



BUILDING  
BRIDGES &  
BONDS | B3

# B BUILDING BRIDGES AND BONDS (B3)

- A rigorous, multi-site study of innovative services offered by Responsible Fatherhood/ReFORM (RF) programs
- Unique opportunity for the program and research communities to produce new evidence about specific service approaches
- OFA and other stakeholders are involved in helping B3 to set priorities





# WHY B3?



- Fathers play a distinct role in children's lives
- However, they often face barriers to positive economic and emotional involvement with their children
- Improving outcomes for low-income fathers and children is a high priority for policymakers
- A number of promising approaches are emerging, but there is a **limited evidence base**

# B STUDY GOALS

- Provide evidence about strategies that
  - Are feasible in RF program context
  - Improve outcomes
  - Have the potential to change practice
- Build knowledge in three areas
  - Employment
  - Parenting and co-parenting
  - Participant recruitment and engagement

OMB # 0970-0356  
Expiration Date: 03/31/2018





# STUDY TEAM

- Sponsored by the Administration for Children and Families' Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
- Conducted by
  - MDRC, in partnership with
  - MEF Associates
  - Abt SRBI
  - Leading experts in the field

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# FEDERAL EVALUATIONS AND THE GRANT APPLICATION AND AWARD PROCESS

- Approximately 6 RF and 6 HM sites will be chosen for the federal evaluations
- The B3 and STREAMS selection process is separate from the-grant selection process
  - Selection for the evaluation will take place after grants are awarded
  - The B3 and STREAMS teams have no role in grant decisions
  - No additional points will be awarded for including mentioned approaches in funding proposals
  - The study teams may not work with programs on grant applications



# A RESEARCH-PRACTICE PARTNERSHIP



- B3 is planning ongoing communication with the entire range of stakeholders
  - January 2015 meeting: Heard views from several current grantees and fatherhood researchers about potential priorities for B3
  - Newsletter and at RFHM grantee conferences: Continue the dialogue
  - Ongoing: Will work closely with sites throughout recruitment, random assignment, and implementation



# COMPLEMENTARY STUDIES

- B3 is one of several studies providing new evidence for RF field
- Others include
  - Local evaluations from next cohort of RF grantees
  - Parents and Children Together (PACT)
  - Fatherhood Research and Practice Network
- B3 complements these studies with its focus on individual program components and implementation features







# WHAT WE KNOW

- Fathers in PACT report that their participation is motivated by
  - Employment
  - Better relationships with their children
- RF programs are
  - Important to local communities
  - Strong partners to other organizations
  - A forum for men to discuss their roles as fathers and support each other's efforts
  - Like other federal programs, increasingly focused on evidence

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# KEY QUESTIONS ADDRESSED IN B3



- What outcomes do the services affect? (Impact analysis)
  - Examine effects of program components, including program approaches and implementation factors
  - Measure impacts using random assignment
- How are impacts achieved? (Implementation analysis)
  - Give context to impact findings
  - Describe how component was delivered, staff/participant views of services, and challenges and solutions



# HIGH-PRIORITY EMPLOYMENT SERVICES



- Challenge
  - Help men find and maintain better jobs with higher earnings than they can find on their own
- Promising approaches
  - Active job development
  - Services informed by cognitive behavioral principles
  - Wage subsidies
  - Industry-specific training



# HIGH-PRIORITY PARENTING SERVICES

- Challenges
  - Build parenting skills of dads even if not living with children
  - Increase conflict management skills and reduce co-parenting conflict for both parents
- Promising approaches
  - Parenting curricula involving the child
  - Co-parenting sessions involving the mother
  - Parenting curricula with some evidence





# PROGRAM RECRUITMENT & ENGAGEMENT



- Participant recruitment, engagement, and retention are a central issue for many programs
- B3 seeks to
  - Work with programs to identify and test new approaches in this area
  - Apply learnings from “behavioral economics”
- The study team will help sites
  - Identify current challenges
  - Test multiple strategies
  - Assess and refine enhancements



# RANDOM ASSIGNMENT

- The most rigorous and reliable method for demonstrating program effects
- Program participants are randomly assigned to one of two groups
  - **Group 1:** Receives program services, ***including*** the component intervention being tested
  - **Group 2:** Receives program services, but ***not*** the component intervention being tested
- The difference in the outcomes of the two groups shows the intervention's impact



# RANDOM ASSIGNMENT

- Individuals are assigned to the groups randomly
- The two groups will have similar characteristics on average, at enrollment
- We can be confident that any differences in outcomes are attributable to the program





# DESIRED STUDY SITE CHARACTERISTICS

- Funded through OFA Responsible Fatherhood grants and/or other sources
- Demonstrated experience running a fatherhood program
- Operating a high-priority strategy or willing to implement new program enhancements
- Capacity to recruit and serve approximately 500 fathers over 15-18 months





# BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION



- May provide additional funds to support programming and study participation, for example, to support enhancements to services
- Expert technical assistance on
  - Participant recruitment and engagement
  - Program service being tested
  - Study procedures
- Specific results for your program
- Contribute to growing evidence base
- Increased visibility as part of a national study

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## B3 STUDY TEAM RESPONSIBILITIES

- Maintain close communication with organizations, including visits, to learn about program operations, hear your interests, and brainstorm study options
- Facilitate meetings to plan study implementation
- Provide funding and other resources to support program enhancements and research activities
- Train and support program staff on study procedures
- Provide ongoing technical assistance to achieve high-quality program enhancement and research procedures



# STUDY TIMELINE

- 2015-2016: Site recruitment
- 2016-2017: Enroll participants into the study
- 2016-2018: Sites receive study support
- 2017-2019: Share lessons with RF field
- 2017: Implementation reports
- 2018: Impact reports
- 2019: Final synthesis reports



# CONTACT INFORMATION

## **MDRC (research contractor)**

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NOTE: The Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This collection of information is voluntary and will be used to gather preliminary information about the fatherhood field and explore with fatherhood programs the research questions that are of interest and the design options that are feasible. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 108 minutes per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and reviewing the collection of information. An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to Anna Solmeyer; [anna.solmeyer@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:anna.solmeyer@acf.hhs.gov); Attn: OMB-PRA (0970-0356).

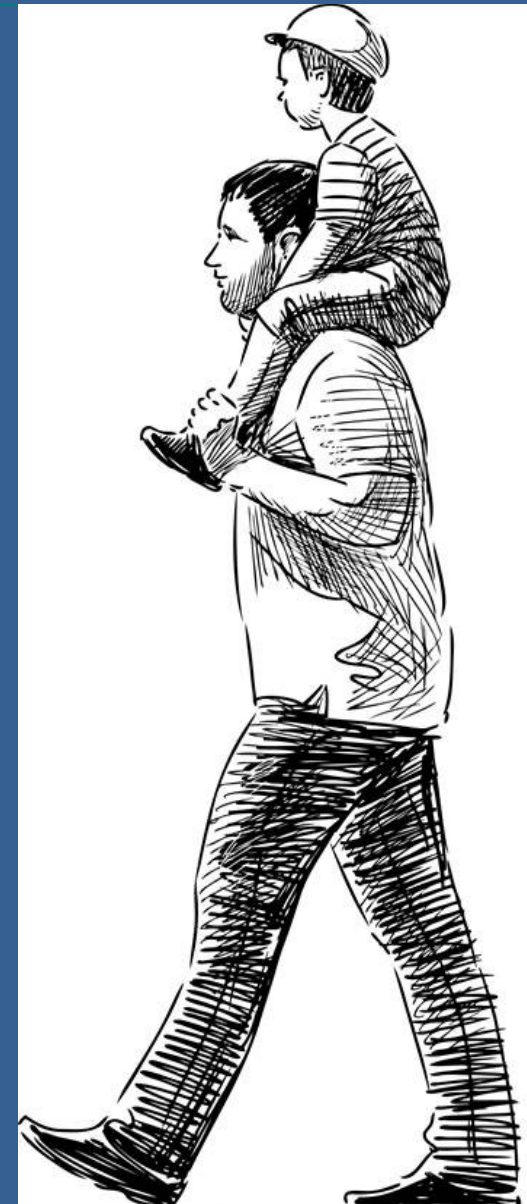


# ADDITIONAL MATERIALS



# IMPACT ANALYSIS

- Sample research questions
  - Does a focused co-parenting model help fathers spend more and better time with their children?
  - Do enhanced employment services increase work and earnings?
  - Can behavioral interventions increase participant engagement in program services?
- Sample data sources
  - Participant surveys
  - Federal administrative data (new hires, child support)
  - Program management information systems (MIS) data





# IMPLEMENTATION ANALYSIS

- Sample research questions
  - What are the characteristics of participating fathers?
  - What services are offered and to what extent are they used?
  - How are services perceived by participants and staff or partners in the community?
- Sample data sources
  - Program management information systems (MIS) data
  - On-site interviews with program staff and participants



# STUDY IMPLEMENTATION

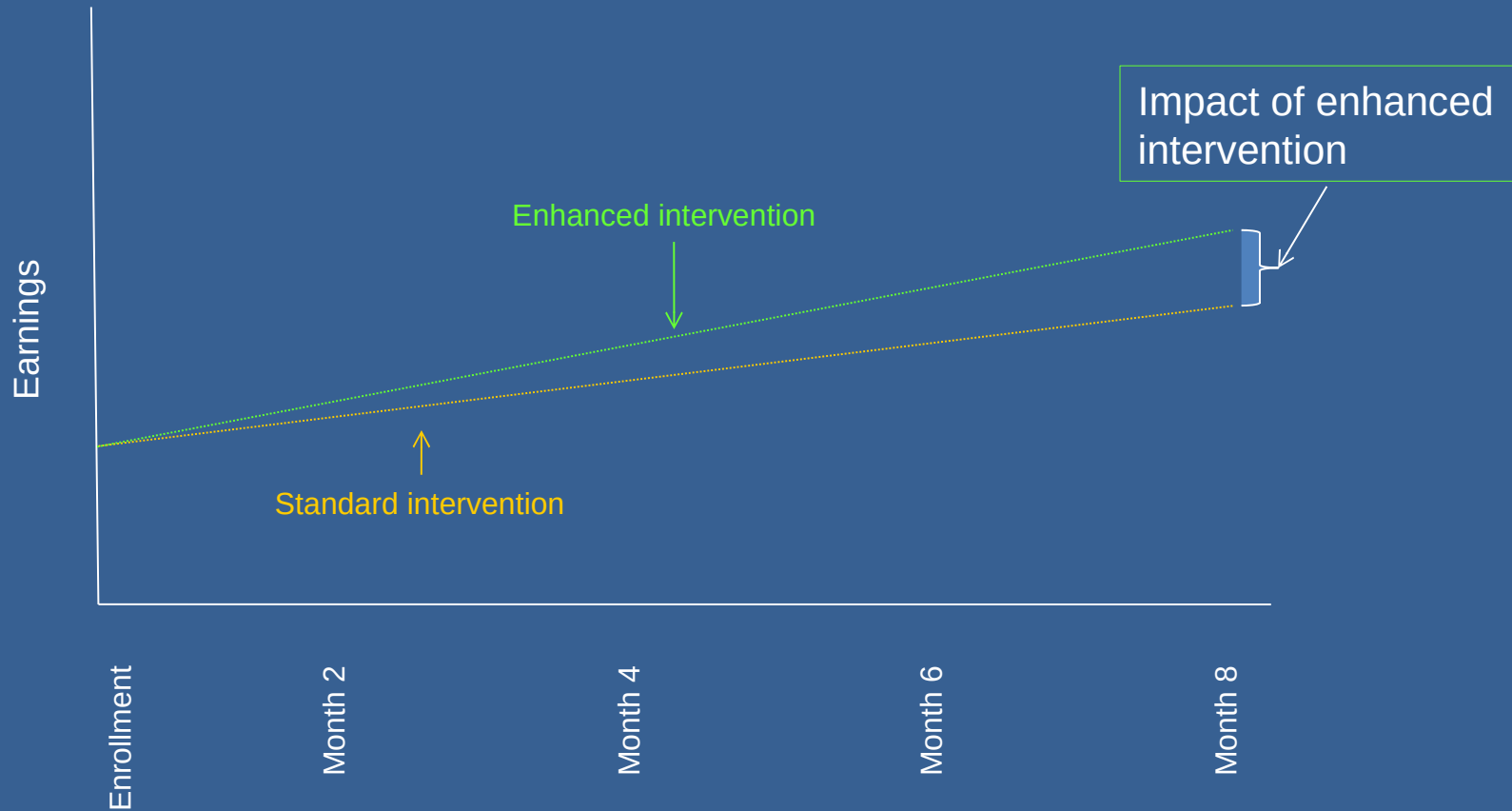
- Sample designs
  - Site already implementing strategy to be studied
    - Program recruits additional participants to a second group that gets some services but *not* the strategy being tested
  - Site not yet implementing strategy to be studied
    - Program provides half their participants with the intervention services as an *enhancement* to their existing program
- Study sites will be provided with resources to expand recruitment and/or add enhancements





# RANDOM ASSIGNMENT

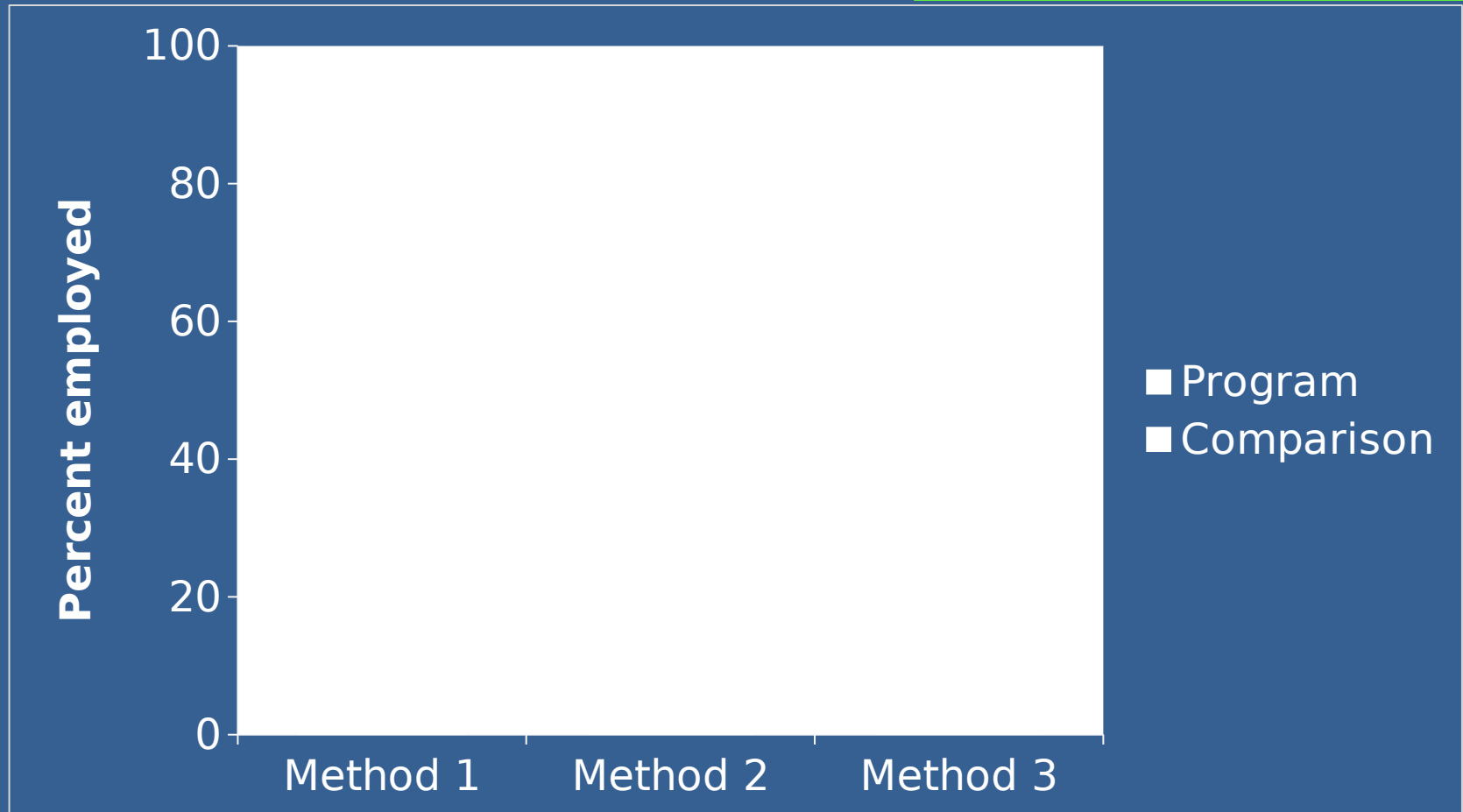
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# RANDOM ASSIGNMENT

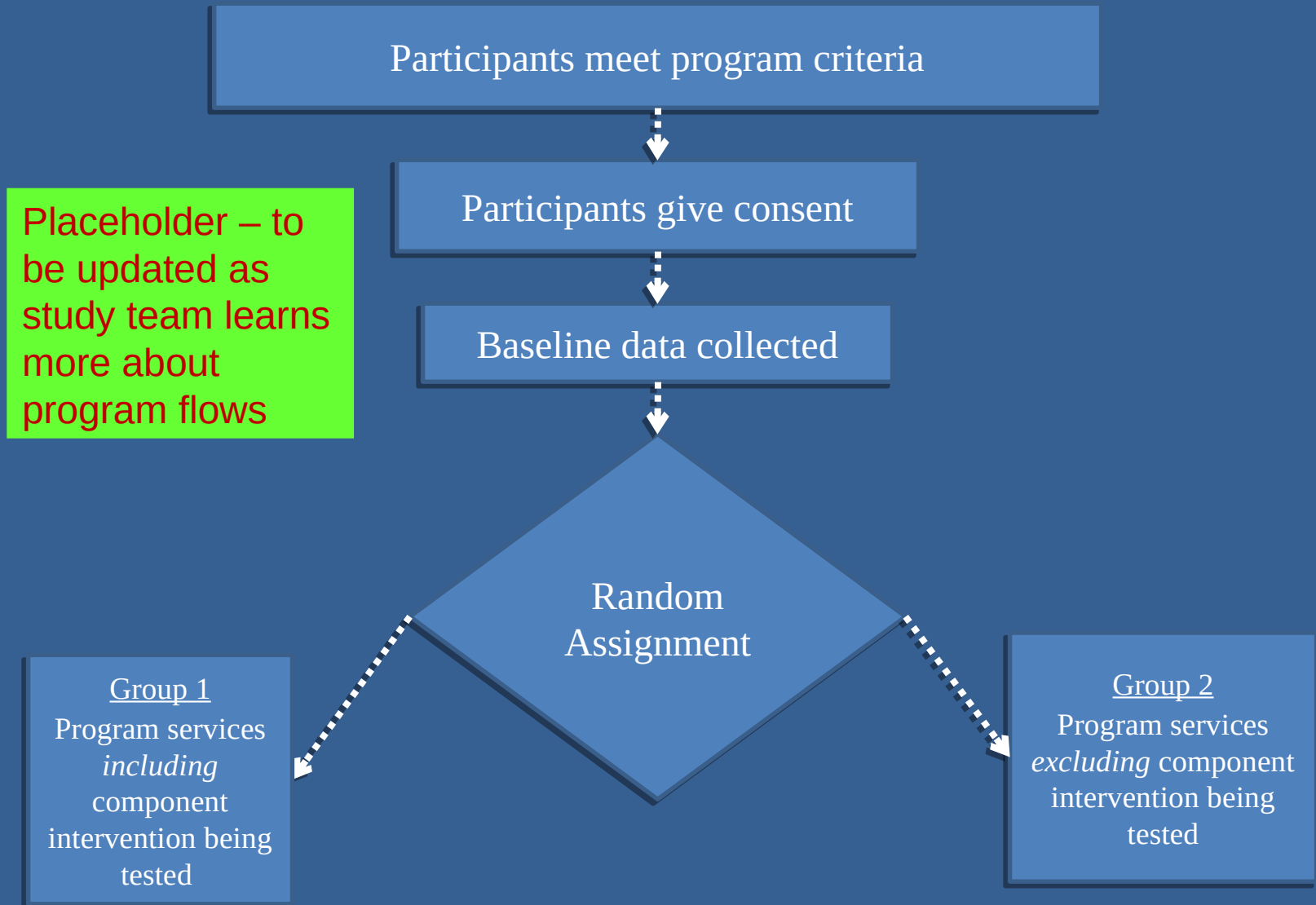
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*Without a comparison, Method 3 might appear to be the most effective.*



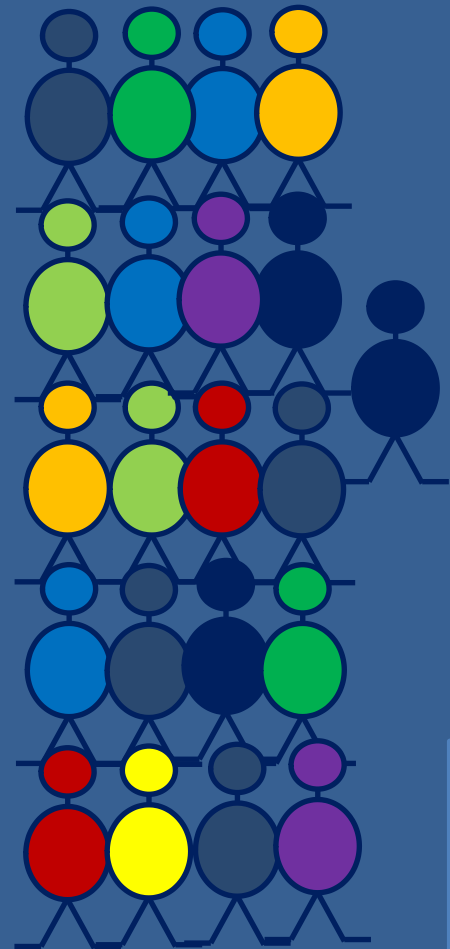
# RANDOM ASSIGNMENT PROCEDURES





# EXAMPLE: CO-PARENTING INTERVENTION

Participants enroll



Placeholder example –  
example of interventions to  
be updated as the study  
design process progresses

Fatherhood  
workshop covering  
multiple topics

Parenting workshop  
during group  
sessions PLUS  
intensive co-  
parenting