"Evaluation: Tips and Tools to Document and Impact Your Work with Fathers"

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Presenters:
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Webinar Transcription (provided by Global Crossing)

Operator:	Ladies and gentlemen, thank you standing by. Welcome to the National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse Technical Assistance Webinar. During the presentation all participants will be on a listen only mode. If any time during the conference you need to reach an operator please press star 0.
	As a reminder, this conference is being recorded Tuesday, March 31, 2009. I would like to turn the conference over to Nigel Vann, Director of Training and Technical Assistance. Please go ahead sir.
Nigel Vann:	Thank you very much and welcome everybody. So for today's Webinar we are focusing on evaluation and tips and tools to document impact of your work with fathers.
	And I think you know if we look back over the work of the fatherhood field, which we can really go back 20 or even 30 years on that. And one of the ongoing weaknesses is still the ability to tell the story about the good work that you will do out there and really show the impact of that work.
	You know, we all know the importance of doing this work, and the Federal Government knows the importance of doing this work that's why you have these

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grants. But it's just so important that we really document and show the impact so we can really sort of take the field to the next level.

And so it really is I think one of the big challenges that we face over the next 2-1/2 years of this grant period. So right now, you know, most of you have gotten stabilized, you've got guys in and you're collecting data. So today the emphasis is really going to be on what you do with that data when you've got it.

I know some of you still have questions about the data that you are collecting and how to include that. And we will address that a little bit in today's Webinar, but we're going to focus more on what you actually do with the data you've got, so you can tell that story, so you show the impact so you can get more funding, so you can make your program better.

And I do want to emphasize that, you know, there is ongoing technical assistance available in all areas of evaluation starting with how you collect the data, the instruments you use to how you tell the story. And I do encourage you continue to send in any requests for assistance there. You can talk to your FPO; you can go onto the Clearinghouse Website and submit a QA there, but please do if you need that.

And let me make one other brief announcement here before I turn it over to Jen. I know you've all signed up for the coming series of roundtables and we're really looking forward to seeing you there. Some of those roundtables were focused on evaluation although I've had some feedback from people and the form was not that clear in you recognizing which of the roundtables were focused on evaluation. But there were two that were listed as number five and number seven and it said Customer Service Oriented TA with Evaluation in parenthesizes.

So those were the two workshops if you wanted to send an evaluator or somebody else to really work with JBA on strengthening the story that you're telling.

One of those has now been cancelled, it was the May 27 to 29 date, but there is still an evaluation workshop on July 14 through the 16; I believe there are 17 people signed up for that. And if there is anybody who still wants to attend that and you can

still change your travel arrangements for those dates you can still do that through Macro, so I just want to make sure you are clear on that.

Any questions, feel free to drop me an email after this Webinar. So let me pass this to Jen McHenry to walk us through the mechanics of this and then we'll get going and I'll introduce the first presenter.

Jen McHenry: Thanks Nigel. I just want to take a couple of minutes to go over some technical issues. As Nigel mentioned, just how you ask a question. Now you may be wondering midway through our inspiring presentation, what does she mean by that or how do I get help on this? That's not something you have to keep to yourself.

We're not going to do a live question and answer at the end where you can ask that verbally, but we will allow you to ask the question via Live Meeting. And I'm going to walk you through a little bit of how to do that now. If you look at the top of your screen there's a Q&A button, if you click on that word it'll open up a box for you.

Type your question in that box at any point during the presentation and then hit ask and you're going to get something back that says something to the effect of thank you for your question it's been submitted to the moderator. This will do two things, it's going to let you know that we got your question and we're collecting those for the end and it also will allow you to ask another question.

So please send as many questions as you have whenever you get them during - throughout the presentation and we'll make sure that they get addressed either at the end of this presentation or afterwards if we have to follow up.

And one or two other technical issues is to the screen you're looking at feels a little bit too small you can hit the F5 button and that will take the presentation full screen for you. If you hit the F5 button the second time or the Escape button that'll bring the presentation back down to the screen that you're probably looking at now. It'll also let you type a question if you are looking at something full screen and you want to ask a question you have to go back to the smaller screen to get to that tool.

Also for some reason if you have trouble hearing the presenters, you can use that question and answer key to send a message to us and we'll make sure that that gets relayed.

Also if you're interested in the slides and you want an extra copy or if you've just misplaced the ones that you had before you can email us at info@fatherhood.gov and we'll make sure that we get those to you.

So thanks and I'll turn it back over to Nigel.

Nigel Vann: Okay thank you very much Jen. And so as you'll see on your screen we have two presenters today. We actually don't have it on the screen, but they are both PhDs so we're going to be hearing from Dr. Susan Passmore and then Dr. Irene Luckey.

Susan's going to go first, so let me just briefly introduce Susan and then we'll have the benefit of her vast knowledge in this area. As you see she has over ten years of professional evaluation and applied research experience and she's been working with James Bell Associates for the last six years.

And I'm sure you all know that James Bell Associates is your go-to Technical Assistance Provider for anything to do with evaluation. And so previously to this work with JBA, Susan's been working with other ACF grantees around issues to do with children and families across the nation.

She specializes in qualitative data collection analysis, has designed and guided multiple public health projects to reduce health disparities that are experienced among poor and underserved populations.

And most recently her work in public health has been in connection with The University of Maryland School of Medicine. So let me pass it over to Susan and again please type in any questions you may have and we'll get to those at the end.

Are you there Susan?

Susan Passmore: Yes, I'm here.

Nigel Vann: Okay.

Susan Passmore: Great, thank you so much everyone for coming, so to speak. And I just want to first apologize for the quality of my voice. I have either a cold or a reaction to cherry blossoms. Everything seems to be blooming here in D.C. So hopefully you'll be able to hear me alright. Jen, could you go to the next slide.

I just wanted - in this presentation, I just want to touch on a few topics and give some ideas about how you might approach strengthening your program evaluation, you know, assuming that it's in place and everything is working fairly well. So ideas about how to strengthen your program evaluation, maybe ideas about how to approach data analysis and I'm really going to focus on those two.

So I just want to touch on at the end, how you might want to think about how you want to be presenting your data and using your findings. Overall I'm going to touch on these things and give ideas and really I'm thinking more of an overview.

If you find that you want to know more or want to see some more individualized guidance that has to do particularly with your project, as Nigel suggested you might request some technical assistance to JBA or either go to your FPO and you can also request that online, make an online PA request. Okay, next slide.

For the first topic is strengthening your evaluation and really if you're thinking about strengthening your evaluation the first place to start is finding out how it's going. What's going on and some ways of doing that.

The most obvious way is look at your logic model if you have one. And see if that evaluation still is flexible as set out in the logic model. And make sure everything is still on track because as you know, projects as they go along can tend to veer in certain directions and that's fine but you want to make sure that your evaluation is still reflecting what your project rules are.

Secondly is talk to people. Talk to your staff, talk to your participants, I mean you can do that formally or informally. First I have here, initiate your informal discussions and

observations regarding the evaluation. Sit in on when your staff is pre tests or post tests and see what's going on. Are participants resistant to filling it out? Is there something that's not working as well as you would hope?

Talk to staff, just informally talk to participants, I mean and find out what their thoughts and ask them to reflect on how the evaluation is going.

If you want to do something in a more formal vein, you can hold actual focus groups or interviews where you can really focus and have staff and participants carve out time to really focus on the evaluation and reflect on the evaluation.

And then finally check in and keep in touch with those external evaluators. I know that sometimes third party evaluators are sort of distant from the projects and you shouldn't be thinking that everything is okay if you haven't heard from then. I mean they should be - evaluators should be easily accessible and they should be working with you and being responsive to the project's needs. And really be primarily concerned with the evaluation of the project.

So there should be contact and there should be sort of a back and forth between the project implementation and the evaluation. Okay, next slide.

A couple of ideas about improving the power of your data. Now if you have a pre/post test in place and you're happy with that, that's great, I'm not saying that you necessary need to add anything else.

But if you feel like maybe you could be getting more, telling a more complete story of the kind of experiences and successes that your project is having, you might want to think about that. One step is to add a follow up data collection maybe at six months or a year.

Maybe at some point after the participants have gone through the service, they can reflect - you can get some data on how they have changed in a more long term way. And how your participants have started using their parenting skills in their day-to-day life, and has impacted the relationship with their children or their spouse in a more long-term sort of way, which can be very powerful.

Another way of doing that is making sure that your response rates are high and followed and I know that a lot of the grantees are having problems with response rate.

And I just have here a few things that give you some ideas about maybe how to improve that. One thing of course is to get tracking information early on. Not only phone numbers and addresses but also maybe a family member's phone number so that if you need to go to the next step to find somebody, that you have that information already and think that out.

I mean if your population is a population where they're moving a lot or if they're, you know, getting new phone numbers a lot which happens a lot these days, you might want to get as much of the information as you can early on so you can keep track of people.

But probably the most important way of keeping response rates high is tailoring your approach to your population to people, the people that you're serving. Who are they and what makes them in terms of them.

There's no one size fits all in terms of evaluation. You need to think about who they are, consider your methods. Are you doing a mail survey for a population that highly movable and you're losing them that way? Are you using an Internet survey for a population that doesn't really have first rate access to computers? And so think about that and consider that.

Another way of increasing response rates is the follow-up is an incredibly powerful way of getting people to fill out surveys. Think about your population again. Are they somebody who's going to respond to a phone reminder? Are they people who are going to respond to an email reminder that they should fill out their post test or their follow up?

Or is it better for - or is it feasible for someone to do a face-to-face kind of interaction with the participants is the the facilitators that ran the parenting class still in contact

where they might see people in the community and remind them that way. And that could be a very strong encouragement.

And finally incentives are a very powerful way of getting people to respond. And they don't necessarily have to be money, I know we say incentives and we think about money or food, but they may not necessarily need to be that way. And we've seen that incentives actually don't have to be big cash amounts, that participants can respond to very small tokens, signs of appreciation for their contribution.

Also, you might consider having people in for some kind of events where you're asking for a reunion or something like that if that makes sense in terms of your project and population. And have them fill out a follow-up at that point.

But in any case the use of incentives is powerful and it's not necessarily some cost benefit analysis, it could be just a just merely acknowledging that people are spending time on doing the evaluation. Next slide.

Next step, improving the power of data in other ways could mean adding qualitative data. I know that most of you have probably heard the phrase qualitative data, you probably know that we call mixed method research is really what is considered the gold standard in research and evaluation these days.

So if it's reasonable and it's something that you think you might want to explore, qualitative data collection - and when I'm talking about qualitative methods I'm talking about focus groups and interviews, which you know, but also just observations about perhaps in a parenting skills class or in a mentoring session.

Or case note review, if someone is - has a case management that's where they're taking daily notes with - about the progress of participants, that's something you can review, which is also qualitative data.

And so qualitative data can show you about what's going on in terms of the implementation so that's really a process data, what's going on, how are things working, what are the barriers that participants might have, something you could address in focus groups.

You can also address the outcome evaluation through focus groups or interviews or any of these methods. For example, there's one project that I recently worked with that is doing focus groups with the spouses of the fathers that they're serving.

So they're getting - they're asking the - well I don't think they're necessarily just spouses or partners or spouses or co parents - you know what the base is of the impact of the project which is very interesting way of going at that.

But again it's outcome evaluation because it's going at the change that has been created in the participant's lives and their relationships. Next slide.

And I just want to reiterate and - that seeking technical assistance, if you're having any protocols with your evaluation it's worthwhile to not try to go at it alone. Talk to your FPO or contact JBA or put in a TA request online if anything is just not right, if you just want to touch base with somebody and see if everything is okay or not, if your tools are not working right or it's not appropriate.

That is not to say that you're not getting the results that you want or it could be, but I'm talking about if your response rates are low, what's going with that, if you're unsure of how to add qualitative data collection or add a focus group.

If you have any kinds of ideas or questions about your analysis, these are things that you can talk to someone at JBA about and you seek technical assistance if you talk to your FPO. Next slide.

The analysis - I want to kind of shift gears a little bit and talk about analysis. And you all know that there are two kinds of objectives here in analysis. First you have your implementation evaluation, which has to do with who you serve, how many people you serve, did you reach the goals in terms of those implementation objectives.

And also in that is talking about barriers and facilitating factors things that help the project and things that hinder the projects. I mean were there problems that participants had in transportation and that impacted the project? Those are part of the implementation.

The outcome of objective data analysis has to do with change. And it always has something to do with change. If you think about change it's always outcome. What has been the change and the behavior, knowledge, skills or attitudes or any of those things that occurred in participants?

And in that, you know, one of the questions you want to ask is, you know, why did that change occur and explain it fully, how it occurred.

Did it affect other - some people in the population more than other people, that's something to think about. Next slide.

Not to get too jargony, but there's - in your analysis there's two objectives your implementation analysis and your outcome analysis. And there's also two different types of data, the quantitative data that is numbers and percentage and all of that and qualitative data.

And I just want to very briefly mention a couple of things that I tend to see a need for out there. In quantitative data analysis, I don't want - people shouldn't feel that they need to do the most sophisticated statistical analysis that they can pull together.

And many times, especially depending on the sample size, I mean, that is how many participants you're being - you are serving. If it's a small number, then really statistical analysis may not be appropriate, and that's okay.

When I say descriptive versus statistical, descriptive is percents and frequencies. So how many of participants improved their (stan) score from pre and post test on the AAPI or some other measure? I mean, that's all right to present things in the form of percents and frequencies and not necessarily doing these high level statistical analysis. You need to think about your capacity to assure analysis and also the need. The important thing is expressing the change that occurred.

And then secondly, just - I want you to think about why these findings happen and think about exploring that in more depth. I mean, just because you can't - let's say you do your analysis and you find that you haven't - after parenting skill classes your

participants are not showing any kind of increase in their skill level and that's disappointing.

But why is that the case? Is it perhaps that there's some kind of difference in the population, are you serving two ethnic groups and one could have done better than the other and when you bring them all together that the difference is erased?

Or is it, you know, younger fathers really responded better than older fathers? And it's okay to think about those things and in your analysis to maybe take those groups apart and look at the benefits in those separate groups and that might help make sense of what kind of impact your project had. Next slide.

Very briefly, qualitative data analysis is that something people tend not to be as familiar with because it's useful - it's real - excessive is relatively new. And so in that, I know that people are interested in using it much more - in there I just want to point out that again, the same ways that the quantitative data, it's okay to trust your thoughts, what has gone on and explore those things in qualitative data.

Do you feel like some segment of the population did better than the other population or is there something that's going on there that you'd like to explore? The point is to really think it all out and present your data and look at your data in a real systematic way and that's a thorough way.

And very often in qualitative data, people do focus groups for example; they tend to list themes that came up during the focus groups. And some - very often you'll see just a list of participants in terms of barriers participants listed, transportation, child care or lack of child care, you know, the - it was difficult to get to.

They'll list all these things as if they're all equal and you know when you're sitting in a focus group or you hear from participants that these things are not equal. They for example, in the focus group, participants that - somebody said, you know, it was really difficult to get here when the changed the bus lines, they limited the bus service because of economic problems in the community and then it became really difficult for us to come.

And everyone in the group said "Yes it did, it was awful, we could never come anymore." That's more important than one person saying that they have problems with child care if they're the only person that says that, then those things aren't equal and its okay to say that this was a real important barrier that came up in the focus groups and not so much these others. So don't necessarily just present things as if they're all equal.

And again, if you are interested in doing more complicated or sophisticated qualitative data analysis, please talk to your FPO, talk to JBA and request some help in that. And the same thing - and next slide.

In the same vein, the same sorts of things I've been talking about, when you're doing your analysis, go to the next level about - for interpretation. Were the implementation objectives obtained? Why or why not? Was there something going on in the community like the buses were limited? Was there staff turnover? Was there anything that could have come in that could have influenced the - or helped, it might not necessarily just a barrier, but also help the project succeed.

In terms of the change, you know, interpret that change, the outcomes. Don't just present data or statistical test, you know, really talk about what has happened. Report data and analysis that is relevant and (unintelligible) that relevant data thoroughly.

So even if it doesn't look so good, it's still an important lesson that we learned. And no one expects anything to be perfect so I think the - leaving out things that might not be as glowing is really a disservice to everybody including your project because that's what you learn from.

Those influential factors, population, the staff, turnover, agency, anything that's going in the community and again, think about those differences in the target population. Did men get - did younger men get more out of it? Was there something in the community different either serving, you know, a large group in different counties or something like that? Next slide.

And then - and all of that and I just wanted to briefly talk about presentation. And the whole point as Nigel said before is that you're telling your story and the successes and your failures of your story.

And the most important thing that you should be bringing to your thoughts and your discussions about your evaluation is how can we tell our story? And how can we do it in the most clear way that fits with the capacity of our agency and our skills and also is true to who we're working with, the families that we're working with.

So think about the value of telling your story. Use clear language, you know, don't get jargony or any - feel any reason for that, you know your project and you are the experts on your project and you need to express that in the most clear way that you can. And in that, describe the project, the evaluation, methodology thoroughly and that helps people, don't assume people know.

Using charts and tables effectively, and I said here and sparingly. I've seen often that grantees will present table after table after table or chart after chart after chart and it doesn't necessarily add to an understanding.

Like if you really had demographic data and - you don't necessarily need to present that in all in a chart. If it adds something to the understanding of the reader, that's great. But if it's really just kind of put in there then maybe it's not necessary and you should think about that.

And finally, integrating qualitative data, I like to suggest that you might think about integrating qualitative data in with your quantitative data. So say for example you're presenting a table that shows again an increase in (stenclirs) for the AAPI or whatever test you're using from pre, post, pre to post test, so there's an increase in skill level and appearance and that you can demonstrate quantitatively.

But you also have some focus groups or you have from your stories of impact, some nice qualitative data that illustrates that increase in parenting skills. Do you have a quote say, from a father who said I've learned so much, I learned this, that and the other thing. And it's helped my family grow.

It's nice to put that with the quantitative data and what it does is it fills it out. I mean, I don't want it to be necessarily just a great advertisement, but if it adds to the understanding again of the reader of what's going on then it's nice to put that in there. I think it rounds out that knowledge, so that you know that there was an increase in skills, that you can see quantitatively but you can also read the quote and get it a little deeper understanding of what that meant. Next slide.

And then just finally I just want to leave you with the - the next extension of that is just thinking about how you want disseminate your findings, press releases, newsletters, community presentations, whatever makes sense for you.

And if makes sense to go to professional meetings or work on journal articles, then do that. But the - my idea is that you are all learning so much and what you are getting and what are seeing is valuable to a lot of people, people who are working on projects now and people who are working on projects to come and for your own agency as well, but beyond that. So I want to encourage you to share your knowledge. Next slide.

And I just also included here some more resources that you might want to look at, if you want to have more in depth understanding of any of these things that I've talked about today. And I also very strongly encourage you to look at getting help that's individualized to your project through your FPO or JBA.

And you can go to the next slide and that's it. Thank you very much.

Nigel Vann: Thank you very much, Susan. I heard a lot there and I'm sure we can revisit some of that in the Q&A. There was a couple of things - one thing, let me just make one remark now and we'll pick up on a few of these things in the Q&A.

I particularly liked the idea you shared about following up and perhaps trying to bring people back, together again. And, you know, I think one of the ways in which you can sort of meld the evaluation in gathering the follow up info that you desperately need to show outcomes, to sort of meld that a little bit with opportunities to bring program graduates back together again for some alumni event or reunion event as Susan put

it. Where you can reinforce some of the learning that's gone on, but at the same time, give that face to face contact to get some follow up data.

Of course, you've got to be careful that you do that within your program budget and that you don't do it with any kind of celebration because we all know now that's not an allowable cost.

And as with everything, you should be checking with the FPO but just in general I think that's something where you might want to think about if you are having issues and - with follow up data.

So let me move on and introduce our next presenter who will be Dr. Irene Luckey. She is a Researcher, Associate Professor at the Institute for Families in Society at the University of South Carolina. And she's also working with one of the grantees; she's working as an evaluator for the South Carolina Center for Fathers and Families and they have been involved in this fatherhood work going back to the '90s.

And Irene actually helped to put together the evaluation design for some of the early fatherhood work and she assisted with a charity foundation back in the mid to late '90s.

She has received a number of awards and citations for her work with fatherhood programs, so she comes as a very, sort of grounded presence, not just as an evaluator but, you know, grounded in the fatherhood work.

She is the author of a guidebook for community groups entitled "Evaluation from the Start". And in general she has a practice background in social work with a focus on working with low income populations.

And I know just from talking with Irene that those events over the last few years and that she does indeed bring a breadth of knowledge to this field. So I would like invite Irene to share some of her wisdom with us.

Irene Luckey: Thank you, Nigel. Again, good afternoon everyone, I apologize for my voice being raspy but in South Carolina the pollen is quite heavy and I have trying to deal with it. So I hope you will be able to hear me and understand me.

I'm going to speak about evaluation pretty much from lessons learned in working with fatherhood programs and from a practical stance and hopefully it would be of help for you as you are working with evaluation. Next slide.

One of the main overarching comments I want to make is that I see evaluation as an integral part of the overall program operation and the guidebook "Evaluation from the Start" is just that. We thought about evaluation, it developed into programs. I know how our programs are already underway, but integrating that throughout the process rather looking at it as a process that begins towards the end.

And another crucial point is that staff needs to be included from the start and throughout the process of evaluation because they are involved. Next slide.

Number one, the staff is extremely important in the evaluation process therefore you must have staff buy in. It is just essential because you will be calling on the staff for input with data, the ideas, making adjustments based on the data and all of that affects the people who are working with the bigger population. And if they do not buy in to your evaluation and your evaluation process, it's going to be very difficult for you to achieve the goals that you set out to achieve.

So I would say you would have - your time must be very well spent in making sure that your staff is on board, meaning they understand it, they understand the importance of it, they understand how it can be of help to them and to the overall operation of the program.

The program staff is - are the people who your population have direct contact and the strongest relationships are generally with those individuals. And if their attitude about data collection and evaluation is not on point, that can directly and sometimes indirectly affect the response that you'll get or the participants' willingness to participate in the evaluation.

They also administered your pre/post tests in many cases when you have group sessions. And it's such comments such as, "Well, we're going to have to end now because we got to do these evaluations, you know, this is what we have to do, " that sets a tone that is not conducive the men understanding that taking these tests are - or giving feedback is extremely important for the ongoing work of the program and the program success. Next slide.

Program staff play a major role in ensuring that the data is accurate. Many times the data that they evaluate - that is evaluated or that go directly to the evaluator as far as input into a system where the data is analyzed, it comes from staff and they need to be extremely careful in understanding how important accuracy is.

I know in our programs at first, you know, because they did not really buy in to it, you know, I'd put it in if I have time or they would put it in and there would be errors.

Luckily, I tend to monitor the data closely and we did not go far down the road in the beginning before we began to see something is wrong. And therefore, we were able to find out what the problem was and to begin to take steps to correct it and one is that the program staff had not really bought into the process in a very serious way.

The program staff also may be helpful in interpreting data. By that I mean, when you're looking at something from data and it just as an evaluator, it just doesn't make sense, your staff could be helpful in perhaps helping you understand what you're looking at give you some perspective on it.

I'll give you an example. At one point the - I worked with groups around fatherhood program to deal with low income, primarily noncustodial fathers. And when I looked at the marital status, I saw a high degree of divorce.

And knowing the population, I just knew that the divorce rate would not be what I was seeing on paper. And so I brought this to the program. I work with a statewide program and we all get together at least quarterly, if not more frequently to discuss this is what I'm seeing here and it's hard for me to believe that the divorce rate is this high.

And they were able to say way the men interpreted divorce was if they had been away from their mother of their child or the person that they were never married to for a while. They considered that divorce, which was a very important insight because what it told me is that rather than having four variables, single, married, divorced, widowed, we had to be more specific about the question.

And so, you know, it ended up being six categories, are you legally married, legally divorced, legally separated and within that, a clearer, more accurate picture began to emerge but without the staff being able to give a perspective on what I was looking at, we may have been reporting outcomes that just was - that just were not accurate.

Program staff is also in a good position to detect some data collection problems. For example, sometimes when I look at the data and I said now I know they're working hard, but this is what I'm looking at and you ask them what's happening here, it becomes clear, oh, we forgot to enter this. Or when I entered this I was thinking about such and such and I was only checking it one time, not aware that each unit of service that need to be checked.

So again, that was important so that the problem could be corrected and the data was more accurate therefore the analysis could be more accurate. Next slide.

You want to make sure that your staff is able to see the big picture of how the data that they were asked to collect can help the program participants and the program as a whole.

One of the things I've heard quite a bit about particularly early on was, you know, we're asking too many questions, we don't need to know all of this, we don't want to get in to the men's business. And again, it was because the level of sharing of personal or information tended not to be very wide.

However, once the staff was able to see why it is necessary to ask such questions, for example, rather than are you employed or not employed, full time or part time. It was important to know what is the longest length of time that you've ever worked at any - for any one employee - employer full time. Because that question helped to give the staff more insight in terms of how the fathers tended to - I guess his level of

reliability, the level of coaching he would need around employment versus just getting a job. Because in most cases, we found that many of them had not worked for any - maybe a year or two at any one job and being laid off was not the reason for the multiple successions of jobs.

And so once they were see how that helped them understand the man's behavior better, and helped them to understand that that was not a question that was quote, unquote "getting into their business too much." But it would help them to make more accurate assessment of perhaps what jobs or what kind of other supportive measures needed to be taken regarding employment. Next slide.

Again, it's important to show how the data can be used to help staff, which is a continuation of what I just addressed and one area, you want to make sure they know how to help improve service delivery.

The programs I work with, they do electronic daily logs and they have to enter in what they do, the amount of time, so that in looking at that, we're able to see what they're doing in their service delivery. So that that data could give them - can provide a means for their supervisor or even the evaluators to make suggestions to help them to manage the workload they have more efficiently and to also help them see areas where they are really doing a very, very good job.

It helped them to assess their progress towards their goal and the data can also help them improve their outcome. Program participants need to be included in evaluation process by letting them know they're a part of this.

They are giving us information and that the information - by them giving us information, it not only helps us to help but it provides important contributions. When the participants feel that they are contributing in a useful manner, I have observed that the accuracy of information that they are willing to provide and their willingness to provide information where we give them instruments to complete, it seemed to go up.

So I do think that it is important for the program participants to know it's not just getting information to have the information to go in a black hole so to speak. Next slide.

Be sure that all requested data is written or verbally presented at the level that a participant can understand. With the fatherhood programs that we work with, many of the literacy levels are quite low. And so we just make sure that the words that are used, the expressions that are used are those that the men can easily understand.

What we have found is many times when they don't quite understand what you're asking; they'll just check anything without giving it a thought. And that again can affect the accuracy of your outcomes or your understanding of how well they're doing because it makes them too - they really didn't just understand a word or phrase, et cetera.

You want to as close as - as much as possible in written responses, use closed ended questions. We always provide an opportunity for them to give comments but in most cases, it's left blank. And again when literacy levels are low, that tends to be the case more so than not. So we tend to try to ask more closed ended questions when it is written responses, but leave an opportunity to write comments if they choose.

Any software that you use for data entry needs to still user friendly. And regardless of how simplistic it may appear to be, time needs to be taken to train staff on how to use the software even if it's just a simple spreadsheet.

You can go to the next slide - because again many times that becomes a source of having erroneous data. There's just not a clear understanding of how to enter the data or if one needed to make an adjustment or when they get to the end to do a tab other than to just keep it flowing over into other categories, that is not done.

You only want to gather information that is necessary and that is limit the number of questions as much as possible, but be as complete as you need to be. Your questions really do need to be very direct and precise. And again which I mentioned earlier, you want to make sure that the staff is clear as to why each question that is required - that an answer why it is that that question is important. Because

sometimes the participant may ask the staff and if they say, "I don't know," it doesn't fare well in terms of getting the best input. Next slide.

You want to be sure that you look at your participants' satisfaction responses and address areas where adjustments are needed. In the programs I work with, I've suggested that they do this every three months.

And we're in a 24 week program - I mean, yes 24 week program because if you only do the participant satisfaction at the end, that doesn't leave room to maybe address some areas that could have made the program more meaningful for the participants.

On the other hand, it also gives you some ideas about - or a greater understanding of where some participants are and I'll give you an example. In one case, there was a participant who - it was maybe what do you like most about the program and he named some people and then what did you like least about the program, he named some people. And it was very clear they were all staff people. From the people he named, I knew there was a problem not so much with the staff, but with the person because person that he liked least, I knew was the person who tended not to be, how can I put it, hold the men most responsible.

Whereas the people he liked least and, you know, the question didn't necessitate you name a person, it was just what in general were the people that I know would hold men to their standards. And that's important to know, so it doesn't always mean that the program is not doing something correctly but it does give you an idea of where the participant stands.

You want to continuously monitor the data to detect potential problems and that's pretty much what I've been talking about throughout because again, if all of these things had waited until the end or a reporting period there would have been no way to make adjustments based on the data. It would have gone in, this is what we did, this is what we didn't do and then if you had another cycle, you may try to adjust it but if it's at the end of cycle, then you've lost all the opportunities to improve your functioning if you only wait until the end.

I know particularly with fatherhood programs, very likely your follow up with the men would involve leg work efforts rather than mailing and phone calls. And what I mean is getting out sometimes and you just walking the neighborhood understand - in many cases the men that we work with, the guys on the street is going to know where John Doe or see him or we'll let you know if he has left town or his family members or relatives may know. They tend not to respond as well to phone calls sometimes because it's not possible for mailing.

My final comment - next slide - is generally data collection, documentation, evaluation are not area of expertise of program staff. Many of the people, I would say most of the people tend to have their greatest in working directly with the population.

Therefore, you need patience, encouragement and repetition in instructions and direction regarding evaluation and data collection and documentation if you want desired results. I don't know what else to do except going over it and over it and answering the questions because again, this is a new arena for the staff in many cases to be actively be involved in.

You want to focus on how the data can help in service delivery and sustainability rather than using it just for reports that are required by funding agencies. When this occurs, it makes it more real if I can see as a staff how this is going to help me do my job, how is it going to help me help the men?

How can it help me in writing this grant that may not be related to where I'm getting my funding right now? It brings it to a more real level and I find that staff more actively participate. Next slide.

Evaluation needs to be seen as an integral part of your program that can be helpful throughout the tenure of your program and not just the product at the end, which is all I've been talking about throughout this session.

And evaluation is an ongoing process. The more you use it, the more you refer to it, the more you let the data lead what you're doing, to make your adjustments and to talk about changes are made, the more the staff makes it an integral part of what they do and it - the more likely you are to meet your goals and outcomes. Thank you.

Nigel Vann: Thank you very much, Irene. And I certainly appreciate both you and Susan staring with the allergies here. Certainly I have my own allergy problems, so I know what it's like. It's sort of a modern blight we all have to deal with I think in a lot different ways.

But I took copious notes while you were speaking, Irene. You certainly made a lot of very good points there. I particularly think, you know, the point you were making about the role the staff is just so important.

I've seen that so often with fatherhood programs but, you know, you really want to provide the service and do everything we can to be of help but that means we often negate writing down all the case notes that we need to.

And I think it's just so important, as you say, to stress with staff the - actually write down every interaction you have with a client. And all the ins and outs, that's actually - it's not just good case management, but it's going to be data that you can use and that it's useful to make the program better and help you meet your goals better.

And I find, you know, having those kinds of conversations with staff, it really does sort of help people make more sense of a lot of this. And, you know, I think that the whole point of having all your staff on point, it goes beyond even just evaluation. Because if we don't - and I know this is a point that we've making, that we've been making at the roundtables.

But if you don't have all your staff really buying into the value of this program and really sort of seeing why it's important to do the different things you do and understanding the research questions, you know, if you don't have that then it undermines the real outcomes that you're trying to get to.

And I think that's true not just to direct staff involved in the program, but staff throughout your agency who in one way or another are involved in bringing folk in and explaining to them what's going on and just having that warmth to keep things going.

So let me move to our question and answer phase here and I've got a few questions that I wanted to pose to you and we've had a couple of questions come in. So let me begin with the questions that have come in from the audience here.

And the first one which I'm going to direct to both Susan and Irene and so I hope Susan's phone in now unmated, are you back with us Susan?

Susan Passmore: Yes.

Nigel Vann: Great. Okay. So the first question I want to raise is this person has asked - it's talking about the wording of questions in the surveys. So, how do we change our surveys so the answers aren't obvious for those taking the test?

In our parenting surveys, the participants know the desirable answer, so we measure little to no change during the post. So if you'd both like to sort of respond to that, you know, about how do we word our survey questions so that we're not influencing the answers we're getting?

Susan Passmore: Well I think that - if it's okay for me to go and answer. I think that when you're writing questions you need to think from the perspective of the participants and be sure that you're not putting in things that are obviously leading, that are actually suggesting right there in the question how you should answer it. So try to leave it as - without value, that is to say, not valuing one direction or another and be as simple and straight forward in the questions as you can.

And another way of going - another important step, and I think that this comes really from what Irene was talking about, you need also when the participants are given the pre and post tests, if you are have staff members who are giving those things out, it's really important to have them explain what the purpose of the survey is and what the purpose of the evaluation is. And if they do understand that and the staff have that buy in and they can express that to the participants I think that you can encourage participants to be - to answer more frankly and thoughtfully.

Nigel Vann: Good, good. Thanks, yes. Have you got anything on that one Irene?

Irene Luckey: I would agree with Susan and I'm not sure if this has to do with information perhaps to see if they had gotten information maybe from a group session or something. But if it is, I would say that I found there's very little difference or growth between the pre and post if in fact the questions are just too easy and they don't even, you know, stretch the knowledge.

                   I mean, you know, it's pretty much information that they may have come there already knowing and to make it look like everybody could feel okay, I find that there's sometimes people would make the questions as much, much too simplistic. So even if they never was even at the group sessions, they could have scored what they scored...

Nigel Vann: Yes, yes.

Irene Luckey: ...on the test. So, you know, in addition to the wording, that's what I have found to be a problem sometimes too.

Nigel Vann: You know, another issue along those lines that I've heard at some of the OFA conferences, and this is perhaps more on the healthy marriage side, but the fact that when you come into the program and you do an initial survey and you're asked, say about your relationship, so you're asked, "Have you got any issues in your relationship?" and you say, "No, everything's fine." But then you go through a couple of sessions and you start thinking, oh I realize I've got a few problems here.

                   So, you know, the initial intake would have you saying everything's okay but then further down the line you might say, well now I've got some problems and it might look like you had a negative impact. Have you got any sort of take on that?

                   I've heard some people say you could actually do at the end, you know, you know, you could do a sort of retroactive pre test and so when you came in, "How were things and how are they now?" What do you think about those issues?

Susan Passmore: Well, I guess I'll go first again. I think that you're right, you can do the sort of retrospective - ask them to compare what their knowledge was before and after if that makes sense for your project.

But I do think that that's a very valid point because I think that often happens and in fact I've seen it several times with the parenting stress index for different kinds of project, not with only what's in these initiatives, but that pre test with the PSI sometimes when people don't feel like they're stressed. And then once they're involved in a project they are.

There are questions about, you know, how they're doing things and suddenly things may not seem as good as they were before and that causes more stress, so actually the PSI has increased as a result of participation.

And so and I think that you need to think about - and that's one of those things that I was trying to get at before about whether or not your instruments really fit with what you're trying to do.

Nigel Vann: Yes.

Susan Passmore: I mean, if you're finding something like happening, I mean that's a reasonable thing to happen. It's reasonable that participants should be feeling more stress. So that's your - the most - the best test of the success of the project.

Nigel Vann: Exactly, yes.

Susan Passmore: I mean maybe you need to be looking for something else, right? So.

Nigel Vann: Yes.

Susan Passmore: I mean it's not a bad thing, so it shouldn't be necessarily something that should be presented that way. You know...

Nigel Vann: I think part of the issue is that what we're doing in these programs is essentially we're helping folks increase their self awareness right. So they may well answer the questions differently after we've done that. Irene?

Irene Luckey: I do think raising awareness definitely is something that we do, but sometimes I've just asked the question, you know, now before taking this, you know, questionnaire or when you first came into the program how did you rank you relationship or something like that. And then afterwards - and then try to find out from them if in fact they can give you some pointers, just bullet points of the areas and that, you know, sometimes it just takes that for you to help them in those areas.

Nigel Vann: That's interesting, yes. You know, one of the things that actually struck me in Susan's presentation was when you were talking about the use of focus groups and, you know, particularly getting the information from partners or spouses who may not have been through the program.

In fact it made me think of - I was talking to one of the grantees, I don't know if he's on the line today, but Brian Jersky with the Dads on Duty program in San Diego. He shared just a short story that they had an event where some of the mothers came and one of them shared with him that she was really impressed that since her husband had been coming to the program he was now washing the dishes. So, you know, you get those kind of impacts and you can get that data by talking to somebody else.

So I just wonder in terms of doing focus groups, you know, if folk were going to do that, do you have any advice about how you might structure a focus group.

Susan Passmore: Oh, yes, sure. There's some - you know, in focus groups as research and data questions should be tailored to who you're working with, so what makes sense in terms of the, you know, the individual and cultural understanding of the population.

So having said that, there's some rules to follow. Focus groups usually are - first the people that are invited to your focus group should be similar in some ways. If you suspect that there might be differences between the way the perspectives are with the young men and the older men, just as an example off the top of my head, then if you want to do focus groups, then do one with younger men and one with the older men. So that when they are talking about the project there can be somewhat of a level of consensus and you're not trying to tackle too much stuff at once and you also have that level of comparison, the ability to compare.

Nigel Vann: Okay.

Susan Passmore: So you want - you have the people who you invite be similar and you want to have the moderator be similar - and that is the person who facilitates it, that's who directs the questions and all of that be someone who makes sense to do it.

I mean if you're talking to a whole bunch of - or, you know, fathers who - would it be appropriate to have a young woman be the moderator? I mean, maybe so, maybe not. Let's think about those things. You don't want them to be put off by who is actually asking them questions and that's the case for any kind of data collection, but especially in focus groups.

And the group should be relatively small. Usually people say, you know, five to ten participants at a time. I like to say six to eight because again, you don't - there's two problems with too small - or too big of a group. One is you're just going in too many directions at once.

And the second problem and the more common problem actually is once you have too many people then you start to get this kind of effect where the people feel like they're in a classroom and they're more passive. So you don't want to have that kind of a thing, you want people to be fully participated and to have the opportunity to be there. So keeping the groups small is a good guideline too.

Nigel Vann: Okay. Have you got any input on that, Irene?

Irene Luckey: No, I would agree and I would just say generally with focus groups I know exactly the issues that I want to come out, so you ask questions that will generate dialogs rather than...

Susan Passmore: You want to - I'm sorry.

Irene Luckey: Go ahead.

Susan Passmore: I was going to say, I was just agreeing that you need to come up with your questions ahead of time and think about how you want the answer - ask them in the same way as you do any kind of data collection.

Irene Luckey: Yes. But it needs to be such that once - I mean it creates dialog and interaction and I usually can have them there but it's a very dynamic process and there are very few closed ended questions, if any, that I usually use in a focus group. It's generally open ended questions that will flow into other things until you get all of your questions answered.

Nigel Vann: Okay. But what I'm hearing you both say is that it's just very important to prepare and make sure that the person facilitating this is skilled and is going to relate to the group and you said you had an idea about how this is going to flow.

Irene Luckey: Absolutely.

Susan Passmore: Right. And it's not in the same way as we were talking about with surveys is the moderator and the questions shouldn't be leading. They should give the participants an opportunity to express their own thoughts in the way that they happen.

Nigel Vann: Yes. Okay, yes, great point, yes. Okay. Now actually I want to come back and sort of raise an issue about the children in a couple of ways. One is, you know, can we do focus groups with kids, can we talk to kids to get their input and also how do we measure child well being. But I do want to go to one other question that came in first, then I'll come back to that.

So this question is, what is a good timeframe to follow up with clients you haven't served in a while? What is a good timeframe to follow up with clients who you haven't served in a while?

And I guess you could look at that is, what's the time frame between the pre and the post test but also what's the timeframe if you haven't heard them for a while and you need to get more data?

Irene Luckey: In most cases, with the programs I work with if they are - because the group sessions are - peer support groups are weekly, if they haven't seen or heard from that person in at least two weeks, they need to really start following up.

Nigel Vann: Okay.

Irene Luckey: Yes.

Nigel Vann: What do you think, Susan?

Susan Passmore: I'm confused, do you mean when - does the questioner mean that when you want to do a follow up kind of data collection?

Nigel Vann: I'm assuming so, yes.

Susan Passmore: Yes, okay. Well I think, you know, a lot of times you hear people say, 6 months, a year, 6 months, 12 months, 9 months and I really - there's nothing wrong with that, but I really kind of hate to see it because people feel like it's this, you know, cookie cutter kind of approach to it. And I think what makes sense in terms of your project. Well look at your logic (model), look at what you're trying to - what kind of change you're trying to affect in the participants. And think about how long would you think that that would take place?

So they walk away from the parenting skills class and they have a lot of knowledge. How long do you feel like it would be before they could start really, you know, using that knowledge in their interactions with their children or their (co-parent)?

And you think about what makes sense in terms of your population and also think about what makes sense in terms of when you feel like you might be able - would be a good time to get a hold of people. So there's, you know, two things you need to is think about what makes sense given the objectives of the project and what makes sense given the participants.

So if you know, six months brings you to December 24, does that make sense to do that then, you know.

Nigel Vann: Yes.

Susan Passmore: So my answer is, unfortunately I think that you need to - it really depends on the project and what makes sense in terms of that.

Irene Luckey: I think it does, but I do think specifically if you're working with low income people, particularly men, the time span cannot be too great because you'll lose them.

Nigel Vann: Yes.

Irene Luckey: You really have to - I mean, at minimum we do like a retest or something three months - I mean, you know that - I mean that would be a max period of time before you try to - because otherwise with the timing you're going to totally lose them.

Nigel Vann: Yes and I think that is one of the real conundrums of this work, you know, because on the one hand real outcomes make take a long while, so we're not going to be around to see that anyway. But what sort of conceivable timeframe can we stay in touch? And that was what I particularly liked, you know, when (Susan) was talking about with the idea of reunion activities. You know, so you can have even sort of a regular newsletter that goes out to stay in touch with people and then pull them together for occasional things.

You know, perhaps you have a Father's Day picnic each year. And again, I mean, you couldn't do that with grant funding but if you've got other ways of bringing yourself together and then touching them or using that to perhaps do another focus group or get them to fill out another survey or get the new contact information, those kind of things, yes.

So that's obviously a big subject that we could spend a long while talking about, but it was a very good question.

I did just want to come to thinking about the children a little bit because, you know, the ultimate goal really of this federal funding is to improve child well being and I know for a lot of the grantees, you know, in one way or another you've got that in

your goals and outcomes that you're expecting. So sort of a two pronged question for you to finish up with here.

But on the one hand, I remember a few years ago the (Nod Vanleer) Foundation that's based in Holland, they were doing surveys with - they fund parenting programs around the world. And they were talking to children, you know, even young children about their parents and they were using that in sort of pre and post stuff to see the impact of the program.

So I have two questions for you to address however you feel like. So one would be, is it possible to do a focus group with children, obviously depending on the age or is it possible to do some one on one talking to children, maybe if it's just getting down on your knees and playing with them and talking with them about mommy and daddy to a certain extent?

And beyond that, what do you think about sort of formal measures of child well being? Is there anything that you can recommend that people might be looking at if they're not already?

Susan Passmore: Well, off the top of my head, I think it's very interesting idea about talking with children, of course it's very - but I think and I wonder what Irene's thoughts on this would be.

But the problem with children is that it's more complex. When we do data collection or we do research with any population we want them to give us informed consent. We want them to understand what the projects or the research is for. We want them to understand that we'll be protecting their confidentiality and we want them to consent voluntarily to be in the research and that's not clear - as cut and dry with children as it is with adults.

Nigel Vann: Yes.

Susan Passmore: So, it's problematic. I don't know, Irene, what are your thoughts?

Irene Luckey: That is definitely a challenge and I do agree with what you said, there - my experience has been though, many times it's - I mean, I was doing an afterschool program and wanted to sort of talk to the students, but you had to get parental consent. And some of the parents actually wanted to be present.

And again, that can vary, you know, the child's reaction or what they will say or feel they can't say. And it becomes a very difficult piece when you have that because of the age and their level of understanding and even if the parents give consent, many times they did want to be present and it did influence the response.

Nigel Vann: Okay. What about any formal measures of child well-being and I actually do need to take us to the survey at the end here in just a minute, but - perhaps I should come back to that. Let me just ask you both to think about that and I'll bring Jen on to have folk respond to the survey.

But if you've both got any closing thoughts on just sources of questions that would tap into child well being, if that's possible, you know. So that would be I guess survey questions or gathering data from the schools or whatever.

So let me just pass it to Jen to do the quick survey and then we'll ...

Irene Luckey: Excuse me, Nigel may I just say one quick thing?

Nigel Vann: Sure.

Irene Luckey: The issue we talked about where the people may have gotten worse because they were made aware, I would see that as something that the evaluator being knowledgeable about what that really means could really write that up and that's not necessarily a negative.

Nigel Vann: Good. Thank you, yes.

Irene Luckey: And so I think the importance of your evaluator understanding really what that means and writing it up, that could be a big plus.

Nigel Vann: Great, yes. And also how you blend in your qualitative data there, yes.

Irene Luckey: Absolutely.

Nigel Vann: Yes. Yes. Great point.

Irene Luckey: Okay. That's all I wanted to say.

Nigel Vann: Okay. Thank you, yes. Okay, (Jen) if you would have us do the quick survey then.

Jen McHenry: Great. Thanks, Nigel. There will be four questions and these are just to give us a little bit of feedback on how we're doing. So the first question is, I have a better understanding of how to consider the different uses of quantitative and qualitative data.

Again, if you can you just select your choice to the left of the colored square, strongly agree, agree, unsure, disagree, strongly disagree or again, there's a no vote on the bottom. And that question, I have a better understanding of how to consider the different uses of quantitative and qualitative data. Okay?

We'll move on to question number two. This works the same. So (the poll) question is, I have a better understanding of how to analyze and make sense of the data we collect. Strongly agree, agree, unsure, disagree, strongly disagree or no vote. I have a better understanding of how to analyze and make sense of the data we collect.

We'll move on to question number three. I have more complete understanding of ways to present my findings to best tell my program's story. Again, strongly agree, agree, unsure, disagree, strongly disagree or no vote. I have a more complete understanding of ways to present my findings to best tell my program's story.

Okay thanks. And we'll move on to question number four, this is the last one. The advice and suggestions regarding evaluation methods were helpful to me. And your choices this time are, very helpful, helpful, unsure, of little help, of no help at all or no vote. And the advice and suggestions regarding evaluation methods were helpful to me.

Okay. Thank you for your time and we'll go back to Nigel, (Sue) and Irene.

Nigel Vann: Okay. Thank you very much, (Jen). So just very briefly and I know I'm sort of putting on the spot right at the end here, but I - you know, this is something I've heard a lot from grantees is sort of, how do we measure child well being? Have you got any sort of closing thoughts or resources we might refer people to or something you can send me letter that I can send to grantees?

Irene Luckey: I don't have anything right on the top of my head because I have not done that in a long time, but I would be willing to try to look into and see if I could send some measures of child well being. I know they do exist.

Nigel Vann: Okay. Thank you. I'll certainly be interested in looking at that, yes.

Susan Passmore: And I feel the same way, I don't know that I - I know that I've had grantees who have used the child behavior check list successfully and found that useful. And that's something that you would have a person who knows the child reflect on the child's well being, there's a set or questions, a survey that can be administered or self administered.

And then I've also had grantees use the home inventory which is an assessment of the child's environment.

Nigel Vann: Okay.

Susan Passmore: But I don't know that I am any - I'm certainly not an expert on measures or I think that maybe I wouldn't mind some time to look into it as well and reflect.

Nigel Vann: Okay. Well I appreciate that. So Susan's suggestions are to look at the child behavior check list, which I know some folk in the fatherhood work have used and then the home inventory.

So I actually think, you know, this may be sort of an ongoing discussion that we can sort of have at grantee roundtables and perhaps particularly at the evaluation

roundtable, but I'll certainly be interested in hearing from any of the grantees who are successfully measuring child well being. You know, if you have lessons learned there that you might want to share with others.

So anyway, but that's a discussion for the future I think. So with that said, let me offer very warm appreciation to Susan and Irene for your presentations and particularly battling the allergies. But really appreciate the ideas you've shared and I think they'll be very useful for folk. I certainly hope so.

And we will be seeing most of you I hope, one way or another at the coming roundtables. and we will be doing our next Webinar in April and that's going to be on Working Fathers from the Hip Hop Culture. So we'll be getting more information on that to you shortly and we'll see you then. Thank you very much everybody.

Operator: Ladies and gentlemen, that does conclude the conference call for today. We thank you for your participation and we ask that you please disconnect your lines.

END