

## Fatherhood Facilitator and Program Director Interview Protocol

Thank you for taking the time to talk with us. My name is [NAME] and this is [NAME], and we work for Child Trends, a research center in Washington, D.C. We are part of a team that is helping the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation in the Administration for Children and Families understand what kinds of services fatherhood programs offer on healthy romantic and coparenting relationships; how those services help fathers; and how those services might be tailored to better meet the needs of fathers.

As part of this project, we are conducting interviews with program participants and coparents, as well as interviews with staff from fatherhood programs like yours and partner organizations.

As we're talking today, please keep in mind there are no right or wrong answers to our questions. You're the expert and we want to hear your honest opinions – positive or negative. Honest feedback will help us the most. If there is a question you do not want to answer, please let us know and we will skip to the next question. Your participation is voluntary, and you are free to stop the interview at any time. However, your opinions are important to us, so we hope you will stay for the whole interview. This interview will last about 90 minutes.

What you say here will be kept private, which means that your name will not be shared or associated with your opinions, and we will not identify who participated in the interviews. Your responses will be combined with responses from others who are participating in these interviews in published documents. Additionally, quotes from today may be included in published documents, but the quotes will not be attributed to you or your organization without your permission.

We will take notes and record the interview, so we can make sure that we don't miss important details. If you would like us to turn off the recorder at any point, please ask and we will do so. Only the study team will have access to the recordings. Once we transcribe the interviews and finalize our notes, we will delete the recordings.

Have you had a chance to read the consent form [STAFF] sent by email? [WAIT FOR RESPONSE, THEN SAY:] This form covers much of what we just discussed about the goals for this study, how we will protect your privacy, and how we plan to use what we learn for our project. The consent form also has contact information for the study's Principal Investigator as well as the Institutional Review Board that is in charge of ensuring our study follows certain guidelines regarding participant rights. You can contact them with any comments or concerns about participating in this study.

Because this is a federally-funded project, I have to read a couple of sentences to you before we begin. *According to the Paperwork Reduction Act, 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. The OMB number for the described information collection is 0970-0540 and the expiration date*

is 2/28/2021. If you have comments regarding this estimated interview length or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing the interview length, please send them to Mindy Scott at Child Trends, 7315 Wisconsin Ave, Suite 1200W, Bethesda MD 20814; Attn: OMB-PRA [NUMBER].

Do you have any questions before we get started?

Do you agree to participate in this interview?

Do you agree to be recorded?

## **INTERVIEWEE ROLE AND BACKGROUND**

*To begin, we would like to hear a little about your background.*

- 1) Please take a minute or two to share a little about your experience working with fathers.
- 2) Tell me about your position and role at [FATHERHOOD PROGRAM NAME].
  - a. [IF NOT ADDRESSED]: How long have you been in this position?

## **PROGRAM BACKGROUND**

*Thank you so much. We are now hoping to learn more about how your program addresses healthy relationships. Throughout this discussion, you'll hear us refer to both coparenting and romantic relationship services separately. When we say coparenting relationships, we mean a fathers' relationship with the mother(s) of his children or others who work with the father and share responsibility for raising a child. When we say romantic relationships, we mean fathers' relationships with people they are dating, committed to, or married to. If we are speaking about both romantic and coparenting relationships, we will refer to these as healthy relationships.*

- 3) How does your program or curriculum define coparenting? *Note for interviewer: if they have trouble, you can offer our definition: mother(s) of a father's child(ren) or others that play a significant role in helping to raise his children.*
  - a. Follow up: In your experience, who do fathers typically coparent with?
  - b. Follow up: How common is it for fathers to have multiple coparents?
- 4) Does your program consider romantic relationships and coparenting relationships as distinct topics? [IF NEEDED]: Say more about that.
- 5) Does [FATHERHOOD PROGRAM] use specific curricula to provide healthy relationship services?
  - a. [IF YES]: Can you tell me about the curricula?
    - i. **Probe**: Do the curricula distinguish between fathers' romantic relationships and their coparenting relationships?
      1. [Follow up]: Who are included as coparents/partners/spouses in these curricula?
    - ii. Follow up: Do the [CURRICULA MENTIONED] require or encourage involvement of coparents/partners and/or spouses?
      1. [IF YES]: Who are included as coparents/partners/spouses in these curricula?

2. [IF YES]: Please describe the coparents'/partners'/spouses' involvement in the curricula.

## SERVICES OFFERED ADDRESSING HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

Now we are hoping to ask you a few questions about how fathers' healthy relationships– both coparenting and romantic relationships – are addressed through the services [FATHERHOOD PROGRAM] provides.

- 6) In what ways does [FATHERHOOD PROGRAM] address fathers' healthy relationships?
  - a. Follow up: How often do these services occur and how long do they last?
    - i. Follow up: About how much of this time is spent addressing coparenting relationships?
    - ii. Follow up: How, if at all, is coparenting with multiple coparents or multiple children discussed in these services?
    - iii. Follow up: About how much of this time is spent addressing romantic relationships?
  - b. Follow up: To what extent is addressing fathers' healthy relationships a priority for [FATHERHOOD PROGRAM]? [IF PRIORITY]: Please share some examples that show this.
    - i. Follow up: Is addressing coparenting relationships a priority?
    - ii. Follow up: Is addressing romantic relationships a priority?
  - a. Follow up: What kind of support is there from the organization or leadership to address healthy romantic relationships with fathers, if any?
  - b. Follow up: Does your program face any challenges or barriers to addressing healthy relationships with fathers?
    - i. Follow up: Are there any specific challenges or barriers to addressing coparenting relationships?
    - ii. Follow up: Are there any specific challenges or barriers to addressing romantic relationships?
- 7) Are coparents/partners/spouses included in any of the services you mentioned?
  - a. [IF YES]: How are coparents/partners/spouses involved?
    - i. [IF COPARENTS ARE MENTIONED]: Who are included as coparents?
      1. Follow up [IF NOT JUST THE CHILD'S MOTHER]: How do these services address coparenting relationships with caretakers who are not the child's biological mother?
    - ii. [IF SPOUSES OR PARTNERS ARE MENTIONED]: Are these services mainly for fathers and the biological mothers of their children, new partners or both? What if a father is no longer romantically involved with the mother of their child/children?
  - b. [IF YES]: How often do coparents/partners/spouses attend?
  - c. [IF NO]: Is there a reason [FATHERHOOD PROGRAM] does not include coparents, partners, or spouses? **Probe** by saying "Can you tell me more about that?"
  - d. Is [CURRICULUM MENTIONED] designed to involve coparents/partners/spouses?

- i. [IF NO, BUT PROGRAM IS SERVING COPARENTS/PARTNERS/SPOURCES]: Did you have to make adaptations to involve coparents/partners/spouses?
    - ii. [IF YES, BUT PROGRAM IS NOT SERVING COPARENTS/PARTNERS/SPOURCES]:
    - iii. Did you have to make adaptations to use without the involvement of coparents/partners/spouses?
- 8) What does attendance or uptake and engagement of fathers in healthy relationship services look like?
- a. Follow up: What are the reasons fathers participate in these services?
    - i. **Probe**: Are there specific reasons fathers attend programming related to coparenting?
    - ii. **Probe**: Are there specific reasons fathers attend programming related to romantic relationships?
  - b. Follow up: What, if anything, makes it difficult for fathers to participate in these services?
    - i. **Probe**: In what ways does [FATHERHOOD PROGRAM] work to address these challenges to make it easier for fathers to participate?
  - c. Follow up: How does [FATHERHOOD PROGRAM] encourage fathers to participate in healthy relationship services?
  - d. Follow up: What, if any, challenges do [FATHERHOOD PROGRAM] staff have keeping fathers engaged in these services?
  - e. In what ways have any changes or disruptions caused by the coronavirus affected or changed the healthy relationship services offered at [FATHERHOOD PROGRAM]?
  - f. Follow up: What changes have you made to your healthy relationship programming to respond to changes or disruptions?
  - g. Follow up: Are you maintaining contact with fathers amidst these changes or disruptions? If so, how
- 9) Thinking about the fathers in your program, what are the challenges, if any, that these fathers face in forming healthy romantic relationships and keeping them strong?
- a. **Probe** [IF NEEDED]: Are there any particular subsets of fathers (for example, fathers who are young, are justice involved, or who have children with more than one partner) who face additional or unique challenges in their romantic relationships? What are those challenges?
  - b. Follow-up: What are some strengths, , that these fathers have related to forming and keeping romantic relationships strong?
  - c. Follow up: Have fathers mentioned any challenges or shifts in their romantic relationships related to changes or disruptions caused by the coronavirus? If so, can you tell me more about that?
    - i. **Probe** [IF NEEDED]: For example, have any fathers faced new challenges related to losing their job, having to isolate themselves from their romantic partner, or experiencing increased stress and anxiety?

- ii. **Follow up:** How do you think fathers can use the skills or strategies used they learned in [FATHERHOOD PROGRAMMING] to help navigate any challenges or shifts in their romantic relationships related to changes or disruptions caused by the coronavirus?
- 10) What challenges do the fathers in your program face in keeping their coparenting relationships strong?
- a. **Probe** [IF NEEDED]: Are there any particular subsets of fathers (for example, fathers who are young, are justice involved, or who have children with more than one partner) who face additional or unique challenges in their coparenting relationships? What are those challenges?
  - b. **Follow-up:** What are some strengths that these fathers bring to their coparenting relationships?
  - c. **Follow-up:** Are there any challenges that coparents face that are different from the those you mentioned for fathers in your program?
  - d. **Follow up:** Have fathers mentioned any challenges or shifts in their coparenting relationships related to changes or disruptions caused by the coronavirus? If so, can you tell me more about that.
    - i. **Probe** [IF NEEDED]: For example, have any fathers faced new challenges related to losing their job, having to isolate themselves from their children or coparents, or experiencing increased stress and anxiety?
    - ii. **Follow up:** How do you think fathers can use the skills they learned in [FATHERHOOD PROGRAMMING] to address any challenges or shifts in their coparenting relationships related to changes or disruptions caused by the coronavirus?

## FACILITATORS AND FACILITATOR TRAINING

- 11) What do you look for when hiring facilitators for your healthy relationship services?
- a. **Probe:** Are there any specific credentials or qualities you look for in your facilitators for either coparenting or healthy romantic relationship related services?
  - b. **Probe:** Do you look for facilitators that reflect the characteristics of the fathers you serve? Tell me more about that.
- 12) Can you tell me about any training you offer for facilitators at [FATHERHOOD PROGRAM], for your healthy relationship services? *Note: We want to know about training content, length of training, and whether they think it is adequate.*
- a. **Probe:** Are there any specific certifications or on-the-job training facilitators can receive related in these topic areas? [FOLLOW UP ON EACH CERTIFICATION AND TRAINING BY ASKING IF IT IS OPTIONAL OR REQUIRED]
  - b. **Follow up** [IF OFFERING TRAINING]: Would you say that the training for facilitators is adequate? How so?

- i. Follow up: How can the training be made better?

### **PARTNERSHIPS (DIRECTORS ONLY; FACILITATORS SKIP)**

*Now we have a few questions about your partnerships with other organizations. [Note to interviewer: Please skip any questions in this section that have been discussed previously throughout this interview. Partnerships may be discussed above if the partner organizations are providing the relationship services described.]*

- 13) I just want to clarify that there [**ARE/ARE NOT**] any partnerships in place between your organization and other agencies addressing healthy relationship services, which can include either coparenting or the father's romantic relationships?
  - a. [IF YES]: What type of organizations or agencies do you partner with? Please tell me about each partnership. We'll start with [PARTNER ORGANIZATION]. [Note for interviewer: Ask the following questions for each partnership named].
    - i. **Probe**: What kind of activities does [PARTNER ORGANIZATION] do as a result of the partnership?
    - ii. **Probe**: How was this partnership started?
    - iii. **Probe**: Is this partnership formal or informal (i.e. is there a MOU established)?
    - iv. **Probe**: How long has this partnership been in place?
    - v. **Probe**: On average, how much time do you spend working with this partner? How often do you communicate with the partner?
    - vi. **Probe**: On average, about how many fathers who participate in your program are served each year by this partner organization(s)?
  - b. [IF YES]: What works well about this/these partnership(s)? Any success stories you would like to share?
  - c. [IF YES]: What are some challenges of this/these partnership(s), if any? What are some lessons learned?
  - d. Follow up: Are there any partnerships with other systems (e.g., child support, child welfare, school systems, DV)?

Follow up: Have any changes or disruptions caused by the coronavirus affected or changed this/these partnership(s)? [IF NEEDED]: Can you tell me more about this?

- 14) Are there any partnerships you would like to develop to help address coparenting or healthy romantic relationships with fathers?
  - a. [IF YES]: What kinds of partnerships would you like to make?
    - i. Follow up: Any plans to make these partnerships?

### **CLOSING AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

*Lastly, we would like to see if you have any further thoughts or recommendations.*

- 15) Sometimes there are external factors that can affect people's coparenting and romantic relationships. We've already talked about how any changes or disruptions related to the

coronavirus may have affected participating fathers' coparenting and romantic relationships. Can you think of any other external factors that impact their coparenting or romantic relationships, either positively or negatively?

16) **Probe:** What about systems like social, legal, community, or school systems, or specific agencies like child protective services or child support? Can you think of any other external factors that impact their coparenting or romantic relationships, either positively or negatively?

a. **Probe:** What about systems like social, legal, community, or school systems, or specific agencies like child protective services or child support?

17) How could [FATHERHOOD PROGRAM]'s coparenting and healthy romantic relationship services be improved? If you had all the money in the world to design your program and make services better for the fathers you serve, what would you do?

a. **Follow-up:** What would be required for these changes to happen?

18) Is there anything that we didn't touch on today that you want us to know?

*We really appreciate you taking the time to talk with us today—thank you.*