
Home Visiting: Approaches to Father Engagement and Fathers' Experiences

**OMB Information Collection Request
New Collection**

Supporting Statement

Part B

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B1. Respondent Universe and Sampling Methods

This study consists of a purposive sample of five home visiting programs that have evidenced effectiveness in engaging fathers in their programs. In each program, we plan to interview (a) the home visiting program director and up to two other senior staff such as a program manager, field supervisor, or fatherhood coordinator, (b) up to five home visitors and including an outreach or recruitment specialist, where applicable, (c) eight fathers who have been engaged in the home visiting program in some meaningful way, and (d) two mothers who are matched to the fathers we interview. In addition, we will also shadow home visitors and observe the activities and interactions that occur during two home visits in which fathers are participating. The observations will likely be done with different fathers from those that are interviewed.

Because the criteria of sampling programs that have evidenced effectiveness in engaging fathers is subjective, there is no well-defined universe for the population of programs we will sample. The universe of the different individual respondent types (a-d, above) is well-defined by their descriptions and will differ for each program.

Plans for data collection include on-site visits to five home visiting programs that vary in program model (e.g., Early Head Start, Parents as Teachers, Healthy Families America, Nurse Family Partnership, and Healthy Start) and the demographics of the population served (e.g., geographic location, race/ethnicity, age of parents, age of child).

During the planning phase of this project, the contractor contacted program experts in the field and leaders from national associations for home visiting program models (n=9) to gather input into the study design and to collect recommendations for potential site visit locations. Based on recommendations from the national experts, federal project officer, and information from the Web, we compiled a list of potential sites. Approximately 25 programs using various father engagement strategies were recommended. We then narrowed the list of potential sites to nine based on the following criteria: demographics, geography (urban/rural), known father engagement strategies including staffing, fatherhood activities, types of fathers targeted and father home visits. The nine sites were selected to maximize diversity by program type (Healthy Families America, Early Head Start, Parents as Teachers, for example), demographics, and geography. After selecting these nine sites, we had individualized conversations with one person at each site to find out more about the program including the demographics of the population served, community context, and father engagement strategies. Based on these screening calls, we will select the five sites in coordination with the federal project officer.

Once the five programs have been determined and the program director agrees to participate in the study, the contractor will ask the program director to identify appropriate staff for categories a and b (described above) and, once dates for on-site visits are established, to identify two home visits where a father is likely to be involved that researchers can shadow. The home visits shadowed will be with different families than those selected for interviews so the data collected

from each can be independent from one another and not influence client behaviors or responses. We will also work with program staff in advance of the site visit to identify fathers and mothers meeting our study criteria. Specifically, we will provide the program director (or designee) a list of the characteristics of fathers we would like to interview and request that they assist with identifying fathers meeting those criteria to provide a range of perspectives (see Appendix A-2 Guide for Selecting Parents for Interviews). The criteria we will provide will include the following, but may be tailored for programs with more narrow populations served:

- *Child age.* Fathers with enrolled children of different ages (infants, toddlers, preschoolers)
- *Residence.* Fathers residing with their children and those who are not
- *Fatherhood experience.* First-time fathers and experienced fathers, who may have multiple children with the same mother or different mothers
- *Relationship status.* Fathers who are married or in relationship with mothers enrolled in home visiting services and fathers no longer in intimate relationships with the enrolled mothers
- *Level of involvement in program.* Fathers who have not participated very intensively (but at least 1-2 visits) and fathers who have been very engaged in home visits

Given the literature shows the importance of the mother-father relationship in facilitating the father's involvement with his children, we will interview mothers to explore how mother's might either facilitate or hinder a father's participation in home visiting. Because the primary focus on fathers and due to cost considerations we will interview only two mothers in each site. This sample size (n=10) will be sufficient for coding qualitative interviews for themes. Typically 6-9 interviews is ideal to reach a saturation point among a subgroup of respondents. Two mothers will be selected who are matched to the selected fathers. When recruiting, program staff will be advised to recruit two sets of parents, in addition to six additional fathers. These mothers may or may not be in a relationship with the father, but they will be parents of the same child enrolled in home visiting services. They will be interviewed separately.

B2. Procedures for Collection of Information

Collection of qualitative data will occur through a five-day site visit¹ to each of the selected five programs. A team of two experienced, qualitative researchers (one senior researcher lead and one research assistant) will conduct each visit. The interviews will follow approved discussion guides with key topics and open-ended questions. The approach will allow flexibility to capture key aspects of the processes, procedures and experiences across diverse programs.

On the first day upon arrival, the researchers plan to conduct interviews at the home visiting agency's central office with the program director, other key leadership staff, and home visitors, as time allows. We will schedule the interviews at times that are flexible for the staff, with transitions between each session and a lunch break.

¹ A period of five days is planned to allow sufficient time to meet with fathers and mothers who may have nonstandard work hours or only be available on a weekend. A shorter period on-site may be possible.

When planning and coordinating the visit, researchers will ask to shadow two home visits that are expected to include the father.. They will ask home visitors to obtain verbal consent from parents prior to these visits and remind parents in advance that an observer will be accompanying them.

On the other days, the researchers will schedule interviews with selected fathers and mothers, which will be conducted at a convenient location of their choosing (e.g., their homes, the home visiting agency's office, or at a local community center or library, etc.). With time for setting up, consenting, and wrapping up, we will schedule interviews with fathers in 90-minute blocks, with the actual interview time estimated to be 75 minutes. Interviews with mothers will be scheduled in 75-minute blocks with the interview time estimated to be 60 minutes. We expect to schedule no more than four interviews a day, based on prior experience with similar data collection activities.

The senior researcher will lead the interviews with fathers and mothers, and with the permission of the respondent, will audio record the interviews solely for the purpose of creating full transcriptions. If permission to record is not provided, both researchers will take detailed notes and later create an extensive summary of the interview and the key information provided. The research assistant will be responsible for supporting the quality of data collection (e.g., engage young children as needed to allow parents to complete the interview, ensure paperwork transactions are completed, etc.).

When interviewing program directors, other key staff and home visiting staff, the researchers will use a laptop to record close to verbatim interview responses and later create *targeted transcripts* capturing the key information provided.

B3. Methods to Maximize Response Rates and Deal with Nonresponse

Expected Response Rates

We anticipate that the maximum of five programs that the scope of the study will allow can be successfully recruited to participate in the study based on past experience with similar studies. Once the program has agreed to participate we expect high response rates from the staff who are identified by program leadership as willing and available to be interviewed.

Program staff will be recruiting parents on our behalf. Since home visitors have already built rapport with the families they serve, having staff contact parents on behalf of the research team generally produces a higher response rate than would be achieved by first obtaining parental consent to contact and recruit participants on our own. Recruitment will not require that staff interview parents. Based on prior experience we anticipate that program staff will need to contact ten to eleven fathers to allow a total of eight fathers (with two having partners who also agree) to be interviewed.

As a token of appreciation, a box of children's books will be offered to each program for their efforts in identifying and recruiting parent participants, coordinating home visit observations,

and assisting with scheduling and organizing the visit. Books will be valued at no more than \$5 a book. The actual number of books purchased will be based on the particular program's caseload of families, but will not exceed a total cost of \$100 in children's books per program.

Dealing with Nonresponse

If a home visiting program recommended for inclusion in the study declines to participate in the research, the team will discuss the case, the concerns the program has about participating, and attempt to address the concerns. If it is ultimately determined that a selected program cannot or will not participate in the research, we will select a program with as similar characteristics as possible from a list of alternate programs.

Maximizing Response Rates

Once a set of potential study programs is identified, a high participation rate can be supported by a careful plan for recruiting those programs into the study. Urban Institute researchers have a proven track record of successfully engaging early childhood program staff and clients in research studies. Based on past experience, we plan that the first contact with programs will be a letter addressed to the program director, which introduces the study, invites participation, and indicates that someone from the research team will contact them soon (see Appendix A-1). Since programs will be among the nine that will have already been screened prior to formal recruitment, we expect the final five that are invited to participate will do so unless there are changes in program administration or significant barriers that prevent their participation.

The recruitment letter will be followed by a phone call to each program director to discuss any questions he or she may have about the research, obtain agreement to participate in the study, and if possible, schedule the timing of a five-day site visit. The phone call will be individualized, so no script for the conversation will be developed.

Our experience suggests that most program administrators indicate a willingness to participate in this type of data collection when the burden is not too heavy on their staff, the research does not disrupt their normal program activities, and they are able to learn from our findings. We will work with program directors or a designee to schedule and plan for the visit, and make all attempts to reduce burden and schedule the interviews at a convenient time for each targeted respondent.

The researchers will work with program staff in advance of the site visit to identify fathers and mothers meeting our study criteria and ask home visitors working with those families to invite them to be interviewed as a part of the study. Urban Institute researchers will send program staff the Guide for Selecting Parents for Interviews (Appendix 2) to support these recruitment efforts. Since client information is confidential and can only be released with client consent, and home visitors have already built rapport with the families they serve, having staff contact parents generally produces a higher response rate than would be achieved by first obtaining consent to contact and having the research team recruit parents. The Guide to Selecting Parents for Interviews will direct staff to provide parents with a flyer about the study, once parents express

interest in participating, (Appendix 5a and Appendix 5b) and to seek the parents' verbal consent to have their names and contact information (phone number and address) shared with the research team. A member of the research team will then follow up with the parent by telephone to address any questions the parent might have, confirm their participation, and schedule the interview. This contact with the researchers will help to build rapport with the parents prior to the interview and increase the interview completion rate, while not placing the burden of scheduling on the program staff.

To further support a high rate of study participation, we will offer a monetary token of appreciation. We anticipate offering \$40 to each father and mother participating in an interview.

The amount is appropriate in size to thank respondents for their participation given the study requirements. This approach expresses gratitude for the respondents' participation but will not be an excessive amount that could be coercive. The amount indicated (\$40 per parent) is similar to those offered in association with recent OMB-approved information collections conducted by the Urban Institute. In *Understanding the Dynamics of Disconnection from Employment and Assistance (0970-0434)*, researchers offered low-income mothers \$40 for participation in an in-person qualitative interview in their homes lasting 75 minutes in length on average.

B4. Tests of Procedures or Methods to be Undertaken

This data collection will involve qualitative interviews using topical guides with probes that will vary depending on the respondent. Interview guides were not formally pretested given the flexibility of the tools to capture direct responses from respondents rather than having restricted response categories. The guides were reviewed by senior advisors on the project to ensure clarity and coverage. Before data collection begins, the researchers who will conduct on-site visits will complete a full-day training to review the guides, practice interviewing techniques, and address any questions they have about the purpose and intent of the questions.

B5. Individuals Consulted on Statistical Aspects and Individuals Collecting and/or Analyzing Data

The study design plan and data collection protocols were developed by the following project staff at the Urban Institute with experience conducting similar studies using similar data collection strategies:

- H. Elizabeth Peters, Principal Investigator, Co-Lead on Study Design
- Heather Sandstrom, Co-Principal Investigator, Lead on Program Selection/Recruitment Plan, Co-Lead on Study Design and Instrument Design
- Maeve Gearing, Co-Lead on Instrument Design

Three internal senior advisors at the Urban Institute provided support on the study design and instrument development:

- Ian Hill, Health Policy Center; expert on home visiting and qualitative research
- Nan Astone, Center on Labor, Human Services, and Population; expert on fatherhood, fertility, and family dynamics

- Heather Koball, Center on Labor, Human Services, and Population; expert on immigrant families and access to services