

Alternative Supporting Statement for Information Collections Designed for  
Research, Public Health Surveillance, and Program Evaluation Purposes

# **Strengthening the Implementation of Responsible Fatherhood Programs (SIRF)**

**Formative Data Collections for ACF Research**

**0970 – 0356**

## **Supporting Statement**

### **Part A**

**October 2020**

Submitted By:  
Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation  
Administration for Children and Families  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

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**Part A**

**Executive Summary**

- **Type of Request:** This Information Collection Request is for a generic information collection under the umbrella generic, Formative Data Collections for ACF Research (0970-0356).
- **Description of Request:** The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) seeks approval to contact Responsible Fatherhood program staff and program participants to gather information about the fatherhood field with a focus on implementation challenges, particularly related to recruitment, retention, and program completion for the project called Strengthening the Implementation of Responsible Fatherhood Programs (SIRF). The first generic clearance request (approved under 0970-0356) that was approved in February 2020 for SIRF was focused on identifying implementation challenges to establish a list of possible research priorities. The current request will build upon the initial insights gained from previous outreach and will inform the intervention selection and corresponding study designs through a learning cycle approach. This request includes semi-structured phone discussions with program staff (see Instruments 1 and 2), a semi-structured phone discussion with program participants (see Instrument 3), and a guided activity and workshop for program staff that will involve a series of activities designed to gain an understanding of the local program context known as Customer Journey Mapping (see Instruments 4 and 5). The information learned from conducting these activities will allow the team to explore priority implementation challenges more deeply within the context of each program and inform the final learning cycle study designs.

We do not intend for this information to be used as the principal basis for public policy decisions.

- **Time Sensitivity:** The award of ACF's new Responsible Fatherhood grant cohort was made in late September 2020. The data collection activities described in this request need to begin shortly after grant awards are announced, so that the information can be used to plan for the rapid cycle evaluations that will begin in Spring, 2021. For this reason, we would like to begin data collection by early November 2020.

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### **A1. Necessity for Collection**

There are no legal or administrative requirements that necessitate this collection. The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) is undertaking the collection at the discretion of the agency. Since 2006, Congress has authorized dedicated funding for discretionary grants from the Office of Family Assistance (OFA) to programs to promote healthy marriage and responsible fatherhood and conduct capacity- and evidence-building activities. In the current cohort, there are 113 grantees, and 58 of these are Responsible Fatherhood programs. Given robust data indicating the importance of father involvement for a child's well-being, and the continued federal funding of programs to promote father involvement, understanding which programs and service delivery practices are most effective is an important priority to ACF.

Capacity- and evidence- building efforts have produced a growing body of evidence on the effectiveness of federally funded Responsible Fatherhood programs. However, these activities have repeatedly shown that Responsible Fatherhood programs face challenges recruiting fathers, enrolling them in services, and keeping them actively engaged in services, which in turn makes obtaining rigorous evidence on program effectiveness more difficult. To address these challenges, the overall Strengthening the Implementation of Responsible Fatherhood Programs (SIRF) project will use an iterative learning method (i.e., rapid cycle evaluation) to identify and test promising practices to address critical implementation challenges in Responsible Fatherhood programs. To do so, researchers will identify common implementation challenges and potential solutions, select Responsible Fatherhood programs to undertake iterative learning activities, work with sites on iterative learning activities, and build stronger implementation and greater capacity for a summative evaluation.

This information request, described in more detail below, is necessary to inform the study design for evaluation activities planned to begin in 2021, which will be explained in a future information data collection request submission..

### **A2. Purpose**

#### *Purpose and Use*

This proposed information collection meets the following goals of ACF's generic clearance for formative data collections for research and evaluation (0970-0356):

- inform the development of ACF research
- maintain a research agenda that is rigorous and relevant
- ensure that research products are as current as possible
- inform the provision of technical assistance

The information collected is meant to contribute to the body of knowledge on ACF programs. It is not intended to be used as the principal basis for a decision by a federal decision-maker and is not expected to meet the threshold of influential or highly influential scientific information.

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This information collection request will build upon the earlier phase of the project, which focused on identifying implementation challenges to establish a list of possible research priorities<sup>1</sup>. Through this request we will contact priority programs (including federal grant recipients and some non-federally funded father serving programs) in order to explore intervention and study designs for the learning cycle approach more deeply within specific program contexts. The implementation challenges that Responsible Fatherhood programs face vary by organization based on factors like whom they serve, how they structure services, and strategies they use to engage fathers. Moreover, these challenges can change over time due to circumstances like staffing, funding, and referral partnerships. This variability in fatherhood programs that are operating today - both those that receive OFA funding and those that do not - has implications for tailoring interventions that the SIRF team will help programs implement and for the research questions that SIRF will test. This phase of information collection will inform the development of iterative learning methods and tests, specifics of which will be documented in a subsequent full information request package. The SIRF team will also use information collected to inform its technical assistance to participating programs.

The results from SIRF are intended to inform future large-scale impact evaluations of programs that adopt them. A future summative study will show sizable effects only if Responsible Fatherhood programs can achieve strong implementation in these areas and use effective approaches for employment, parenting, and healthy relationship services.

### *Research Questions or Tests*

Study activities outlined in this information collection request seek to answer the following research questions through semi-structured discussions and guiding staff to complete the customer journey mapping activity with program staff.

1. How do the implementation challenges and potential areas of improvement of select fatherhood programs align with SIRF priorities?
2. What solutions might be feasible to test in a learning cycle approach with fatherhood programs?

### *Study Design*

With OMB approval, the study team will conduct outreach to fatherhood programs and their stakeholders to collect information about implementation challenges programs face as well as potential solutions.

First, these discussions will involve a one-hour telephone or video conference call with program staff from up to 25 programs. The study team will lead the telephone meeting using a semi-structured discussion protocol (see Instrument 1, described in Table 1 below). Each protocol is designed to collect the minimum information necessary to allow us to understand the variation of programming in the field, the range of perspectives on SIRF and to assess particular study design options that would be feasible given the structure of a range of fatherhood programs. The study team will email programs (Appendix A: SIRF Phone Email Template) in advance to request the call. For the conference call, program staff and fathers have the option to dial in by phone, or connect to video and computer audio, depending on their technical capability. The calendar appointment with conference line log-in information will include the meeting topics found in Appendix C: SIRF Phone Meeting Topics for Program Staff. If needed, the study team will conduct follow-up virtual conference calls (see Instrument 2) and will also request a phone

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<sup>1</sup> Activities approved under the Formative Data Collections for ACF Research, OMB #0970-0356 in February 2019.

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conversation with program participants if possible (see Instrument 3). The SIRF team will provide attendees with the same dial-in or video options used for the initial meeting. The calendar appointment will include the meeting topics found in Appendix D: SIRF Phone Meeting Topics for Follow-Up Call.

Secondly, the study team will invite up to 15 programs (from the original 25) to participate in a follow-up activity called Customer Journey Mapping. Program staff will use a set of tools and techniques to map the steps in their service flow in order to identify areas where the process of enrolling and engaging fathers in program activities can be improved. Following an informational webinar (Appendix F: Customer Journey Mapping Webinar Agenda), the study team will host a video conference call with program staff (Instrument 5) and ask them to complete short assignments in between the webinar and the meeting (see Instrument 4). For example, program staff will create a customer persona that reflects the characteristics of a typical customer (e.g., demographics, family relationships, financial situation). The study team will guide them as they create a list of touchpoints that tell the story of the persona’s participation in the program from the beginning (eligibility screening, orientation, etc.) to the end (post-placement follow-up, employment services, exit screening, etc.). For each touch point, the team will discuss what the person is thinking and feeling as well as what program staff will do (e.g., enter the participant into the management information system). The team will rate each touch point to indicate which ones are acceptable but could be improved and which ones are “pain points,” i.e., areas sources of participant frustration, confusion, or dissatisfaction. The team will brainstorm about the real source of these problems. The team will then be encouraged to prioritize these pain points. The study team will use the information gathered to assess study design options with program staff.

A limitation of this process is that the information will be gathered from only a selection of father-serving programs; however, the selection of programs will be prioritized in such a way to maximize the range of responses possible that may inform SIRF design and planning (See Supporting Statement B, Section B2, for additional information).

<b>Table 1: Description of Instruments and Data Collection Activities</b>			
<i>Data Collection Activity</i>	<i>Instrument(s)</i>	<i>Respondent, Content, Purpose of Collection</i>	<i>Mode and Duration</i>
Conference calls with Program Staff (one-on-one or in small groups when possible)	Instrument 1: SIRF Phone Meeting with Program Staff Protocol	<p><b>Respondents:</b> Program Staff (up to two staff per call, up to 50 staff total)</p> <p><b>Content:</b> Meeting topics include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Current affiliation, role, and organization</li> <li>2) Structure of the program</li> <li>3) Use of data and experience with evaluation</li> <li>4) Referral sources and service partners</li> <li>5) Program implementation challenges</li> <li>6) Program approaches to address implementation challenges</li> <li>7) Next steps and program improvement areas of interest</li> </ol> <p><b>Purpose:</b> Calls with programs will be used to verify our prior knowledge of the programs and collect additional information about each fatherhood program and their</p>	<p><b>Mode:</b> Telephone or Virtual Conference Call</p> <p><b>Duration:</b> 1 hour</p>

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		alignment with priority challenges and approaches. Based on the program's answers to our question we may also begin planning follow-up conversations with them (see below).	
Semi-structured Discussions with Program Staff (one-on-one or in small groups when possible)	Instrument 2: SIRF Follow-up Meeting with Program Staff Protocol	<p><b>Respondents:</b> Program Staff (up to two staff per call, up to 50 staff total)</p> <p><b>Content:</b> Meeting topics will be selected from this list based on what is known about the program:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) About the respondent</li> <li>2) About the program participants</li> <li>3) Organizational priorities</li> <li>4) Practices to identify and meet fathers' needs</li> <li>5) Peer support and networks</li> <li>6) Staff capacity</li> <li>7) Recruitment (including challenges, previously tried approaches, and ideas for improving)</li> <li>8) Service delivery (including challenges, previously tried approaches, and ideas for improving)</li> <li>9) Engagement and retention (including challenges, previously tried approaches, and ideas for improving)</li> <li>10) Other challenges and innovative ideas</li> <li>11) Office setup</li> <li>12) Capacity for and interest in for participating in learning cycles and customer journey mapping</li> </ol> <p><b>Purpose:</b> Learn about the key implementation challenges facing programs serving fathers, identify program improvement areas of interest, and understand the program's organizational maturity and ability to adapt.</p>	<p><b>Mode:</b> Virtual Conference call</p> <p><b>Duration:</b> 1 hour</p>
Semi-structured Discussions with Program Participants (one-on-one or small groups)	Instrument 3: SIRF Follow-up Meeting with Program Participant Protocol	<p><b>Respondents:</b> Program Participants (2 participants in a discussion)</p> <p><b>Content:</b> Meeting topics include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) About the respondent</li> <li>2) Learn how the father heard about the program (recruitment)</li> <li>3) Experience in the program (program services)</li> </ol>	<p><b>Mode:</b> Phone or Virtual Conference Call</p> <p><b>Duration:</b> 1 hour</p>

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<b>Table 1: Description of Instruments and Data Collection Activities</b>			
<i>Data Collection Activity</i>	<i>Instrument(s)</i>	<i>Respondent, Content, Purpose of Collection</i>	<i>Mode and Duration</i>
		<p>4) Engagement and retention in program 5) Other challenges or innovative ideas</p> <p><b>Purpose:</b> Learn fathers' perspectives on challenges with successfully participating in the program and ideas to improve the experiences of people in similar situations.</p>	
Preparation for Customer Journey Mapping (program staff and/or participants to complete in groups on their own)	Instrument 4: Customer Journey Mapping Pre-Work	<p><b>Respondents:</b> Program staff (up to 4 staff).</p> <p><b>Content:</b> Activity topics include: 1) Draft a problem statement 2) Create a persona 3) Document program touchpoints</p> <p><b>Purpose:</b> Prepare for Customer Journey Mapping by drafting program-specific information that will be used as tools in the Customer Journey Mapping session.</p>	<p><b>Mode:</b> Sites to complete this activity on their own (written activity)</p> <p><b>Duration:</b> 3.25 hours</p>
Customer Journey Mapping with Staff and/or Program Participants (in groups)	Instrument 5: SIRC Customer Journey Mapping Workshop	<p><b>Respondents:</b> Program staff (up to 4 staff).</p> <p><b>Content:</b> Activity Topics Include: 1) Mapping every touchpoint in the program's process that a father experiences and its associated timeframe. (Consider the program's father persona's thoughts and feelings and staff actions at each touchpoint.) 2) Ranking each touchpoint based on where the program's father persona experiences challenges 3) Developing a vision statement about how to change fathers' experiences</p> <p><b>Purpose:</b> Identify touchpoints in the program's process where participants may face challenges related to the problem the site wants to solve during SIRC (recruitment, engagement, or retention) to understand whether the programs challenges and priorities are a good fit for SIRC.</p>	<p><b>Mode:</b> Virtual Conference Call</p> <p><b>Duration:</b> 5 hours</p>

*Other Data Sources and Uses of Information*

The study team will use some program-specific information gathered under the previous SIRC generic clearance package. The study team will also review HMRP grant applications provided by the Office of Family Assistance and will use information from nFORM, (Information, Family Outcomes, Reporting, and Management; OMB # 0970-0460) the management information system used by all federally funded Responsible Fatherhood programs, supported by an ACF contract. Aggregate data reports from

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information kept in nFORM will be used to inform the study team about current program service utilization patterns.

**A3. Use of Information Technology to Reduce Burden**

The study team plans to use information technology wherever possible to streamline communications (i.e. conference calling platforms for telephone meetings). When information is available from the internet about the program services and structure, it will supplement requests for information. To the extent possible, meetings will be done by telephone or virtual conference calling to reduce burden on respondents.

**A4. Use of Existing Data: Efforts to reduce duplication, minimize burden, and increase utility and government efficiency**

Under the previous generic information collection for the SIRF project (OMB # 0970-0356), the study team engaged some fatherhood programs to gain a broad understanding of the kinds of implementation challenges faced by programs and promising strategies to be explored further. In this phase of the project, the study team aims to understand more about a programs' context and processes to think collaboratively about study designs based on the experience of a father as he engages with the program. Before engaging new fatherhood programs, the study team will review their grant applications and/or other program descriptions that are publicly available. In some cases, the study team will re-engage programs that were contacted under the previous package and will build off the initial phone calls that were conducted to avoid duplication. Lastly, some programs may be nominated to participate in these activities or will have self-nominated and will have provided some initial information about their implementation challenges. The information learned previously provides a starting point but additional detail and information is needed to address the study's research questions.

**A5. Impact on Small Businesses**

Most of the programs we connect with will be small, nonprofit organizations. Burden will be minimized for respondents by restricting the discussion length to the minimum required, and by conducting telephone or video discussions at times convenient for the respondents.

**A6. Consequences of Less Frequent Collection**

The study team proposes a multi-staged process for gathering information from fatherhood programs. Without the information requested for this phase of the study, the SIRF team would lack the background information needed to design appropriate and efficient rapid cycle evaluations. The proposed approach limits the scope of discussions to the information needed for the current phase of the project. Further, we will avoid undue burden on discussion attendees by conducting the first round of telephone calls with a larger number of programs, then narrowing the list of participants in later discussions.

**A7. Now subsumed under 2(b) above and 10 (below)**



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**A8. Consultation**

*Federal Register Notice and Comments*

In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (Pub. L. 104-13) and Office of Management and Budget (OMB) regulations at 5 CFR Part 1320 (60 FR 44978, August 29, 1995), ACF published a notice in the Federal Register announcing the agency's intention to request an OMB review of the overarching generic clearance for formative information collection. This notice was published on October 11, 2017, Volume 82, Number 195, page 47212, and provided a sixty-day period for public comment. During the notice and comment period, no substantive comments were received.

*Consultation with Experts Outside of the Study*

Experts in the fatherhood field (including both practitioners and researchers) have been providing guidance to the study team and ACF. The purpose of engaging subject matter experts is to supplement the knowledge of the project team as it develops a list of priorities for implementation challenges to address and promising approaches to address them, as well as methodological issues related to the study design.

**A9. Tokens of Appreciation**

No incentives for respondents are proposed for this information collection.

**A10. Privacy: Procedures to protect privacy of information, while maximizing data sharing**

*Personally Identifiable Information*

This information request will not collect personally identifiable information.

*Assurances of Privacy*

Information collected will be kept private to the extent permitted by law. Respondents will be informed of all planned uses of data, that their participation is voluntary, and that their information will be kept private to the extent permitted by law. As specified in the contract, the Contractor will comply with all Federal and Departmental regulations for private information.

*Data Security and Monitoring*

As specified in the contract, the Contractor shall protect respondent privacy to the extent permitted by law and will comply with all Federal and Departmental regulations for private information. The Contractor, MDRC is committed to maintaining the security of sensitive data. MDRC adheres to FedRAMP and FISMA standards (per NIST SP 800-53 revision 4) regarding the collection, transfer, storage, access, monitoring, and sharing of data. MDRC recently acquired FedRAMP moderate accreditation and received a FedRAMP moderate Authorization to Operate (ATO) in summer 2020. MDRC conducts regular audits and reviews of the software, hardware, vendors, network configuration, and data stored on its network. MDRC systems primarily operate on the cloud and control implementation follows the guidance prescribed by FedRAMP for Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) Cloud Service Providers (CSPs).

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MDRC’s security procedures include the following:

1. Access to information on a need-to-know basis, supported by multi-factor authentication factors
2. End-to-end encryption, in-transit and at-rest, using TLS 1.2+ and AES256 via FIPS 140-2 modules for systems integrity, systems and communications protection, and media protection
3. Continuous monitoring of application and transport-level traffic for inbound and outbound flows

These are supplemented by 1) employee nondisclosure agreements and annual data security training, 2) IT support teams well-versed in cyber security, and 3) policies for responding to data security incidents.

**A11. Sensitive Information**<sup>2</sup>

There are no sensitive questions in this data collection.

**A12. Burden**

*Explanation of Burden Estimates*

The estimated annual burden for this information collection request is 610 hours. This effort includes semi-structured discussions and workshop activities with a total of up to 235 respondents, explained below in Table 2.

<b>Respondent Type</b>	<b>Number Interviewed</b>	<b>Description</b>
Program Staff	220	Staff from organizations representing a range of programs across urban, suburban, and rural geographies, such as those targeting young fathers, fathers with criminal-justice involvement, or those who speak English as a second language
Program Participants	15	Past or current recipient of services at the organization.
<i>Total</i>	235	

*Estimated Annualized Cost to Respondents*

<sup>2</sup> Examples of sensitive topics include (but not limited to): social security number; sex behavior and attitudes; illegal, anti-social, self-incriminating and demeaning behavior; critical appraisals of other individuals with whom respondents have close relationships, e.g., family, pupil-teacher, employee-supervisor; mental and psychological problems potentially embarrassing to respondents; religion and indicators of religion; community activities which indicate political affiliation and attitudes; legally recognized privileged and analogous relationships, such as those of lawyers, physicians and ministers; records describing how an individual exercises rights guaranteed by the First Amendment; receipt of economic assistance from the government (e.g., unemployment or WIC or SNAP); immigration/citizenship status.

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This information collection request will include three types of respondents: program staff, stakeholders, and program participants. The hourly wage rate for each type of respondent was calculated using the following criteria:

- **Program Staff:** According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Current Population Survey 2020, the median weekly earnings for full-time employees age 25 and over with a bachelor's degree is \$1,416. We assume a full-time work week for program staff is 40 hours per week. Therefore, the estimated hourly wage is \$35.40.<sup>3</sup>
- **Program Participants:** The average hourly wage of program applicants is estimated from the average monthly earnings (\$600) of study participants in the Parents and Children Together Study.<sup>4</sup> We assume a full work week for fathers to be 40 hours per week. Therefore, the estimated hourly wage is (\$3.75).

<b>Table 3: Total Burden Under this Information Request</b>							
Instrument	Respondent	No. of Respondents (total over request period)	No. of Responses per Respondent (total over request period)	Avg. Burden per Response (in hours)	Annual/ Total Burden (in hours)	Average Hourly Wage Rate	Total Annual Respondent Cost
<b>Instrument 1:</b> SIRF Phone Meeting with Program Staff Protocol	Program Staff	50	1	1	50	\$35.40	\$1,770.00
<b>Instrument 2:</b> SIRF Follow-up Meeting with Program Staff Protocol	Program Staff	50	1	1	50	\$35.40	\$1,770.00

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2020). *News Release: Usual Weekly Earning of Wage and Salary Workers Second Quarter 2020*. Retrieved from <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/wkyeng.htm>

<sup>4</sup> Avellar, Sarah, Reginald Covington, Quinn Moore, Ankita Patnaik, and April Wu (2018). *Parents and Children Together: Effects of Four Responsible Fatherhood Programs for Low-Income Fathers*. OPRE Report Number 2018-50. Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

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<b>Table 3: Total Burden Under this Information Request</b>							
Instrument	Respondent	No. of Respondents (total over request period)	No. of Responses per Respondent (total over request period)	Avg. Burden per Response (in hours)	Annual/ Total Burden (in hours)	Average Hourly Wage Rate	Total Annual Respondent Cost
<b>Instrument 3:</b> SIRF Follow-up Meeting with Program Participant Protocol	Program Participants	15	1	1	15	\$3.75	\$56.25
<b>Instrument 4:</b> SIRF Customer Journey Mapping Pre-Work	Program Staff	60	1	3.25	195	\$35.40	\$6,903.00
<b>Instrument 5:</b> SIRF Customer Journey Mapping Workshop	Program Staff	60	1	5	300	\$35.40	\$10,6200.00
<b>Total</b>		235			610		\$21,119.25

**A13. Costs**

There are no additional costs to respondents.

**A14. Estimated Annualized Costs to the Federal Government**

Cost Category	Estimated Costs
Instrument Development and OMB Clearance	\$5,818
Field Work	\$238,998
Publications/Dissemination	\$ 0
<b>Total costs over the request period</b>	\$244,816
<b>Annual costs</b>	\$244,816

**A15. Reasons for changes in burden**

This is for an individual information collection under the umbrella formative generic clearance for ACF research (0970-0356).

**A16. Timeline**

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Phone calls and follow-up discussions with local programs for the purpose of information gathering will take place following for approximately 6 months after this OMB generic clearance request is approved.

**A17. Exceptions**

No exceptions are necessary for this information collection.

**Attachments**

Appendix A\_SIRF Phone Meeting Email Template

Appendix B\_SIRF Project Description

Appendix C\_SIRF Phone Meeting Topics for Program Staff

Appendix D\_SIRF Phone Meeting Topics for Follow-Up Call

Appendix E\_SIRF Customer Journey Mapping Email Template

Appendix F\_SIRF Customer Journey Mapping Webinar Agenda