

APPENDIX A

FCL SEMISTRUCTURED PROTOCOL FOR INITIAL AGENCY PHONE MEETING

## **Fathers and Continuous Learning in Child Welfare Project**

### **Semi Structured Protocol for Initial Agency Phone Meeting**

#### **What is FCL? What is the purpose of our call?**

*We're contacting you on behalf of the Fathers and Continuous Learning (FCL) project. FCL is a new study sponsored by the federal government to identify promising approaches to engaging fathers and paternal relatives of children involved in the child welfare system. Although there has been an increased emphasis on engaging fathers and paternal relatives of children involved in child welfare, there is limited evidence about which strategies are most effective. The Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation of the Administration for Children and Families in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services awarded Mathematica Policy Research a contract to work collaboratively with child welfare agencies and their local partners to understand how the child welfare system can improve father and paternal relative engagement practices.*

*Today, we are calling because we are in a preliminary stage of gathering information to inform the design for this project and we would like to invite you to participate. We asked staff from federal agencies and a group of researchers and practitioners working with the project team to identify child welfare agencies that might provide valuable information about engaging fathers and paternal relatives, and your agency was one of the few that was selected. We would like to walk through the topics we provided in advance of the meeting, and go into more detail about the topics. We will use the information you provide to inform project planning and our study design and we may follow up by inviting you to participate as this project progresses. The information you provide will not be shared in any public reports and will be kept private to the extent permitted by law. Your responses and participation are completely voluntary. There are no repercussions if you choose not to participate. If you do not know the answer to a questions asked, or you prefer not to answer a question for any reason, please let us know that and we will simply move on. We expect this call will take about an hour. Do you have any questions? Do we have your permission to proceed with the call?*

#### **I. Organizational structure and staffing**

1. It will be helpful for us to learn a bit about [Agency Name], your role in the agency, and the nature of the families you serve.
  - a. What is your role at [Agency Name] and how long have you worked there?
  - b.
  - c. How many Child Protective Services (CPS) case workers do you currently have, or do you have an organizational chart you would be willing to share? What is their average caseload? How many staff supervise CPS caseworkers?
  - d.
  - e. How many active in-home and out-of-placement cases does your agency currently have?
  - f. How many workers/supervisors manage in-home or foster care cases?

- g. Do workers carry one type of case or do they carry mixed caseloads?
- h. Do you have specific staff assigned to engaging fathers and paternal relatives? If so, about how many staff and supervisors work in this area?

## II. Father and paternal relative engagement

- 2. There are many ways to engage fathers and paternal relatives in child welfare. I'll ask about each separately.
  - a. How does [Agency Name] engage fathers at each stage of child welfare involvement:
    - When a family comes to the attention of the agency (e.g., during an assessment or investigation)?
    - When it is determined the child can remain safely in the home?
    - When it is determined the child will be removed and placed in foster care?
    - While the child remains in foster care or is returned home?
    - At each of these stages, what is your best estimate of the percentage of cases where fathers are engaged in some way?
  - b. How does [Agency Name] engage paternal relatives:
    - When a family comes to the attention of the agency (e.g., during an assessment or investigation)?
    - When it is determined the child can remain safely in the home?
    - When it is determined the child will be removed and placed in foster care?
    - While the child remains in foster care or is returned home?
    - At each of these stages, what is your best estimate of the percentage of cases where paternal relatives are engaged in some way?
- 3. Tell me about the services that [Agency Name] offers to fathers and paternal relatives? For example, do you offer parenting services or involve them in case planning?
  - a. Are these services provided directly by your agency or by a contracted private agency? If not, tell us more about the types of providers offering these services.
  - b. How do you decide which services fathers/paternal relatives are offered/referred to?
  - c. How often do fathers/paternal relatives of children you serve receive such services?
  - d. Do you use any structured father engagement models or have any father service model affiliations? How about for paternal relatives?
  - e. What is the intended duration of the program services you offer to fathers/paternal relatives? What are the primary reasons for fathers leaving before that time?

4. Do you partner with local organizations and/or other stakeholders in the child welfare system to engage and involve fathers/paternal relatives? If so, please describe your partnerships? If not, would you be interested in partnering with other agencies e.g., child support or local fatherhood programs?
5. What strategies or approaches have you found to be successful in engaging fathers and paternal relatives?
6. Some child welfare agencies report challenges engaging fathers and paternal relatives.
  - a. What has been your agency's experience with engaging fathers? How have you been doing with identifying, locating, and involving fathers?
  - b. What has been your agency's experience with engaging paternal relatives? How have you been doing with identifying, locating, and involving paternal relatives?
7. What do you find most challenging about engaging fathers and paternal relatives? At what point in the case planning process is it most difficult?
  - a. What strategies or approaches have you found to be unsuccessful in engaging fathers and paternal relatives?
8. Are you currently planning any changes to how you engage or serve fathers/paternal relatives? If so, please describe the planned changes.
9. If you had additional resources, are there any changes or enhancements you would add?

### **III. Continuous improvement or learning approaches**

10. Some agencies have used continuous improvement or continuous learning approaches to improve casework practice. That is, the agency uses an ongoing process to review data, use it to make decisions about improvements, and evaluates its progress based on the implemented improvements.
  - a. Has [Agency Name] used continuous improvement or continuous learning approaches?
    - i. If so, please describe your approach? When did this effort begin?
11. An important part of this study will focus on using data to better engage fathers and paternal relatives with the goal of enhancing the well-being of children involved in child welfare.
  - a. How do you, your supervisors, and your caseworkers use data to inform decision making?
  - b. Does the agency have and use a data system to support data for continuous learning?

- b. What is working well in using data to inform your decision making? What could be better?
  - c. What do your supervisors and caseworkers believe is working well in using data to inform their decisions? What do they suggest could be better?
12. Has [Agency Name] used any specific continuous improvement or continuous learning approaches to engaging father and paternal relatives?
- a. If so, please describe your approach? When did this effort begin? How broadly is it used within the agency?

#### **IV. Pilot Study Reflections**

13. Based on your agency's experience, are there any specific questions or topics you would find useful for the pilot study to address?
14. Would you be open to future conversations with the project team to discuss different collaborative engagement strategies?
15. What is your initial thinking about strategies you would use or services you would enhance or add to improve engagement of fathers and paternal relatives?
16. Is there anything we did not ask you about that would be helpful as we work on the project and pilot study plans? Do you have any questions for us?

**The Paperwork Reduction Act Statement**

This collection of information is voluntary and will be used to gather preliminary information about father and paternal relative engagement in child welfare, and explore with child welfare agencies the research questions that are of interest and the design options that are feasible. 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 any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing burden to Matthew Stagner; mstagner@mathematica-mpr.com; Attn: OMB-PRA (0970-0356).