



Quarterly Update

Latest developments in the evaluation

July 2015

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Study Overview

The Parents and Children Together (PACT) evaluation examines the effectiveness of programs offered by a subset of responsible fatherhood and healthy marriage grantees. Recognizing that grantees' programs are still growing and developing, PACT is intended to provide a foundation and an initial building block in the evidence base to guide ongoing and future program design and evaluation. PACT approaches research questions from several angles to tell a more complete story about the programs and participants. In total, 10 grantees from the 2011 grantee cohort are participating in PACT. Four responsible fatherhood grantees are participating in process, qualitative, and impact studies. Two healthy marriage grantees are participating in process and impact studies. A separate set of four responsible fatherhood grantees, which were purposefully selected for their target population, participated in a descriptive study on the implementation of programs for Hispanic fathers. For more information, please see the [PACT](#) website.

Study Progress

PACT study enrollment is now complete. In April 2015, grantees in PACT completed evaluation enrollment. In total, 5,522 fathers and 1,595 couples were enrolled in the impact study across the four responsible fatherhood programs and two healthy marriage programs.

Follow-up data collection for the impact study continues. Follow-up telephone interviews with study participants from the responsible fatherhood and healthy marriage programs continue. Program and control group members who enrolled in PACT approximately 12 months earlier are being interviewed about their parenting, couple relationships, and economic circumstances. This information will be used to assess program effects related to parenting, healthy relationships, and employment. Follow-up data collection will continue through mid-2016.

Initial reporting on program implementation has begun, and the second round of data collection has been completed. Selected findings from the first round of implementation data collection in the responsible fatherhood and healthy marriage programs have been summarized and released in the form of two practitioner briefs ([HM brief](#); [RF brief](#)). A comprehensive report on the responsible fatherhood programs, including detailed program profiles, will be forthcoming this summer and a report on implementation of the healthy marriage programs will be available later in 2015. Evaluation staff have completed the second and final wave of implementation

data collection; findings describing implementation during the full evaluation period will be available in late 2016.

A report on the [results of the first round of in-depth interviews](#) with fathers has been released, and the second round of interviews has been completed. The report on findings from the first round of in-depth interviews with fathers in responsible fatherhood programs is available. In late 2014, the research team completed second interviews with the fathers in which they were asked to reflect on their current circumstances and how their relationships with their children and their children's mother(s) may have changed since the previous interview. A report on the findings from the second round of interviews will be available in 2016.

Publication Spotlights

PACT recently released three publications based on the first round of data collection for the implementation and qualitative studies.



Responsible Fatherhood Programming: Two Approaches to Service Delivery

This [brief](#) introduces the four responsible fatherhood (RF) grantees involved in PACT and their target populations, and describes two approaches to service delivery and how the approach and fathers' characteristics relate to program participation and retention. Key findings include:

- The majority of fathers who enrolled in the four RF grantee programs were African American men not living with any of their children. Fathers were in their mid-thirties, on average, and had multiple challenges including low education, unemployment and incarceration histories.
- The four RF programs take one of two approaches to delivering services. In one approach, programs integrate content into a single intensive workshop series and offer it to groups of fathers who proceed through the program together. The other approach offers a menu of lower-intensity services that fathers can start and stop any time.
- Although responsible fatherhood programs are required to offer the same type of content, the

ways programs offer and structure that content appears to affect the population reached, fathers' engagement and participation, and the amount and type of information fathers receive.

- Across the four programs, 80 percent of enrolled fathers participated in one or more program activity. Ongoing participation in workshops varied by program and workshop type, with parenting the most frequently attended type of workshop, and relationship skills the least attended. The average amount of content received by all fathers was 46 hours, though this varied widely from program to program..



Embedding Job and Career Advancement Services in Healthy Marriage Programs: Lessons from Two Programs in PACT

This [brief](#) describes how two healthy marriage (HM) grantees integrated job and career advancement services for parenting couples into their programs. It also discusses the role these services played in meeting the needs of couples and engaging them in services. Key findings include:

- Both programs served married and unmarried couples; the majority were of Hispanic origin. Couples had an average of 3 children and 56 percent had children by more than one partner.
- A large proportion of couples participated in at least one workshop on marriage and relationship skills (between 76 and 95 percent, depending on the program). Over 50 percent of couples attended at least half of the workshop sessions offered (56 of couples in one program, 80 percent in the other).
- Attendance at job and career workshops varied greatly between the two programs. The need for and interest in job and career advancement services likely depends on the population served.
- On average, couples in each program received about 17 hours of services, mostly in the relationship skills workshop. An average of between 30 minutes and 3.5 hours was spent receiving economic stability content.



In Their Own Voices: The Hopes and Struggles of Responsible Fatherhood Participants in PACT

This [report](#) describes findings from the first round of in-depth interviews conducted as part of the PACT qualitative study. Interviews were held with 87 fathers who voluntarily enrolled in one of four responsible fatherhood programs. The report relies on rigorous analysis of data from the interviews, and provides extensive quotes from the fathers to illustrate themes and findings that emerged from the data, including:

- The childhoods of the fathers were typically marked by poverty and family instability, including absent fathers, exposure to substance abuse, conflict, and neglect.
- After they became fathers, the men desired to “be there” for their children and to help them avoid the same mistakes they had made.
- Fathers enrolled in the programs primarily to become better fathers and find steady employment.
- Fathers often discussed ongoing contentious relationships with the mothers of their children.
- As they sought to become more involved and supportive fathers, the men often faced many life challenges. These included the effect of criminal records on their efforts to be stably employed; low wages; child support arrears that had built up during incarceration or unemployment; and difficulty obtaining affordable housing suitable for children.

To find out more about the PACT Evaluation: Contact the federal project officer at ACF: Seth Chamberlain (seth.chamberlain@acf.hhs.gov); or Contact the evaluation contractor, Mathematica Policy Research: Robin Dion (rdion@mathematica-mpr.com) or Heather Zaveri (hzaveri@mathematica-mpr.com).

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