

## Non-Participating Fathers Interview Protocol

Thank you for taking the time to talk with us. My name is [NAME] and this is [NAME]. We work for Child Trends, a nonprofit research center in Washington, D.C. We're interested in hearing about your experiences with [FATHERHOOD PROGRAM]. We don't work for [FATHERHOOD PROGRAM] – we have been contracted by the Administration of Children and Families (ACF) to learn more about how programs like [FATHERHOOD PROGRAM] can better address your needs as a father. As someone who is no longer participating in the program/someone who decided not to participate in all services offered by the program, we are particularly interested in hearing your feedback on [FATHERHOOD PROGRAM] and programs like this.

As we're talking today, please keep in mind there are no right or wrong answers to the questions we're going to ask. You're the expert, and we want to hear your honest answers – positive or negative. Honest feedback will help us the most.

Before we start, I'd like to check to see if you received the consent form we sent?

[IF NO]: [GATHER INFORMATION NEEDED TO RESEND THE CONSENT FORM AND TELL PARTICIPANT WE WILL BE SENDING IT].

[IF YES]: Have you had a chance to read it? [WAIT FOR RESPONSE]

[IF PARTICIPANT **DID NOT** RECEIVE OR **HAS NOT** READ CONSENT] OK, I will read it to you. [READ CONSENT FORM, THEN PROCEED TO "ALL PARTICIPANTS" SECTION BELOW].

[IF PARTICIPANT **HAS** RECEIVED/READ CONSENT] Great. I'll just briefly summarize some of the main points from the consent form.

If there is a question you do not want to or do not feel comfortable answering, please let us know and we will skip to the next question. Your participation is voluntary [**FOR FATHERS RECENTLY RELEASED FROM PRISON ONLY**: and your decision to participate in this study will not impact your parole or probation in any way]. 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 time. Today's conversation should take about 60 minutes, followed by a survey that will take up to 15 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 share who participated in the interviews. Your responses will be combined with responses from others who are participating in these interviews and may be shared in published documents or with [FATHERHOOD PROGRAM]. Additionally, quotes from your interview may be included in published documents, but the quotes will not be attributed to you, so your information will remain private.

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 capture all the information on paper, we will delete the recordings.

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 you have 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?

## INTRODUCTION

*To get started...*

- 1) We'd like to start by learning a little bit about your children. Could you tell me how many children you have, their ages, and whether they are living with you full or part time? We would also like to know if there are any other children that live with you either full or part time.

## BEING A FATHER

*Thank you very much for sharing! Now we're going shift gears a little and ask you some questions about what it's like to be a father. We know that there are some easy things and some not so easy things about being a father and we'd like to talk to you about that more.*

- 2) What are some of the things that you enjoy about being a father?
- 3) We know being a father can also be hard sometimes. What are some of the things that are hard or difficult about being a father? [**Probe** by saying "Tell me why you think that's a challenge" or "That's interesting. Can you tell me more about that?"].
  - a. **Probe:** What are some things that cause you or other fathers stress?

## COPARENTING RELATIONSHIPS

*Thank you! Next, we're hoping to learn more about your relationships with other people who share responsibility for raising your child(ren). When we say raise, we mean helps make decisions about the child, like, around discipline, what the child will eat, and where they go to school. We will refer to your relationships with these individuals as 'coparenting' or 'parenting' relationships.*

- 4) Who are the people that you share responsibility for raising your child(ren) with? [CLARIFY THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE INDIVIDUAL(S) LISTED, IF NEEDED].
  - a. **Probe:** What about (ex-partners, current partners, or other relatives)?
  
- 5) We'd like to know more about what it is like to parent with each of these individuals. [IF ANY EX-PARTNERS] Let's start with your ex-partner(s) who are the biological mother(s) of your child(ren). What is it like to parent with your ex(es)?
  - a. **Probe:** If they have trouble answering the question ask, "What is working well, and what is not working well?"
  - b. **Probe:** If challenges are not mentioned, ask "Are there any difficulties parenting with your ex(es)?"
    - i. Follow up: What do you think contributes to these challenges/successes?
    - ii. Follow up: What do you think would make your parenting relationships with your ex(es) stronger?

*[IF HAVE A CURRENT PARTNER]: Now let's talk about your current partner/spouse.*

- 6) What is it like to parent with your current partner/spouse?
  - a. **Probe:** If they have trouble answering the question ask, "What is working well, and what is not working well?"
  - b. **Probe:** If challenges are not mentioned, ask "Are there any difficulties parenting with your partner?"
    - i. Follow up: "What do you think contributes to these challenges/successes?"
    - ii. Follow up: What do you think would make your parenting relationship with your partner/spouse stronger?

*[IF LISTED OTHER COPARENTS IN Q4] Great, now let's talk about [OTHER INDIVIDUALS LISTED IN Q4]*

- 7) What is it like to parent with [OTHER INDIVIDUALS LISTED IN Q4]?
  - a. **Probe:** If they have trouble answering the question ask, "What is working well, and what is not working well?"
  - b. **Probe:** If challenges are not mentioned, ask "Are there any difficulties parenting with [OTHER INDIVIDUALS LISTED]?"
    - i. Follow up: "What do you think contributes to these challenges/successes?"
    - ii. Follow up: What do you think would make your parenting relationships with [OTHER INDIVIDUALS LISTED] stronger?

*[IF PARTICIPANT MENTIONS MORE THAN ONE COPARENT]*

- 8) You mentioned [A COUPLE OF/SEVERAL] people you raise your children with. Can you tell me more about what it is like to raise your children with more than one other person?
  - a. **Probe:** What works well in that situation, and what doesn't work well?

*Okay, before we move on to talking about romantic relationships...*

- 9) In what ways have your coparenting relationships been affected by any changes or disruptions caused by the coronavirus?
  - a. **Probe:** How, if at all, have you had to change how you coparent because of changes or disruptions caused by the coronavirus? [IF NEEDED]: For example, have your and [COPARENT(S)]'s responsibilities for taking care of your child shifted or changed? If so, how?
  - b. **Follow up:** Are there any skills or strategies that you would like to learn to help navigate these changes?

## **ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS**

*Okay, now let's talk about your relationships with people you are dating, committed to, or married to. I will refer to these as romantic relationships.*

- 10) What does a healthy romantic relationship look like to you?
- 11) We know all relationships can be challenging. What are some challenges you have faced in forming healthy romantic relationships or keeping them strong?
  - a. **Probe:** What are the sources of stress in your relationships?
  - b. **Follow up:** What could help with these challenges or sources of stress?
- 12) If you are in a relationship right now, in what ways has your romantic relationship been affected by any changes or disruptions caused by the coronavirus?
  - a. **Follow up:** Are there any skills or strategies that you would like to learn to help navigate these changes to your romantic relationship?

## **RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION IN RELATIONSHIP SERVICES**

*Now we'd like to ask you some questions about your participation and experiences with [FATHERHOOD PROGRAM].*

- 13) How did you first hear about [FATHERHOOD PROGRAM]?
  - b. **Probe:** How long have you been in [FATHERHOOD PROGRAM]?
  - c. **Probe:** How often do you go?
- 14) When you signed up for [FATHERHOOD PROGRAM], what did you expect or hope to get out of it?
  - a. **Follow up:** How do you think [FATHERHOOD PROGRAM] did in terms of addressing these hopes?

- b. **Probe:** What could they have done better?
- 15) We'd like to now talk specifically about [INSERT RELATIONSHIP SERVICES]. Did you attend of these services?
- a. Follow up: What are some reasons you participated/didn't participate in these [RELATIONSHIP SERVICES]?
  - b. [IF DID NOT ATTEND] Tell me more about that.
    - a. **Probe:** What made it difficult for you to participate in [RELATIONSHIP SERVICES]? [IF NEEDED] Was it hard for you to get to [RELATIONSHIP SERVICES]?
  - c. Follow up: What do you think might push other fathers away or make it hard for them to participate in [RELATIONSHIP SERVICES]?
  - d. Follow up: What, if anything, could the program have done differently to make you want to participate/keep participating?
  - e. [IF ATTENDED] What made you attend [RELATIONSHIP SERVICES]?
    - i. Follow up: What did you know about it before attending?
    - ii. Follow up: What do you think would make other fathers want to participate?
  - f. [IF ATTENDED] What, if anything, did you really like about [RELATIONSHIP SERVICES]? Was there anything you found beneficial?
  - g. [IF ATTENDED]: What, if anything, did you not like, or think could be better about [RELATIONSHIP SERVICES]? Is there anything missing?
  - h. [IF ATTENDED] Can you tell me more about what you discussed at these services?
    - i. **Probe:** Can you tell me about anything that came up specifically related to the coparenting relationships you have with the people helping you to raise your child(ren)? When we refer to coparents, we mean the individuals you identified earlier that work to help you raise your children.
    - ii. **Probe:** Did you discuss anything about how to manage coparenting when you have multiple coparents? [IF YES AND HAS MULTIPLE COPARENTS] How useful was this discussion to you?
    - iii. **Probe:** Can you tell me about anything that came up specifically related to your romantic relationships?
    - iv. **Probe:** Have you found yourself using any of the skills or strategies you learned about coparenting or romantic relationships at [FATHERHOOD PROGRAM] because of any changes or disruptions caused by the coronavirus? If so, can you tell me about how or why you used these skills?
  - i. **Probe** [IF ATTENDED]: Tell me about the atmosphere (e.g. was it a friendly atmosphere to come to, describe the facilitation) participating in [RELATIONSHIP SERVICES]?
  - j. **Probe** [IF ATTENDED]: Did you feel like what you learned was relevant to you? [IF NEEDED] Tell me more about that. Do you feel like it would be relevant to the other fathers?
  - k. **Probe** [IF ATTENDED]: Did you relate to the staff and other participants? [IF NEEDED] Tell me more about that.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RELATIONSHIP SERVICES

*Now we'd like to wrap up by asking you some questions about how you think programs like [FATHERHOOD PROGRAM] can improve coparenting and romantic relationship services and activities.*

- 16) In your opinion, do you think [PROGRAM] should be discussing coparenting and romantic relationship topics?
- 17) [IF YES TO Q16] What are the main needs that fathers like you have related to **coparenting** that you think [FATHERHOOD PROGRAM] or programs like it could address?
  - a. **Probe:** What kind of services or activities related to coparenting would be most helpful?
- 18) [IF YES TO Q16] What are the main needs that fathers like you have related to **romantic relationships** that you think [FATHERHOOD PROGRAM] or programs like it could address?
  - a. Follow up: What kind of services or activities related to healthy relationships would be most helpful?
- 19) [IF NO TO Q16] Can you tell me more about that?

## CLOSING

*Thank you for sharing your thoughts on this. We are coming now to our last few questions.*

- 20) [IF PARTICIPANT MENTIONED ANY SYSTEMS OR AGENCIES EARLIER IN THE INTERVIEW]: Earlier you mentioned [SYSTEM OR AGENCY]. Are there any ways in which [SYSTEM OR AGENCY] affects your parenting or romantic relationships? Can you think of any [other] systems that affect your parenting or romantic relationships, either positively or negatively?
  - a. **Probe:** [IF PARTICIPANT IS HAVING DIFFICULTY ANSWERING] For example, social systems, legal systems or police, community or school systems, child support, child protective services, domestic violence agencies, etc.”]
  - b. Follow up: What are the steps other systems or agencies can take to help make your coparenting or romantic relationships better?
- 21) [IF PARTICIPANT DID NOT MENTION ANY SYSTEMS OR AGENCIES EARLIER IN THE INTERVIEW]: Sometimes there are external factors that can affect people's coparenting and romantic relationships. We've already talked about how any changes or disruptions caused by the coronavirus may have affected your coparenting and romantic relationships. Can you think of any other external factors that affect your 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?
- 22) Do you think stigma or discrimination affects your coparenting or romantic relationships?
  - a. **Probe** [IF YES]: Can you give be an example?

23) Is there anything that we didn't touch on today that you want us to know? Do you have any final comments or suggestions related to getting fathers to come to the program or about the program itself?

*We really appreciate you taking the time to talk with us today, thank you!*

*Before you go, we have a quick survey we'd like to complete with you. [ADMINISTER BRIEF QUESTIONNAIRE]*