permanency outcomes by strengthening the engagement of fathers and paternal relatives with children involved in child welfare and (2) to add to the evidence base on engagement strategies for fathers and paternal relatives. FCL is sponsored by the Office of Family Assistance and administered by the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, in partnership with the Children's Bureau, within the Administration for Children and Families in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. This project, conducted by Mathematica and the University of Denver (referred to as the Mathematica/DU team), will achieve these goals through a pilot study, which is the focus of this report, and a subsequent descriptive evaluation. The descriptive evaluation will detail how the engagement strategies were implemented and their association with process outcomes, including organizational changes and network supports for fathers' and paternal relatives' engagement; changes in staff attitudes and skills for engaging fathers and paternal relatives; and father and paternal relative engagement outcomes.

The logic model in Figure I.1 guides the pilot study and the planned descriptive evaluation.

Figure I.1. FCL logic model



Note: FPR = father and paternal relative; GAL = Guardian ad litem; CASA = Court appointed special advocate.

The logic model organizes the work of the BSC and defines the global aim (long-term outcome) of the effort. It also combines the factors that influence the ability to implement the BSC, the CCF, and additional BSC processes and to achieve related outcomes—all aimed at improving placement stability and permanency outcomes by engaging fathers and paternal relatives. Factors that influence the ability to implement the BSC—staff and agency partnerships with community and system partners, along with resources, infrastructure, and supports—build child welfare agencies’ capacity and readiness to change. The logic model also shows the five key elements of the BSC: the Collaborative Change Framework, Improvement Teams, the Shared Learning Environment, Faculty Coaches, and the Model for Improvement.

At the center of the logic model, the CCF guides the work of the Improvement Teams and creates a common language for BSC participants. For FCL, it comprises five domains that, together, depict a child welfare agency that has developed processes and strategies for engaging fathers and paternal relatives. Each domain is further broken down by goals and then strategies (also called change concepts) that the Improvement Teams can test. Although the CCF strategies provide teams with some ideas about or inspiration for strategies implemented and tested by teams, teams are not limited to testing only those strategies in the CCF. The implementation of the CCF is supported by the other four elements of the BSC, including Improvement Teams, a Shared Learning Environment, Faculty Coaches, and the Model for Improvement. The elements work together to affect outcomes in the broader child welfare system, for staff, and for the engagement of fathers and paternal relatives.

A subsequent descriptive evaluation will examine selected strategies—implemented during and after the pilot study—for engaging fathers and paternal relatives in the child welfare system. The descriptive evaluation will build on the pilot study by leveraging the instruments used to collect data during the pilot and the findings described in this report. Focusing on specific engagement strategies, the descriptive evaluation will also explore the promise of implementing the BSC by assessing organizational changes and network supports for father and paternal relative engagement; changes in staff attitudes toward and skills for engaging fathers and paternal relatives; and father and paternal relative engagement outcomes in child welfare settings that were interested in improving father and paternal relative engagement and have participated in a continuous quality improvement process.

B. Pilot study

The pilot study was designed to (1) document the implementation of a BSC beginning in August 2019 and (2) document how the teams worked with system partners to plan, test, and adjust their engagement strategies. Although the pilot study documents how a BSC was implemented with the global aim of improving placement stability and permanency outcomes for children involved in the child welfare system, the study did not directly address those outcomes. Instead, the pilot study findings provide nuanced information about preparation for a BSC, the components of a BSC, the early stages of implementation of a BSC, and the BSC's aims, short-term outcomes, and sustainability. Six Improvement Teams from five sites, representing five state or county child welfare agencies, participated in the pilot study.

The following research questions guided the pilot study:

Preparation for the BSC

1. What father and paternal relative engagement strategies and implementation supports for the strategies existed at the start of the BSC?
2. What resources were required to implement the BSC?

BSC components

3. Which BSC elements (Model for Improvement, Collaborative Change Framework (CCF), Faculty Coaches, and Shared Learning Environment) were most helpful to Improvement Teams? Which BSC elements were most challenging?
4. What were the perceived benefits of the learning sessions to the Improvement Teams?
5. What were barriers and facilitators to using the Model for Improvement (small tests of change, Plan-Do-Study-Act, or PDSA, cycles)?

Implementation of the BSC

6. How did the Improvement Teams prioritize the domains, objectives, and change concepts they would address during the pilot study?
7. What system partners were involved in implementing strategies based on the CCF?
8. What were the barriers and facilitators to implementing the CCF?

Aims, short-term outcomes, and sustainability

9. Was there an improvement in site-specific aims and short-term outcomes?
10. Do sites plan to sustain the practices identified in the CCF?
11. Has the BSC been implemented sufficiently to move engagement strategies to the evaluation stage?

In this report, we present findings from the pilot study period—September 2019 through June 2020—beginning with engagement of the Improvement Teams and concluding with the virtual booster session. To address the above research questions, the Mathematica/DU team analyzed the data sources described in Table I.1.

Table I.1. Data sources

Data source	Description	Data collection period
Qualitative data		
Interviews and focus groups	Semistructured interviews and focus groups conducted during site visits (four in-person and two virtual)	March 2020–April 2020
Document review		
Meeting notes	Notes from monthly all-team calls and monthly affinity group calls captured by the BSC team ^a	December 2019–May 2020
Learning and booster session observations	Observations capturing the interactions of the Improvement Teams and the topics discussed during each learning session (two in-person and one virtual booster)	October 2019, February 2020, and June 2020
PDSA plans	Review of plans for conducting PDSAs submitted by the Improvement Teams	October 2019–June 2020
PDSA tests	Review of PDSA or small tests of change conducted by the Improvement Teams	October 2019–June 2020
Team information forms	Review of Improvement Team descriptions submitted by each team	November 2019–January 2020
Quantitative data		
Implementation assessments	Individual assessments of each Improvement Team member's confidence in engaging fathers and paternal relatives	October 2019 or February 2020; June 2020
Learning and booster session feedback	Feedback provided by Improvement Team members who attended each learning session (two in-person and one virtual booster)	October 2019, February 2020, and June 2020
Site self-assessments	Self-assessments of each site's work focused on the domains in the CCF, completed by Improvement Team members	October 2019 and February 2020

^a The notes from the November and February all-team call meetings were not available.

The pilot study included both qualitative and quantitative analyses. Data from site visits and notes from all-team call meetings were audio-recorded and transcribed. They were then compiled, along with notes from monthly affinity group calls, and organized by using NVivo software. Three members of the Mathematica/DU team coded the data using two levels of coding, first, by research question and, second, by emergent theme. To establish consensus in coding, the Mathematica/DU team members coded two transcripts and met to discuss discrepancies in coding. The team did more coding and reviewed the coding questions as they arose. Data from learning sessions, implementation assessments, and site self-assessments were collected on paper forms and through electronic surveys conducted with Survey Monkey software. The pilot study team analyzed all survey data by using Excel software.

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II. BREAKTHROUGH SERIES COLLABORATIVE

A. Introduction

This chapter focuses on the BSC methodology, briefly describing its history and purpose with an emphasis on its five key elements. In addition, we outline the BSC elements as they were developed and implemented for FCL, including some elements adapted from earlier Institute for Healthcare Improvement BSCs. The chapter concludes with an overview of the COVID-19 public health emergency’s impact on the pilot study.

The BSC is a continuous learning collaborative methodology used to test and spread promising practices to help organizations improve outcomes in a focused topic area. The Institute for Healthcare Improvement developed the BSC in 1995 to help health care organizations integrate evidence-based practices into their daily work (Institute for Healthcare Improvement 2003). As with other continuous learning processes, the BSC methodology involves having a team identify, collect, and review data continuously to gauge progress toward specified outcomes. The BSC’s methods and values distinguish it from other continuous learning processes commonly used in child welfare. These methods and values include the use of continuous cross-site shared learning opportunities, efforts to broaden participation by reducing power differentials between stakeholders in the change process, and an emphasis on small tests of change.

The BSC methodology supports organizational change by (1) building site capacity through teams made up of staff with diverse roles and (2) using a team-based learning approach (Lang et al. 2015). Teams are encouraged to accept the ideas of all stakeholders; that is, to recognize leaders across an organization and not just work through a single coach or consultant. Because of its unique combination of methods and values, the BSC holds promise as a continuous learning process that may address stubborn systemic challenges such as father engagement while supporting systematic implementation of engagement strategies for fathers and paternal relatives in child welfare.

The BSC methodology brings together a set of five key elements that are designed to support effective improvement processes. They are the Collaborative Change Framework, the Improvement Teams, the Shared Learning Environment, Faculty Coaches, and the Model for Improvement, shown in Figure II.1.

Figure II.1. Five key elements of the FCL BSC



Note: CCF = Collaborative Change Framework.

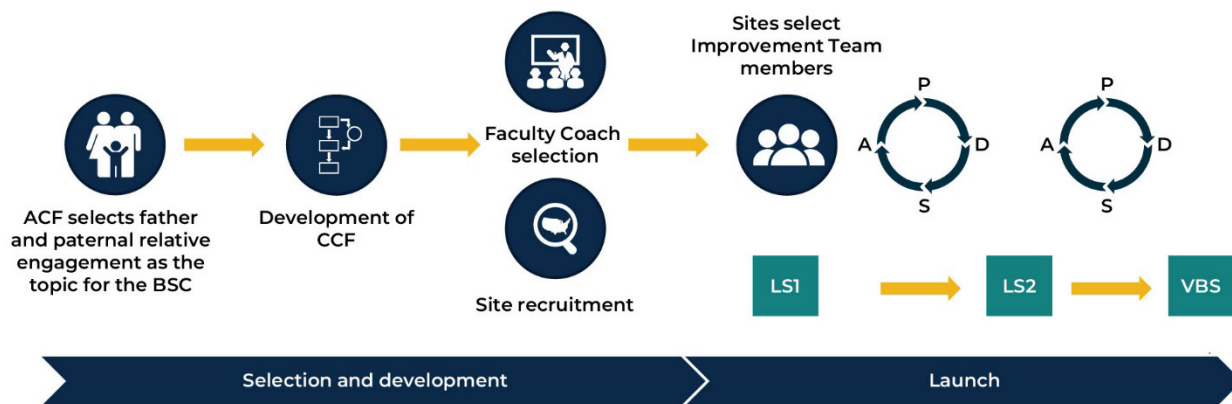
The five key elements of the BSC methodology support and sustain the implementation of promising practices in the real-world contexts people work in (Daily et al. 2018).

1. **The CCF** provides a mission statement and specified outcomes broken down into attainable segments that drive the work of a BSC. The CCF also creates a common language for the Improvement Team members and other participants in the BSC. For FCL, the CCF outlined the vision for engaging fathers and paternal relatives in child welfare across five domains. The father and paternal relative engagement strategies tested by Improvement Teams in the BSC focus on one or more of these domains. Each domain includes goals that teams might achieve if they are successful in their work in that domain and strategies that could be used to engage fathers and paternal relatives. The CCF is included in the FCL logic model (Figure I.1).
2. **Multilevel inclusive teams** leverage input from and empower team members across varied roles and system levels to develop, implement, and provide data and feedback on tests of change aimed at CCF-related outcomes. The teams include stakeholders at different levels in an agency who are most familiar with the agency systems and processes that will be affected by the BSC. These stakeholders can also spread the achievements of the BSC throughout the agency and support a culture of learning in the BSC. For FCL, sites were asked to identify a group of six to eight people to lead the BSC work at each agency. Each group, called the **Improvement Team**, included a mix of administrators, managers, supervisors, child welfare caseworkers, community partners, and fathers and paternal relatives. Individual teams varied in their composition.
3. **Expert faculty** share their expertise with teams and facilitate shared learning across teams. In a BSC, the expert faculty play a supportive role and do not engage in the more hands-on approach that is often characteristic of other continuous learning processes. For FCL, ACF and the Mathematica/DU team selected a group of six experts to support the Improvement Teams and provide expert knowledge. The six individuals are referred to as **Faculty Coaches** in FCL.
4. A **Shared Learning Environment** is a broad collection of continuous learning activities designed to help teams build relationships with and learn from each other. For the Improvement Teams participating in FCL, the Shared Learning Environment included the following:
 - In-person learning sessions
 - A virtual booster session
 - All-team calls with all participants in the BSC
 - Affinity group calls facilitated by Faculty Coaches with Improvement Team members tasked with similar team roles (senior leaders, team managers, supervisors, frontline workers, community partners, and fathers and paternal relatives)
 - An online learning community where Improvement Teams could post and review materials (including monthly metrics and PDSA cycles) and talk with other teams about their work
5. The **Model for Improvement** is a collection of strategies teams use to translate the CCF into small tests and to reinforce continuous learning. In FCL, the model includes the PDSA cycles or small tests of change designed by the Improvement Teams to target the CCF domains. The Improvement Teams used data to test and track these small tests of change. The Institute for Healthcare Improvement describes the PDSA cycle as shorthand for testing a change by developing a plan to test the change (Plan), carrying out the test (Do), observing and learning from the consequences (Study), and determining what modifications should be made to the test (Act).

B. Implementation of the Breakthrough Series Collaborative in FCL

Leading up to the start of the BSC in August 2019, the Mathematica/DU team initiated a series of activities to prepare for and implement the BSC. At the start of FCL, the Mathematica/DU team explored different continuous learning processes. ACF selected the BSC model to learn more about how it might be applied to motivate system change in child welfare. The Mathematica/DU team led the development and implementation of the FCL BSC (Figure II.2). The Mathematica/DU team also worked closely with an expert BSC consultant. Together, they are referred to as the BSC team.

Figure II.2. Developing and implementing the BSC



Note: CCF = Collaborative Change Framework; LS1 = Learning Session 1; LS2 = Learning Session 2; VBS = Virtual booster session.

Developing the CCF

Once ACF selected the BSC as the continuous learning process for this project, the BSC team began developing the CCF. The BSC team drafted an initial CCF and shared it during a one-day, in-person meeting that also included experts in father engagement, child welfare agency staff, practitioners, administrators, and researchers. Some of the participants in this in-person meeting represented sites that would later participate in the BSC—namely, the Hartford region, Los Angeles County, and Wake County teams. Some participants also were later selected as Faculty Coaches for FCL. The BSC team guided meeting participants through a structured process of brainstorming, organizing, and revising themes to refine the CCF. More details on the CCF development process appear in Appendix E.

Identifying, assessing, and recruiting sites

The Mathematica/DU team facilitated the process of identifying and recruiting sites. The team asked ACF to recommend 10 state or county child welfare agencies as potential sites. All sites were actively engaging in or interested in father and paternal relative engagement activities. ACF also recommended child welfare agencies that were performing comparatively better than others on continuous quality improvement. The Mathematica/DU team sought a mix of sites, including those currently collaborating with child welfare system partners and those that were interested in doing so but that were at earlier stages of collaboration. The Mathematica/DU team also sought a geographic mix of agencies serving large and medium-sized urban areas and rural areas.

The Mathematica/DU team made recruitment calls and site visits to assess the sites' readiness for and commitment to (1) creating and supporting an Improvement Team, (2) collaborating with partners in the child welfare system, (3) participating in all elements of the BSC (such as data tracking and the Shared Learning Environment), and (4) sustaining the strategies achieved through the BSC. Based on the information collected in recruitment calls and site visits, the Mathematica/DU team recommended five sites to ACF, all of which ACF approved. The Mathematica/DU team then formalized site agreements with each site. The agreements specified expectations for participating in the BSC and the resources and supports provided by FCL, including site payments.

Identifying and preparing Faculty Coaches

The Mathematica/DU team, with input from ACF, selected four Faculty Coaches from the pool of experts who helped develop the CCF. Two additional experts were identified and recruited to serve as Faculty Coaches to ensure representation of all domains of the CCF and diverse perspectives and identities (for example, practice, research, and policy perspectives and expertise in racial equity). With the Faculty Coaches selected, the Mathematica/DU team provided the coaches with an online orientation, access to the online learning community, and materials to support their understanding of the purpose of FCL and the elements of the BSC.

Adapting the Institute for Healthcare Improvement model

Some elements of the BSC were adapted from the Institute for Healthcare Improvement model for FCL and provide important context for the pilot study findings. First, the FCL BSC pilot study took place under a condensed timeline. Although the FCL BSC will continue for 18 months, which is the preferred timeline for a typical BSC, only 12 months were available to conduct the pilot study as reflected in this report. The timeline was condensed because of the time needed to select the BSC as the continuous learning model and because of additional contract-related time and budget constraints.

Second, in earlier Institute for Healthcare Improvement BSC projects, after experts developed the CCF, an application process was implemented to solicit sites to participate in the BSC. In FCL, there was no formal site application process. Site selection was based on site visits for recruitment and recommendations from federal partners. Also, sites typically do not participate in the development of the CCF. In earlier BSCs, site recruitment took place after the development of the CCF, at which point sites applied to participate in the BSC. In this case, the BSC team was already in the process of recruiting the Hartford, Los Angeles, and Wake sites to participate in the BSC. When planning for the development of the FCL CCF, the BSC team and its federal partners wanted to include practitioners; accordingly, they invited these three sites to participate.

Finally, clearance from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) was required to collect information from the participating Improvement Teams. Because the documents had not yet been approved by OMB, the information collection activities for Learning Session 1 had to undergo adjustment. Some documents related to important BSC processes could not be shared before OMB approval, including a PDSA form and the data collection planning worksheet, which described the metrics for this BSC. In feedback on Learning Session 1, the Improvement Teams said they did not fully understand PDSAs and would have liked more information about them.

C. The COVID-19 public health emergency's impact on the pilot study

The COVID-19 public health emergency intensified in the United States in mid-March 2020, about seven months into the BSC. In response to the emergency, the final in-person learning session was delayed until fall 2020 in the hope that travel would be possible at that time. Given the ongoing disruption in travel, the third learning session ultimately took place in a virtual format in October 2020, beyond the data collection period for the pilot study. Consequently, the pilot study does not include feedback from Improvement Team members about the third learning session. To maintain the BSC's momentum, the BSC team implemented a three-hour virtual booster session in early June 2020. Feedback from the session is included in this report. Other shared learning opportunities continued during the public health emergency, including monthly all-team and affinity group calls. However, the call agendas were adjusted to give participants opportunities to discuss the changes to services and strategies for engaging fathers and paternal relatives as dictated by the COVID-19 public health emergency and its challenges.

The COVID-19 public health emergency also had an impact on the pilot study methodology. Before sites closed in response to stay-at-home orders and the imposition of travel restrictions, the Mathematica/DU team completed four in-person site visits. The pilot study's last two in-person site visits were virtual site visits.

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III. CONTEXT OF THE FCL SITES AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE IMPROVEMENT TEAMS

A. Sites participating in FCL

There were a total of six Improvement Teams in the following five public child welfare agencies:

- Denver County Department of Human Services (DHS)
- Connecticut Department of Children and Families (DCF)
- Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS)
- Prowers County Department of Human Services (DHS)
- Wake County Department of Human Services (DHS)

These sites reflect the diversity of child welfare agencies, varying in size, authority (state- or county-administered), the population served, and collaboration with system partners. In Table III.1, we describe each Improvement Team.

Table III.1. Sites participating in FCL, by Improvement Team

Site	Team	Region	Agency structure
Denver County Department of Human Services	Denver	Denver, Colorado	State-supervised, county-administered
Connecticut Department of Children and Families	Hartford	Hartford, Connecticut	State-administered
Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services	LA–Palmdale	Palmdale, California	State-supervised, county-administered
	LA–Vermont Corridor	Los Angeles, California	State-supervised, county-administered
Prowers County Department of Human Services	Prowers	Prowers County, Colorado	State-supervised, county-administered
Wake County Department of Human Services	Wake	Wake County, North Carolina	State-supervised, county-administered

B. Continuous learning experience before FCL

Two of the sites participated in other BSCs before FCL. Several members of one of the site’s leadership team were involved in a BSC on safety and risk assessments. Based on their experience, site leaders said they were interested in using the BSC approach to build on one region’s work to engage fathers. Another site participated in two earlier BSCs. Many agency leaders were familiar with the continuous learning process and were enthusiastic about the potential to spread and sustain improvements in engaging fathers and paternal relatives, with a particular focus on racial equity for men of color.

Although three sites had not participated in a BSC before FCL, they all had some exposure to PDSA cycles or statewide continuous quality improvement efforts. They expressed interest in and a commitment to using the BSC approach to improve fathers’ and paternal relatives’ engagement in child welfare.

C. Father and paternal relative engagement before FCL

When selecting sites for FCL, ACF recommended sites that were actively involved or interested in activities to engage father and paternal relatives. Therefore, before participating in FCL, all six Improvement Teams had strategies in place to engage fathers and paternal relatives of children involved with the child welfare system. Some of these strategies were already built into each site’s case practice. For example, all Improvement Teams said they provided staff with training or other professional development opportunities to learn more about fathers, ways to engage fathers, or interventions to locate fathers or paternal relatives. In particular, these opportunities included annual fatherhood conferences, a training series on engaging fathers, and specific training sessions in cultural sensitivity. Similarly, most Improvement Teams made efforts to identify, search for, and locate fathers and paternal relatives—efforts that continue today. In particular, these efforts included checklists, database searches, collaborative efforts with other agencies, working with family members, and focusing staff time on searching for fathers and paternal relatives.

Beyond describing federal requirements, including the Child and Family Services Reviews and corresponding Program Improvement Plans, some Improvement Teams said that state policies or legal requirements obligated them to identify and contact fathers.¹ For example, two teams referenced state mandates to locate and contact fathers. Another team said that practicing racial justice in their state’s child welfare system was a statewide legislative mandate. Most Improvement Teams also described deliberate efforts to invite fathers to case reviews and other family meetings to ensure they could participate in their child’s case planning. For example, one team arranged for incarcerated fathers to participate in Child and Family Team meetings by telephone.

“[Our state] has statutory requirements around contacting dads, so that was happening...”

– Senior leader

Most Improvement Teams said that they actively discussed the importance of fathers and were developing additional supports for engaging fathers and paternal relatives. They described regular ongoing discussions throughout the agency about the value and importance of fathers, especially during supervisory meetings, unit meetings, and program meetings with agency staff. Most Improvement Teams had developed additional organizational structures and supports for engaging fathers and paternal relatives. For example, some sites had existing units or teams focused on improving father and paternal relative engagement. Similarly, two other teams worked with long-established groups focused on racial equity to improve engagement with fathers of color. Three Improvement Teams also offered instrumental supports to fathers such as employment assistance, housing services, food, holiday gifts, and transportation.

In addition, all the Improvement Teams said that services were available to, or inclusive of, fathers and paternal relatives, even though they were not intended exclusively for them. These services included kinship support services and relative placement teams. Similarly, one team described a two-generation approach to ensure that their programs served both children and their caregivers together and that staff understood the importance of servicing extended family. Furthermore, some of the Improvement Teams pointed to ongoing community partnerships that focused on father engagement, such as partnerships with

¹ The Children’s Bureau in the Administration for Children and Families conducts regular Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSRs) of state child welfare agencies to monitor compliance with federal requirements, understand implementation of child welfare at the local level, and support child- and family-level outcomes. To respond to any challenges identified in the CFSRs, states develop Program Improvement Plans.

community-based fatherhood programs and other community partnerships and collaborations. For example, two teams partnered with a program that engaged fathers and mothers with lived experience. This program helped parents with open cases navigate the child welfare system and connects them to community resources dedicated to them. One team's well-established community partnership offered Healthy Relationships and Parenting workshops for fathers, and another team's existing partnership with its contracted fatherhood engagement program provided fathers with support and resources. All five sites offered fatherhood programs, such as fatherhood classes, paternity testing, and men's support groups.

D. Selecting members of the Improvement Team

Guidance for selecting Improvement Team members

The Institute for Healthcare Improvement highlights the importance of (1) including the right people on an Improvement Team, (2) considering the system in which the BSC is being implemented, and (3) including people who are familiar with all the different parts of the service system. The BSC model also directs each organization to build an Improvement Team that suits its own needs. At the start of the BSC, the BSC team provided guidance to help sites select members of their Improvement Team. The guidance asked sites to select the following categories of members:

- A high-level child welfare administrator at each agency to serve as senior leader and oversee the Improvement Team's work
- A program manager or mid-level manager at each agency to serve as the team manager, responsible for supporting the work of the senior leader and Improvement Team members
- A supervisor who works in the child welfare agency and oversees staff and work relevant to this BSC
- Two frontline workers who work in the child welfare agency and work directly with fathers and paternal relatives
- One or two fathers or paternal relatives who had been involved with the child welfare agency before
- One or two community partners or members of a partner agency working in collaboration with the child welfare agency to engage fathers and paternal relatives

Selection of agency staff for Improvement Teams

In forming their Improvement Teams, sites selected team members in a variety of ways. Senior leaders selected most of the Improvement Team members, although some of the teams relied on other processes. For example, in some cases, a team manager formed the Improvement Team. In other cases, some Improvement Team members were designated, and others were invited and joined teams depending on their interest. Several teams mentioned that they faced no problems in recruiting agency staff for membership on the Improvement Team; on the contrary, they were challenged to narrow the team to a manageable size in view of the large number of interested candidates. Improvement Team members said the opportunity to spread work they were already doing to engage fathers and paternal relatives motivated them to participate in the BSC. Improvement Team members also appreciated the opportunity to travel as part of FCL.

“This was an opportunity for us to take the work we were already doing to the next level. So, when I was asked to participate, obviously I agreed.”

– Community partner

“We were just looking for people we thought would be passionate about the work.”

– Team manager

“We handpicked people who not only had a heart and passion for involving fathers but also people who had the time to fit this into their schedules.”

– Senior leader

“I think that when we are talking about fatherhood and paternity, surely the women in the office can advocate just as well as the men, but I also think that his perspective as a man and a father is important.”

– Team manager

Senior leaders considered a variety of factors in selecting staff for their Improvement Team. They based some selections on staff members’ current work with fathers or their passion for and interest in working with fathers. For example, agency staff involved in facilitating or supervising fatherhood groups or working on fatherhood initiatives were often selected to join the Improvement Teams. Similarly, other members of the Improvement Teams included agency staff who had expressed a genuine interest in and excitement about championing the engagement of fathers and paternal relatives in their agency and were willing to take on additional responsibility. A few Improvement Teams also emphasized that they were intentionally including as many male voices as possible because BSC work is specifically about fathers and paternal relatives, and the majority of child welfare employees are women (Levine 2005).

In selecting Improvement Team members, some teams prioritized a diversity of roles to reflect fully the scope of the work (Figure III.1). They prioritized selecting members who could represent different divisions of the child welfare agency, different offices, and different levels of the organizational hierarchy from frontline workers to agency administrators. Senior leaders said this was important for inclusivity, and also increased the potential to spread the work across the agency. Two Improvement Teams also mentioned that they intentionally selected a staff member familiar with the agency’s data system or continuous quality improvement processes to help organize data needed by the teams.

Figure III.1. Improvement Team members



Selection of fathers and paternal relatives for Improvement Teams

Although the BSC team suggested that the Improvement Teams should include one or two fathers or paternal relatives previously involved with the child welfare agency, only three Improvement Teams identified and recruited a father or paternal relative to join their team at the start of the BSC. Three fathers and paternal relatives participated on three Improvement Teams. The teams that initially included fathers or paternal relatives selected those with formal roles in the agency, whether through employment or existing community partnerships.

Selection of community partners for Improvement Teams

Because a great deal of child welfare work is carried out in partnership with many other service systems, the BSC team advised the sites to include community partners. The Improvement Teams sought to engage a wide array of community partners to help push the work forward and outward into the community. Some Improvement Teams described their selection process for community partners, which included inviting partners who were long-time collaborators or played a central role in child welfare cases. For example, three Improvement Teams invited their existing community partners to join the Improvement Team. The teams enjoyed long working relationships with these partners on agency efforts to engage fathers.

Demographics and composition of Improvement Teams

Throughout the BSC, most Improvement Teams remained stable, with only a few shifts in response to turnover, changes in roles, or expansion of the team. In Table III.2, we describe the demographics and composition of Improvement Team members across all six teams at the start of the BSC. Most team members had completed some graduate work or held a master's degree (55 percent) and were non-

Hispanic or Latino (81 percent). Half were Black or African American (50 percent), and just over 40 percent were White (42 percent). The Improvement Teams were primarily composed of supervisors, program directors, and caseworkers. Improvement Team members reported that they were in their current position for an average of 6 years and said they had been promoting father and paternal relative engagement for an average of 11 years.

Table III.2. Demographics and composition of Improvement Team members

	Proportion (percent)	Number of responses
Gender (n = 57)		
Male	40	23
Female	60	34
Education (n = 56)		
High school or GED	2	1
Some college or associate's degree	4	2
Bachelor's degree	34	19
Some graduate work or master's degree	55	31
Postgraduate, post-master's degree work (no doctorate)	2	1
Doctorate (EdD or PhD)	4	2
Ethnicity (n = 54)		
Hispanic or Latino	19	10
Non-Hispanic or Latino	81	44
Race (n = 52)		
Black or African American	50	26
White	42	22
Asian	2	1
American Indian or Alaska Native	4	2
More than one race	2	1
Role in agency or organization (n = 57)		
Caseworker/case manager	16	9
Supervisor	23	13
Program director	18	10
Agency director	11	6
Staff in a special program (parent support or reunification services)	9	5
Community partner	9	5
Other	16	9
Average number of years in current position (n = 55)	6	n.a.
Average number of years promoting father and paternal relative engagement (n = 55)	11	n.a.

Source: Implementation assessment data (Baseline).

Note: N = 57 total respondents. Percentages may total to more than 100 percent because of rounding. Other roles in agency or organization included quality improvement, management analyst, program manager, assistant division director, regional administrator, program coordinator. Improvement Teams drew on staff in special programs, community partnerships, and other roles to add fathers' and paternal relatives' perspectives to their work in the BSC.

n.a. = not applicable.

IV. IMPLEMENTING THE FIVE ELEMENTS OF THE BSC

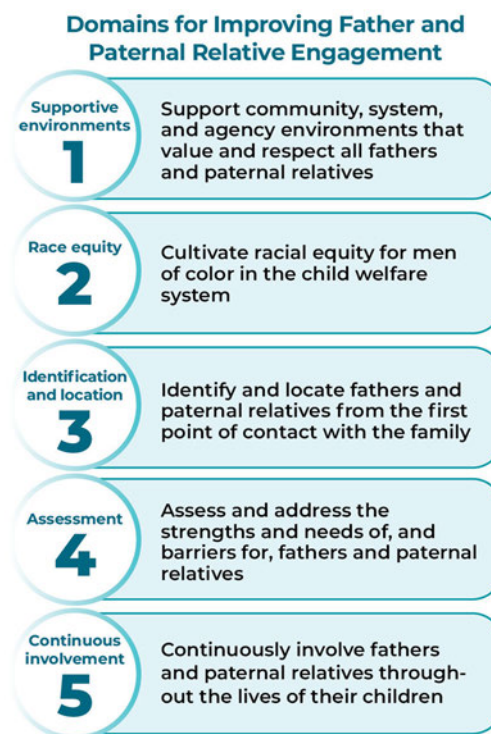
A. Overview and summary of key findings

In this chapter, we describe the implementation of the five elements of the BSC. Recognizing that individual sites and the Improvement Teams are unique in context and configuration and that the BSC is designed to be a collaboration, we report on the whole group of Improvement Teams implementing the BSC and do not focus on individual teams.

The high-level findings are:

1. Collaborative Change Framework domains successfully framed and organized the Improvement Teams' approaches to engaging fathers and paternal relatives. At first, the Improvement Teams selected strategies based on their areas of strength and interests and aligned these strategies with the domains of the CCF. Later, they sought to address gaps or needs based on CCF domains.
2. The Improvement Teams facilitated the BSC at each site, and team members were valued for their capacity to represent a wide variety of roles inside and outside the agency, to empower and support staff in engaging fathers and paternal relatives, and to serve as natural leaders.
3. Shared learning opportunities, particularly the learning sessions, gave the Improvement Teams protected time to focus on the issue of engaging fathers and paternal relatives and to learn from other sites. Participants would have liked even more time in learning sessions because there was so much to learn and so many activities.
4. Faculty Coaches were appreciated for the expertise they brought to the BSC, but the Improvement Teams wished that they had more team-specific opportunities to work with the coaches.
5. The Model for Improvement, which includes the PDSAs or small tests of change, was instrumental in helping the Improvement Teams break large, complicated efforts into manageable steps. The Improvement Teams reported, however, that it was not easy to collect metrics and data for PDSAs. They worked to improve their data collection and said it improved over time.

Figure IV.1. Collaborative Change Framework: Domains for improving father and paternal relative engagement



B. Collaborative Change Framework

The CCF helped the Improvement Teams frame and organize their approach to engaging fathers and paternal relatives. The Improvement Teams primarily understood the CCF in terms of the five domains of the model. Although the teams were introduced to the full CCF at the start of the project as well as to the other elements of the framework (such as the goals and strategies that provided the structure for other elements of the BSC), the domains figured most prominently in guiding the work of the Improvement Teams. In Figure IV.1, we present the domains. The Improvement Teams found that the CCF was relevant and broad enough to cover the range of work they were pursuing to engage fathers and paternal relatives. The CCF also challenged Improvement Teams to make a critical examination of their strengths and weaknesses.

“[The domains] really encompass a lot of the different areas that are important to engaging fathers and paternal relatives. I feel like almost everything falls under one of those umbrellas.”

– Frontline staff

The Improvement Teams’ prioritization of domains shifted from areas of strength and interest at the start of the BSC to an increasing focus on gaps and needs. Almost all the Improvement Teams began by looking for “quick wins,” existing strategies they could build on, areas of interest, or areas where they thought engagement strategies were more feasible. After the Improvement Teams selected strategies, they organized them to fit the CCF domains instead of selecting domains first and then shaping the chosen strategies to fit them. As a result, some of the domains did not have corresponding strategies. A complete list of the strategies considered by Improvement Teams appears in Appendix C.

“From the very first brainstorming session that we had, when we started with the PDSAs, we wanted to find ones that were quick wins to make some good change. . . .”

– Senior leader

Later in the BSC, other factors influenced the focus of teams’ work. For example, at Learning Session 2, the Improvement Teams were encouraged to do more work addressing race equity (Domain 2) because no PDSAs had been tested under this domain. A Faculty Coach led a particularly engaging session on the topic. Still, by June 2020, only two Improvement Teams had entered PDSAs for Domain 2. The Improvement Teams were unsure how to address large systemic challenges, such as race equity. At this point in their participation in the BSC, the teams said they needed more time, more supports such as training and consultation, and greater buy-in from the child welfare system to address racial inequities in child welfare.

The BSC site self-assessment tool, which helped teams reflect on their current engagement of fathers and paternal relatives across the five CCF domains, enhanced CCF implementation for a few Improvement Teams by identifying gaps and needs that inspired more PDSAs under domains that were not previously addressed. A copy of the instrument appears in Appendix D. Two Improvement Teams noted that they needed more guidance on how to begin system and policy change. Other processes and input that shifted prioritized domains over time included input from fathers, affinity group calls or ideas from other

Improvement Teams, and brainstorming with stakeholders outside the Improvement Team, such as child welfare staff and community partners.

C. Improvement Teams

Composition

The Improvement Teams were made up of 7 to 14 people selected by the site to lead the BSC work at each agency. The Improvement Teams included a mix of administrators, managers, supervisors, child welfare caseworkers, community partners, and fathers and paternal relatives. Improvement Team members reported favorably about their participation on the teams, and many said that their overall success was linked to the personalities, relationships, and experiences of individuals who represented the community. A perceived strength of the teams was their ability to work collaboratively, which was connected to their efforts to leave titles “at the door.” Consequently, they believed that they had developed deeper personal and working relationships with other team members.

Valuable member qualities

The Improvement Teams identified general qualities of members that were important to the success of the teams. They valued members who were already involved in fatherhood initiatives at their agency or organization—whether that involvement took the form of operating fatherhood programs, providing community supports to fathers, or working on the front lines to engage fathers and paternal relatives. They also appreciated natural leaders in a variety of roles who could spread the work and foster buy-in with system partners. The Improvement Teams that did not initially include a diverse mix of roles said that, as they became clearer about their work for the BSC, they tried to expand the diversity of roles within their Improvement Team.

Community partners

Community partners were important members of the Improvement Teams. The number and types of partners engaged by sites (beyond those participating on the Improvement Team) varied considerably. Partners brought unique perspectives and connections to the community outside the child welfare agency. Improvement Team members included partners representing the courts, child support, adult assistance, clinical services, community activist groups, medical professionals, and fatherhood initiatives.

Community partners engaged by sites included courts and the larger judicial system, jails, churches, fatherhood programs, child support, family resource centers, adult assistance, mental health and clinical services, and, in one case, a university.

“We built a brotherhood that went way beyond the department. It became a personal “men taking care of men” situation, and our brotherhood is an unbreakable bond. And that brotherhood definitely came through as a result of the Improvement Team.”

– Community partner

Both community partners and agency employees said that these partnerships were beneficial to the child welfare agency because they helped the community form a more positive impression of the child welfare agency. Community partners provided opportunities to engage fathers through a variety of venues outside the child welfare agency, such as “men only” meetings and community celebrations. Community partners likewise found that working with the child welfare agency helped them develop relationships, gave them access to resources like training, and afforded them an

opportunity to work with decision makers. To raise awareness and better engage with the community, some Improvement Teams expressed a desire for more system partners to join their team, such as the courts, housing services, financial services, schools, contract agencies, and physicians.

Fathers and paternal relatives

At the time of the site visits, four Improvement Teams included at least one father or paternal relative, whereas two teams had no actively participating fathers or paternal relatives. One of the latter Improvement Teams wanted to recruit a father or paternal relative who was not an employee of the agency, whereas the other was still working to identify a father or paternal relative. Some Improvement Teams also emphasized the need to find fathers or paternal relatives earlier in the BSC and suggested that the BSC should require membership of a father or paternal relative on the Improvement Teams. For some teams, it was difficult to recruit a father or paternal relative because of the fathers’ family obligations, schedules, or negative experiences with the child welfare agency. The fathers and paternal relatives who were consistently involved with the Improvement Teams had more official roles within the agency as employees or community partners, whereas those not in such roles were less likely to participate consistently or often. Participating fathers and paternal relatives who were able to attend a learning session said that they felt valued and supported by the Improvement Team. During site visits, two of the fathers and paternal relatives said they were not very engaged with the BSC. Though they were generally positive about the work and the project’s potential, they did not yet have enough contact or experience to describe their role on the Improvement Team.

D. Shared Learning Environment

The Shared Learning Environment, a key element of participation in a BSC, was an opportunity for the Improvement Teams to exchange ideas and supports across sites. The FCL Shared Learning Environment included in-person learning sessions, a virtual booster session, all-team and affinity group calls, and an online learning community. Table IV.1 shows the schedule of activities that Improvement Teams participated in.

Table IV.1. Schedule of Shared Learning Environment activities

Activity	Action Period ^a				Action Period 2 ^a				
	10/2019	11/2019	12/2019	1/2020	2/2020	3/2020	4/2020	5/2020	6/2020
Learning session	X				X				
Virtual booster session ^b									X
All-team calls		X	X	X		X	X	X	
Affinity group calls	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Online learning community	Accessed as needed across all months of the pilot study								

^a Action Periods are the months between the learning sessions in which Improvement Teams are testing and tracking small tests of change.

^b The virtual booster session was added when the third learning session was postponed in response to the COVID-19 public health emergency.

Overall, Improvement Team members were positive in describing the Shared Learning Environment. Opportunities to access the knowledge and experience of other Improvement Teams resulted in the teams “shamelessly stealing” strategies and brainstorming their own small tests of change. The exchange and development of ideas across teams is a key function of the Shared Learning Environment in a BSC. Improvement Team members highlighted the ideas they gained from other teams, including adapting forms for better tracking of fathers’ involvement and implementing worker recognition strategies. Several Improvement Team members noted that discussing challenges other teams faced in improving father and paternal relative engagement validated the experiences of their own Improvement Team.

“So to hear that [there are] these types of problems everywhere else, it’s kind of like an eye-opener. We do need people to stand up for fathers [who] don’t have voices or guide them or train them to have a voice of their own.”

– Father or paternal relative

Learning sessions

Learning sessions were opportunities for Improvement Teams to learn about the BSC methodology while focusing on their work to engage fathers and paternal relatives. Improvement Teams gave and received mutual support and feedback from experts in father and paternal relative engagement and their colleagues in child welfare. An overview of the learning session activities is in Appendix A.

- **Learning Session 1** introduced Improvement Teams to the BSC methodology through didactic and interactive approaches. Use of the site self-assessment in the session encouraged self-reflection on each team’s current level of father and paternal relative engagement through discussions about the teams’ engagement of fathers and paternal relatives across the five CCF domains. Learning Session 1 also offered an opportunity to build a culture of information exchange across the Improvement Teams and strengthen relationships within each team. The individual Improvement Teams swapped ideas for PDSAs or small tests of change that they planned to test once they returned to their site.
- **Learning Session 2** gave the Improvement Teams more nuanced information about the BSC methodology, how to use metrics, and how to spread and sustain strategies over time. The Improvement Teams exchanged lessons they learned from implementing different engagement strategies since the first learning session. They also highlighted specific strategies that they considered promising. The second learning session also emphasized the lack of PDSAs related to race equity (Domain 2) and the need to develop more.
- The three-hour **virtual booster session** was designed to maintain momentum and connection between Improvement Teams when Learning Session 3 was delayed in response to the COVID-19 public health emergency. As with the learning sessions, teams exchanged lessons learned about engagement strategies, but the session focused on information and activities related to bundling strategies. Bundling strategies is an approach designed to help the Improvement Teams connect discrete strategies to support the sustainability of the whole bundle of strategies, and not the separate efforts.

“Once again, I believe the most rewarding part was meeting the individuals from the other parts of the country. . . . We’ve become friends, and we’re all doing the same job, and we all have the same objective in mind. And that’s to serve our fathers, and serve them in a way they have not been served in the past.”

– Father or paternal relative

“It’s become like a little family, and everyone is excited to hear from each other. Just getting the different ideas about different people about what they have going on in their community.”

– Father or paternal relative

“It’s what I really appreciate about the learning sessions. Even though they’re so fast-paced, it’s great to be in a room with like-minded people and to just have space to kind of think through.”

– Senior leader

“I come away from those learning sessions feeling proud of the work we’re doing. Some of the other jurisdictions have some cool ways of looking at their work that I really appreciated.”

– Frontline staff

After each learning session, participants shared anonymous feedback about their experience during each learning session activity and about the quality of the session as a whole. A detailed summary of feedback for each learning session appears in Appendix B. Although participants noted some suggestions for improvement, they were enthusiastic about the sessions overall.

Participants said that the sessions provided valuable opportunities to connect with other Improvement Teams and gave them protected time to work on father and paternal relative engagement away from their daily responsibilities. Participants characterized Learning Sessions 1 and 2 as “welcoming, energizing, enjoyable, inspiring, and idea generating.” Improvement Teams described the sessions as engaging opportunities to learn from “like-minded people.” They said working

with other Improvement Teams committed to the common goal of engaging fathers and paternal relatives in child welfare was a highlight of the project.

In evaluations of Learning Session 1, Improvement Teams appreciated the opportunity to connect with other professionals who share the same passion. The participants highlighted the Gallery Walk as an opportunity to engage with other Improvement Teams. In this activity, one or two team members presented their storyboards (visual representations of their team) as the other team members walked around and looked at the other teams’ presentations. Team members read other Improvement Teams’ storyboards, asked questions, and networked with members of other teams. Several participants noted that the Gallery Walk in particular provided time for sites to network while learning about the differences between the Improvement Teams, such as populations served and agency administration, as well as for discovering the shared challenges and missions across teams. More information about the Gallery Walk and other learning session activities appears in Appendix A.

Participants highlighted the value of the content on racial equity in Learning Session 2 and the Faculty Coach’s effective delivery. Participants also said that they were impressed with the progress made by each Improvement Team between the learning sessions, including their own team’s achievements. Participants had similarly positive feedback about the virtual booster session, noting their appreciation for the opportunity to reconnect with other Improvement Teams, hear about each team’s progress, and become “re-energized” about their work.

“[One Faculty Coach] came at it [the topic of racial equity] in a completely different way, I don’t know how many sessions I’ve attended on that over the years and I’ll just tell you, his was an eye-opener.”

– Community partner

Participants shared some consistent suggestions for improving the learning sessions and the virtual booster session. They wanted longer learning sessions and, in particular, more time for small-group activities such as breakout sessions and opportunities to work with their own Improvement Teams. A few teams also talked about the challenge of required travel and time away from their work.

Participants offered suggestions for improvement specific to each session. Comments from the participants included the following:

- Learning Session 1: The amount of information presented was overwhelming. The session would have benefited from more guidance from the BSC team and Faculty Coaches, specifically related to PDSAs.
- Learning Session 2: The learning sessions should include more fathers and paternal relatives. This suggested improvement reflected the challenges reported by teams in identifying and recruiting a father or paternal relative to join the Improvement Teams.
- Virtual booster session: More guidance was needed about the goals of the session and how to prepare for its activities before the session.

In the absence of data collected to compare specifically the in-person learning sessions to the virtual booster session, participants expressed a preference for in-person learning sessions and a desire for more time in learning sessions overall. The virtual booster session required a shorter format.

Group meetings

Overview. Group meetings are an important piece of the BSC's Shared Learning Environment. The group meetings include monthly all-team calls with Improvement Team members and, sometimes, additional site staff as well as monthly affinity group calls. The affinity group calls, led by Faculty Coaches, grouped Improvement Team members according to similarity of team roles. At the outset of the BSC, the affinity groups were for senior leaders, team managers, frontline staff, community partners, and fathers and paternal relatives. During group meetings, Improvement Team members discussed challenges, worked through similar issues, and supported each other.

Group meeting strengths. The greatest strengths of the group meetings, according to Improvement Team members, were the encouragement to continue BSC work and the opportunities to build relationships with and learn from other Improvement Team members and Faculty Coaches. Team members enjoyed talking with people in similar roles who were engaged in father and paternal relative engagement work and shared similar successes and struggles. Others highlighted the role of the meetings as a helpful counterbalance to the typical focus on mothers in child welfare. In particular, two Improvement Teams highlighted group meetings as an opportunity to learn more about and improve efforts on race equity (Domain 2).

Some participants highlighted the importance of receiving support during the COVID-19 public health emergency by sharing ideas about how to support fathers virtually. Sites shifted in-person parent-child visitations to virtual ones and reported an increase in parents' attendance. They discussed reliance on virtual visitations in the future if fathers and paternal relatives face transportation problems.

Overall, the participants were satisfied with the group meetings, although experiences varied with the meeting was being assessed. Effective group meetings were described as well organized, with up-to-date information.

Group meeting challenges. Most of the reported challenges of group meetings were specific to the affinity group calls. Participants thought that some affinity groups could be improved by sharpening the focus on the topics of interest to the group or on topics in need of deeper discussion. After the first learning session, participants said that the affinity group for frontline staff was too large. To sharpen the

group's focus, the group split into two smaller groups: one for supervisors and one for other frontline staff.

Other challenges described by participants involved the content of the meetings and participation. Some calls were described as “just reporting out” or restating what was already shared in other meetings. In the spirit of the Shared Learning Environment, some participants also wanted more time to hear directly from other participants about their experiences and priorities. Improvement Team members wanted different membership constellations in the group meetings, such as including fathers and paternal relatives in other affinity groups or having an administrator-only group.

“I’m not on the phone calls with the dads, and for me, the most impactful thing is hearing from the dads. I don’t get to do that on the phone calls.”

– Team manager

Other challenges mentioned less often included the lack of web cameras; poor engagement practices, such as participants working while listening; difficulty in knowing when to talk during a meeting; and poor flow of meeting structure. Many participants attributed these challenges to the nature of large-group calls or video meetings.

Online learning community

The online learning community, hosted on Microsoft SharePoint, offered Improvement Teams the opportunity to exchange ideas with other teams and post and review materials, like PDSAs and data. All Improvement Teams said their access to online information and resources was generally helpful. They appreciated the access to resources shared during learning sessions and the access to information about PDSAs made possible by other teams. One Improvement Team said the online learning community helped with accountability for developing PDSAs because each team could see what other Improvement Teams were testing and tracking.

The Improvement Teams provided mixed reviews on their perception of the ease of using the online resources, but most teams thought the site's functionality could have been better. The SharePoint site was described as difficult to navigate, awkward, unreliable, and not particularly user-friendly. One Improvement Team recommended more training or guidance on how to use the site to address some of these challenges. Others recommended adding elements like videos and tracking tools to the online learning community.

E. Faculty Coaches

Faculty Coaches are a key element of the Shared Learning Environment. They are supports and sources of expertise and leadership on affinity group calls, and they contribute to valuable learning session content. Teams generally described their interactions with Faculty Coaches favorably, but they provided limited feedback on how coaches were most helpful or what could be improved.

Although the Improvement Teams did not talk at length about the Faculty Coaches, they appreciated the coaches for their varied perspectives and backgrounds. Some Faculty Coaches with deep expertise in an area provided teams with additional information or connections to training and other opportunities. The Improvement Teams highlighted the value of some specific Faculty Coach-led activities during the learning sessions and praised the coaches' leadership in affinity group calls, saying they helped the teams stay focused and on track, assisted with PDSAs, and provided suggestions for training sessions, reports,

or other information. In particular, a Faculty Coach provided training and support on racial equity during Learning Session 2. The Improvement Teams characterized this coach’s contribution to the session as inspiring, an “eye-opener,” and helpful in guiding their racial equity work.

Two Improvement Teams said they wanted more time with the Faculty Coaches so they would become more comfortable leaning on them. Those two teams also wanted coaches to be more active participants in learning sessions and group meetings, to ask more questions, and to inspire more thought-provoking discussions.

F. Model for Improvement

Overview

The elements of the Model for Improvement (Figure IV.2) are designed to break large, complicated tasks into manageable steps and provide a framework to organize, track, and collaborate on work toward specified goals. The elements include the Improvement Team priorities or goals, the CCF domains, monthly metrics, and PDSA cycles. The priorities or goals selected by the Improvement Team guide application or implementation of the model. Different teams identified and worked toward different goals, and the goals that drove the work of each team changed over time. The goals were aligned with one or more domain in the CCF, and the monthly metrics tracked progress toward these goals.

Figure IV.2. The Model for Improvement



The Improvement Teams used PDSAs, or small tests of change, to develop father and paternal relative engagement strategies, formally track and collect data on the strategies, and determine whether the strategy was working, needed to be adjusted, or should be discontinued. Although data collected for PDSAs varied by the strategy tested and the amount of information available about implementation of the strategy, the metrics were quantitative indicators of father and paternal relative engagement for each Improvement Team. The process of developing metrics and the collection of data on metrics were designed to help the teams build the capacity to track indicators for their own use and document improvements over time.

Overall strengths and challenges

The Model for Improvement facilitated the work of the Improvement Teams in several ways. The strongest theme articulated by many of teams was that the model gave them permission and freedom to focus on their passions, think outside the box, and innovate. The Model for Improvement also helped the Improvement Teams break overwhelming goals into smaller, more feasible steps, with clear strategies and at a small scale that felt less intimidating and risky. The teams could “try something small and just see how it goes.”

“What this has created is the opportunity to try different things that maybe even frontline staff thought would be a great idea. . . .”

– Senior leader

“It almost created an internal [challenge] with everybody to make sure they were going to meet those metrics.”

– Senior leader

The Model for Improvement also enhanced accountability, which brought a process and purposefulness, a clear commitment, and focused leadership to the testing of strategies. Supervisors expected staff to report on their efforts to engage fathers and paternal relatives by checking in and reporting on performance. To that end, the Improvement Teams found it helpful to designate a

team member to track monthly metrics. The teams appreciated the help from Mathematica staff and agency staff who work in Quality Improvement in supporting the Improvement Teams’ work on the elements of the Model for Improvement. Teams also developed innovative approaches to collecting data. For example, one Improvement Team developed an Excel tool for tracking PDSA data, and another used Survey Monkey software to develop a system for tracking data on reunification with fathers.

Challenges to using the Model for Improvement included competing demands, staff shortages, and “initiative fatigue.” Some Improvement Teams described how communication also made it difficult to implement the Model for Improvement. For example, teams needed to balance the expectations communicated to them from the BSC team, and expectations coming from agency leaders. They also

“I look at all of our demands, and I’m thinking we could do 10 PDSAs for every one of these demands, but of course we don’t have the time and resources to do that.”

–Team manager

balanced sharing the appropriate amount of information about the BSC from the Improvement Team with other staff at the site. Teams wanted more clarity, consistency, training, and technical assistance. Information often “trickled down” from administrative levels or from the Improvement Team to other staff. In any event, the process for communicating information was not consistent and clear. In addition, the Improvement Teams wanted more information upfront from the BSC team about data collection requirements for the BSC process and more data-related support earlier in the BSC.

“How do we capture certain things? I know we’re doing a lot of work, but it’s difficult to track the qualitative work.”

– Team manager

Finally, some Improvement Teams talked about the difficulty involved in measuring some of the work they were doing within the Model for Improvement. Some outcomes targeted or observed by the Improvement Teams were qualitative in nature. For example, culture change and the creation of leaders or leadership teams is hard to measure or track. Moreover, the changes can take time—sometimes years—to produce real effects. The inability to track or see change frustrated some Improvement Team members.

Metrics framework and challenges

Metrics helped the Improvement Teams track and assess their progress in engaging fathers and paternal relatives in child welfare (Table IV.2). The BSC team asked Improvement Teams to collect and report metrics every month. Teams were given a broad framework within which to develop team-specific data collection strategies and select metrics. Each Improvement Team approached the measurement of metrics with a different array of available data. The instrument used to collect metrics from teams appears in Appendix D.

Identifying and collecting the data needed to implement the Model for Improvement presented some challenges. Some staff faced difficulties in figure out how to set up a data collection process. All Improvement Teams pointed to the time and burden involved in trying to collect, organize, and upload data. Many teams said that the extraction of data from existing data systems at their site posed challenges because of several uncoordinated and outdated data systems. They added that their data systems were not designed to collect data about fathers and could not be easily adapted to do so. One participant thought that the Improvement Team was just collecting the numbers and not analyzing the data.

Some Improvement Team members were surprised by the pushback or lack of buy-in they sometimes faced when they tried to involve other staff and teams in the data collection effort. Some Improvement Teams did not designate a person to lead the data-related work and instead relied on staff outside the Improvement Team to access and use data. This approach proved to be difficult because often these other staff had no commitment to the Improvement Team. In some cases, those outside the Improvement Team did not understand why the data were needed.

“It is not because [the project] is giving us money, so now we have to do this survey. It’s that we’re working to do a better job engaging fathers and we’re utilizing this survey in order to track our efficacy in that area. . . .”

–Supervisor

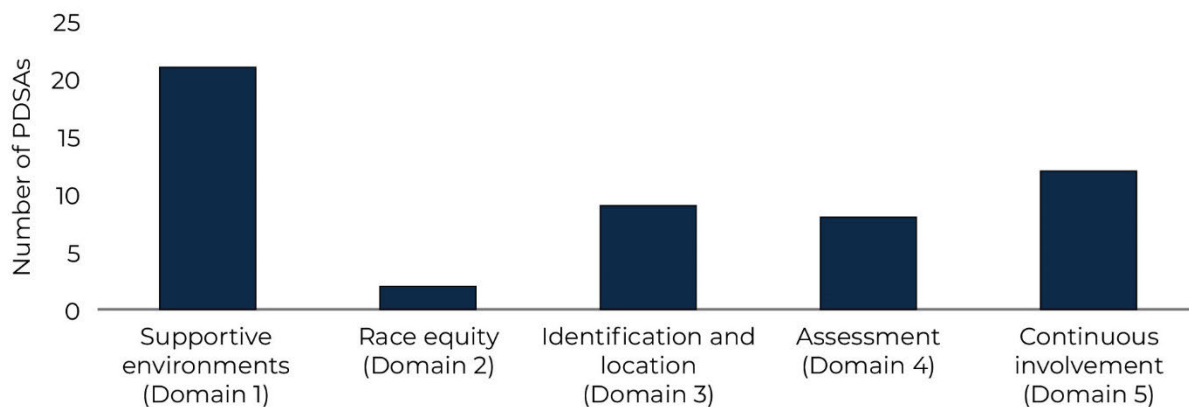
Table IV.2. Measures and metrics collected in at least one site

Measures	Metrics
1. Initial identification of the father	1a. Initial request to identify the father in an investigation 1b. Initial identification of the father at point of first contact
2. Identification of the father by additional agencies or sources when the father was not previously identified	2. At least one attempt to reach out to additional agencies or sources to identify fathers
3. Placement notification and options	3a. Notifying the father of new placements 3b. Documented reason for father not being a viable placement option
4. Family meetings with fathers and paternal relatives	4a. Invitation of fathers and paternal relatives to the family team meeting 4b. Participation of fathers and paternal relatives in the family team meeting
5. Inclusion of fathers and paternal relatives in case plans	5a. Input from fathers and paternal relatives in case planning 5b. Needs of fathers and paternal relatives met by services in case plans 5c. Receipt of needed services by fathers or paternal relatives 5d. Perception of needs met (optional) by fathers or paternal relatives
6. Visitation with fathers and paternal relatives	6. Visitation and contact with fathers and paternal relatives
7. Reunification	7. Reunification with fathers or paternal relatives

PDSAs or small tests of change

Improvement Teams were asked to update their PDSAs continuously during the BSC, including uploading new PDSAs and updating existing ones on the SharePoint site. By June 2020, the Improvement Teams had conducted or were in the process of conducting 52 PDSAs. Figure IV.3 shows the distribution of PDSAs across the domains.

Figure IV.3. Number of strategies tested in each domain



Note: N = 52. Two domains were assigned to strategies when the Improvement Teams did not select one.

Of all the PDSAs, 4 had been discontinued, 4 had been fully implemented, and 48 were in progress. In-progress strategies continue to undergo testing and improvement. Improvement Team members and other agency staff were regularly using fully implemented strategies. The Improvement Teams discontinued strategies that required too much time to implement or did not succeed in engaging fathers and paternal relatives. Table IV.3 describes the variety of PDSAs that Improvement Teams conducted by focus, domain, and status. Appendix C describes all strategies tested through PDSAs.

Table IV.3. Examples of PDSAs tested by Improvement Teams, organized by domain

Domain ¹	PDSA focus ²	PDSA name and objective
Supportive environments (Domain 1)	Father and paternal relative engagement in case planning	Father and Paternal Relative Engagement Survey: To create a father and paternal relative survey to support engagement of fathers and paternal relatives in service plans
Supportive environments (Domain 1)	Fatherhood conference	Fatherhood Leadership Conference: To host a Fatherhood Leadership Conference that raises awareness about the value of father and paternal relative engagement to other agencies and the community
Supportive environments (Domain 1)	Improved father search efforts	Locate Tools: To identify and gain access to additional resources and systems to facilitate locating fathers and paternal relatives
Supportive environments (Domain 1)	Including father and paternal relative engagement in discussions with staff	Where Is the Value?: To increase level of engagement with fathers and paternal relatives by incorporating father and paternal relative engagement as an agenda item in weekly supervisory meetings with staff
Supportive environments (Domain 1)	Staff recognition	Father Strong Achievement Award: To acknowledge staff who receive positive feedback on a family survey that collects data about what is working, what needs to be improved, and who had a positive impact on fathers
Supportive environments (Domain 1)	Community partner engagement	Father Engagement Community Collaborative: To develop a collaborative of community agencies to enhance institutional practices of engaging fathers across multiple disciplines
Race equity (Domain 2)	Staff bias awareness	Implicit Bias Assessments: To increase awareness around personal biases by having staff complete implicit bias assessments
Identification and location (Domain 3)	Intentional father outreach	Genetic Marker Testing–Father Engagement: To provide putative fathers with immediate access to information, resources, referrals, and peer-to-peer support
Assessment (Domain 4)	Paternal relative outreach/engagement	Family Tree: To use Family Tree, the agency’s kinship caretaker/relative contractor, to identify fathers, engage them, and learn about the types of support the father needs to participate in family meetings
Assessment (Domain 4)	Data to monitor and assess targeted outcomes	Fathering After Violence: To implement the Fathering After Violence approach with fathers who have a history of domestic violence to increase father empathy and measure changes in scores on the North Carolina Family Assessment Scales

Domain ¹	PDSA focus ²	PDSA name and objective
Continuous involvement (Domain 5)	Father mentors	Father Mentor: To establish a father mentorship program by identifying and contracting with fathers who previously went through the child welfare system and are willing to mentor fathers currently in the system
Continuous involvement (Domain 5)	Father and paternal relative identification form	Father/Paternal Relative Inclusion Form: To draft a form to be completed by social workers that asks intentional questions about the identification and inclusion of father and paternal relatives in the case plan
Continuous involvement (Domain 5)	Inclusivity efforts	Find Your Happy Place: To assess the father's and child's baseline comfort with current visitations in the agency's office, get ideas for alternative settings and activities for future visitations from the father and child, implement and test the impact of the suggested settings and activities, and measure their comfort afterward

Note: Data as of June 30, 2020.

¹ Domains were assigned to the Improvement Teams that did not select one.

² Foci of each PDSA are not mutually exclusive. Strategies with more than one focus are included in each count for the focus category. As a result, the sum of the counts may be higher than the total number of strategies tested by the Improvement Teams.

At the time site visits were conducted, sites were 7 months into an 18-month BSC, and many PDSAs were still in progress. Improvement Team members said that they initially selected PDSAs or small tests of change to reflect their expertise, roles, and interests and then mapped the tests back to the corresponding domains. The Improvement Teams said that the domains of the PDSAs they tested often overlapped with other domains. For example, one team considered the bias awareness training it tested as addressing the domain on race equity (Domain 2), whereas another team conducted bias awareness training in the domain focused on continuous involvement (Domain 5).

“With judicial, we’re able to share more research and information to express why fathers are important, and I think advocate a little bit more and maybe be pushier in court, making sure that we’re bringing the dads to the table.”

– Senior leader

“My personal opinion is that they are all relevant, but Domain 2 [Race equity] is probably the one. . . we feel the most challenge with. . . because it feels like there is so much that is outside of our control. It is so systemic that it’s frustrating coming up with something that would make real change from our involvement.”

– Team manager

PDSAs and the data they produced helped Improvement Teams collaborate with child welfare staff, families, and system partners such as the courts to engage fathers and paternal relatives. The PDSAs also provided a tool through which the teams could put words into action. In addition, the data from PDSAs helped the Improvement Teams decide which practices to discontinue and which to disseminate. Other, less commonly reported benefits of the PDSAs included an improvement in supervisory practices, an increased focus on outcomes, and strategies for soliciting feedback from fathers. Although teams were

generally positive about their progress on PDSAs, two participants were disheartened by the lack of PDSAs focused on race equity (Domain 2).

G. Conclusion

Overall, the data collected in the pilot study suggest that the five key elements of the BSC successfully guided the work of the Improvement Teams. The CCF gave the teams a useful framework to organize, describe, and eventually direct the strategies they were testing. The PDSAs or small tests of change helped break the framework down into manageable and actionable steps. The Improvement Teams were well suited to engage in the BSC, and they attributed their success to the diverse perspectives, passion, commitment, and leadership of the Improvement Team members. The Improvement Teams truly valued the learning sessions and virtual booster session for their protected time and the opportunities to share lessons learned. They also valued the group meetings but said that the meetings could have focused more sharply on topics of interest and could have allocated more time to the exchange of information between teams. Faculty Coaches played a key role in sharing their expertise. The most challenging element for the Improvement Teams was the use of data to support the Model for Improvement. Although the teams were able to improve their data processes over time, the data element required more time and support than other BSC elements did.

V. CHANGES IN THE ENGAGEMENT OF FATHERS AND PATERNAL RELATIVES

Over the course of the pilot study, the Improvement Teams began to see a variety of changes in the level of engagement from fathers and paternal relatives. They observed changes in their site's increasing knowledge about and use of purposeful approaches to engaging fathers and paternal relatives, the tools and processes used to collect data and metrics from testing strategies, and shifts in perspectives in their Improvement Team and colleagues. Changes could reflect both the perception of improvement and/or a deeper understanding of the challenges in a domain. In this chapter, we describe the changes observed by teams.

A. Overall changes

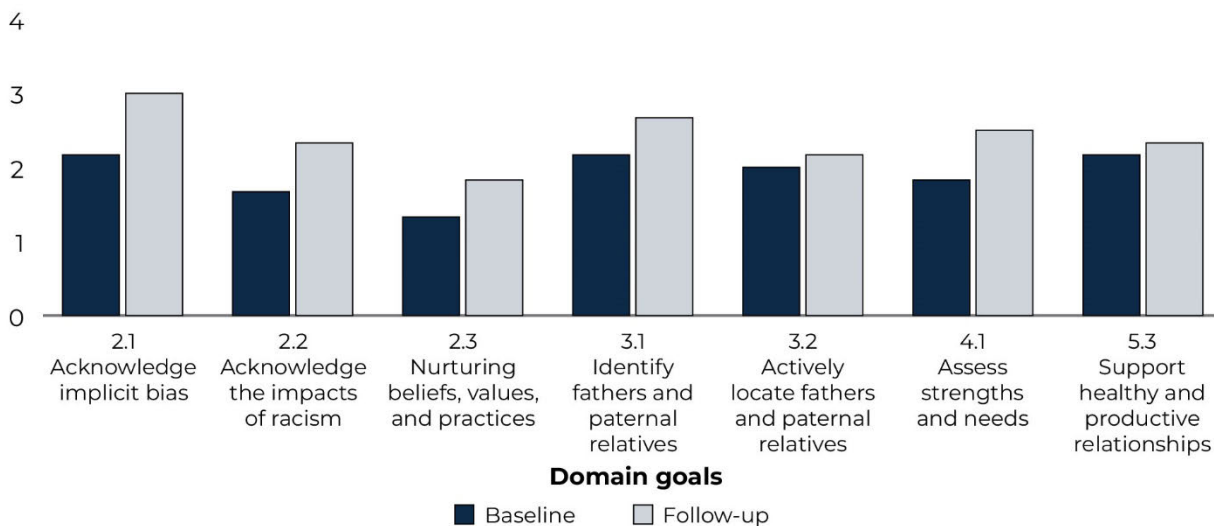
The Mathematica/DU team used (1) the site self-assessment to measure each site's work toward the goals in each domain of the CCF and (2) the implementation assessment to understand how each Improvement Team member rated their confidence in engaging fathers and paternal relatives. The instruments for the site self-assessment and the implementation assessment appear in Appendix D.

Site self-assessment

During Learning Session 1, the Improvement Teams used the site self-assessment to report their site's current level of engagement among fathers and paternal relatives based on the domains in the CCF. They also gave their rating for goals in each domain. At baseline, the Improvement Teams rated their sites as challenged or somewhat challenged by the engagement goals outlined in the domains focused on race equity (Domain 2) and assessment (Domains 4). In particular, the domains specified goals focused on nurturing beliefs, values, and practices about fathers and paternal relatives (Goal 2.3) and identifying barriers to engaging them (Goal 4.2). The Improvement Teams rated their sites as relatively high on domains focused on supportive environments (Domains 1), identification and location (Domain 3), and continuous involvement (Domain 5).

The Improvement Teams completed a second site self-assessment during Learning Session 2. At follow-up, ratings for two Improvement Teams stayed the same across time, and four teams changed their ratings. One Improvement Team gave itself higher ratings across all domains. Another reported an increase in the domain focused on assessment (Domain 4). The ratings for a third team increased across all five domains, but the ratings for some goals and change concepts in a given domain stayed the same. Finally, one Improvement Team reported increases across all domains but indicated lower ratings for goals and change concepts in the domains focused on identification and location (Domain 3) and assessment. In Figure V.1, we present seven examples of goals that changed the most and the least across the sites between baseline and follow-up.

Figure V.1. Examples of changes in average goal ratings across all Improvement Teams



Source: Site-self assessment data.

Note: Improvement Teams rated their sites on a scale of 1 through 4: 1 = practice seriously challenged, or no strategies developed; 2 = practice somewhat challenged, or strategies untested; 3 = practice shows strengths, or strategies are being tested; 4 = practice very strong; strategies well developed and tested.

Given that the Improvement Teams were only six months into the BSC and engagement strategies were just starting to be implemented, we did not expect significant overall improvements were not expected at this early stage. In some cases, ratings declined, probably because teams increased their understanding of the challenges associated with engaging fathers and paternal relatives.

Implementation assessment

At the start of their participation in the BSC, Improvement Team members completed an implementation assessment in which they indicated their confidence level on certain aspects of engaging fathers and paternal relatives. They completed the assessment at two points: (1) during baseline, after the first learning session they attended (typically November 2020); and (2) at follow-up, in July 2020, about 12 months into the BSC. Improvement Team members rated their confidence along a scale with a rating of 1 meaning “not at all confident” and a rating of 10 meaning “extremely confident.” Examples of items rated by the teams included “my ability to express positive beliefs and attitudes when engaging fathers and paternal relatives” and “my ability to assess and address the barriers that fathers and paternal relatives face that could impact their ability to safely care for their children.”

At baseline, Improvement Team members were confident in their abilities to engage fathers and paternal relatives, rating themselves on average 7 or higher on the 10-point implementation assessment scale. During the follow-up, team members rated themselves higher than they had before—on average 8 or above. In some cases, average ratings for particular aspects of engagement marginally decreased, namely, those focused on expressing positive beliefs and attitudes when engaging fathers and paternal relatives, engaging fathers and paternal relatives from varying backgrounds, developing positive working relationships with fathers and paternal relatives, and understanding the importance of cultivating racial equity for men of color.

The decreases in average ratings could be because the number and array of Improvement Team members who worked on a follow-up assessment changed, or some team members transitioned away from the Improvement Team. Changes might also reflect that the knowledge team members gained as a result of participating in the BSC could have made them more critical of their abilities to engage fathers and paternal relatives.

B. Team improvements

All Improvement Teams reported that they saw an increase in engagement among fathers and paternal relatives compared to the situation before the BSC started. In some cases, Improvement Teams cautioned that it was too early to see changes because site visits were conducted 7 months into the 18-month BSC. The subsequent descriptive evaluation will be based on 15 months of data collection, offering a better opportunity to capture changes in how well sites engage fathers and paternal relatives. However, many teams described improvements in their efforts to engage fathers, including engaging paternal relatives, engaging community partners, and evaluating their engagement work.

Intentionality of engaging fathers and paternal relatives

Some Improvement Teams said they had a greater awareness of and intentionality about engaging fathers and paternal relatives. They reported a resulting increase in the number of fathers who were located, contacted, appeared in court, and referred to services and/or reunified with their children. For example, one team noted an increase in the number of fathers who were participating in visits with their children without the mother present. Because of the engagement, the Improvement Teams said fathers seemed empowered, were increasingly advocating for themselves and other fathers, and there were increases in referrals to father engagement or father-specific services.

“Looking at all of our data and . . . at the progress that we’ve had since October, actually seeing the numbers for me was [eye-opening]. Seeing how many kids we’ve returned home to their dads.”

– Frontline staff

Improvement Teams shared that they were being more intentional about locating and engaging paternal relatives. They said they had focused on identifying the father before, but the BSC sharpened the focus on engaging paternal relatives as well. Teams saw an increase in conversations with staff about engaging paternal relatives, in addition to fathers. By engaging paternal relatives, staff learned that paternal relatives can also help locate fathers.

“I think this has made us really want to look for the paternal relatives.”

– Supervisor

Developing tools for data collection and tracking

Equipped with data, Improvement Teams were able to assess father and paternal relative engagement.

During site visits, the Improvement Teams reported that the BSC was improving the team’s capacity by identifying data sources and tracking metrics. Some teams began developing their own tools to track data,

“Once we looked at the data, we were doing a good job of contacting fathers and having them involved, and we didn’t realize that until we put together our metrics.”

– Team manager

such as an Excel file or an online survey. For one Improvement Team, data collection and tracking allowed the team to realize how successful it had been in contacting and engaging fathers. Other teams talked about the value of opportunities to meet with staff members who work with the site's data system or continuous quality improvement processes. Some teams were able to recruit these staff members to join their Improvement Teams.

Opportunities to work with staff familiar with data systems helped the Improvement Teams learn what kinds of data were collected and stored in their data systems. Because data can help the teams determine if their strategies are changing father and paternal relative engagement, teams were working on the metrics that they can continue tracking over time and that are most salient for their work.

No Improvement Team was able to track all possible metrics during every month of the pilot study, even though this was a goal of the BSC. Nonetheless, the teams' capacity to track different metrics had generally improved. Barriers to collecting and reporting metrics extended to outdated or difficult-to-access data systems, the lack of a team member or other support member with expertise in data systems, and the absence of existing data directly addressing FCL's targeted metrics.

Culture of the child welfare agency

All the Improvement Teams reported culture shifts, generally demonstrated by the focus on fathers and paternal relatives in a variety of contexts, processes, and conversations and reflected in strong and abiding leadership. Teams said that the BSC built on their existing work to engage fathers and helped keep fathers and paternal relatives at the forefront of conversations throughout the agency. Moreover, supervisors asked specifically about how staff members were engaging fathers and paternal relatives.

All the Improvement Teams said that they integrated conversations and questions about engaging fathers into standard practices: supervision, team meetings, family meetings, and casual office conversations.

With supervisors communicating to staff the expectation and value of engaging fathers and paternal relatives and the value of engaging them to staff, the Improvement Teams intentionally began asking questions specifically about staff members' efforts to engage fathers and paternal relatives. Eventually, staff came to expect these questions regularly from supervisors, indicating a shift in site culture to include fathers and paternal relatives more frequently.

“Talking about fathers is part of the conversation now, where it wasn't always before. Not only am I doing it, but people around me are starting to as well.”

– Team manager

“The more we talk about it, the more we message the value and importance of dads, that speaks to people. The more we encourage it and discuss it, the more it is on people's mind to pay attention and focus on. It's creating a cultural shift.”

– Supervisor

“It's not a question of if you've engaged fathers and paternal relatives, it's have you, and if you haven't, why haven't you?”

– Frontline staff

Almost all the Improvement Teams said they received more support from leaders and system partners, allowing them to engage fathers and paternal relatives and carry out their work more effectively. Because of their participation in the BSC, the Improvement Teams reported increases in buy-in, awareness of the value of fathers and father-focused work, and a more intentional or strategic focus as elements of this cultural shift. Teams also reported that the

BSC empowered them to educate community partners about the value of engaging fathers and paternal relatives. Two teams highlighted improvements by the courts and worked to share information and research with the courts about engaging fathers. For example, one team said that the court was becoming more aware of local fatherhood programs and was referring fathers to the programs more often. Another Improvement Team reported that the broader agency leadership was interested in learning more about the BSC methodology in order to use the approach in other departments that work with fathers.

Improvement Team members hoped that the shift in culture would move beyond the team, not only into the broader realm of child welfare staff members but also to the community and to system partners. Three Improvement Teams made plans to educate their partners by developing and sharing signs and posters about the value of fathers. For example, one team distributed posters and signs to schools, doctor's offices, churches, hospitals, and service agencies. Team members said that the materials helped them start a conversation with their partners about the value of fathers and establish a common vocabulary. As a result, the team started seeing more referrals from the courts to fatherhood programs. Other Improvement Teams also planned to share information with partners.

Even though they perceived improvements in father and paternal relative engagement as well as in the tools and processes they used to collect data, the Improvement Teams said they did not have enough data at the time of the site visits to demonstrate these changes objectively. They also thought they did not have measures in place to collect data on qualitative changes such as a shift in organizational culture. In addition, the Improvement Teams said that they were just beginning to engage with the many different elements of the BSC, so one or all of the strategies they were implementing could have contributed to the changes they began to see.

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VI. FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

The pilot study was designed to document (1) the implementation of a BSC and (2) how the Improvement Teams worked with system partners to plan, test, and adjust their engagement strategies. It also examined whether agencies could implement a BSC to strengthen the engagement of fathers and paternal relatives with their children who are involved in child welfare. In this chapter, we present key lessons learned about the resources that the Improvement Teams needed to participate in the BSC, their plans to continue the BSC, and implications for the subsequent FCL descriptive evaluation.

A. Resources needed to participate in the BSC

In general, Improvement Team members said that participating in the BSC was a time-intensive experience on top of already full workloads. Teams reported that they drew on the following resources to address this challenge and implement the BSC (Figure VI.1):

- **Commitment.** Almost every Improvement Team said that its commitment to engaging fathers and paternal relatives helped advance the BSC’s work. In addition, team members reported that they assigned a high priority to the BSC’s work. They said that their commitment to engaging fathers and paternal relatives and working with team members who were similarly committed to the effort helped them find the time for their BSC work.
- **Leadership.** Because the Improvement Teams had direct access to leaders who participated on the Improvement Teams, team members perceived that they were heard and supported when they raised challenges or concerns to leaders. Frontline staff reported that support from their supervisors helped them make time for BSC-related meetings and engagement strategies.

“I know that by being on this team, I can go all the way up to [the senior leader] who is the deputy chief, and I feel comfortable going up to her and saying I don’t like something happening or don’t feel right about something.”
– *Father or paternal relative*
- **Dedicated time.** The Improvement Teams said that learning sessions and group meetings, along with time devoted to meeting with their Improvement Team at their site, helped them engage in the work of the BSC. Dedicated time and regular meetings helped Improvement Team members focus on brainstorming and implementing strategies to engage fathers and paternal relatives.

“We still have a long way to go when it comes to attitudes towards fathers, especially in cases where we can see that dad may be the appropriate parent and that’s who we’re working towards. . . . We need a structure change and a shift change across the board. . . . I don’t think we give our dads enough credit, especially the ones who do engage and show up.”
– *Frontline staff*
- **Agency buy-in.** Improvement Team members said that it could be difficult to change father and paternal relative engagement without building buy-in within the agency about the value of engaging fathers and paternal relatives in addition to mothers and kin.

- Staff support.** Frontline and support staff members who were willing to implement engagement strategies and collect information on the outcomes of those strategies helped the Improvement Teams accomplish their BSC work. Some staff who did not participate on the Improvement Team took the initiative to develop and test their own engagement strategies. For some teams, staff in the data division of the agency helped the teams understand and analyze data collected from PDSAs. Future BSCs could require the Improvement Teams to include one member who is knowledgeable about data collection and analysis, affording staff valuable time that is now devoted to understanding the data collected by their current data systems.
- Guidance.** The Improvement Teams identified guidance that could have helped them implement the BSC more effectively. The teams desired more direct guidance at the outset of the BSC on (1) the value of including a father or paternal relative and more system partners on the teams, such as judges or staff from data divisions; (2) the level of effort required by the BSC; (3) how to describe the BSC to other agency staff; and (4) the metrics they were expected to collect for the BSC.

Figure VI.1. Key resources needed for BSC implementation



B. Continuing the BSC

The Improvement Teams plan to continue at least some of their BSC work after the BSC’s conclusion, with some elements more likely than others to be maintained over time. Teams also talked about remaining committed to engaging fathers and paternal relatives by continuing the promising engagement strategies developed during the BSC. Some thought that the shift in knowledge and awareness of father and paternal relative engagement that they achieved through the BSC would ensure the continuation of engagement after the BSC’s conclusion. With support from the BSC team, the Improvement Teams continued their BSC work for 9 months after the pilot study. The subsequent descriptive evaluation will include 15 months of data collection on how the BSC may have contributed to the launch and potential sustainment of strategies.

Continuing elements of the BSC

The Improvement Teams planned to continue their implementation of parts of the Model for Improvement after the BSC’s conclusion. In particular, they planned to keep using the framework of implementing small changes, and three teams planned to continue collecting and using data to assess changes in their engagement of fathers and paternal relatives. They said that the valuable elements of the BSC are worth continuing if the agencies are to keep improving engagement. For example, one team said that participation in the BSC process helped the team fine-tune its engagement strategies.

Factors supporting continued system change

According to the Improvement Teams, several factors will help them continue the changes the BSC helped them introduce. Teams described the pressure, accountability, and expectations of participating in

a full-scale BSC process as unsustainable, but they believe that the changes in engagement brought about by participation in the BSC will persist. They recognize that change is needed to ensure better engagement of fathers and paternal relatives; one team member said it is now hard to ignore how important it is to keep working on engaging fathers and paternal relatives.

One Improvement Team talked about how the BSC work aligns with its Program Improvement Plans, which help the team maintain a focus on engaging fathers and paternal relatives. The existing meeting and fatherhood initiatives and teams' leadership will also help the Improvement Teams continue their BSC work. For example, some teams, which were already meeting to address father engagement in an existing committee or group, said that it was easy to integrate the BSC into those meetings.

One team member who participated in an earlier BSC believes that the number of supervisors who participated in the FCL BSC will help to continue advancing the work. Another noted that participation in the BSC has shifted the individual's perspective from a focus on the custodial family to the inclusion of paternal relatives. Another Improvement Team was able to locate fathers before the BSC but did not know how to engage with them. Now, the team members have more skills and promising engagement strategies.

Engaging fathers and paternal relatives

Although all the Improvement Teams are committed to ongoing work to engage fathers and paternal relatives, they noted a range of strategies that they will use in the future. The strategies varied from team to team, with no two teams highlighting the same ones. Some of the strategies included specific documentation of the appropriateness of a father or paternal relative as a placement option, continuation of the team's processes for identifying and locating fathers, and the delivery of a training session for staff on the value of engaging fathers. To maintain successful strategies, several team members believed that they needed to include the community and more agency staff, develop fathers as leaders, align the above strategies with other priorities and initiatives, integrate the strategies into policy and systems, and demonstrate improvements.

Some of the Improvement Teams talked more broadly about a change in knowledge and awareness that they did not think would be "undone," suggesting a shift in practice perspectives and culture. Others talked about undergoing a similar shift on a personal level and of their intention to keep championing father engagement. Some teams cited the commitment of leaders to work with fathers as a source of momentum for continuing the strategies.

"I feel more knowledgeable and educated around this and I can't imagine that would just go away. Knowing that the outcomes for children are so much better when fathers are involved, I just can't forget that."

– Team manager

"I hope that it does, and I know that for my personal practice it will, but institutionally. . . I don't know. Time will tell."

– Frontline staff

Concerns about continuing the engagement strategies included waning energy, the possibility that working to engage fathers and paternal relatives will be perceived as a fad, the slow pace of spread and change, failure to engage all possible system partners successfully, future leadership changes, the loss of accountability for developing and tracking engagement strategies, and the loss of regular meetings associated with the support provided by the BSC team. The Improvement Teams believed that, without the continued involvement of the Mathematica/DU team, they would be challenged to stay accountable. However, one team thought that the loss of accountability for developing and tracking engagement strategies may provide opportunities to focus on continuing the strategies and BSC elements that were more feasible for its site.

C. Implications for evaluability

Although the Improvement Teams plan to continue some of their strategies to engage fathers and paternal relatives after the BSC's conclusion, the timeline of the pilot study did not allow for a data-driven identification of the more promising strategies. The subsequent FCL descriptive evaluation will examine selected strategies for engaging fathers and paternal relatives implemented both during and after the pilot study. Focusing on specific engagement strategies, the descriptive evaluation will also explore the promise of implementing the BSC by assessing organizational changes and network supports for father and paternal relative engagement, changes in staff attitudes and skills for engaging fathers and paternal relatives, and father and paternal relative engagement outcomes two years after the outset of the BSC. Given that collecting and accessing data was a challenge for the Improvement Teams, the ability to collect and access data will be an important consideration as FCL continues. At the time of the site visits, the teams were collecting data and had just begun reporting outcomes back to frontline staff and supervisors. Improvement Team members said they hoped to build data review into their daily practice.

The Improvement Teams were also constrained by their data systems. Even those with recently updated data systems did not have all the information they needed or the resources to update systems. In some cases, teams could not access data on the fathers or paternal relatives who were involved in open cases. Understanding that it might not be feasible to redesign data systems, staff developed new tools to collect or track data and brought in staff from their agency's data division to join their Improvement Teams. These staff members advised the Improvement Teams on how to access relevant data and described the enhancements that could be made to the data systems to allow for more efficient and continuous data collection.

As noted, team members talked about the time and effort required to attend the many meetings related to the BSC, and they thought some of the meeting time could have been better allocated to developing and implementing engagement strategies. Five Improvement Teams were not sure that they could maintain the same level of effort after support for the BSC ended, but they did value the changes they have been able to implement.

D. Conclusion

The pilot study was designed to understand the Improvement Teams' experience in implementing a BSC and to learn about how teams worked with system partners to brainstorm and test engagement strategies. Findings from the pilot study suggest that child welfare agencies can implement a BSC aimed at potentially strengthening the engagement of fathers and paternal relatives with their children who are involved in child welfare. The experience of the Improvement Teams points to some lessons learned when implementing this BSC:

- The teams' experience with the BSC methodology or continuous quality improvement and their work in fatherhood programs helped the teams leverage their existing engagement efforts.
- Each of the five elements of the BSC played an important role in implementing the BSC:
 1. The CCF successfully framed each team's approach to engaging fathers and paternal relatives and it helped them produce quick wins and, later, target areas for improvement.
 2. The Improvement Teams valued members who empowered staff to engage fathers and paternal relatives and served as natural leaders in the site. They also needed representation from a wide variety of roles inside and outside of the agency, such as staff in the site's data division and fathers and paternal relatives, to help teams develop and test engagement strategies.
 3. Shared learning opportunities, particularly the learning sessions, gave the teams dedicated time to focus on engaging fathers and paternal relatives and learn from other teams.
 4. Faculty Coaches shared their expertise, but Improvement Teams wished they had more opportunities to work with them.
 5. The Model for Improvement, which includes the PDSAs or small tests of change, helped teams break the process of engagement into manageable steps. Teams shared, however, that collecting metrics and data for PDSAs was challenging, and they were working to improve their data collection.
- Teams said that support from site leaders, supervisors, site staff, and system partners to dedicate time for the BSC and to implement engagement strategies, paired with a commitment to engaging fathers and paternal relatives, expedited their participation in and implementation of the BSC.
- Findings suggest that several changes could boost implementation of the BSC: (1) more time for Improvement Team members to engage in BSC work; (2) clear and direct guidance about which stakeholders to include on the Improvement Team, along with data-related requirements for the BSC; and (3) developing the buy-in of staff members who implemented engagement strategies but did not participate on the Improvement Team.

Throughout the pilot study, the Improvement Teams began to see changes in the number of fathers who were located, contacted, appeared in court, and referred to services. They also observed a culture shift, making their sites more intentional about engaging and including fathers and paternal relatives. Looking ahead, the Improvement Teams planned to continue implementing promising engagement strategies, breaking goals into smaller steps, and using data to test engagement strategies. They thought the shift in culture would ensure a continuing emphasis on engaging fathers and paternal relatives. Over time, the strategies implemented by the Improvement Teams could improve placement stability and permanency outcomes for children. The subsequent FCL descriptive evaluation will explore in greater depth the promise of implementing the BSC in a child welfare setting.

“I know it is challenging to get fathers to participate unless there is a role that allows them to have a seat at the table. “

– Father or paternal relative

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GLOSSARY

Affinity group calls. Monthly affinity group calls between Improvement Team members with similar roles. Calls focused on topics relevant to the participants according to their role on the Improvement Team. Faculty Coaches moderated the calls. There were affinity groups for (1) senior leaders, (2) team managers, (3) supervisors, (4) frontline staff, (5) community partners, and (6) fathers and paternal relatives. There were opportunities to share updates on small tests of change and discuss challenges in engaging fathers and paternal relatives.

All-team calls. Monthly all-team calls helped maintain the momentum of the work between in-person learning sessions. The calls involved all Breakthrough Series Collaborative participants, Faculty Coaches, and project staff from Mathematica and the University of Denver (referred to as the Mathematica/DU team). Each call was intended to build on discussions from previous learning sessions, add to topics of discussion from the affinity group calls, and address one domain of the Collaborative Change Framework. On the calls, Improvement Team members shared ideas for strategies they could test, successes from the strategies they tested, and lessons learned.

Breakthrough Series Collaborative (BSC). The BSC is a continuous learning collaborative methodology used to test and spread promising practices to help organizations improve in a focused topic area. It has five key elements: (1) the Collaborative Change Framework; (2) inclusive multi-level teams; (3) the Shared Learning Environment; (4) expert faculty; and (5) the Model for Improvement. Each plays a critical role and works with the other elements in interrelated ways. Each BSC has a topic area of focus. Improvement Teams are continuously identifying, collecting, and reviewing data on the topic to gauge their organization's progress toward specific outcomes.

BSC team. The FCL BSC was conducted by the Mathematica/DU team with a consultant who had expertise in the BSC. This team was responsible for identifying models of continuous learning for the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), developing the CCF, identifying and recruiting sites, identifying and preparing Faculty Coaches, and facilitating all BSC activities.

Collaborative Change Framework (CCF). The CCF is used to guide the work of the Improvement Teams, and creates a common language for BSC participants. For the Fathers and Continuous Learning in Child Welfare (FCL) project, it comprised five domains that collectively depict a child welfare agency that performs optimally to engage fathers and paternal relatives. Each domain is broken down into goals, and then into strategies (also called change concepts) that Improvement Teams can test.

Domains. Each domain of the CCF has goals that Improvement Teams might achieve if they are successful in their work in that domain. The father and paternal relative engagement strategies tested by Improvement Teams in the BSC focus on one or more of the five CCF domains: (1) support community, system, and agency environments that value and respect all fathers and paternal relatives (supportive environments); (2) cultivate racial equity for men of color in the child welfare system (race equity); (3) identify and locate fathers and paternal relatives from the first point of contact with the family (identification and location); (4) assess and address the strengths and needs of, and barriers for, fathers and paternal relatives (assessment); and (5) continuously involve fathers and paternal relatives throughout the lives of their children (continuous involvement).

Faculty Coaches. Expert faculty share their expertise with Improvement Teams and facilitate shared learning across teams. For FCL, ACF and the Mathematica/DU team selected a group of six experts to support Improvement Teams and provide practice expertise related to the five domains of the CCF. Faculty Coaches led affinity group calls and contributed to learning sessions and the content of all-team calls. Faculty Coaches were selected to ensure that diverse perspectives and identities were represented.

Fathers and Continuous Learning in Child Welfare (FCL). The FCL project is designed to test the use of the Breakthrough Series Collaborative methodology. For this project, the methodology was used to improve placement stability and permanency outcomes by strengthening the engagement of fathers and paternal relatives with children involved in child welfare, and to add to the evidence base on engagement strategies for fathers and paternal relatives. FCL is funded by the Office of Family Assistance and directed by the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation in partnership with the Children's Bureau, all within the Administration for Children and Families in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Improvement Team. A group of 7 to 14 people were selected by each site to lead the BSC work at each agency. For FCL, Improvement Teams included a mix of administrators, managers, supervisors, child welfare caseworkers, community partners, and fathers and paternal relatives, although the composition of the teams varied from one site to another.

Learning sessions. Learning sessions give teams an opportunity to receive in-person training, meet intensively within and across Improvement Teams, and report on progress and lessons learned. For FCL, two-day, in-person learning sessions were an opportunity for Improvement Teams to learn the BSC methodology, prioritize strategies for engaging fathers and paternal relatives at their sites, and give and receive support and feedback from experts in father and paternal relative engagement and from their colleagues in child welfare.

Metrics. Metrics were designed to help the Improvement Teams develop insight into their current status on indicators of father and paternal relative engagement and build their capacity to track this for their own information and documentation of improvements toward outcomes over time. Improvement Teams were given a broad framework within which to develop team-specific data and metrics. Each team approached measurement of metrics with a different array of available data.

Model for Improvement. A collection of strategies Improvement Teams use to translate the CCF into testable strategies to reinforce continuous learning. In FCL, this includes both Plan-Do-Study-Act cycles and small tests of change focused on the CCF domains. Teams designed strategies, tested them, and tracked outcomes using data.

Online learning community. The Improvement Teams used an interactive web-based platform (such as Microsoft SharePoint) to communicate with one another, share documents, post discussion topics, report on PDSA cycles, and store and update planning documents and assessments. In addition, the online platform allowed the Improvement Teams to view strategies tested across sites, which helped teams generate ideas for new PDSAs.

Plan-Do-Study-Act Cycles (PDSAs). These small tests of change are used to identify beneficial practices and adapt them to real situations. The PDSA cycle is designed to break complicated efforts into manageable steps. PDSAs provide the steps for planning a new strategy, testing it, studying its impacts, and then adjusting or expanding the strategy based on what was learned.

Shared Learning Environment. Shared learning is emphasized throughout the BSC, as Improvement Teams test different strategies and share successes and challenges with each other. The combination of learning sessions, all-team calls, affinity group calls facilitated by Faculty Coaches, and the use of an online learning community like Microsoft SharePoint contributed to a collaborative environment that supported and enhanced learning.

Sites. Five sites participated in FCL, representing five state or county public child welfare agencies. There were a total of six Improvement Teams.

Virtual booster session. A three-hour virtual booster session in early June 2020 supported the momentum of the BSC after Learning Session 3 was delayed in response to the COVID-19 public health emergency. The virtual booster session provided teams with abbreviated content that was structured like the content of the in-person learning sessions, but focused on sustainability and bundling of strategies.

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Appendix A

Learning Session Activities

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This appendix describes the activities Improvement Teams participated in during both in-person learning sessions and the virtual booster session. The tables below show whether the activity was a large-group activity with all six Improvement Teams participating, a small-group activity for members within their own Improvement Team, or a mixed small-group activity with members of one or more teams participating. In some cases, activities included had large- and small-group components.

Table A.1. Learning Session 1 activities

Title	Type of activity	Description
Day 1		
Welcome and overview	Large-group activity	The Mathematica/DU Breakthrough Series Collaborative (BSC) Team welcomed Improvement Teams and introduced the BSC consultant, Faculty Coaches, federal partners, and Mathematica staff. The Mathematica/DU BSC Team then gave a general overview of what to expect from the learning session and what would be expected of Improvement Teams, such as being authentic, willing to engage in hard conversations, and leaving titles at the door.
Team introductions	Large-group activity	Each Improvement Team introduced their team members, shared their team motto, briefly described their site, explained why they are excited to participate in the BSC, and gave a few highlights from the storyboard they had prepared before the learning session. Creating a storyboard is a team-building activity in which each team visually represents its members, their goals, and the families they serve to other participants.
Overview and Background	Large-group activity	The BSC consultant described how a BSC can improve father and paternal relative engagement, why the BSC methodology was chosen as the continuous learning approach, and the different components of a BSC, including the Collaborative Change Framework (CCF). The Mathematica/DU BSC Team then introduced the FCL pilot study and the BSC timeline.
The Value of Engaging Fathers and Paternal Relatives: Dare to dream	Mixed small-group activity Brief large-group discussion	Participants sat in small groups with other participants whom they had not met yet. Small groups discussed what their agency and community looked like when fathers and paternal relatives were valued, and what resources were required to achieve this. This activity also helped build more meaningful and personal relationships across teams at the individual level. The large group report-out focused on common elements and themes of the discussions.
Team Meeting 1: Completing the self-assessment	Improvement Team activity	Improvement Teams completed an in-depth site self-assessment instrument based on the five key domains of the CCF. The Mathematica/DU BSC Team encouraged teams to openly discuss initial priorities, and also exploring their strengths.

Title	Type of activity	Description
Potato Head	Improvement Team activity	This experiential activity used a Potato Head toy to simulate the experience of collaboration around a difficult task. One team member was blindfolded, and the other team members had to tell the blindfolded person how to assemble the toy. Some team members could not talk, and one team member tracked how long it took the team to assemble Potato Head. This activity challenged participants to think about communication within their teams, and what their metrics could tell them.
Potato Head	Brief large-group discussion	This activity also modeled the practice of Plan-Do-Study-Acts (PDSAs) that Improvement Teams would be testing, and the importance of cross-team collaboration as teams were invited to share their experiences and learn from each other.
Challenging Our Own Perceptions: What's Holding Us Back?	Improvement Team activity Large-group activity	Two Faculty Coaches talked about the importance of addressing biases and perceptions and understanding where these beliefs come from. By doing a root cause analysis, Improvement Teams thought about both personal implicit biases and institutional and societal biases that might hold them back from having authentic conversations about the value of fathers and paternal relatives. Teams also considered the challenges fathers and paternal relatives face that can prevent them from engaging in the child welfare system. Afterward, the group reflected on the many and varied forces that impact how fathers and paternal relatives interact with the child welfare system.
Breakout sessions	Mixed small-group activity	Faculty Coaches led five different breakout sessions with the goal of having Improvement Team members share concrete, specific strategies in different topic areas. Sessions were conducted in two rounds, and participants chose two sessions to attend. The five sessions were on: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Practices and strategies that demonstrate authentic engagement 2. Practices and strategies that move us beyond assumptions about fathers' strengths and needs 3. Practices and strategies that support fathers in ways that keep them engaged 4. Practices and strategies that raise awareness about, unpack, and address biases 5. Practices and strategies that support an organizational culture and climate that supports the value of fathers and paternal relatives
Team Meeting 2: What Changes Can We Test That Will Result in Improvements?	Improvement Team activity	Improvement Team members shared with their teams the strategies they learned in the breakout sessions they attended, and discussed how they could use the strategies in their agency.
Gratitude and closing	Improvement Team activity	In the last activity for Day 1, participants wrote down gratitude statements and read them aloud as a team—another opportunity for team building.

Title	Type of activity	Description
Day 2		
Day 1 reflections	Large-group activity	The BSC consultant explained how the plans for Day 2 had been adapted based on verbal feedback from Day 1, modeling the ability to be adaptable and flexible just as teams need to be when testing changes.
Gallery Walk	Mixed small-group activity	One or two team members stood near their storyboards and presented them, and their other team members walked around and visited other team’s storyboards, asked questions, and networked. Those who presented the storyboards first could switch with their team members to listen to other presentations, reinforcing the importance of cross-team sharing and learning.
Making Sure Your Changes Result in Improvements	Large-group activity Improvement Team activity	The BSC consultant and a Mathematica team member introduced the role of metrics in the BSC and described important qualities of metrics, such as containing meaningful data and not being burdensome to track. The teams then discussed the data available in their agencies.
Affinity groups	Mixed small-group activity	Participants were assigned to affinity groups based on their role in their agency or on their Improvement Team: (1) senior leaders, (2) team managers, (3) frontline staff, (4) community partners, and (5) fathers and paternal relatives. Faculty Coaches and Mathematica/DU BSC Team members led these activities, and participants discussed their contribution to the BSC. Groups spoke about the practices and strategies they were excited to test and the supports and/or resources they needed. For example, members of the senior leader affinity group talked about how they plan to create space on their Improvement Teams to ensure that everyone gets to be a leader in this process.
Accelerating Improvement ^A	Large-group activity	The BSC consultant introduced the Model for Improvement and PDSAs, and discussed how the identified strategies can be tested in just a week.
Team meeting: Moving to PDSAs ^A	Improvement Team activity	Teams brainstormed PDSAs to test during Action Period 1, the time between the first and second learning sessions.
Team meeting: Making Our Plan	Improvement Team activity	Teams used the PDSAs they brainstormed to develop an Action Plan. They used the action planning form to indicate strategies they planned to test during Action Period 1, how they planned to track the results of the PDSAs, and who was responsible for implementing each PDSA.
Sharing Plans for Action	Large-group activity	After completing their action planning forms, teams briefly shared their plans for Action Period 1 with the whole group.
Next Steps, Reflections, and Evaluations	Large-group activity	The Mathematica/DU BSC Team closed out Learning Session 1 with a short discussion of plans for next steps and reflections from the teams. ^B

^A Activities were combined.

^B Once OMB clearance was received, detailed evaluations were sent to participants.

Table A.2. Learning Session 2 activities

Title	Type of activity	Description
Day 1		
Welcome and overview	Large-group activity	The Mathematica/DU BSC Team welcomed all Improvement Teams and previewed the day's agenda. A brief overview of the collaborative progress to date was given, including monthly metrics and self-assessments.
Team reintroductions	Large-group activity	Improvement Teams selected a spokesperson to share a 30-second teaser on the topic they would be presenting during Speed Sharing later in the morning.
Team Meeting 1: Taking Stock and Revisiting Priorities	Improvement Team activity	After reviewing self-assessments and metrics from Learning Session 1 and Learning Session 2, teams were directed to set goals for the learning session. Based on priorities, goals, and interests, participants discussed which Speed Sharing sessions they would like to attend and selected the person who would present for their team.
Speed Sharing Successful Practices, Strategies, and Tools	Mixed small-group activity	During three 15-minute sessions, teams highlighted practices, tools, and strategies they have successfully tested.
Speed PDSA Refresher	Large-group activity	After a quick video on simplifying PDSAs, teams brought up something they heard in Speed Sharing that they would like to test. The BSC consultant modeled how to turn strategies and ideas into PDSAs that can be tested.
Plenary session: Breaking Barriers and Addressing Structural Racism (Domain 2)	Large-group activity	To get teams to think about concrete strategies to test, a Faculty Coach led a discussion about cultivating racial equity (Domain 2), addressing three types of racism: institutional, structural, and individual.
Plenary session: Leadership and Father and Paternal Relative Engagement	Improvement Team activity Brief large-group discussion	A Faculty Coach encouraged teams to think about leadership in the context of father engagement, and teams participated in an activity in which they were asked to consider their agency environment through the eyes of a father.
Cross-team breakout sessions: Strategies to Bring Back	Mixed small-group activity	Faculty Coaches facilitated five different breakout sessions aimed at cross-team sharing of concrete, specific strategies in different topic areas. Sessions were conducted in two rounds, and participants selected two sessions to attend. The five sessions were: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Moving Beyond Dads to Paternal Relatives 2. Elevating the Voices of Dads and Paternal Relatives in the Agency 3. Working with Incarcerated Dads 4. Engaging Dads and Paternal Relatives Isn't Just About Placement Options 5. Baking This Work In: Changing the Culture
Team Meeting 2: What Changes Can We Test That Will Result in Improvements?	Improvement Team activity	Teams shared strategies from their breakout sessions and discussed ways they could use the strategies in their agency through possible PDSAs and other tests of change.

Title	Type of activity	Description
Gratitude and closing	Large-group activity	In the last activity for Day 1, participants wrote down gratitude statements and read them aloud as a team. The Mathematica/DU BSC Team asked the participants to evaluate Day 1.
Day 2		
Day 1 reflections	Large-group activity	At the beginning of Day 2, the BSC consultant shared general feedback from the Day 1 evaluations and explained how plans for Day 2 changed based on this feedback.
Continued discussion on bias	Large-group activity	The planned Gallery Walk was removed from the schedule based on Day 1 feedback indicating that teams wanted to continue the discussion on bias. As planned, a short film titled "Hair Love" was shown to the large group, followed by a discussion about the assumptions made throughout watching the film. Led by a Faculty Coach, the group discussed strategies within the domain that focused on race equity (Domain 2) that they want to bring back to their agency.
Moving from Small Tests to Implementation	Large-group activity Improvement Team activity	This activity began with a large-group discussion recapping the experiences of the teams during the Potato Head activity from Learning Session 1. Then individual teams repeated the activity, but blindfolded a Faculty Coach instead of a team member. Teams reflected with the Faculty Coach on the communication process. The BSC consultant then introduced the concept of being a PEST (Positive peer pressure, Existing Structure, and Tools) to the large group as a method of spreading the work to others.
Affinity groups: How to be a better PEST? Making Strategies Permanent by being a PEST	Mixed small-group activity	Participants joined their respective affinity groups, including a new supervisor group, and Faculty Coaches led them through a structured set of questions and activities designed to help them apply the PEST Model to their work. Senior leaders focused on how to use policy and data to shape and support practice.
Team meeting: Making Our Plan	Improvement Team activity	Teams developed a plan for Action Period 2 (the time between Learning Session 2 and the booster session) including specific PDSAs, and approaches to spreading successful strategies.
Sharing Plans for Action	Large-group activity	Each team briefly shared their priorities and some planned PDSAs for Action Period 2 with the large group.
Next Steps, reflections, and evaluations	Large-group activity	The Mathematica/DU BSC Team closed out Learning Session 2 with reflections from the sites and asked individuals to complete an online evaluation.
Additional team time (optional)	Improvement Team activity	Teams were invited to stay and continue planning with faculty support if they would like.

Table A.3. Virtual booster session activities

Title	Type of activity	Session description
Welcome/Mini virtual storyboards	Large-group activity	Each team presented a “shining star” strategy, a PDSA that was a highlight for them. A team member explained what the practice is, how it is done, what excites the team about it, and why they think it’s successful.
Team meeting time	Improvement Team activity ^A	Looking at the PDSAs tried so far, sites worked to identify bundles (groups of strategies that could be packaged together) and began developing strategies to spread them and sustain these bundles.
Plenary session: Shifting the Narrative	Large-group activity	Two Faculty Coaches led a session on how the work that teams are doing leads to system and culture transformation. They emphasized that assumptions about fathers are being challenged, and that each of their activities leads to a shift in the cultural narrative about fathers in child welfare.
Breakout sessions: Strategies to Shift the Narrative and Achieve Transformational Change	Mixed small-group activity	Faculty Coaches led five different breakout sessions focused on considering what it will take to shift the narrative and achieve transformational change in different areas. Those five sessions were: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Partnering with courts 2. Mental health practices to mitigate risk of interpersonal violence 3. Community partnerships to strengthen safety nets for fathers and paternal relatives 4. Supporting foster parents to support relationships with fathers, including best practice for visits 5. Shifting the narrative and creating cultural change within our own agency
Sharing highlights and closing	Large-group activity	The large group reported out on topics discussed in the breakout sessions and reflected on the booster session as a whole. The Mathematica/DU BSC Team also asked individuals to complete an online evaluation.

^ALA teams met together as one site.

Appendix B

Learning Session Evaluation Analysis

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Learning sessions were opportunities for Improvement Teams to learn about the BSC methodology while focusing on their work to engage fathers and paternal relatives. As part of the FCL project, there were two in-person sessions and one virtual booster session. After both learning sessions and the virtual booster session, the Mathematica/DU BSC team asked participants to share feedback about their experience. Feedback was given anonymously. Participants evaluated each of the session activities and the quality of the sessions as a whole. This appendix has the findings from those evaluations.

The Learning Session 1 evaluation was not done at the end of the session itself because the respondent burden associated with having participants fill out an evaluation form was awaiting approval from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), but the evaluation was emailed to participants as a fillable PDF once OMB clearance was obtained. The evaluations for Learning Session 2 and the virtual booster session were disseminated via Survey Monkey to learning session participants at the end of the sessions.

For each activity, participants rated how much they agreed with a statement about the effectiveness of the activity in achieving its intended purpose. They used the following scale:

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

The questions used to evaluate the sessions are in Appendix D. As an example, one question asked participants to say how strongly they agreed with the following statement: “The Speed Sharing Activity helped me learn about work that other teams are doing and gave me ideas for strategies to implement at my site.” The evaluations also included four items that prompted participants to evaluate their overall experience of the session. These items focused on inspiration and commitment, flow and structure, balanced focus, and overall impressions.

Open-ended questions allowed participants to express their perceptions about the sessions’ strengths and areas that needed improvement, and to give general reflections on the sessions. Participants described both learning sessions in positive terms, using words like enjoyable, inspiring, engaging, idea generating, offering valuable opportunities to connect with other teams, and providing protected time for the team to work on father engagement away from their daily responsibilities. In response to the open-ended questions, teams shared the following session-specific feedback:

- Learning Session 1: Participants said they were pleasantly surprised to learn that even though the teams were different in many ways, they faced the same challenges and shared a passion for engaging fathers. Some participants singled out the Gallery Walk activity as a particularly effective and enjoyable way to get to know the populations other teams serve, their existing programs and practices, and the resources they have access to (Appendix A has more information about the Gallery Walk activity.).
- Learning Session 2: Many participants specifically highlighted that they found the content on racial equity particularly valuable, and talked about how effectively the content was delivered by the Faculty Coach. Participants said they were impressed with the progress all of the teams had made by Learning Session 2, including their own team’s achievements.

- Virtual booster session: Participants shared their appreciation for the opportunity to reconnect with other teams, hear about the progress of each team, and become “reenergized.”

Overall, analysis of the learning session evaluations reveals a deep appreciation for the protected time to gather with and learn from other professionals with a shared mission.

The following figures are visualizations of average participant ratings. Two figures are presented for each session: one that shows ratings for specific session activities, and one that presents the ratings from the overarching session questions.

Learning Session 1

Figure B.1. Effectiveness in achieving each activity’s goal

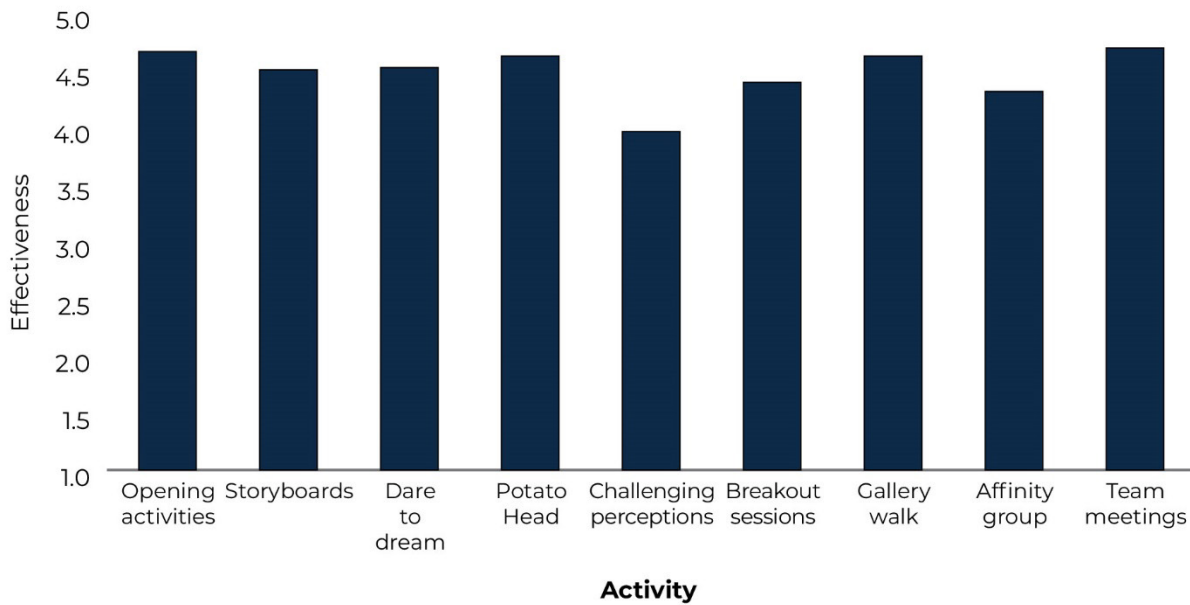
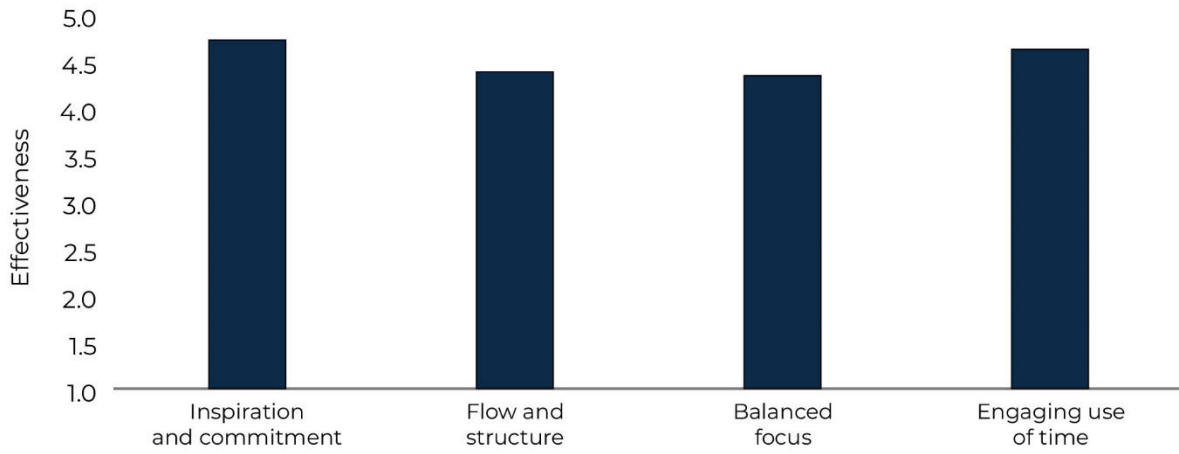


Figure B.2. Effectiveness in achieving learning session's goals



Learning Session 2

Figure B.3. Effectiveness in achieving each activity's goal

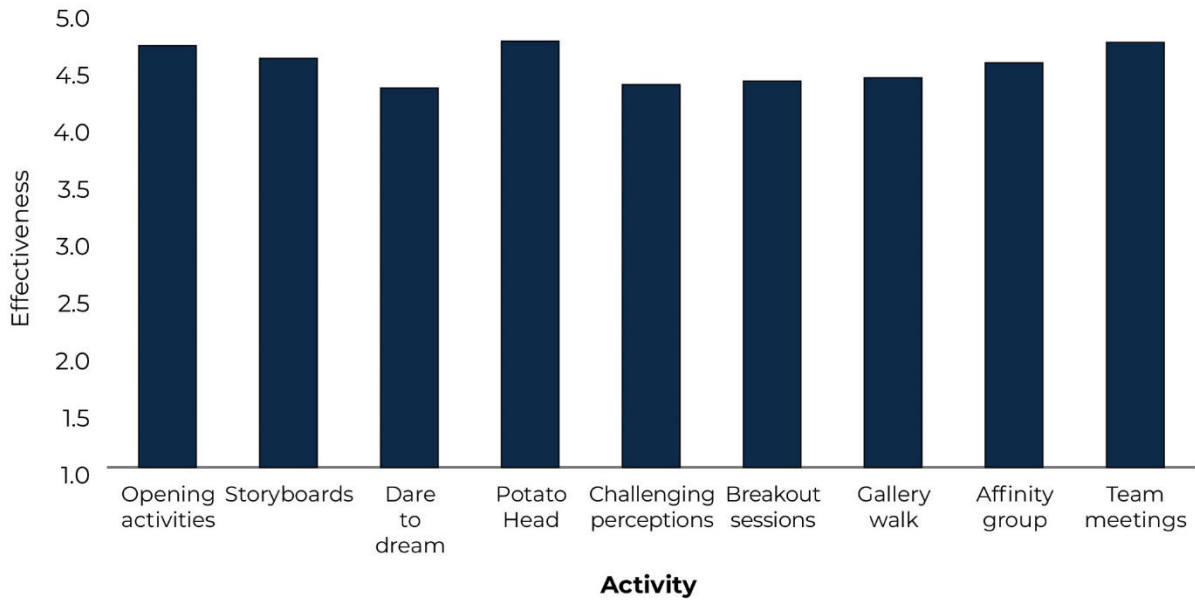
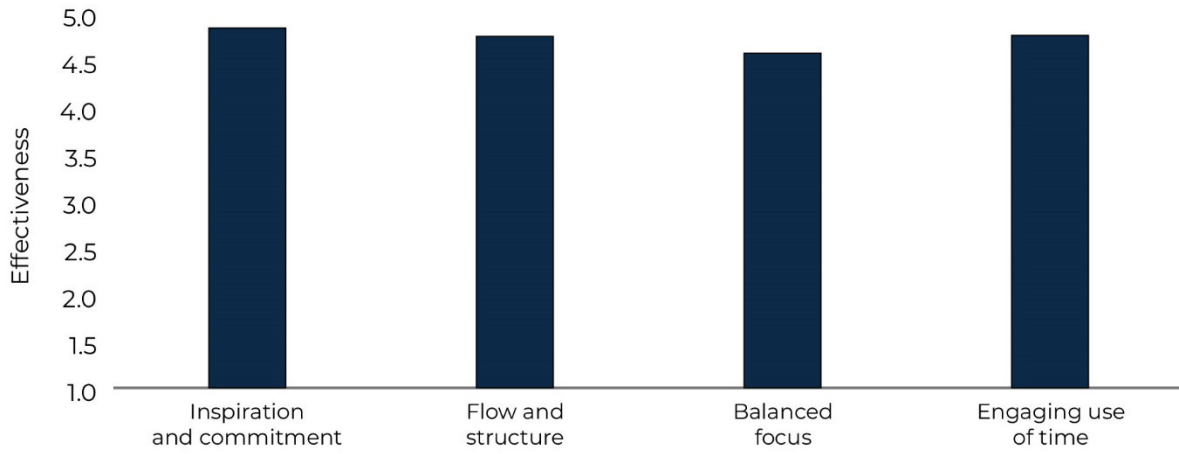


Figure B.4. Effectiveness in achieving learning session's goals



Virtual booster session

Figure B.5. Effectiveness in achieving each activity's goal

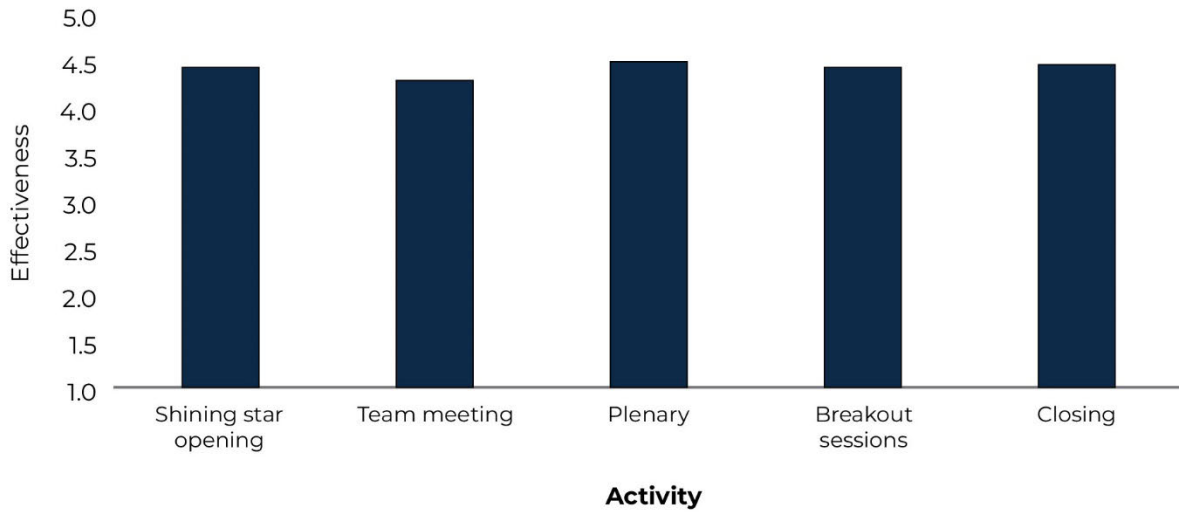
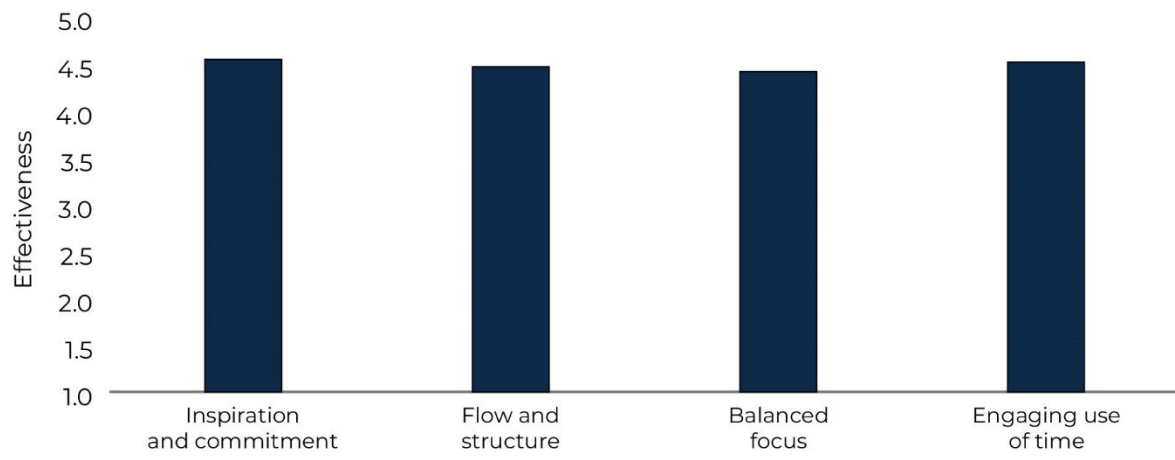


Figure B.6. Effectiveness in achieving the booster session's goals



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Appendix C

Strategies Organized by Focus

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This appendix describes the strategies to engage fathers and paternal relatives that were considered and tested by Improvement Teams up to the point of our data collection.

Table C.1 lists the different strategies considered by each Improvement Team, with strategies organized by their focus and status as of June 2020. Strategies that are in progress continue to be tested and improved on; fully implemented strategies are being used regularly by Improvement Team members and other agency staff; and discontinued strategies had been abandoned at the point of data collection. We put each strategy into the following categories based on its focus:

- **Father mentors**—fathers who have already navigated the child welfare system become mentors to fathers currently in the system
- **Father and paternal relative engagement in case planning**—promoting fathers’ and paternal relatives’ involvement in case planning
- **Father and paternal relative identification form**—documenting caseworkers’ efforts to identify, contact, and/or engage fathers and paternal relatives
- **Fatherhood conference**—presenting at a conference or hosting a conference to raise awareness and educate the community about the importance of father engagement
- **Staff bias awareness**—increasing awareness about the potential biases staff may have toward fathers and paternal relatives in child welfare cases
- **Improved father search efforts**—targeting efforts to improve existing search processes and/or systems to locate fathers and paternal relatives
- **Including father and paternal relative engagement in discussions with staff**—intentionally discussing the value of father and paternal relative engagement with staff through supervisory meetings, brown bag discussions, webinars, and/or trainings
- **Inclusivity efforts**—targeting efforts to modify the physical environment, marketing tools, and agency language to be more welcoming to and inclusive of fathers and paternal relatives
- **Intentional father outreach**—purposefully contacting, engaging, and supporting fathers and paternal relatives specifically
- **Paternal relative outreach/engagement**—targeting efforts to identify, engage, and support paternal relatives
- **Staff recognition**—acknowledging staff who are nominated by families for effectively engaging fathers and paternal relatives
- **Community partner engagement**—increasing awareness about the value of father and paternal relative engagement with new or existing community partners; exchanging resources; and expanding fatherhood service coordination through community partners
- **Data to monitor and assess targeted outcomes**—using data to identify and assess improvements toward targeted program and agencywide outcomes

The table is organized by strategy focus and lists the Collaborative Change Framework domain most closely aligned with each strategy—supportive environments (Domain 1), race equity (Domain 2), identification and location (Domain 3), assessment (Domain 4), or continuous involvement (Domain 5). Although some strategies may span several domains, the primary domain selected by the Improvement Team is listed. Strategy objectives that are expected to be impacted are also noted for each strategy. Improvement Teams used the Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSA) Worksheet and action planning form as templates to document and track their PDSA goals and progress (see Appendix D).

Table C.1 Strategies considered by strategy focus¹ and by status

Domain ²	Objective	Status (as of 6/30/2020)
Community partner engagement		
Supportive environments (Domain 1)	To identify community partners, foster a relationship with them to educate them about fathers and paternal relatives, encourage them to share information with their organizations, and document the scope of partners' services	In progress
Supportive environments (Domain 1)	To create community awareness and affirm that fathers are vital to the success of children by sharing information at community events with schools and physicians, and with judicial, probation and other community resource sites	In progress
Supportive environments (Domain 1)	To present at a state convening focused on educating judicial partners about the importance of fathers' voices and feelings ³	In progress
Continuous involvement (Domain 5)	To build a network to support fathers' involvement with their children by distributing information and educational materials to community partners	In progress
Supportive environments (Domain 1)	To develop a collaborative of community agencies to enhance institutional practices of engaging fathers across multiple disciplines	In progress
Assessment (Domain 4)	To engage fathers during the establishment phase of child support to mitigate the impact of accruing arrears and past due balances, minimize harmful enforcement remedies, and ratify an equitable permanent order for fathers	Fully implemented
Assessment (Domain 4)	To create a triage process with the community partner to gather information about case status; schedule intake meetings with fathers; and share court dates, Administrative Case Review dates, and supervised visit schedules to ensure clear communication between the agency and community partner	Fully implemented
Data to monitor and assess targeted outcomes		
Assessment (Domain 4)	To use the Love and Logic model to increase overall family interactions through parent coaching, and measure changes in scores on the North Carolina Family Assessment Scales	In progress
Assessment (Domain 4)	To implement the Fathering After Violence approach with fathers who have a history of domestic violence to increase father empathy and measure changes in scores on the North Carolina Family Assessment Scales	In progress
Assessment (Domain 4)	To determine whether staff are accurately conducting a needs assessment of fathers' cases by having a senior leader or administrator review two case plans per week that are due in the next month	In progress
Supportive environments (Domain 1)	To conduct the site self-assessment at each of the agency's regional offices	In progress

Domain ²	Objective	Status (as of 6/30/2020)
Supportive environments (Domain 1)	To develop an IT plan about the information needed to measure father engagement	In progress
Father and paternal relative engagement in case planning		
Identification and location (Domain 3)	To increase the identification, location, and engagement of fathers in case planning through collaboration between the caseworkers and the mothers, child(ren), and other relatives to identify fathers when a referral has been assigned as an assessment for investigation	In progress
Continuous involvement (Domain 5)	To consider fathers as an option for placement in all child and family team meetings when discussing removal of child(ren) and gather considerations for fathers before and after each meeting	In progress
Supportive environments (Domain 1)	To create a father and paternal relative survey to support engagement of fathers and paternal relatives in service plans	In progress
Continuous involvement (Domain 5)	To create and implement a step-by-step plan to increase the level of investment of fathers and paternal relatives in permanency planning for the child(ren), including a survey to measure satisfaction and quality of contact, agendas that are specific to cases, and monthly outreach to encourage ongoing investment by fathers and paternal relatives ⁴	Discontinued
Father and paternal relative identification form		
Continuous involvement (Domain 5)	To draft a form to be completed by social workers that asks intentional questions about the identification and inclusion of the father and paternal relatives in the case plan	In progress
Identification and location (Domain 3)	To create a template to document information from family finding that will be completed upon assessment and stored in a centralized place	In progress
Father mentors		
Continuous involvement (Domain 5)	To establish a father mentorship program by identifying and contracting with fathers who previously went through the child welfare system and are willing to mentor fathers currently in the system	In progress
Continuous involvement (Domain 5)	To use the master case list to identify fathers and paternal relatives who would be willing to be mentors	In progress
Fatherhood conference		
Supportive environments (Domain 1)	To host a Fatherhood Leadership Conference that raises awareness about the value of father and paternal relative engagement to other agencies and the community	In progress
Supportive environments (Domain 1)	To participate in a Fatherhood Leadership Conference that raises awareness about the value of father and paternal relative engagement to other agencies and the community	In progress

Domain ²	Objective	Status (as of 6/30/2020)
Improved father search efforts		
Identification and location (Domain 3)	To identify fathers in abuse/neglect referrals using the name and date of birth of the child and mother, found in other databases	In progress
Identification and location (Domain 3)	To locate fathers in cases where their name (but not their location) is known by working with a search specialist using case mining, online tools, and other resources to locate fathers	In progress
Supportive environments (Domain 1)	To identify all fathers on caseload of two social workers	Fully implemented
Supportive environments (Domain 1)	To identify and gain access to additional resources and systems to facilitate locating fathers and paternal relatives	Fully implemented
Continuous involvement (Domain 5)	To locate fathers in cases where child is not linked to the father or paternal relatives, provide resources and information on visitation and placement, and address any concerns	Discontinued
Including father and paternal relative engagement in discussions with staff		
Supportive environments (Domain 1)	To host weekly forums using virtual webinars in which staff identify ways to engage fathers and paternal relatives and improve the narrative around them	In progress
Supportive environments (Domain 1)	To increase level of engagement with fathers and paternal relatives by incorporating father and paternal relative engagement as an agenda item in weekly supervisory meetings with staff	In progress
Assessment (Domain 4)	To distribute an informational flyer on the 50 Barriers to Fatherhood Engagement to all staff via email and printed copies, and host a brown bag discussion with staff about these barriers	In progress
Race equity (Domain 2)	To launch staff training to provide agency staff with tools to better engage men of color and improve outcomes of their children	In progress
Supportive environments (Domain 1)	To require assigned caseworkers to supervise at least one visit between parents and children per month in order to gain firsthand experience and be better informed	In progress
Supportive environments (Domain 1)	To promote inclusion of fathers and paternal relatives in service plans by discussing engagement of fathers and paternal relatives with staff and encouraging them to contact non-engaged fathers and paternal relatives	Discontinued
Identification and location (Domain 3)	To ensure workers are consistently making efforts to engage fathers by reviewing their contact documentation and discussing these efforts during supervision meetings on a weekly basis in order to improve fatherhood engagement throughout the life of a case ⁵	Discontinued

Domain ²	Objective	Status (as of 6/30/2020)
Inclusivity efforts		
Assessment (Domain 4)	To encourage engagement in parenting time and family service time by asking fathers a series of questions gauging their comfort and overall experience during supervised parenting time and review the fathers' cancellation rate after the intervention	In progress
Continuous involvement (Domain 5)	To assess the father's and child's baseline comfort with current visitations in the agency's office, get ideas for alternative settings and activities for future visitations from the father and child, implement and test the impact of the suggested settings and activities, and measure their comfort afterward	In progress
Supportive environments (Domain 1)	To shift the practice of calling families "cases" to calling them families instead	In progress
Supportive environments (Domain 1)	To create a father-friendly workspace through signage, resources, and posters that demonstrate the agency respects the role fathers play in the lives of their children	In progress
Supportive environments (Domain 1)	To migrate programs and services (e.g., classes) to community agencies and partners to expand the reach of father resources and reduce stigma fathers feel when accessing services from the agency ⁶	In progress
Continuous involvement (Domain 5)	To increase father and paternal relative involvement in child and family team meetings and facilitated meetings by increasing the use of virtual technology and the number of meeting invitations sent to fathers and paternal relatives ⁷	In progress
Intentional father outreach		
Identification and location (Domain 3)	To create opportunities to locate fathers and paternal relatives, and conduct visits with kindness by hand-delivering monthly bag mailers that include information, a letter, and a gift branded with fatherhood-focused statements	In progress
Identification and location (Domain 3)	To engage fathers in dependency investigations by collecting identifying information, addressing specific needs of fathers and paternal relatives, and documenting any concerns or requests	In progress
Supportive environments (Domain 1)	To locate fathers using the information obtained from the father and paternal relative inclusion form in order to include fathers and paternal relatives in visitations	In progress
Identification and location (Domain 3)	To engage fathers in dependency investigations by collecting identifying information, addressing specific needs of fathers and paternal relatives, and documenting any concerns or requests	In progress
Identification and location (Domain 3)	To provide putative fathers with immediate access to information, resources, referrals, and peer-to-peer support	In progress
Paternal relative outreach/engagement		
Assessment (Domain 4)	To use the agency's kinship caretaker/relative contractor to identify fathers, engage them, and to learn about the types of support the father needs to participate in family meetings	In progress

Domain ²	Objective	Status (as of 6/30/2020)
Identification and location (Domain 3)	To involve paternal relatives in case planning, and identify the supports they can provide to fathers and children in foster care through staff contact with a few paternal family members	In progress
Staff bias awareness		
Race equity (Domain 2)	To increase awareness around personal biases by having staff complete implicit bias assessments	In progress
Continuous involvement (Domain 5)	To identify bias awareness among staff that arise from staff's own life experiences by facilitating internal discussions with agency units and external conversations with stakeholders and partners to recognize potential biases against fathers and paternal relatives	In progress
Staff recognition		
Supportive environments (Domain 1)	To recognize social workers who are effectively engaging fathers and paternal relatives with an award	In progress
Supportive environments (Domain 1)	To acknowledge staff who receive positive feedback on a family survey that collects data about what is working, what needs to be improved, and who had a positive impact on fathers	In progress

¹Foci of each strategy are not mutually exclusive.

²Domains were assigned if Improvement Teams did not select one.

³Strategy focus includes fatherhood conference.

⁴Strategy focus includes intentional father outreach.

⁵Strategy focus includes intentional father outreach.

⁶Strategy focus includes community partner engagement.

⁷Strategy focus includes father and paternal relative engagement in case planning.

Appendix D

BSC Instruments

To document the implementation of the BSC, the pilot study used the instruments in this appendix to collect data from all Improvement Teams. All data were collected at the team level, except the data collected by the implementation assessment and the learning sessions' overall evaluation, which both collected data at the individual level. The instruments are:

Team information form

Site self-assessment

Implementation assessment

Learning session overall evaluation

Data collection planning worksheet

Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) worksheet

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Engaging Fathers and Paternal Relatives in Child Welfare Breakthrough Series Collaborative

Team information form

The purpose of this document is to provide information to the Fathers and Continuous Learning in Child Welfare (FCL) project team about each site's composition. The information will be used to create a profile of each site that participates in the Breakthrough Series Collaborative (BSC).

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average one hour for the improvement team's senior leader.

Providing this information is voluntary, and all collected responses will be kept private to the extent permitted by law.

An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. The OMB number for this information collection is 0970-0531 and the expiration date is 07/31/2022.

Thank you for participating in the Breakthrough Series Collaborative (BSC) to Engage Fathers and Paternal Relatives in Child Welfare. As the senior leader of your team, please complete the following questions on behalf of your improvement team and site.

Date completed:		Department name:	
1. About the child welfare agency			
Number of children served by child welfare agency:		Number of children in out-of-home care:	
Of children placed in out-of-home care, how many live:		1. In kinship homes?	
		2. In non-relative foster homes?	
		3. In specialized foster homes?	
		4. In group/transitional living homes?	
		5. In residential facilities?	
Describe the racial makeup of families in foster care:		Percent African-American:	
		Percent Latino:	
		Percent Caucasian:	
		Percent Native American:	
		Percent other:	
Number of children whose families receive in-home services:			

2. Contact information for improvement team senior leader and team manager	
Senior leader:	Title:
Phone:	Email:
Team manager (For communication between FCL project team and improvement team members):	Title:
Phone:	Email:

3. Composition of your improvement team
<p>a) Who is the proposed senior leader of your improvement team? (It is strongly recommended that the senior leader be a high-level agency leader.) Please include name, title, and a brief description of this leader's demonstrated commitment to the goals of this BSC. Also describe the role and responsibilities of the proposed senior leader in terms of the agency's organizational chart.</p>
<p>b) Who is the proposed team manager of your improvement team?</p> <p><i>The team manager will coordinate the activities of the improvement team and actively guide its work. This person must have easy access to the senior leader.</i></p> <p><i>Please include the name, title, and a brief description of this person's demonstrated commitment to the goals of this BSC.</i></p>
<p><i>Describe the management/reporting relationship between the proposed team manager and the proposed senior leader. Please also report the key contact's role, skills, and experience with engaging fathers and paternal relatives.</i></p>

3. Composition of your improvement team

c) Who will be on the Improvement Team?

Please list all names, positions, including length of time in current position, experience/expertise in engaging fathers and paternal relatives, and unique strengths they bring to the team.

--

d) How will your agency ensure that the members of the improvement team have the resources and time they need to complete the BSC requirements?

--

4. Child welfare agency: background information	
a) Please tell us about your agency. Briefly describe your organizational structure and approach to serving fathers and paternal relatives.	
b) Describe the staff (name, title, responsibility) in your agency whose roles may be relevant to this project.	
c) What are four key strengths of your agency that help position you to promote engagement of fathers and paternal relatives?	
d) What specific professional development has your staff received about engaging families?	
e) What training and support has your staff received about engaging fathers and other paternal relatives?	

4. Child welfare agency: background information

- f) Describe how your agency currently engages fathers and paternal relatives as team members to create the best outcomes for their children.

Please be specific about how you provide them with information about their children, how you engage them in your interactions and involvement with their children, how you give them necessary supports or resources, and how you include them in discussions and decisions about their children.)



Engaging Fathers and Paternal Relatives in Child Welfare Breakthrough Series Collaborative

Site self-assessment

The purpose of the information collection is to understand the extent to which improvement teams have engaged in Breakthrough Series Collaborative (BSC) activities. The Fathers and Continuous Learning in Child Welfare (FCL) project team will use this information to better understand your current organizational structure and help identify teams with similar and different strengths and challenges.

The average estimated public reporting burden for this collection of information is about 20 minutes per domain. Providing this information is voluntary, and all responses that are collected will be kept private to the extent permitted by law. This report will be completed once at the beginning of the BSC and once at the end. Improvement teams will submit one completed form per team.

An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. The OMB number for this information collection is 0970-0531 and the expiration date is 07/31/2022.

Purpose

This self-assessment tool is designed to help your improvement team evaluate the systems and processes you currently have in place to help engage fathers and paternal relatives. It is organized based on the five key domains described in the Collaborative Change Framework. We recognize that your team is a partnership that includes individuals who facilitate different kinds of engagement with fathers and paternal relatives. Thus, this self-assessment can help do the following for your team:

1. Help consider the multiple components of effective father and paternal relative engagement.
2. Construct a shared frame of reference and develop a common language and understanding about the level of functioning of your organization across the five domains of the collaborative change framework.
3. Identify key successes, challenges, and priority areas for improvement.

The results of this self-assessment will be shared with the FCL project team, faculty coaches, and other advisors who will be supporting your team throughout the collaborative. This will develop their understanding of your current organization and enhance their ability to coach your team effectively and efficiently.

We will also share these self-assessments across teams after Learning Session 1 and at the end of Learning Session 3 to help teams identify areas of strength and areas for improvement. After completing the self-assessment, your team should think about priorities based on your identified areas of need.

Your team might even generate ideas and strategies for change during this self-assessment process. **Keep track of those change ideas, and bring them to the all-team call to share with the group.** The tool is not intended to help you think about how to improve, however; it is designed to help you assess your current organization and teams.

Instructions

- It is important that the members of your improvement team complete this tool together.
- Each table below outlines one of the five domains identified in the collaborative change framework. Each domain is broken down into goals and the strength of progress toward goals is being evaluated on a four-point scale.
- Use your judgment to determine how well your organization performs in each domain. We encourage you to be honest about where your organization is right now recognizing that different agencies and organizations can have different strengths and areas for opportunity. This exercise will help the team prioritize the areas needing the most attention and to building an improvement plan. You will complete this initial self-assessment and then use this tool again to reassess your progress at specific points in time over the course of the collaborative.
- For each practice, please use the “Comments” section to note specific examples or to explain why you chose the score you did.

Scoring Guidelines and Considerations

To complete this self-assessment, select the point value (1–4) that best describes your current overall agency or organization’s level of functioning. When scoring change concepts within each domain, please base your scoring on the following anchors:

Practice seriously challenged, or no strategies developed 1	Practice somewhat challenged, or strategies untested 2	Practice shows strengths, or strategies being tested 3	Practice very strong; strategies well developed and tested 4
<p>Our practices have numerous barriers and challenges. There are few or no known policies, procedures, or daily practice examples for this concept. We have few policies or procedures developed in this area to establish staff capacity and could benefit from a significant amount of technical assistance.</p>	<p>Our practices have some challenges and barriers. This area is of concern for our system and could require technical assistance, policy development, establishment of protocols, and practice implementation to improve our skills here.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Or</p> <p>We have developed a strategy for this area, but have not yet implemented it.</p>	<p>Our practices have some strengths, and we are functioning with some success in this area. We have some policies and procedures in place that most staff follows. We have developed and implemented strategies that are showing promise, and this will continue to be an area of focus.</p>	<p>Our practices have numerous strengths. We currently have practices, policies, and protocols in place that are all staff use on a daily basis. Our current practices, policies and protocols yield positive results for the families we serve.</p>

Domain 1. Support community, system, and agency environments that value and respect all fathers and paternal relatives

Goals and change concepts	Score (1–4)	Comments
<p>Goal 1. Create an organizational environment and climate that strongly emphasizes the value of fathers and paternal relatives in children’s lives</p>		
<p>Goal 2. Develop an atmosphere where the voice and active engagement of fathers and paternal relatives influences an inclusive environment</p>		
<p>Goal 3. Actively promote and integrate inclusive practices and the value of fathers and paternal relatives within the community</p>		

Domain 2. Cultivate racial equity for men of color in the child welfare system

Goals and change concepts	Score (1–4)	Comments
Goal 1. Promote personal awareness among staff to acknowledge implicit bias, and implement practices that improve father and family outcomes.		
Goal 2. Acknowledge the impacts of historical, institutional, cultural, and structural racism on policy, practice, and decision making.		
Goal 3. Identify and nurture the cultural beliefs, values, and practices of fathers and paternal relatives, communities, and tribes to drive child welfare decision-making processes.		
Goal 4. Collaborate with related systems to identify, address, and change institutionalized racist policies and practices		

Domain 3. Identify and locate fathers and paternal relatives from the first point of contact with the family

Goals and change concepts	Score (1–4)	Comments
Goal 1. Identify fathers and paternal relatives		
Goal 2. Actively locate fathers and paternal relatives		

Domain 4. Assess and address the strengths and needs of, and barriers for, fathers and paternal relatives

Goals and change concepts	Score (1–4)	Comments
Goal 1. Assess fathers and paternal relatives' strengths and needs		
Goal 2. Identify and address barriers to engaging fathers and paternal relatives		
Goal 3. Provide specialized plans that meet unique needs of families and include fathers and paternal relatives		

Domain 5. Continuously involve fathers and paternal relatives throughout the lives of their children

Goals and change concepts	Score (1–4)	Comments
Goal 1. Facilitate fathers and paternal relatives' preparation for attending and participating in meetings, activities, and decisions		
Goal 2. Engage and continuously assess fathers and paternal relatives as placement options.		
Goal 3. Support healthy and productive relationships with fathers and other caregivers		
Goal 4. Support relationships between fathers and paternal relatives and their children by maximizing the types of and opportunities for involvement		

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Engaging Fathers and Paternal Relatives in Child Welfare Breakthrough Series Collaborative Implementation assessment

The purpose of this survey is to understand the extent to which improvement team members have engaged in BSC activities. The Fathers and Continuous Learning in Child Welfare (FCL) project team will use this information to determine (1) the extent of BSC participation among improvement team members and (2) the spread of BSC practices to others within the participating programs.

It will provide information about BSC participants' experiences that could be important for full engagement in the BSC. It will be administered twice throughout the BSC.

The average estimated public reporting burden for this collection of information is about 20 minutes per response. Providing this information is voluntary, and all responses that are collected are private to the extent permitted by law.

An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. The OMB number for this information collection is 0970-0531 and the expiration date is 07/31/2022.

PURPOSE

The information you provide in this survey will assess your personal experiences with the BSC. Data collected from this survey will provide an understanding of how you and your agency engage with fathers and paternal relatives. The answers will be aggregated to ensure you remain anonymous in any reports. Thank you for taking the time to candidly and thoughtfully share your experience with us. Please email the completed form back to Doug at FCL- Project@mathematica-mpr.com by **November 22, 2019**.

A. Background information (demographics)

1. Sex

- Male
 Female

2. What is the highest educational level you have completed?

- High school or GED
 Some college
 Associate's degree (A.A.)
 Bachelor's degree (B.A. or B.S.)
 Some graduate work
 Master's degree (M.A. or M.S.)
 Postgraduate, post-master's work (no doctorate)
 Doctorate (Ed.D or Ph.D.)
 Other _____

3. What is your ethnicity?

- Hispanic or Latino
 Non- Hispanic or Latino

4. What is your race? (Select one or more)

- Black or African American
 White
 Asian
 American Indian or Alaska Native
 Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander

5. Do you currently work in a child welfare agency or other system agency that engages with fathers and paternal relatives? (If no, skip questions 6-8)

Yes

No

6. Select the job title that best describes your current role in the agency or organization.

Caseworker/case manager

Case aide

Supervisor

Program director

Agency director

Staff in a special program (parent support or reunification services)

Community partner description _____

Other

Description _____

7. How long have you worked in your current position?

_____ Years _____ Months

8. How long have you been actively promoting the engagement of fathers and other paternal relatives in this or any other professional role?

_____ Years _____ Months

B. Individual assessment

The following are statements about your **individual experiences** with *Engaging Fathers and Paternal Relatives in Child Welfare*. Please indicate your level of confidence in the following areas.

Please rank your individual level of confidence in the following areas.

1 – Not at all confident 10 – Extremely confident

1. My ability to express positive beliefs and attitudes when engaging fathers and paternal relatives	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
2. My ability to engage fathers and paternal relatives from varying backgrounds (e.g. racial, ethnic, socio-economic and other)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
3. My ability to develop positive working relationships with fathers and paternal relatives	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
4. My ability to create an environment that values and respects fathers and paternal relatives	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
5. My understanding of the importance of cultivating racial equity for men of color in the child welfare system	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
6. My ability to efficiently and effectively identify and locate fathers and paternal relatives	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
7. My ability to assess and highlight the strengths of fathers and paternal relatives	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
8. My ability to assess and address the needs of fathers and paternal relatives	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
9. My ability to assess and address the barriers that fathers and paternal relatives face that could impact their ability to safely care for their children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
10. My ability to support fathers and paternal relatives involvement with their children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11. My ability to use data to effectively improve my engagement of fathers and paternal relatives	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10



Engaging Fathers and Paternal Relatives in Child Welfare Breakthrough Series Collaborative

Learning session overall evaluation

The purpose of the information collection is to get feedback on improvement team members' experiences with each of the three learning sessions that will take place over the course of the project. The Learning Session Overall Evaluation collects information on participants' general perceptions of the learning sessions.

It will be administered three times. The FCL project team will analyze this information to determine whether the training and support provided to the improvement teams worked well and whether the FCL project team was responsive to the improvement teams.

The average estimated public reporting burden for this collection of information is about 15 minutes per response. Providing this information is voluntary, and all responses that are collected will be kept private to the extent permitted by law.

An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. The OMB number for this information collection is 0970-0531 and the expiration date is 07/31/2022.

Overall Evaluation

*This **two-page** evaluation assesses how well this learning session met the project goals.*

Responses will be kept anonymous and used for planning purposes only, so please be candid!

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Comments
1. The [insert session specific title] helped me achieve [insert session learning objectives] .	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2. The [insert session specific title] helped me achieve [insert session learning objectives] .	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
3. Each team meeting was important because it gave my team time to process what we learned and translate our learning into action.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
4. The [insert session specific title] helped me achieve [insert session learning objectives] .	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
5. The affinity group session (Day 2 – meetings by role) allowed me to share my strengths and concerns with people from other teams who serve in a similar role.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
6. Inspiration and commitment: Overall, I leave the learning session feeling inspired, empowered, and committed to testing improvements in my practice when I return home.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
7. Flow and structure: This meeting had the right mix of small-group and large-group discussions to ensure all voices and perspectives were heard.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Comments
8. Balanced focus: We had the right mix of “content” work (focus on engaging fathers and paternal relatives) and “process” work (using the Model for Improvement and Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSAs)) to continue moving this work forward.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
9. Overall impression: This learning session was a good use of my time, with a solid focus, engaging activities, and concrete results.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
10. Storyboards: Creating and presenting our storyboard was a value and rewarding experience for our team.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

1. What (if anything) **surprised** you about this learning session?

2. Please use the space below to comment on what you thought was **best** about the learning session.

3. Please use the space below to comment on what you thought could **most use improvement** about this learning session.

4. Please use the space below for any other reflections, comments, or recommendations you have about the learning session or the BSC overall.

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Engaging Fathers and Paternal Relatives in Child Welfare Breakthrough Series Collaborative Data collection planning worksheet

The purpose of this document is to describe the information your Improvement team will collect and share to help track and assess your progress toward engaging fathers and paternal relatives in child welfare. It is intended to be a companion to the collaborative change framework, with improvement in each measure moving you closer to the global aim of this Breakthrough Series Collaborative (BSC).

Whenever possible, we encourage you to consider using data you already collect instead of creating entirely new data collection systems for this project. The ideal is to find a balance between data that are minimally burdensome to collect and assess, and data that will be most helpful and important to your team as a way of understanding your progress toward the global aim of this BSC.

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average two hours per response. Your Improvement Team members are encouraged to complete this document together. Providing this information is voluntary, and all responses that are collected will be kept private to the extent permitted by law.

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Measure Guidance

This document includes Breakthrough Series Collaborative (BSC) measures that support the Collaborative Change Framework and a data collection plan template designed to help teams plan for collecting data. We encourage teams to consider data they may already collect; data that is minimally burdensome to collect and access; the data that will be most helpful and important to their individual sites; and tools that may be used to collect data for multiple metrics.

Data collection

Teams will create a data collection plan in the first month of the BSC. A data collection plan is a detailed document that outlines the steps, sequence, and resources required to collect data for measuring BCS measure outcomes. This document is important to ensure everyone understands the individual and team expectations for collecting the data. Consider the following when developing the data collection plan:

Collecting Data: Determine what data is needed, who will collect it, where to get the data (or where to begin collecting it), the frequency of data collection, and method of collecting it.

- **What:** The BSC team has defined measures that support the Collaborative Change Framework (CCF). These measures are described in this document.
- **Who:** Your team will determine who is responsible for collecting each data element within the measures. In some cases more than one person will collect data for the same measure. Consider how hand-offs will occur and what collaboration is required in order to obtain complete data.
- **Where:** Consider what data sources your team will need to access in order to collect the data.
- **Frequency:** Each measure has a defined measure period. Consider the frequency in which your team will collect data in order to meet these measurement periods.
 - **Monthly:** Calendar month of the reporting period. For example, teams will report data in December the data collected in November.
 - **Quarterly:** Three calendar months. This may be defined by the teams as the previous three months or by collecting data at four defined points throughout the year. For example, sites may decide to conduct surveys in March, July, October and December.
- **How:** What methods will your team use to collect the data? Evaluate what data your site is already collecting in relation the BSC measures. In some cases, the data collection process will need to be created.

Race and Ethnicity: Cultivating racial equity and actively valuing the role of fathers and paternal relatives in all children’s lives is necessary to father and paternal relative engagement. We recommend that you collect all metrics by race and ethnicity, and request that you select at least two (2) measures to collect by race and ethnicity. This will allow your team to observe whether practice changes appear to impact families of different races differently. We ask that you use the categories aligned with standard child welfare data collection practices as you report your metrics so there is consistency in reporting across sites. These categories are African American, White, American Indian or Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, Asian. Separately, please report whether the child is Hispanic or Latino (yes or no).

Reporting the Data

The BSC team will provide sites a data submission tool that includes graphs and run charts to demonstrate performance over time. Data submission is due the 20th day of each month. If the 20th falls on a weekend, the data is due the next business day. Some data is collected monthly and other data is collected quarterly. Refer to each measure for the correct reporting period. In addition to the data reporting tool the BSC planning team is also available to help your team develop and revise your data collection plan. This includes helping identify available tracking systems as well as support in developing additional/supplemental tracking systems. If you do not already use surveys or tools to collect specific metrics, we can help you select or create a survey or tool that would best meet your site's needs.

Breakthrough Series Collaborative Measures

1. Initial identification of the father

Change Framework Domain: 3

1a. Initial request to identify the father

Measure Description: Percent of investigations where there was a request to identify the father at the first point of contact

Numerator Statement: Number of investigations initiated during the month where the investigator asked about father's identity at the first point of contact

Denominator Statement: Number of investigations initiated during the month

Measure Period: Monthly

Measure Notes: Sites define "new investigations" and "first point of contact"

1b. Initial identification of the father

Measure Description: Percent of fathers identified at the first point of contact

Numerator Statement: Number of investigations initiated during the month where the investigator asked about father's identity at the first point of contact

Denominator Statement: Number investigations initiated during the month

Measure Period: Monthly

Measure Notes: Sites define "new investigations" and "first point of contact"

2. Identification by additional agencies or sources

Change Framework Domain: 3

2. At least one attempt to outreach to additional agencies or sources

Measure Description: Percent of completed investigations where investigators accessed additional agencies or sources to locate the father when the father was not previously identified

Numerator Statement: Number of completed investigations where at least one attempt was made in the month to access information from additional agencies or sources to locate a father where a father is not identified at the first point of contact

Denominator Statement: Number of investigations completed in the month where a father was not identified at the first point of contact

Measure Period: Monthly

Measure Notes: Sites may consider setting their own internal goals for number of attempts per case

Breakthrough Series Collaborative Measures

3. Placement options

Change Framework Domains: 1, 2, 4, 5

3a. Notifying the father of placement

Measure Description: Percent of new placements where the father was notified the child/sibling group was being placed into foster care

Numerator Statement: Number of new placements completed in the month where the father was notified the child/sibling group was being placed into foster care

Denominator Statement: Number of new placements completed in the month

Measure Period: Monthly

3b. Documented reason for father not being a viable placement option

Measure Description: Percent of new placement with documented reason why fathers are not a viable placement or permanency option for children placed in foster care

Numerator Statement: Number of new placements completed during the month with a documented reason why fathers are or are not a viable placement or permanency option

Denominator Statement: Number of new placements made during the month where a child was not placed in the care of a father

Measure Period: Monthly

Measure Notes: Foster care is defined as kinship care or another non-relative foster care placement

4. Family meetings with fathers and paternal relatives

Change Framework Domains: 1, 2, 4, 5

4a. Invitation to the family team meeting

Measure Description: Percent of family team meetings where an invitation was extended to fathers and/or paternal relatives

Numerator Statement: Number of family meetings conducted in the month where an invitation was extended to fathers and/or paternal relatives

Denominator Statement: Number of family team meetings conducted during the month

Measure Period: Monthly

Measure Notes:

4b. Participation in the family team meeting

Measure Description: Percent of family team meetings conducted that included a father or paternal relative

Numerator Statement: Number of family meetings conducted during the month where the fathers and/or paternal relative attended.

Denominator Statement: Number of family team meetings conducted during the month where the father was invited to attend

Measure Period: Monthly

Breakthrough Series Collaborative Measures

5. Inclusion of fathers and paternal relatives in case plans

Change Framework Domains: 1, 2, 4, 5

5a. Input in case planning

Measure Description: Percent of fathers or paternal relatives who perceived that their input was included in the case plan

Numerator Statement: Number of father or paternal relatives surveyed in the quarter about their perceptions of inclusion of the case plan where the father or paternal relative perceives their input was included

Denominator Statement: Number of father or paternal relatives surveyed in the quarter about their perceptions of inclusion of the case plan

Exclusions: Fathers or paternal relatives that do not complete the survey

Measure Period: Quarterly

Measure Notes:

- Consider a brief survey to fathers and/or paternal relatives to ascertain their perception of inclusion.
- Consider other ways to get input from fathers about whether they felt they contributed to the case plan
- Teams to define “quarter.” See measure guidance for additional information.

5b. Needs documented in case plans

Measure Description: Percent of case plans created that include documentation of a father or paternal relative’s unique needs

Numerator Statement: Number of case plans created during the month where the father or paternal relative’s unique needs were documented

Denominator Statement: Number of case plans created during the month

Measure Period: Monthly

Measure Notes: Documentation of a father or paternal relative’s unique needs include any services or supports that specifically name the father or a paternal relative as the intended client, including (but not limited to) parenting support, behavioral health support, housing, meeting basic needs, navigating the court system, etc.

5c. Receipt of needed services

Measure Description: Percent of fathers or paternal relatives who received services to meet their unique needs as documented in case plans.

Numerator Statement: Number of active/open case plans where the father or paternal relative received at least one of the services to meet their unique needs as documented in the case plans

Denominator Statement: Number of active/open case plans where the father or paternal relative’s unique needs were documented

Measure Period: Monthly

Measure Notes: Note separately the number of services needed, and the number of services received

Breakthrough Series Collaborative Measures

5. Inclusion of fathers and paternal relatives in case plans (continued)

Change Framework Domains: 1, 2, 4, 5

5d. Perception of needs met (optional)

Measure Description: Percent of fathers or paternal relatives who perceived they received services that met their unique needs as documented in case plans

Numerator Statement: Number of fathers or paternal relatives who perceived they received the services to meet their unique needs as documented in their case plans

Denominator Statement: Number of fathers who were surveyed.

Exclusions: Case plans where the father or paternal relative did not complete a survey

Measure Period: Quarterly

Measure Notes:

- Consider a brief survey to fathers and/or paternal relatives to ascertain perception of inclusion.
- Consider other ways to get father input about whether they felt that services met their unique needs.
- The survey for this metric would be given only to fathers or paternal relatives who had their unique needs documented in their case plans (denominator in 5c).
- Teams to define “quarter.” See measure guidance for additional information.

6. Visitation with fathers and paternal relatives

Change Framework Domains: 1, 2, 4, 5

6. Visitation and contact

Measure Description: Percent child/sibling groups that have at least one visit with the father or paternal relative during the month

Numerator Statement: Number of child/sibling groups that had at least one visit with the father or paternal relative in the month

Denominator Statement: Number of open cases where a child/sibling group is in a placement other than with the father

Exclusions: Do not count cases where child is already living with paternal relative, but note separately if you have children living with a paternal relative, and therefore not included.

Measure Period: Monthly

Measure Notes: note separately if you have children living with a paternal relative, and therefore not included.

Breakthrough Series Collaborative Measures

7. Reunification

Change Framework Domain:

7. Reunification

Measure Description: Percent of children/sibling groups who exited care during the month and reunified with a father or paternal relative

Numerator Statement: Number of child/sibling groups that exit care during the month where the child/sibling group returned home to a father or paternal relative

Denominator Statement: Number of child/sibling groups children that exit care during the month

Measure Period: Monthly

Measure Notes: Please also note number of children (sibling groups) that reunified generally (as opposed to reunified with a father or paternal relative).

Data Collection Plan *As noted above, please report by the following racial categories: African American, White, American Indian or Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, Asian. Separately, please document whether the child is of Hispanic or Latino ethnicity (yes or no). We strongly recommend all metrics be reported by race and ethnicity, and request that at least 2 are reported by race and ethnicity.

Measure	Data Type (Discrete, survey)	How we will collect the data	Who will collect the data	New or existing	Where will the data come from	What resources do we need
Initial request to identify the father						
Initial identification of the father						
At least one attempt to outreach to additional agencies or sources						
Documented reason for father not being a viable placement option						
Visits to the home						
Invitation to the family team meeting						
Participation in the family team meeting						
Input in service planning						
Needs documented in service plans						
Receipt of needed services						
Perception of needs met						
Visitation and contact						
Reunification						

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Engaging Fathers and Paternal Relatives in Child Welfare Breakthrough Series Collaborative

Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) worksheet

The purpose of this document is to track your team progress with tests of change conducted as part of engaging fathers and paternal relatives in child welfare. It is intended to be a companion to the Collaborative Change Framework, with improvement in each measure moving you closer to the global aim of this Breakthrough Series Collaborative (BSC). Your team will plan and conduct tests of change to meet the aims of the Collaborative Change Framework and will usually conduct multiple PDSA cycles in order to achieve the aim. You can use this template to guide the information you input into SharePoint.

Public documentation burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 15 minutes per PDSA cycle. Providing this information is voluntary, and all responses that are collected will be kept private to the extent permitted by law.

An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. The OMB number for this information collection is 0970-0531 and the expiration date is 07/31/2022.

Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) Worksheet

Improvement team name:

Date:

Team lead:

Cycle:

The Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) worksheet is a tool for documenting small tests of change. Using the worksheet, you will test practice changes that are based on the PDSA cycle process. In this process, teams develop a plan (Plan), carry out the test (Do), observe and learn from the test (Study), and determine what modifications are necessary in order for the outcome to be more successful (Act). This cycle is also known as a small test of change. You will enter this information into SharePoint.

Plan-Do-Study-Act Worksheet

PDSA information: What are you trying to accomplish?

Team Name:

Start Date:

End Date:

CCF domain most closely aligned with this PDSA:

Measure(s) you expect to impact with this PDSA:

Name of PDSA:

What is the objective (aim)?:

Description: What are we trying to accomplish?

Plan

Description: Describe what you plan to test.

- A. What changes will be made?*
- B. What are the steps for the plan (who, what, where, when)?*
- C. What data will you collect? Who will collect it?*
- D. What do you predict will happen?*

Plan-Do-Study-Act Worksheet

Do

Description: What actions were taken?

Study

Description: What were the results of your actions? Did the test work as expected? Why or why not?

Act

Description: What actions are you going to take as a result of this cycle? Will you adjust the strategy and keep it small, adjust the strategy and expand it, expand the strategy with no changes, or abandon the strategy?

Plan-Do-Study-Act Worksheet

Current Cycle

Description: How many times you've tested this strategy (e.g., first cycle, second cycle).

Status

Description: What is the current status of your test (In progress (still testing), Fully implemented, Sustainable, Abandoned)?

Updates

Description: Briefly describe what improvements your team has made to this test since the first cycle and your plans for the next cycle as you move it towards sustainable implementation.

Appendix E

Development of the Collaborative Change Framework

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Introduction

The Collaborative Change Framework (CCF) is one of the five key elements of the Breakthrough Series Collaborative (BSC) methodology. This appendix briefly describes the purpose of the CCF and the process used to develop it for Fathers and Continuous Learning in Child Welfare (FCL).

Purpose of the CCF

Based on the Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI) model, the CCF is usually developed in the first phase of the BSC. During a BSC, the CCF is a guide for understanding how complicated goals can be broken down into manageable strategies that can be tested and adapted in short periods of time. The CCF describes the key areas that sites will make changes in and serves as a conceptual map for conducting small tests of change and tracking progress over time. In addition to providing a vision, the process of developing the CCF can also be an opportunity to identify potential Faculty Coaches for the BSC. For FCL, the CCF depicts a vision of a child welfare agency that effectively engages fathers and paternal relatives along five key domains. Therefore, it is a model for what the BSC activities work toward.

Process of developing the CCF for FCL

In a BSC, the CCF is developed from the existing evidence base and the experience of stakeholders at different levels of the system that is being targeted for change. A group process is used to develop the CCF. For this project, once ACF selected the BSC as the continuous learning process, the Mathematica/DU BSC team began developing the CCF.

The Mathematica/DU BSC team used existing evidence and its own expertise to draft a CCF. They used scientific and gray literature to determine key themes related to engaging fathers and paternal relatives in child welfare.

The draft CCF was then shared during a one-day, in-person meeting that included the Mathematica/DU BSC team along with experts in father engagement, child welfare agency staff, practitioners, administrators, and researchers. The group included 19 people working in child welfare and other related communities that work with fathers and paternal relatives to promote their involvement in child welfare services. The Mathematica/DU BSC team recruited these experts to represent a diverse group of gender and racial identities, professional roles, and geographic locations.

The group spent one day together in person refining the change framework in order to develop the final CCF. The BSC consultant facilitated this meeting. Participants in the meeting first reviewed the draft CCF, then had a series of small- and large-group discussions until they arrived at the final CCF through consensus. In the process, they added details to and edited the language used in the CCF.

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Appendix F

Pilot Study Instruments

The pilot study used four instruments to collect data from all Improvement Teams during site visits. They document the Improvement Teams' experience implementing the BSC and their work with system partners to plan, test, and adjust engagement strategies. In response to the COVID-19 public health emergency, non-substantive changes were made to these instruments to adapt them for virtual data collection for two sites. This appendix includes the final versions of these instruments:

Improvement Team interview

Interview with staff responsible for engaging with fathers and paternal relatives who are not on the Improvement Teams

Senior leader interview

Interview with fathers and paternal relatives on Improvement Teams

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Engaging Fathers and Paternal Relatives in Child Welfare Breakthrough Series Collaborative Improvement Team interview

This protocol will be used to facilitate group interviews with Improvement Team members, which include child welfare agency staff (such as managers, supervisors, and workers) and community partner staff (such as staff from father engagement organizations). In these interviews, participants will discuss their experience with the BSC, the resources required to participate in the BSC, the perceived benefits of the learning sessions, the barriers and facilitators to implementing strategies based on the Collaborative Change Framework and using the model for improvement, progress toward site-specific aims and short-term outcomes, plans for sustaining the practices identified based on the CCF, and consistency with the five key elements of a BSC.

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average one hour and a half. This collection of information is voluntary and all responses collected will be kept private to the extent permitted by law.

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Fathers and Continuous Learning in Child Welfare Project

Semi-Structured Protocol: Improvement Team Interview

***Note to interviewer:** The following detailed script should not be read verbatim. As the interviewer, you must be familiar enough with the script to introduce the study and the focus of the interview without reading word-for-word from the script. Please familiarize yourself thoroughly with the text before you conduct interviews. After introducing the site visit team and the study based on the detailed script, there is a brief script at the end that must be read verbatim to review the fundamental rights of the participants.*

Introducing the interviewer and co-interviewer

Thank you for taking the time to speak with us today. We especially appreciate your willingness to participate in this site visit online given these extraordinary circumstances. We are from Mathematica, an independent research firm. My name is [NAME], and my colleague is [NAME].

Explaining the project and the purpose of the group discussion

You should have received a copy of a Consent Information Form by email. If you did not, please let us know and we will send you that information. I'm going to review the content of that form before we begin.

We are conducting the Fathers and Continuous Learning in Child Welfare project for the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation within the Administration for Children and Families at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. This project is designed to support and learn about how child welfare agencies can engage fathers and paternal relatives using the Breakthrough Series Collaborative (BSC) methodology.

We are interested in hearing about your experiences using the BSC to enhance the engagement of fathers and paternal relatives' with children involved in child welfare. We are interviewing Improvement Team members to learn about your role on the team, the supports you needed to implement the BSC, and how the BSC affected your work with fathers and paternal relatives and changed how engaged they were in child welfare cases. We will use the information you share with us to write a summary of what we have learned, but we will not use your name in our final report. I hope you feel comfortable enough to speak freely about your experience.

Privacy and taping

Our study team will summarize today's discussion for the purposes of this project only. We will keep the information you provide in these discussions private to the extent permitted by law. We will not use any names or associate your name with a specific statement. We value the information you will share with us, and want to make sure we capture it all by recording this WebEx discussion. We will destroy the recording at the end of the project. If you want to say anything that you do not want recorded, please let me know, and I will be glad to pause the recording.

Before we start, I would like to remind you that participating in this interview is voluntary. We expect this discussion to take about 90 minutes. There are no repercussions if you choose not to participate. If you do not know the answer to a question, please let us know that, and we will simply move on. If you prefer not to answer a question for any reason, please let us know that, and we will move on. Do we have your permission to proceed with the discussion?

Does anyone object to our recording the discussion?

Before we get started, does anyone have any questions?

[The discussions will be tailored to the specific persons interviewed and interview format. To the extent information is not available from other sources collected through the BSC, such as the plan-study-do-act planning form and tracker; the following are guidelines for points for discussion.]

Ground rules for discussion

Before we start, we want to give you some ground rules about how our time together will go.

- Mute yourself when you are not speaking.
- Use your web camera if you are able.
- This will be an informal discussion.
- The discussion will last about 90 minutes. There will be no formal breaks. Please feel free to step away whenever you need to.
- There are no right or wrong answers to the questions. We are interested in learning everyone's opinion.
- We would like only one person to talk at a time so the recording can pick up everyone. But we hope all of you will tell us your thoughts and feelings throughout the discussion.
- To get your thoughts on all the topics that we're interested in, I might change the subject or move ahead from time to time.
- We also ask that you keep the discussion private and do not share it with others outside this discussion.
- Are there any questions? Is everyone comfortable with these ground rules?

Also, before we begin I need to share with you that an agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. The OMB number for this information collection 0970-0531 and the expiration date is 07/31/2022.

Brief Verbatim Script

“Before we start, I would like to remind you that participating in this interview is voluntary. We expect this discussion to take about 90 minutes. There are no repercussions if you choose not to participate. If you do not know the answer to a question, please let us know that, and we will simply move on. If you prefer not to answer a question for any reason, please let us know that, and we will move on. Do we have your permission to proceed with the discussion?”

To get things started, I am going to go around the room and ask each of you to introduce yourself. Then we will discuss your experiences related to [agency]'s participation in the BSC. We would like everyone to participate in the discussion.

A. Please introduce yourself by describing your role on the Improvement Team and sharing how long you have been working at [agency or partner organization]?

Now, we would like to discuss the process for forming your Improvement Team and how being on the Improvement Team impacts your work.

B. What was the process for forming your Improvement Team?

[Probe on the following if needed]

1. What aspects of the process worked well? What aspects of the process were challenging?
2. Were there criteria for selecting team members? If so, what were they?
3. How were community partners selected? Why were those partners chosen?

C. We know that child welfare staff and their partners have many demands on their time. How are you able to make time to be a member of the Improvement Team?

[Probe on the following if needed]

1. How does it affect the rest of your job?
2. What organizational or other supports did you receive to participate on the Improvement Team?

D. How does bringing the Improvement Team together influence your work more generally?

[Probe on the following if needed]

1. In what ways does participating in the Improvement Team benefit your work with fathers and paternal relatives? Can you provide an example?
2. What do you find challenging about bringing the Improvement Team together?

We would like to learn more about your experience with the Collaborative Change Framework and the Model for Improvement.

E. The Collaborative Change Framework guides the work of improvement teams as part of the BSC. What are your thoughts about the Collaborative Change Framework's domains?

[Probe on the following if needed]

1. Do you think the Collaborative Change Framework's selected domains are the most relevant to addressing the challenges of engaging fathers and paternal relatives?
2. What aspects of the Collaborative Change Framework did you find most relevant?
3. Which aspects did you find least relevant?
4. What was missing from the Collaborative Change Framework?
5. Were there any unintended consequences associated with implementing the Collaborative Change Framework?
6. Will the [agency] continue using the strategies associated with the Collaborative Change Framework? Why or why not?

Let's talk about the Model for Improvement and the strategies you tested next. As part of your participation in the BSC, your team used the Model for Improvement to translate the Collaborative Change Framework into testable strategies and keep focused on your mission and aim of successfully engaging fathers and paternal relatives.

F. How did the team determine the domains to address?

[Probe on the following if needed]

1. What were the key issues and challenges the team experienced when choosing which domains to address? How did you address these key issues and challenges?

G. How did the Improvement Team develop the engagement strategies it implemented?

1. What were the key issues and challenges the team experienced when designing (or adapting) strategies? How did you address these challenges?
2. How did you select other staff, who were not involved in the Improvement Team, to help test and implement the strategies?
3. How do the engagement strategies you tested and implemented over the course of this BSC compare with strategies you used to engage fathers and paternal relatives before the BSC??
4. What resources (infrastructure and supports) from [the agency] and/or its partners do you have to implement the BSC? What additional resources would have been helpful to implement the BSC?

H. How did the Improvement Team develop the data collection plan to track changes in engagement?

[Probe on the following if needed]

1. What were the key issues and challenges the team experienced when developing the data collection plan? How did you address these challenges?
2. What resources (infrastructure and supports) from [the agency] and/or its partners do you have to implement data collection plan? What additional resources would have been helpful to implement the data collection plan?

Let's talk about learning from other sites. The Shared Learning Environment is intended to inspire sharing of information for rapid improvement in how teams engage fathers and paternal relatives.

I. What is most useful to you about the opportunities you have had to learn from the other sites and the faculty coaches in the BSC? What could be better?

[Probe on the following if needed]

1. What is most useful about the Learning Sessions? What could be better?
2. What is most useful about the Faculty Coaches? What could be better?
3. What is most useful about the Affinity Group calls? What could be better?
4. What is most useful about the collaborative SharePoint site? What could be better?

Thank you for sharing your thoughts—your input is invaluable. As we close our discussion, we are interested in your reflections on the BSC's impact on your agency and the types of resources that would have made it more helpful to you.

J. How has [agency's] approach to engaging fathers and paternal relatives changed since you began participating in the BSC?

[Probe on the following if needed]

1. In your opinion, which aspects of participating in the BSC are most rewarding? Which are most challenging?
2. What types of guidance or additional information would have been helpful to you as you implemented the BSC?

Thank you again for sharing your experiences with us today.



Engaging Fathers and Paternal Relatives in Child Welfare Breakthrough Series Collaborative

Interview with staff responsible for engaging with fathers and paternal relatives who are not a part of the Improvement Team

This protocol will be used to facilitate focus groups with staff involved with father and paternal relative engagement strategies who are not part of the Improvement Team to explore their perspectives on the implementation, feasibility, and success of the BSC and strategies.

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average one hour and a half. This collection of information is voluntary and all responses collected will be kept private to the extent permitted by law.

An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. The OMB number for this information collection 0970-0531 and the expiration date is 07/31/2022.

Fathers and Continuous Learning in Child Welfare Project

Semi-Structured Protocol: Interview with staff responsible for engaging with fathers and paternal relatives who are not a part of the Improvement Team

***Note to interviewer:** The following detailed script should not be read verbatim. As the interviewer, you must be familiar enough with the script to introduce the study and the focus of the interview without reading word-for-word from the script. Please familiarize yourself thoroughly with the text before you conduct interviews. After introducing the site visit team and the study based on the detailed script, there is a brief script at the end that must be read verbatim to review the fundamental rights of the participants.*

Introducing the interviewer and co-interviewer

Thank you for taking the time to speak with us today. We especially appreciate your willingness to participate in this site visit online given these extraordinary circumstances. We are from Mathematica, an independent research firm. My name is [NAME], and my colleague is [NAME].

Explaining the project and the purpose of the group discussion

You should have received a copy of a Consent Information Form by email. If you did not, please let us know and we will send you that information. I'm going to review the content of that form before we begin.

We are conducting the Fathers and Continuous Learning in Child Welfare project for the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation within the Administration for Children and Families at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Our project is designed to support and learn about how child welfare agencies can engage fathers and paternal relatives using the Breakthrough Series Collaborative (BSC) methodology. The BSC is an approach used to reach important system-wide goals. Organizations conduct small tests of change and collect data from the tests to improve their practice. In this case, the sites in our study had the goal of improving their engagement of fathers and paternal relatives, and Mathematica is working with the sites to support the implementation of the BSC.

We are interested in hearing about [child welfare agency name]'s experience using the BSC to identify and implement promising strategies to enhance fathers' and paternal relatives' engagement. As staff who implemented those strategies as part of the BSC's small tests of change, we are also interested in learning about the activities you have participated in to engage fathers and paternal relatives, what you find helpful about the tests of change, and what you think should be improved. We hope you feel comfortable enough to speak freely about your experience.

Privacy and taping

Our study team will summarize today's discussion for the purposes of this project only. We will keep the information provided in these discussions private to the extent permitted by law. We will not use any names or associate your name with a specific statement. We value the information you will share with us, and want to make sure we capture it all by recording this WebEx discussion. We will destroy the recording at the end of the project. If you want to say anything that you do not want recorded, please let me know, and I will be glad to pause the recording.

Before we start, I would like to remind you that participating in this interview is voluntary. There are no repercussions if you choose not to participate. If you do not know the answer to a question, please let us know that, and we will simply move on. If you prefer not to answer a question for any reason, you do not need to respond. Do we have your permission to proceed with the discussion?

Does anyone object to our recording the discussion? Before we get started, does anyone have any questions?

[The discussions will be tailored to the specific persons interviewed and interview format. To the extent information is not available from other sources collected through the BSC, such as the plan-study-do-act planning form and tracker, the following are guidelines for points for discussion.]

Ground rules for discussion

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- There are no right or wrong answers to the questions. We are interested in learning everyone's opinion.
- We would like only one person to talk at a time so the recording can pick up everyone, but we hope that each of you will contribute. We value your opinions and want to hear about your experiences.
- To keep us on schedule, I might change the subject or move ahead from time to time.
- We also ask that you keep the discussion private and not share what you hear with others outside this discussion.
- Are there any questions? Is everyone comfortable with these ground rules?

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Brief Verbatim Script

“Before we start, I would like to remind you that participating in this interview is voluntary. We expect this discussion to take about 90 minutes. There are no repercussions if you choose not to participate. If you do not know the answer to a question, please let us know that, and we will simply move on. If you prefer not to answer a question for any reason, please let us know that, and we will move on. Do we have your permission to proceed with the discussion?”

To get things started, I'm going to go around the room and ask each of you for your first name and how long you've been with [agency]. Then we will discuss your experiences related to your agency's participation in the BSC. We would like everyone to participate in the discussion.

A. Please introduce yourself and share how long you have been working at [agency].

1. Please briefly describe your involvement in engaging fathers and paternal relatives before your agency began participating in the BSC.

We'd like to learn more about how the strategies to engage fathers and paternal relatives were developed. We're also interested in your involvement in these decisions.

B. Can you briefly describe your involvement in the engagement strategies studied as part of the BSC?

[Probe on the following if needed]

1. Were any of you involved in selecting, adapting, or designing the engagement strategies that would be tested as part of this BSC? If so, how did [agency] select, design, and implement engagement strategies to test in the BSC?
2. What were the key issues and challenges your agency faced when designing (or adapting) the strategies? How did you address these challenges?
3. What additional strategies to engage fathers and paternal relatives would be helpful?

Next, I want to learn about any training or technical assistance you received to test and implement the strategies to engage fathers and paternal relatives. As part of this discussion, please consider all forms of support you might have received from within your agency and also from others outside your agency.

C. What supports did you receive to implement and test the engagement strategies?

[Probe on the following if needed]

1. What preparation did you have to effectively implement the engagement strategies? To understand the intent of testing the strategies?
2. What challenges have you faced with testing and implementing these strategies? What helped you test and implement these strategies?
3. In which areas or ways could you have been better supported?
4. How was the BSC helpful in improving your strategies to engage fathers and paternal relatives? What would you have changed about the BSC to make it more helpful?
5. What types of guidance or additional information would have been helpful?

Now that we've talked about how the strategies were tested, how they were implemented, and the supports that you received, we'd like to get a sense of how the testing and implementation were documented.

D. How did the Improvement Team review data to assess whether the engagement strategies you were testing were making things better?

[Probe on the following if needed]

1. Did you receive guidance on how to interpret and use the findings?
2. How often is documentation about the tested strategies reviewed? Who reviews the data (e.g., supervisor, improvement team, work group)?
3. What made it easier for you to document aspects of using the strategy for the BSC process? What made it challenging?

Next, we'd like to talk about how implementation was influenced by the different domains, which include: (1) Support community, system, and agency environments that value and respect all fathers and paternal relatives; (2) Cultivate racial equity for men of color in the child welfare system; (3) Identify and locate fathers and paternal relatives, from the first point of contact with the family; (4) Assess and address the strengths and needs of fathers and paternal relatives, and barriers for, fathers and paternal relatives; and (5) Continuously involve fathers and paternal relatives throughout the lives of their children.

E. How did implementation of strategies vary by domain?

[Probe on the following if needed]

1. Were some strategies easier to test and implement than others? Please explain.

We have covered a lot of information today related to your role at [site], and learned a lot about the way your agency engages fathers and paternal relatives, and some of its challenges and successes. Before we finish, we want to get your perspective on how the BSC has changed the work with fathers and paternal relatives.

F. How, if at all, has implementing the strategies changed the way staff at [agency] view and work with fathers and paternal relatives?

[Probe on the following if needed]

1. How, if at all, have the strategies improved the engagement of fathers and paternal relatives at [agency]?
2. How, if at all, has learning about, testing, and implementing changes related to these strategies helped your work?
3. What would you change about the process of using the BSC to test and implement strategies to engage fathers and paternal relatives? Which parts of the process have you found challenging?

Thank you for your time today.



Engaging Fathers and Paternal Relatives in Child Welfare Breakthrough Series Collaborative

Senior leader interview

This protocol will be used to facilitate one-on-one discussions with agency leadership to understand their experience participating in the BSC to improve engagement of fathers and paternal relatives.

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average one hour. This collection of information is voluntary and all responses collected will be kept private to the extent permitted by law.

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Fathers and Continuous Learning in Child Welfare Project

Semi-Structured Protocol: Senior leader interview

***Note to interviewer:** The following detailed script should not be read verbatim. As the interviewer, you must be familiar enough with the script to introduce the study and the focus of the interview without reading word-for-word from the script. Please familiarize yourself thoroughly with the text before you conduct interviews. After introducing the site visit team and the study based on the detailed script, there is a brief script at the end that must be read verbatim to review the fundamental rights of the participants.*

Introducing the interviewer and co-interviewer

Thank you for taking the time to speak with us today. We especially appreciate your willingness to participate in this site visit online given these extraordinary circumstances. We are from Mathematica, an independent research firm. My name is [NAME], and my colleague is [NAME].

Explaining the project and the purpose of the group discussion

You should have received a copy of a Consent Information Form by email. If you did not, please let us know and we will send you that information. I'm going to review the content of that form before we begin.

We are conducting the Fathers and Continuous Learning in Child Welfare project for the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation within the Administration for Children and Families at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Our project is designed to support and learn about how child welfare agencies can engage fathers and paternal relatives using the Breakthrough Series Collaborative (BSC) methodology. The BSC is an approach used to reach important systemwide goals. Organizations conduct small tests of change and collect data from the tests to improve their practice. In this case, the sites in our study had the goal of improving their engagement of fathers and paternal relatives, and Mathematica is working with the sites to support the implementation of the BSC.

We are interested in hearing about your agency's experience using the BSC to identify and implement promising strategies to help father and paternal relative's engagement. We are also interested in learning about your experiences using a BSC to improve engagement of fathers and paternal relatives; what you find helpful about the BSC; and what you think should be improved. We hope you feel comfortable enough to speak freely about your experience.

Privacy and taping

Our study team will summarize today's discussion for the purposes of this project only. We will keep the information you provide in these discussions private to the extent permitted by law. We will not use any names or associate your name with a specific statement. We value the information you will share with us, and want to make sure we capture it all by recording this WebEx discussion. We will destroy the recording at the end of the project. If you want to say anything that you do not want recorded, please let me know, and I will be glad to pause the recording.

Before we start, I would like to remind you that participating in this interview is voluntary. We expect this discussion to take about 60 minutes. There are no repercussions if you choose not to participate. If you do not know the answer to a question, please let us know that, and we will simply move on. If you prefer not

to answer a question for any reason, please let us know that, and we will move on. Do we have your permission to proceed with the discussion?

Do you object to our recording the discussion? Before we get started, do you have any questions?

Ground rules for discussion

Before we start, we want to give you some ground rules about how our time together will go.

- Mute yourself when you are not speaking.
- Use your web camera if you are able.
- This will be an informal discussion.
- The discussion will last about 60 minutes. There will be no formal breaks. Please let us know if you need to step away.
- There are no right or wrong answers to the questions. We are interested in learning everyone's opinion.
- We would like only one person to talk at a time so the recording can pick up everyone, but we hope that each of you will contribute. We value your opinions and want to hear about your experiences.
- To keep us on schedule, I might change the subject or move ahead from time to time.
- We also ask that you keep the discussion private and not share what you hear with others outside this discussion.
- Are there any questions? Is everyone/are you comfortable with these ground rules?

Also, before we begin I need to share with you that an agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. The OMB number for this information collection 0970-0531 and the expiration date is 07/31/2022.

Brief Verbatim Script

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[The discussions will be tailored to the specific persons interviewed and interview format. To the extent information is not available from other sources collected through the BSC, such as the plan-study-do-act planning form and tracker, the following are guidelines for points for discussion.]

To get things started, we will start with your role in the agency, and then we will discuss your experiences related to [agency's] participation in the BSC.

A. Please introduce yourself by telling us how long you have been working at [agency], and describing your responsibilities.

We learned that [agency] used the following strategies to engage fathers or paternal relatives: (pull from prior interviews or PDSA trackers).

B. How has your approach to engaging fathers and paternal relatives changed leading up to and during your agency's participation in the BSC?

[Probe on the following if needed]

1. How do the strategies identified through the BSC build on the strategies you previously used to engage fathers and paternal relatives?
2. How do the strategies identified through the BSC conflict with strategies you previously used to engage fathers and paternal relatives?

C. How, if at all, have community, state, and/or national contextual factors influenced implementation of the BSC?

[Probe on the following if needed]

1. What do you see as the greatest needs and challenges for fathers and paternal relatives of the children you serve in this community/county/state?
2. How, if at all, has the state or local policy climate affected your ability to engage fathers and paternal relatives? How does state or local policy affect the strategies you use to engage fathers and paternal relatives?
3. How did you select the community partners that you have been working with in the BSC? Why were these partners chosen?

The Collaborative Change Framework guides the work of the improvement teams. We would like to learn more about how your agency selected the domains for the BSC. We are also interested in who was involved in these decisions.

D. How did [agency] select the domains?

[Probe on the following if needed]

1. How, if at all, were you involved in selecting the domains to focus on?
2. How did you decide:
 - a. Which domains to focus on first?
 - b. What the agency needed to do to address these domains?

Next, we would like to discuss supports for implementing the BSC.

E. What resources (infrastructure and supports) have you needed from your agency or its partners to implement the BSC?

[Probe on the following if needed]

1. We know that child welfare staff and their partners have many demands on their time. What, if any, adjustments to workload and responsibilities has your agency made to accommodate members of the Improvement Team?
2. Did the agency have the appropriate resources to participate in the BSC? If not, what additional resources would have been helpful?
3. How, if at all, has staff turnover affected your agency's implementation of the BSC?

Thank you for you sharing your thoughts—your input is invaluable. As we close our discussion, we are interested in your reflections on the BSC's impact on your agency and the lessons you learned that you would share with other agencies, the larger child welfare system, and policymakers.

F. In your opinion, what aspects of participating in the BSC are most rewarding? What aspects are most challenging?

[Probe on the following if needed]

1. Are there lessons you have learned or advice you would like to share with other agencies interested in participating in a BSC? Lessons learned or advice about designing and implementing high quality and effective strategies to engage fathers and paternal relatives?

Thank you for your time today.



Engaging Fathers and Paternal Relatives in Child Welfare Breakthrough Series Collaborative

Interview with fathers and paternal relatives on Improvement Teams

This protocol will be used to conduct group interviews with fathers and paternal relatives who are members of the Improvement Team.

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average one hour. This collection of information is voluntary and all responses collected will be kept private to the extent permitted by law.

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Fathers and Continuous Learning in Child Welfare Project

Semi-Structured Protocol: Group Interview of Fathers and Paternal Relatives on the Improvement Team

***Note to interviewer:** The following detailed script should not be read verbatim. As the interviewer, you must be familiar enough with the script to introduce the study and the focus of the interview without reading word-for-word from the script. Please familiarize yourself thoroughly with the text before you conduct interviews. After introducing the site visit team and the study based on the detailed script, there is a brief script at the end that must be read verbatim to review the fundamental rights of the participants.*

Introducing the interviewer and co-interviewer

Thank you for taking the time to speak with us today. We especially appreciate your willingness to participate in this site visit online given these extraordinary circumstances. We are from Mathematica, an independent research firm. My name is [NAME], and my colleague is [NAME].

Explaining the project and the purpose of the group discussion

You should have received a copy of a Consent Information Form by email. If you did not, please let us know and we will send you that information. I'm going to review the content of that form before we begin.

I am going to start out by giving you a bit of background and talk about why we wanted to meet with you today. We are conducting the Fathers and Continuous Learning in Child Welfare project for the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation within the Administration for Children and Families at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Our project is designed to find out how child welfare agencies can engage fathers and paternal relatives by using the Breakthrough Series Collaborative, or BSC. The BSC is an approach used to reach important system-wide goals. Organizations that are trying out changes do small tests of how the changes go and collect data on them to improve their practice. In this case, the sites in our study worked to improve their engagement of fathers and paternal relatives, and Mathematica is working with the sites to support the implementation of the BSC.

We are talking with fathers and their relatives who have been involved with agencies like [AGENCY NAME] to learn about their experiences with the child welfare system and about their participation in the teams that implemented the BSC and the small tests of change. I hope you feel comfortable enough to speak freely about your experience.

Privacy and taping

Our study team will summarize today's discussion for the purposes of this project only. We will keep the information provided in these discussions private to the extent permitted by law. We will not use any names or associate your name with a specific statement. We value the information you will share with us, and want to make sure we capture it all by recording this WebEx discussion. We will destroy the recording at the end of the project. If you want to say anything that you do not want recorded, please let me know, and I will be glad to pause the recording.

Before we start, I would like to remind you that participating in this interview is voluntary. There are no repercussions if you choose not to participate. If you do not know the answer to a question, please let us know that, and we will simply move on. If you prefer not to answer a question for any reason, you do not need to respond. Do we have your permission to proceed with the discussion?

Does anyone object to our recording the discussion? Before we get started, does anyone have any questions?

Ground rules for discussion

Before we start, we want to give you some ground rules about how our time together will go.

- Mute yourself when you are not speaking.
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- This will be an informal discussion.
- The discussion will last about 60 minutes. There will be no formal breaks. Please just let us know if you need to step away.
- There are no right or wrong answers to the questions. We are interested in learning everyone's opinion.
- To help us learn all that we want to learn from you, I might change the subject or move ahead from time to time.
- Are there any questions? Are you comfortable with these ground rules?

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Brief Verbatim Script

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To get things started, I am going to go around the room and ask each of you to give your first name. Then we will discuss your experiences related to [name of child welfare agency]. We would like everyone to participate in the discussion.

A. Please introduce yourself, and tell us about when you first connected with [AGENCY].

[Probe on the following if needed]

1. What did you think interacting with [AGENCY] was going to be like?
2. How could your experience with [AGENCY] have been better?

Now, we would like to learn more about how the agency developed its strategies to involve fathers and paternal relatives and your experience on the improvement team.

B. How, if at all, were you involved in selecting PDSAs or small tests of change?

[Probe on the following if needed]

1. What were the key issues and challenges you faced when designing (or adapting) strategies? How did you address these challenges?
2. What support did you receive to participate in the Improvement Team?

C. What is most useful to you about the opportunities you have had to learn from the other sites and the faculty coaches in the BSC? What could be better?

[Probe on the following if needed]

1. What is most useful about the Learning Sessions? What could be better?
2. What is most useful about the Faculty Coaches? What could be better?
3. What is most useful about the Affinity Group calls? What could be better?
4. What is most useful about the collaborative SharePoint site? What could be better?

Thank you for you sharing your thoughts with us—your input is invaluable. As we close our discussion, we are interested in your reflections on [AGENCY] and the lessons you learned that you would share with other agencies, the larger child welfare system, and policymakers.

D. In your opinion, what parts of engaging with the agency in the BSC were most rewarding? Which parts were most challenging?

[Probe on the following if needed]

1. How do you think participating in the BSC is affecting the agency's ability to involve fathers and paternal relatives in case planning?

Thank you for sharing your experiences with us today.



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