

MIECHV TA Resource Center Webinar
Making MIECHV More Father-Friendly

April 28, 2022

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Transcription is provided in order to facilitate communication accessibility and may not be a totally verbatim record of the proceedings.

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TOM HINDS:

Hey everyone. Thanks for joining today's webinar. We'll be starting in just about a minute. So this is the Making MIECHV More Father-Friendly webinar. As you're coming into the Zoom room, please take a moment to introduce yourself in the chat by sharing where you're calling from. So either your MIECHV awardee state or territory or the home visiting program that you work at and also share your role or title. Thank you. Well, we'll get started in just a moment.

Alright, everyone. We've got a great group gathered today, so let's get started. Welcome to the Making MIECHV More Father-Friendly webinar. We're glad you could join us today. My name is Tom Hinds. I'm a programmatic technical assistance specialist with the MIECHV TA Resource Center. And I'll be the host for today's webinar. Alright. So we could go to the participation reminders. We just have a few housekeeping pieces before we dive into content today. So to listen to the audio for today's webinar, we invite you to join via computer audio or phone if that's not possible.

We are recording today's session and the recording will be shared to the MIECHV Awardee Learning Library or the MALL, and on YouTube following the event. So you'll get more information about that afterwards. We encourage discussion and engagement in the content today, so please do use the chat box. We can go on. So here's a high-level view of what we'll be talking about today. We'll frame the topic, and then we'll hear from the Georgia Fatherhood Initiative and the Direct Assistance to Dads Project in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. And we'll end with some closing thoughts. OK. So as this group is more than aware, there are huge benefits to children having an engaged father or father figure in their lives. Children with engaged fathers experience fewer behavioral and emotional problems and develop healthier relationships with others. A child with an engaged father is more likely to experience greater stability and fewer obstacles throughout childhood and adolescence. A father's presence in a child's life is not enough.

The quality of father-child interactions is also important. And if we could go on to the next slide. And the benefits aren't only to children. Fathers involved in the lives of their children are more likely to be happier, healthier, and live longer than their male counterparts who are not involved in their children's lives. These involved fathers are less likely to suffer from mental illness or to misuse substances. When we engage fathers intentionally and father-specific or customized programs, there are benefits as well, including greater employment stability than before they began participating in the program. So, given the benefits of father involvement in the lives of children, it seems like a no-brainer that their involvement in home visiting programs would be to the benefit of all. However, given the focus on mothers in MIECHV, those who identify as male and are either the child's biological father or stepfather or a father figure may feel less clear that home visiting is also for them.

Today, we're joined by presenters representing initiatives to engage fathers in home visiting programs and make efforts not just to bring them to visits, but to make home visiting programs more welcoming and, in some cases, tailored specifically for them. So I'd like to introduce you to today's speakers. Wykinia Culbreth is the state lead of the Georgia Fatherhood Initiative at the Georgia Department of Public Health. Shamanda Charles is the Healthy Families clinical supervisor at Rainbow House Children's Resource Center in Georgia. And Tony Higgins is a home visitor with the Direct Assistance to Dads Project, which is a project of the City of Milwaukee Health Department in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. First, let's hear from Wykinia with the Georgia Fatherhood Initiative. So welcome, Wykinia.

WYKINIA CULBRETH:

Thanks, Tom, and good afternoon, everyone. Again my name is Wykinia Culbreth, and I oversee the Fatherhood Initiative at the Georgia Department of Public Health, where the initiative is housed and the Maternal and Child Health section in Family and Community Supports, also known as home visiting. Next slide, please. Georgia's Fatherhood Initiative has been in existence for a little over three years now as a result of MCH's recognition of father involvement as an emerging strategy to reduce disparities in perinatal health outcomes where Georgia ranks as one of the worst. The mission of the Fatherhood Initiative is threefold: to increase the number of evidence-based interventions, serve as a resource and linkage, and to facilitate projects and partnerships across traditional and non-traditional partners. There's a video that's been made available following today's presentation that really brings our mission to life, illustrating the passion that drives our work and our relationship with our partners.

I encourage you to take a look when time permits. Next slide, please. Rather than by our mission, the initiative is driven by its three main strategies, adapted from the Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs. Those are capacity building, collaboration, and coordination. In an effort to operationalize these strategies, we work directly with our MIECHV sites, also known as LIAs, or local implementing agencies, and other local, state, and national partners. Today I'll share with you some activities and the associated successes from each. Next slide. So just before the three main strategies mentioned, we began with an environmental scan to really get the lay of the land in Georgia. As part of our initial efforts during year one, we partnered with our partners at the National Fatherhood Initiative to conduct the comprehensive Father Readiness Network Assessment, also known as the Father Friendly Checkup that measures an organization's readiness to engage fathers in programs and services.

The assessment specifically measures four main components, which you see on your screen here: the culture of the agency, policies, procedures, programs, and even the physical environment, types of programs and services it offers how it engages staff around those programs, including marketing as well as program and service delivery. (CLEARS THROAT) We implemented the 130-point assessment within 22 home visiting sites or LIAs across the state, which covers 15 of Georgia's 159 counties. This was a natural starting point for our state as MIECHV sites were already providing a very holistic approach to serving families where a few fathers were already engaged. Next slide, please. So, as a result of that assessment, here is a very high-level overview of some of the overarching themes captured from the resulting action plans of our LIAs. Over the next eight months by following the assessment, we began convening our LIAs into our monthly meetings to build and support the execution of their action plans across these four specified areas that you see on your screen.

As you can see, included in their plans were action items such as creating father or male-friendly spaces that are welcoming, displaying appropriate messaging, and making available male-focused literature and

collateral during events. Other findings include increasing staff's ability to effectively engage fathers, hiring males for service delivery and hosting male-targeted activities. Over time, this process led the state and the LIAs to build a virtual repository of some of the best and most promising practices for implementing fatherhood in our state. We recorded our action plan presentation and shared regular updates at quarterly and monthly meetings. Joining me today to share their experience with the process and father engagement is my valuable colleague in the field and partner, Shamanda Charles, from Rainbow House Resource Children's Resource Center. Shamanda.

SHAMANDA CHARLES:

Hello everyone again. I am Shamanda Charles. I'm the clinical supervisor for Healthy Families Houston County. I have taken the lead in our Project Fatherhood Initiative program utilizing the Father Friendly Strategic Plan here at Rainbow House Children's Resource Center. We are devoted to reducing the occurrence of child abuse and neglect and to assist the victims. Our Healthy Families agency here is utilized as a preventive program for families in our area. We value our mothers in this program, but we value our fathers just as much. We actually start our process in getting to know the fathers at the initial intake and screenings still. Questions are asked on the initial forum if there is a secondary guardian or father figure involved. We provide resources and support to those dads at the first home visit where we give resources to mom. We think it's very important for the fathers to be included at all times. Our sites score highest in leadership and program development on the Father Friendly Checkup.

We decided to focus more on the organizational and community engagement areas for immediate improvement. To improve in those areas, we began to look at how to strengthen, elevate and balance out the importance of that father figure role while also showing them a father-friendly agency. We have a fatherhood corner where we display English and Spanish curriculum on building healthy relationships, co-parenting, father-child interaction, and much more. We receive materials from DPH and the National Fatherhood Initiative, which was new dad, expectant dad and disciplining children booklets. We also use Noodle Soup for positive parenting materials and Daddy and Me books. We also have pens and bracelets available to those dads as well. Next slide please (KEYBOARD CLICKS). On this slide, you can see some examples of calendars and activities that we have done in the past. Our fatherhood calendars have our agency activities and father-specific activities and events as well. Some of our monthly engagement activities include Daddy and Me Storytime, Arts and Crafts with Dad, Dinner with Dad, Exercise with Dad, and Water Play with Dad just to give a few examples.

Fathers are encouraged to send their photos or videos to their support specialist, engaging in these activities each month. We coordinate with community partners and agencies for the needs of our fathers. We get donations such as ties with pocket squares, happy socks, if you all know those are, masks, just to name a few. Our partners also send job resources. We receive community assistance flyers. I mean, there are so many different things out there and readily available to them. We host three big events for our fathers each year. We make sure we highlight them while also providing a safe environment. We have done We are With You drive-throughs. We also have a fatherhood podcast on our YouTube channel. If you would like to see that. So just to talk a little bit about participation, we collaborate on the fatherhood program in our monthly team meetings. We make sure we involve those dads in the process, getting feedback from them on events that we should have. We keep track of our participation by utilizing sign-in sheets.

We also get social media release forms signed in case we post the event on our Facebook or Instagram page. We have seen a 60% increase since the start of this initiative in July 2020 to now. We have added more events to our monthly calendars and we also added videos as part of the monthly submission process instead of just submitting those photos. We have also seen an increase in fathers participating in the actual home visits that are required of those parents, on whichever level they are on. We have a fatherhood notebook where we include photos sent in each month, special events, participation logs, and our community engagement information. Everything that we do involving our fatherhood initiative is kept in that notebook. We also show that notebook at least once a year to our board to include them on the things that we are doing in this program as well. Some challenges have been, of course, COVID-19 and the inability to have in-person gatherings, events and activities. But being creative, we had drive-throughs and virtual events.

Scheduling and availability was also a challenge. But surveys or scenes of fathers to get the good days and times, to have those events to make sure that it was a success. Our successes were improvement in community relationships, partnering with Headstart, and the fatherhood program that they have. We saw increase in father-child relationships and also receive feedback on the increase in the mother's perspective on the father involvement in the home. Our next steps include networking more with community partners, being able to provide more things offered outside of our agency. Continuing to conduct annual surveys specifically for fathers and any feedback they may have. And also establish a support group specifically for fathers or father figures. As you all know, there are always moms support groups, donuts with moms. But we want to establish a support group specifically for those fathers. And, of course, we want to increase in participation. We just want to thank Wykinia for motivating us, giving us the resources and materials needed to work closely with our dads as they see in participation in activities.

WYKINIA:

Thank you Shamanda.(CLEARS THROAT) So as you can see, the wealth of work that they're doing at their site, our LIAs do an immense amount of work which Shamanda mentioned and then much more. So to operationalize that initial strategy capacity building, for us, that means strengthening new and emerging projects and building upon the existing efforts to elevate fatherhood and in support of MCH services in Georgia. Specifically, as the state, we provided NFI certificate trainings and the evidence-based curriculum education, we provided a Fatherhood Speaker series for over an eight-month period where we hosted nationally and locally recognized subject matter experts. We also provided one year's access to NFI's Fathering in 15, which is an online virtual programming to engage fathers using the same evidence-based education from the 24/7 Dads curriculum, but in bite-sized pieces. This came particularly in handy during the pandemic when we weren't engaging families in the home, and that work particularly well, also with programs that have limited staffing.

Next slide. So jumping over to strategy three. Thank you. Please recall that strategy number two, collaboration, has been alluded to throughout the presentation where opportunities have been created to make an intersection between MIECHV and our Healthy Start sites to work side by side through state-level partnerships, which you'll learn more about. And so back to operationalizing strategy number three, coordination, means for us supporting the expansion, the scale and spread of programs and services to families across the state. At the state level, this means for us to raise awareness around services for fathers as eligible primary care providers and custodial parents of our WIC services which are offered in all 159 county health departments. We also have fathers participating in our Centering

Pregnancy program at one of our main health systems, and being able to replicate that with other MCH partners is a particular goal for us at the State. Finally, operationalizing by fathers being supported by our resource expansion through our Family Support Line, or formerly known as our maternal and child health line in the state.

And we accomplish that through our Help Me Grow call line. At the local level, we make concerted efforts to advocate for our LIAs, to receive fiscal support, for their involvement in things like pilot projects, targeted needs assessments, and focus groups. All as we work together to develop a streamlined approach to service fathers through program and service delivery. Finally, MIECHV and Healthy Start are partnering with us at the state to establish and build upon Georgia's statewide data for dads. Measuring an increase in fathering knowledge at implementation sites that offer the evidence-based 24/7 Dads curriculum. And all of this positions our state for future funding opportunities as well as for policy systems and environmental change over time. Next slide, please. Essentially, our vision for Georgia is a father-friendly network, and what that means for us is a linkage and referral network throughout the state that connects fathers and families to programs, services and initiatives and embrace culturally relevant and evidence-based approaches in its policy, programs and practices ensuring that fathers are included, engaged, and represented in the family well-being model.

To date, leading this work is our DPH, strong fathers, strong families Georgia Coalition, which is our multidisciplinary advisory team at the state level. The meaningful and essential work of this initiative and its partners is increasing access and capacity of fatherhood programs across the state, developing that father-friendly linkage and referral system that improves the father's access to much needed services that are available. How does MIECHV fit into this? Well, as part of that core advisory, that state advisory team, it consists of various state-level partners and that includes our MIECHV sites and our Healthy Start sites, WIC, academic partners, for- and non-profits, community-based organizations, fathers, and others. Finally, I'd be remiss if I didn't mention that the National MCH Workforce Development Center was so instrumental in our start of this work. We participated in their Health Transformation Lab from the very beginning, where they really increase the capacity of our MCH workforce.

Next slide, please. So I know that's a lot of information, but here are some very simple or basic takeaways from today's meeting on how to get started or opportunities for growth. Conduct a scan, learn who's doing what and assess at what levels are they doing that. Establish the Fatherhood Advisory Committee that drives your work and really works to establish your mission. Increase collaboration with traditional and non-traditional partners, remembering that they are your hands into the communities that you're looking to serve, to conduct outreach and raise awareness. And then finally, continual process improvements – do the work. This is a new population that we're looking to serve. And so it may not work the first time, but it's definitely worth the commitment. Next slide, please. And here are a few pictures of our involved and engaged fathers from our LIAs. Now I turn it back over to you, Tom. Thank you.

TOM:

Well, thank you so much, Wykinia and Shamanda. That was awesome. It's a clear, strong priority like so strongly supported and with so many different activities going on. So it was great to see that. Thank you. So now let's hear from Tony Higgins with the Direct Assistance to Dads project. So welcome, Tony.

TONY HIGGINS:

Thank you, Tom. How you doing today?

TOM:

Good. Thank you.

TONY:

So, my name is Tony Higgins. I'm a home visitor with the Direct Assistance to Dads Program. I mean, so we do the DADs project here in the city of Milwaukee. Next slide, please. So in early 2000, you know, we were at the health department, were doing home visiting to moms and their babies. The moms were constantly asking about services for fathers. And so in 2014, they started a pilot program for dads that really started gaining interest and a lot of motivation within the community. So in 2016, we actually launched this DADS program and started using Parents as Teachers, as a model in which we would serve fathers in home. Next slide, please. Okay. So DADs serves fathers who have children three years old and younger. They can stay on in a program as much as two years. Because of COVID we've actually had a few fathers who have stayed a little bit longer. We use the Parents as Teachers, as a home visiting model where we actually spend as you know, fathers can sign up for as little as two visits a month within their homes.

Or I've had some cases where I've had to see fathers on a weekly basis, and I've had a few fathers that because of the struggles that they've been having, I have seen them it seemed like almost every day I've had contact with them. So I'm very proud of us for allowing fathers to have that kind of access to us. We use the 24/7 DADs or the Nurturing Fathers curriculum as a curriculum that we use to help navigate and push fathers to understand the growth and development of their child as part of what we do when we do our group activities. And then we also have been very good at support, at connecting fathers to some of the supportive services in the community. So we built very strong relationships with child support assistance, with driver's license recovery, as well as with a lot of the employment services that go on in the city of Milwaukee. Having all of these services for fathers makes us kind of like a one-stop shop for many fathers. So they can come to us, get all the services that they need so that they're not just running around the town lost or not pursuing avenues that they're not sure that at the end of that time that they that this is going to work out for them.

Next slide, please. So we talk to our participants about being financially stable through education and employment. One of the major I think, relationships that we've built is with our technical college here in Milwaukee, Technical College. Through this relationship not only have we've been able to have activities on their campus. We've got a program that we've been in partnership with them called Man to Man, where we've actually had young men, as well as some older men, come in and talk about the issues that impact them in the city of Milwaukee. What is some of the things that prevent them pursuing their education and how can we be becoming more education and employment friendly and community for our fathers in the community? We also have been partnering just recently with one of our homeless shelters. It's called a guest house, which gives us access to safe and stable housing for our fathers when sometimes we have fathers who've been incarcerated. They come back into the community.

They don't have the resources right off the bat to be successful. And so our job then is to try to find housing for these fathers. Find stable, good housing for fathers that has a long-term option. And then we've been able to start recently with one of my fathers that I've been working with over the last three years to help him now secure an avenue for him to be able to purchase a house for him and his children.

One of the things that we do talk about is having good health and having access to quality early childhood education, which also we believe will allow children to be more stable and stronger when it's time for them to be ready to enter school. By participating in our birth and early development fathers get a real good understanding about child development, about brain development, about how important it is to have attachments to their children. And what this has done not only mean for their children in the short term but the impact that this is going to have long term for them.

Next slide, please. Our main focus is that we want to build very strong family-, friendly relationships for fathers. I mean, we've got a lot of young men in this city who have grown up without their fathers in their home. They struggle with those relationships. And the odd thing is that we understand honest, negative statistics in this city to come along, when there is no father in the house and the impact that is had on our fathers, I mean, we have one of the most highest incarceration rates in the country here in the state of Wisconsin. So we've got a lot of fathers who have made small mistakes or sometimes large mistakes when they're younger. And then our job is to help them get acclimated and back and established in this community and understand that there's a place for them. We share this information about how important it is about fathers and understanding their rights around visitation, about their rights, about being able to go on a field trip or just show up and go to parent-teacher conferences.

We engage in nontraditional partnerships with fathers and with folks from the community, because I think that that's really, really important. And I think some of the ideas that a lot of times we come up with are not necessarily good ideas for our fathers. And so by having different types of activities in a community with fathers, we give them an opportunity through surveys to tell us what works better for you. You know, and I think one of the most important things that we've got to remember about we're working with fathers is about being patient. It is patience, patience, and more patience. Last night I had a visit with a father who has really, really been struggling and we had some great conversation and we had some very some silent moments, which for him, that's been kind of like a scary situation because he's he didn't grow up in an environment where there was a lot of trust in that environment. And so when I'm sitting there and I'm asking him to take some deep breaths, put your hands on your legs and close your eyes.

You looking at me. I had to remind him I'm not here to rob you or anything like this. I'm here to support you. I mean, we eventually got to a place where he was able to just, like, sit here quietly and breathe in deeply. And I just thought that in this we were starting to build on our relationship and allowing us to have growth in our relationship. It's not an easy process. And again, I say, hey, with all of this let's be patient with our fathers, let's be patient with the men that are in our community. A lot of times we hear about the negative stuff, but hey, there are a lot of positive things that fathers are doing. So I thank you guys very much for allowing us to be here and present our programs and it is back to you Tom.

TOM:

Thank you so much, Tony. It's so great to hear about your work with the DAD project. You know, we've come up on the question time. I feel like we've learned a lot through your presentations. And so I would encourage people to put any questions they might have into the chat. I mean, just listening to you, Tony, and then thinking about the presentations that Wykinia and Shamanda did, definitely hearing a lot of kind of like commonalities too, when you're talking about patience. And I remember hearing Wykinia talk about, you know, this, you know, keep trying. You know, you think about different ways and approaches might not work the first time and hearing you talking about, you know, really talking to the

fathers about what would work best for them, that reminded me of what Shamanda was mentioning about when they were checking with dads for things like what days and times work best. So anyways, great to hear your work and let's give a second to see if there are any questions coming in here.

I mean, there's certainly so many comments about, you know, wanting to, of course, see the slides and the information that you all shared. We do have a question here. What would you say is the best person to interact with a dad? And so, I mean, we could, you know, each or any of the presenters could take that. I don't know, Tony, you were you're just wrapping up. Is there anything that comes to mind to you on this one?

TONY:

I don't know if there's a best person. I think that what we have to really like look at and think to ourselves, too, and I think we think a lot about it was in the program. When I first started off, I had apprehensions about, you know, was I the best person to actually be talking with fathers. You know, I had struggled. I had been a single father myself and really had to think about all of the things that had transpired in my life and the things that I brought to the table is even as far as my education was concerned. Put all of these things together along with the training that we've received in our programming. And it's not that you get it right all the time. Even as a home visitor sometimes when I look back when I first got started, some of the conversations that I've had with clients, I would not go about it in the same way that I do now. So I think through time and experience we just get better at this also.

TOM:

Thank you for that, Tony. And I see there was a kind of an addition or a clarification to the question, too, wondering if any of the presenters, Tony or Shamanda or Wykinia, to have thoughts on whether, you know, in terms of how best to work with interact with dads like male or female. So if you have any thoughts on that, I would just would throw that out there for your consideration.

SHAMANDA:

Hey I would like to say that. I don't think it really matters if it is a male or a female. The best way to do it is to make sure that you are friendly, approachable from the beginning, and also show making yourself available to those dads as well as those moms. An example would be, you know, the home visits are done mainly with the mom, but sometimes the dads are there and kind of doing activities or different things in the curriculum to include those that make them feel like, hey, you know, I'm being included in everything that we do, not just fatherhood specific activities or events, but any events or anything that we are doing in the agency.

TOM:

Okay thank you for that Shamanda.

WYKINIA:

Tom, I would just add a little bit. I just want to share that. Of course, social services or the field of social services is very female facing. Right. And so we have to acknowledge that, that that's kind of, you know, the body of our workforce. And with that said, we believe, you know, culturally relevant, you know, having culturally relevant staff and - even, you know, that culturally competent background is sufficient for serving fathers. But would it be a male or female that would be better? Of course, in in the many situation and in many environments it is a male. We encourage many of the 24/7 dad classes that

happen across many of our sites have male facilitators because males are going to feel more comfortable with other men. They can open up a little bit more because some of the content that they discuss during those sessions is very sensitive by nature. As Tony mentioned, you know, just having a man across from you and asking to envision something was very difficult for him to do, even though he knew Tony was there to support him.

So there's some things that we like to encourage. We have a number of male home visitors in our programs or male engagement specialist. I won't say more than ten. I won't say more than ten, but we definitely look to bring that into our programs. So I just would say that I think I agree with both Tony and Shamanda that the care and the patience with fathers is what you really have to have for that population. Again, they are not used to receiving services from, you know, our programs, whether they be local or state level. And so we have to be patient with that process because again, what they've also mentioned is that what we think that is best for them may not be what is best for them. And so we just have to continue going back to the drawing board and being willing to work through the red tape to really establish those relationships.

TOM:

Thank you very much. The question here that maybe will I'll ask Shamanda to take the first take as this is what have been some of your best referral sources for dads to join your home visiting programs?

SHAMANDA:

Basically all of our community partners, Head Start, we have our Parents as Teachers in another county. They also offer different things. We try to give all of our dads different events and activities that we offer, as well as anybody who is offering those things in the community. So we will send them any resource, any flyer that we receive, no matter who is conducting that event.

TOM:

Thank you, Shamanda. Tony, what about on the DAD project side are there are there certain referral sources that come to mind for you there that are most important or maybe that you think would be interesting to highlight?

TONY:

No, I think one of the it's so funny because I think one of the best referral sources for us has been the mothers who have come into the Health Department for Services for them and their children, and then find out that we have these types of programs available for fathers and they want to see the fathers happen. I think one of the other great referral services for us is going to be our relationship with the Head Start programs and the elementary programs at our public school system. We're starting to build a relationship with a great relationship with them. But I think and the other thing would be some of the programs that we start to see that some of the faith-based communities. They have, again, they have moms coming in looking for services. When the question comes up about, you know, how is the father doing? And sometimes they're saying that he's struggling, but what's available for him? And then that gives us the avenue to be able to present our programs to him.

TOM:

Thank you for that. All right. Here's a question. Maybe this would be Shamanda. Maybe you to start with this one question. Was it tough getting seasoned home visitors to intentionally engage fathers at home visits? So I guess maybe home visitors who've been around, who've been in their job for a while then,

maybe hadn't engaged with fathers in their initial years in the work. Or was it difficult even to share with mom that the program believes dad matters as equally as mom? That's the rest of that question.

SHAMANDA:

From the feedback that I have received, it was actually easier because they are seasoned, they know how to have those conversations. They know actually know the right things to say. Opposed to a new home visitor just coming in, just starting to do home visits. Is easier for the seasoned ones and also to incorporate those fathers in those visits. Having that calendar and having those monthly activities with, bulls with their water play. It actually increased by helping them to want to be in those home visits with the mom.

TOM:

Thank you for that. All right. Just scrolling through here to pick out more questions. So there's one here. If the mother is present, is she asked to participate or is the visit only for dad? So maybe I'll toss this one to Tony. I'm not sure if this is something that you've experienced when you've been visiting if you're enrolling dad principally in your program. Just curious.

TONY:

I mean, I've had it when I'm doing my intake where I've had a month there, I've had I've had the significant other, the wife there and I think it depends on how their relationship is going. And sometimes when they're struggling and their relationship is not a good thing, especially when we first start off. But I think that for the most part it has been a very positive thing because like I said, there's a lot of times it's the women who have encouraged him to get involved with the program and to, you know, actively participate because they think that this would be a great benefit to not only them as a family, but for him and his relationship with his children. So I just think it depends on the strength of the relationship within that home when we start working with the fathers.

TOM:

Thank you for that.

WYKINIA:

Do you mind if I add a comment?

TOM:

Please do.

WYKINIA:

I just want to get back to the previous question about the difficulty of getting seasoned home visitors to engage dad, I just wanted to share that from a state perspective. One of the capacity-building events we recently hosted was an implicit bias training, and during that training, we actually share like slides or visuals or ask questions to just probe home visitors on what is their initial or kneejerk response to some of the things that they see and hear. And what we found during those sessions is that many times as seasoned employees, the environments that we work on, the culture that we're surrounded by, we answer from the perspective of that culture. But of course, we can't leave. But we have challenges leaving our own thoughts about what dads should do, how they should behave, even how they should dress, or how they should present themselves. We find that there are challenges with leaving those

things kind of at the door. But I believe that our programs in Georgia have been very fortunate that there was an embrace to the whole initiative.

There was an enthusiasm about really recognizing the importance and the involvement of dads. But we do have to go back and offer those opportunities for us to identify some of those, you know, inner workings that may come into play when serving dads and when meeting that dad at an initial intake process and just making certain that, again, we are presenting ourselves as father-friendly and as welcoming as Shamanda mentioned that their sites that do. So I just wanted to kind of share that those trainings and exercises are definitely necessary just again to help us to work out some of those things that have either been grandfathered into our organizations or even our personal experiences.

SHAMANDA:

I did want to add one thing. I just want to say that at the initial enrollment process it is encouraged that the whole family be involved. The dad is involved. Mom is involved with any of the questions that are asked. They really highlight and love that those dads are involved, especially if there is a healthy relationship going on between them.

TOM:

Thank you so much. Oh go ahead.

TONY:

If I could. You know, when we first started, when I first started doing home visiting, I struggled with Parents as Teachers model. But I think the biggest thing I had to do was remove myself and how I view whether this is something that I would or would not do but actually be able to present this to fathers in a very honest and open manner and let them make the decision of their participation on this program, I think. In the beginning, you keep thinking because we were doing only home visiting for mom. And I think when our staff that were mostly females, they were having a certain time, a very high level of success with moms. I kept thinking to myself, fathers are not going to sit down and read books to the kids and stuff like this, but I was wrong. And I really had to adjust my thinking. And so I think that that's a big thing for us, as the men who do home visiting is that we have to really adjust and take a look at where do I have any barriers that prevent me from presenting this work to my clients in an open manner.

So when I look at even what these ladies have done in their presentation, I'm totally in awe because I think they're doing an excellent job down there. There are some things that those folks in Georgia are doing it I'd like to actually start us to do here in Milwaukee. I think it would enrich our program and make it stronger. So I'm hoping that I can be in contact with them to shoot some ideas past them.

TOM:

Thank you, Tony. Alright. I'm so glad that we have this time to go through questions. We do have more questions here. So it's great that we can do this. So there and I'm going to be jumping around a little bit. So there is a question from Jarvis, and I think it was, so what Maryland MIECHV program has experienced at times is getting consent from mom to speak with dad for outreach and recruitment into programs has been anyway, something that they have found to be a challenge. So what do you do? What have you done to navigate this dynamic? And what about in non-residential or custodial settings? Anyone who would want to jump in here.

SHAMANDA:

I'd like to say again, it kind of starts initially when you ask mom, "Hey, is there a secondary guardian caregiver?" Is there a father involved? Once they say no, then you know, that's kind of like, you know, they won't have anyone to be able to reach out to. But if they say, yes, that is kind of giving you, that the consent, hey, if you're going to put him on your information and if you're telling me he's involved, then he will possibly be someone that will be involved in these events and also submitting monthly activities.

TOM:

OK. Thank you. All right. So just looking around, trying to pick the question. So there is a question here. Any specific advice on how to engage teen fathers? And it says they are learning how to be a young man themselves while now having a responsibility as a parent. Any tips?

TONY:

I think one of the things that has helped us is that we've built a relationship with the school system that allows us to come within the school building to work with some of the fathers on, I guess you could say, the ground that they walk on every day, which probably makes it a lot easier to do the relationship building. I think sometimes when you've got young fathers and guys are asking them, "Who is this guy coming to see you all the time?", and for them to say, "This is my case manager he is helping me with my son and understanding who my son is." And I think things turn into very positive relationships for them.

TOM:

Thank you. Alright. So I am seeing a few more questions here. I'm trying to go back to make sure we didn't miss some. I believe that both in Georgia and in the DAD Project, you all have used 24/7 Dads. So here's a question: how is the attendance of dads at your community events and or your 24/7 Dad groups?

TONY:

I think when we've got two different events that we use for one of them, it's because we've done these barbershop talks. We've had as many as 125 men who've shown up at these events. We had to shut down because we are the health department and with COVID all of our programming got shut down. Since we came back from COVID, we've had around 70 guys for those events. We had at our technical college before COVID, the technical college was wide open, we could have 60-70 young students as well as their faculty that would show up for the monthly man-to-man. Of course, when COVID came, the technical college went virtual, and we've kind of struggled a little bit, rebuilding our relationship with them. With our 24/7 Dad groups and the Nurturing Fathers group prior to COVID, I think because we limited the number of fathers who could participate in each section, we were around ten or 15 guys, mainly because we wanted to make sure that fathers got the full gist of those programs. And we were, these were going on an ongoing basis.

Since we've been allowed to come back open, that's the program where we struggled with is getting those programs back up and running and getting fathers to come to those in a consistent manner. We really struggled with trying to do things virtually. I mean, it was something different here. Sometimes we started off with about ten guys and then we ended up with zero. But then I think one of the major problems that we have is that the fathers just did not have access to the technology. The public library systems here and that's those venues that they could go to; they were completely closed down, not allowing fathers to come in. And so our struggle, even now that we just... and it hasn't been that long

since we've gotten ourselves opened up, So I'm not discouraged by any of this. I just know it's going to take a ton more work to get ourselves back going in the community. And again, like I said, is being patient with these fathers and getting them to understand we're here and we're available to them.

TOM:

Well, thank you, Tony. Thanks. Shamanda, did you.

SHAMANDA:

Yes, I was going to say something in regards to the events that we have. Right now we're at a capacity of 80 and we are full. Out of those 80 families, we have 52 who reported that a father figure was in the home. And out of those 52, for some of the drive-throughs that we've had, at least half of them came. I know half does not sound like a big number, but it was an increase from maybe four to five who would show up and come to receive different things that we had. So it really does take time. But as I said before, you have to basically send out like a survey type thing, maybe asking those dads, of those dads that you know are involved in those families, sending out a survey, "Hey, what are good days of the week? What are good times?" That way, you can kind of make it available on those dads knowing that they will be able to show up and not make it to where, "Oh man, I have to work." Just because they're working, they are not able to participate in the things that you're having.

WYKINIA:

And Tom, I just want to share that for best practice. And that's my purview for this work. It's just that when the men get together, when Tony is speaking about their classes, their group sizes, and making those group sizes small, very intentionally, so that they can fully engage with fathers. Some of the things that many of our programs do is provide meals during those sessions. It becomes really just this opportunity to fellowship with other men and really get a chance to nurture those relationships and nurture those men in any of the challenges or understanding, even mentoring across men in those environments. And so, small groups are preferred when you're doing the curriculum-based trainings, I believe. But during events, I would agree with them both. Pre-COVID it was easier to get people out and now it's going to be a rebuilding . We're rebuilding those relationships. And yes, technology was definitely a hindrance. It was difficult to get dads to do the Fathering in 15 curriculum, even though it was brief, even though it was bit-sized pieces, it was still difficult because paid minutes.

Even if you had technology, many of our dads faced obstacles with having paid minutes on their phones and not being able to use those minutes to engage in classes and to reserve those things for more emergency situations. So there were a lot of things that we learned during COVID, but I'm encouraged that the work that we do in Georgia, our sites, and even working with programs in Milwaukee, such as DADs, will help us really evolve as programs by sharing best and promising practices.

TOM:

OK. Thank you Wykinia Thank you.

SHAMANDA:

Tom.

TOM:

Yes.

SHAMANDA:

I do want to go back and say something about the teen dads. I did want to say that we did see a few that came through our agency. And a part of our next steps is trying to network and collaborate with the school counselors to be able to try to get more information on how to service them and help them get involved. So we have not done that yet, but that is part of our next steps plan to get with our school counselors in the area.

TOM:

Thank you for sharing that. Alright. Well, we have some closing thoughts as we wrap up today. And we could certainly talk much longer about this or there were more questions. And thanks, everyone, for your questions coming in. Sorry we couldn't get to it all now, but I think Rachel mentioned she could share the speaker's contact information in case people would like to follow up. But we can go ahead and go on to the next slide. Alright. So before we get into those final thoughts, I want to share the evaluation link for today's webinar now. And I think it will be going into the chat box. There it went. So that you have that. We really appreciate you completing the evaluation. I want to give it now so people aren't scrambling to pull it from the chat in the final moments of the webinar. I hope to give you a couple of minutes at the very end to fill that out so we can go on to the next slide. Here are some additional resources to continue your reading, listening, and watching about father engagement in home visiting.

You'll have access to these links when you receive the post-webinar email within a few weeks, and we can go on to the next slide. Alright. So I'd like to wrap up our discussion with a quick poll today. And the poll, you should be seeing, be able to answer the poll. What action are you planning on taking based on attending today's webinar? And so I see responses coming in, and once we get a few more responses, it looks like it's slowing down. We can share this on the screen so everyone can see the responses. I will definitely be sharing materials from today's webinar with others. We're seeing that for sure. Review the outreach and recruitment materials, your own outreach and recruitment materials to see if they're father-friendly is another one that a lot of people are noting and then engaging with partners in the states and territories certainly coming up here. Maybe I'll just give it another second and see if we get a few more responses. Alright. It looks like it's slowing down. Let's go ahead and let's take a look at that, so you all can see the results here.

Alright. So, as I mentioned, just a lot of intention to share, an intention to take a look at the materials that people are already using and think about them if they're father-friendly. Just thinking about the father-friendly checkup tool that Wykinia and that Shamanda are talking about. I think that sounds like a really interesting tool to use. And, when thinking about what programs are doing. Alright. Well, thank you so much for that poll. And so we're just about wrapped up here. We just want to say thank you to the presenters for sharing all your experiences. It's been great to learn with you or learn from you, and thank you to everyone for your participation in today's webinar. Please email the TARC team at TARC@edc.org with any questions, and we hope you have a good rest of the day.