

PARENTS AND CHILDREN TOGETHER (PACT) EVALUATION

INSTRUMENT (12)

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

(FOR PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS)

PARENTS AND CHILDREN TOGETHER (PACT)
TOPIC GUIDE FOR USE WITH FOCUS GROUPS
OF PROGRAM FATHERS OR COUPLES

This topic guide will be used for focus group discussions with program participants (couples in healthy marriage (HM) programs and fathers in responsible fatherhood (RF) programs) to explore their perspectives on the availability, quality, and value of program services.

Introductory script:

Purpose and use of information: Mathematica Policy Research is conducting an evaluation of fatherhood and relationship strengthening programs. As part of that evaluation, we are seeking to learn more about your perspectives on the availability, quality, and value of the program’s services. The purpose of the study is to provide information to practitioners and policymakers within multiple levels of government as well as in other sectors.

Authority of collection: This evaluation is being conducted on behalf of the Administration for Children and Families (ACF). An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it has a current valid OMB control number. The number for this study is 0970-0403. If you have any questions, please contact [CONTACT NAME], at xxx-xxx-xxxx, regarding OMB-PRA (0970-0403).

Privacy: The information you provide will be combined with information from other program participants and discussed among the evaluation team and federal staff at the Administration for Children and Families. Information regarding participants’ perspectives may be included in reports, but your identifying information will be kept private and not shared publicly.

Voluntary Participation: Providing information for the purposes described is voluntary.

Estimated time: This discussion is expected to take about one and a half hours.

A. Warm-up/Introductions

B. Enrollment and motivation for enrolling in program

- Participants’ initial introduction to RF/HM program
- Participants’ initial interest in and expectations of RF/HM program
- Reasons for enrolling

C. Attendance

- Attendance and its regularity
- Barriers to attendance
- Response to efforts by agency to increase attendance
 - Staff encouragement
 - Receipt of gifts/prizes for participation
- Strategies to encourage attendance that were perceived to be most and least effective

D. Responsible parenting services

- Parenting services/information that were helpful, and why
- Parenting services/information that were not helpful, and why
- Parenting services/information would like to have received, and why
- Perceptions of staff providing parenting services/information
- Satisfaction with parenting services/information

E. Healthy marriage and relationship skills education

- Healthy marriage and relationship strengthening services/information that were helpful, and why
- Healthy marriage and relationship strengthening services/information that were not helpful, and why
- Healthy marriage and relationship strengthening services/information would like to have received, and why
- Perceptions of staff providing healthy marriage and relationship strengthening services/information
- Satisfaction with healthy marriage and relationship strengthening services/information

F. Economic stability/job and career advancement services

- Employment related services/information that were helpful, and why
- Employment related services/information that were not helpful, and why
- Employment related services/information would like to have received, and why
- Perceptions of staff providing employment related services/information

- Satisfaction with employment related services/information

G. Perceived benefits

- Knowledge or skills gained in preparing for, finding, and keeping a job
 - Whether/how program increased knowledge/skill related to looking for job, and in what specific areas
 - Whether/how program helped obtain a job and in what specific ways
 - How acquired knowledge and skills related to employability may help in future
- Knowledge or skills gained pertaining to parenting and fatherhood
 - Whether/how program increased knowledge of effective/appropriate parenting and in what areas
 - Whether/how program led to changes in involvement with child or parenting practices
 - How acquired knowledge and skills related to parenting and fatherhood may help in future
- Knowledge or skills gained pertaining to healthy relationships
 - Whether/how program increased knowledge and skills related to healthy relationships
 - Whether/how program led to changes in interactions with romantic partners or co-parents
 - How acquired knowledge and skills related to healthy relationships may help in future
- Knowledge of program policies related to marriage and implications for decisions around marriage and relationships

H. Overall Satisfaction

- Perceived match between available services and individual needs
- Areas for improvement, and how
- Whether would recommend program to others