

Agreement to Participate in Focus Group *Fatherhood TIES*

You are invited to take part in a focus group about the Testing Identified Elements for Success in Fatherhood Programs study, or Fatherhood TIES study. A nonprofit organization called MDRC is running the study. The study is being done with MEF Associates and Abt Associates. This form describes the focus group and what it means for you to be a part of it. Your participation is voluntary.

Why is the study being done?

This study will help us test innovative approaches to overcome implementation challenges and to learn more about fathers' experiences at [Name of the program] to better support fathers achieve their goals. The TIES study is being conducted by MDRC with their partners MEF Associates, Mathematica Policy Research, and Abt Associates.

What does it mean to be a part of this focus group?

- You can participate in a group discussion with other fathers, also known as a focus group. It will take approximately 60 minutes.
- You will receive a \$50 gift card as a "thank you" for your participation.
- Some questions involve sensitive topics and may be stressful to answer. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to answer.
- It is your choice to participate. If you decide not to participate, there is no penalty. Your decision will not affect the services you or others receive.
- The focus group discussions will be recorded and the study team will be taking notes to keep track of what is discussed. The recordings will be used by the research team; however any data storage has a small risk of information being seen outside of the study team in the unlikely event of a data breach (such as a breach in the computer security). However, we follow strict rules to protect your data. No reports will include your name or identifying information.
- The study team will follow strict rules to protect your personal information. The study team is trained to protect your information. The team signs a pledge.
- We cannot guarantee that others in the group will keep private what is said here. Please do not talk about anything people say here once you leave. Respecting the privacy of others in the group is important.
- The information about you will be marked with a special code number, not your name. No reports will describe you in a way that would allow you to be identified.

If you have questions about your rights as someone in this study, MDRC and Fatherhood TIES can be reached at FatherhoodTIES@mdrc.org or at the Fatherhood TIES hotline (855) 907-6696.

Do you agree to participate in the focus group?

PRIVACY STATEMENT: The consent is covered by the Privacy Act. This means that your participation is voluntary, so you can decline to participate. If you decide to decline to participate, you will still have access to program services. The purpose of this study is to find out which parts of fatherhood programs are the most effective at improving the lives of participating fathers and their children and co-parents. The information you provide may be shared with state and federal agencies and researchers involved in similar work. The legal authority for this project is Social Security Act Title IV-A § 403 [42 U.S.C. 603] (a) (2). If you would like more information about this project, please see Systems of Records Notice (SORN) 09-80-0361, OPRE Research and Evaluation Project Records.

PAPERWORK REDUCTION ACT OF 1995 (Pub. L. 104-13) STATEMENT OF PUBLIC BURDEN: The purpose of the described information collection is 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. This is a voluntary collection of information. The answers you give will be kept private. An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information subject to the requirements of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. The OMB # for the described information collection is 0970-0622 and the expiration date is XX/XX/XXXX. If you have any comments on this collection of information, please contact Dina Israel; Dina.Israel@mdrc.org, and Michelle Manno; Michelle.Manno@mdrc.org; Attn: OMB-PRA (0970-0622).

Fatherhood TIES Father Focus Group Protocol

Today's focus group will cover a few different topics. We'd like to start with introductions and then talk about why you joined the program and what kept you coming back. We also want to hear your thoughts about the program, the quality of services/resources you received, and interactions with staff and how the [parent coaching/system navigation support/financial coaching] has affected your life.

As a reminder, all questions are optional. You don't have to answer any questions that you don't feel comfortable or want to answer.

Introduction

First, I'd like to start by learning a little more about you. Can you tell me your name, and, because this is a study about fatherhood programs, your favorite thing to do with your child(ren)?

Enrollment and Engagement

We'd like to hear about why you decided to join [name the program] and what kept you coming back.

1. Can you share why you decided to sign up for the program? What interested you and made you want to join?
2. What was the process of joining [name the program] like?
3. How does [name the program] keep you interested and engaged?
 - a. If [name the program] does not keep you interested, can you think of some examples of other things that they could do to help you stay interested or involved in the program?

Program Overview

Thank you everyone for sharing your experiences. Now I want to ask some questions about [name the program] specifically.

4. How would you describe what you do in [name the program]?
5. How is it different from other programs you have been involved in?
6. Did [name the program] seem relevant to your (parenting/co-parenting/financial) goals?

Service Quality

Now that we've talked about the program, we want to invite you to share your thoughts about the quality of the services and resources you received from [name the program].

7. Overall, what did you think of the [parent coaching/system navigation/financial coaching and/or cash assistance] you received? What did you like or dislike? How useful were these services to you? *Probe: Was it relevant to your [parenting/co-parenting/financial] situation?*
8. Were there any parts of the [parent coaching/system navigation/financial coaching and/or cash assistance] not useful to you? If so, why?
 - a. Are there other services you wished that [name the program] offered?

- b. Do you have any suggestions about how the [parent coaching/system navigation/financial coaching and/or cash assistance] could help you more?
9. Do you have any suggestions for how [parent coaching/system navigation/financial coaching with cash assistance] could be improved for fathers?

Perceptions of Staff

Because [parent coaches/system navigators/financial coaches] play an important role in making sure that fathers receive services and resources from [name the program], we want to invite you to share your thoughts about your experiences with your [parent coach/system navigator/financial coach].

10. Walk me through a typical one-on-one meeting with your [parent coach/system navigator/financial coach]
 - a. How often do you meet? Where? *Probe: convenience of location, any challenges with transportation, flexibility around scheduling, virtual/in-person*
 - b. What do you talk about in these meetings? *Probe: Goal setting, goal progress*
 - c. What was talking through and developing goals like with your [parent coach/system navigator/financial coach]?
 - i. When you first started meeting with [parent coach/system navigator/financial coach], did you come in with goals already in mind, or did they help you come up with goals?
11. Can you tell me about your relationship with [parent coach/system navigator/financial coach]?
 - d. How do you think this relationship influenced your experience in the program?
 - e. Do you feel they could relate to or understand your experiences?
 - f. How do you typically communicate with them? (at program site, over the phone, over email)?
 - g. Did you find communicating with them to be helpful? Why or why not?
 - h. Did you feel comfortable discussing personal things with them?

TIES impact on fathers' lives

Because this study is specifically about the effect that [parent coaching/system navigation/financial support and coaching] can have on fathers' lives, we want to hear about your experiences receiving [parent coaching/system navigation/financial support and coaching]

12. Can you tell us what if anything about your [parenting/co-parenting/financial] situation has changed because of you participated in [name the program]?
 - a. What stayed the same?
 - b. Are there any other changes you've noticed relating to your relationships with your children or your co-parents since [parent coaching/system navigation/financial coaching and/or cash assistance]?

13. How has the [parent coaching/system navigation/financial coaching and/or cash assistance] helped you to move toward your goals?
 - a. In what ways do you feel supported in moving toward your goals?
 - b. What changes have you made to your goals since starting the program?

14. Can you give an example of how you used what you've gotten from [parent coaching/system navigation/financial coaching] in your life (outside of the program)?

Thanks so much for sharing with us today. Before we wrap up, is there anything else you think we should know about the [program]?