



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Administration for Children and Families
Office of Family Assistance

National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse (NRFC) Technical Assistance Webinar

Tuesday June 23, 2009 ~ 2:00 – 3:45 EDT

**Responsible Fatherhood in the Context of Marriage:
Promoting Healthy Marriage Activities with Couples or
Single Fathers**

Moderator:

Nigel Vann: NRFC Director of Training & Technical Assistance

Presenters:

Gardner Wiseheart: MA, Founder and Director, Dads Make a Difference, Healthy Families San Angelo, TX

Andy Sagvold: Assistant Director, Prisoner and Family Projects, Council on Crime and Justice (CCJ), Minneapolis, MN

Annette Wallace: Project Director, Fatherhood/Healthy Marriage Initiative, Family & Children's Services, Tulsa, OK



Presentation by Gardner Wiseheart, Healthy Families San Angelo





Healthy Families San Angelo

- Healthy Families San Angelo is a home based family support program designed to promote healthy child development and enhance family functioning in overburdened families of newborns.

Healthy Families San Angelo

... because the first years last forever



Program Couples

- 18 or older
- Unmarried or married after conception
- Both agree they are “in a relationship”
- More than 500 couples have entered the program
- 74% Hispanic – 9% African American – 15% Anglo





MOST Moms and Dads

- Are under-educated
- Are under-employed or unemployed
- Have children by other partners
- Have limited interpersonal skills
- Have had several previous unsuccessful relationships
- Have no successful couple role models
- Have no successful professional role models
- Have a very limited support system

SOME Moms and Dads

- Are involved with the legal system
- Have a history of drug use/abuse
- Have a history of violence (in school, within the family, and/or in social settings)
- Are inherently bright
- Have an adequate income
- Are in college or trade school



Program Moms and Dads

- Services begin prenatally or at the birth of the child
- Mom and Dad both commit to be in the program



We Focus On...

- Supporting healthy mother-child and father-child interaction
- Supporting healthy child development
- Increasing family functioning by improving:
 - Couple relationship skills
 - Problem solving skills
 - Moms' and dads' ability to provide financially through education, job training and employment



We do this through...

- Home visits
- Groups
- Social activities/family outings
- Connecting folks to community services





Home Visits

- Structured
- Based on family's schedule not ours
- Are both
 - with the couple (regardless of their living situation)
 - with mom or dad individually
- The Home Visitor works with the couple
 - On reinforcing relationship skills the couple learns in group
 - To further develop topics/interests/needs that get started in group
 - Deal with difficult issues that may be sensitive in group
 - Using child development and parent child interaction curriculum

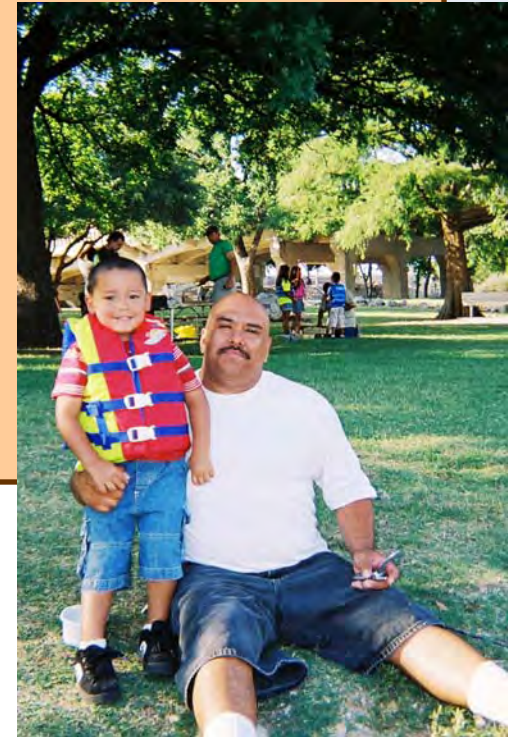
Groups



- Couple Time
- Moms Group
- Dads Group
- Special Topics
 - Anger Management
 - How to Get a Job, Keep a Job, Leave a Job

Key Elements

- Focus on “What’s best for kids”
- Recognize the value of supporting moms’ and dads’ relationship
- Use positive and persistent outreach to engage both moms and dads
- Develop relationships with both moms and dads



Key Elements (cont.)

- Appreciate how gender impacts what you do
- Utilize specific community resources that fit the needs of participants
- Provide support for your program and staff with training and technical assistance





*Work like you don't need the money,
Love like you've never been hurt,
And dance like you do when
nobody is watching*

Source unknown



Contact Information

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Reducing Recidivism Through Community Connections: The Family Strengthening Project

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Minneapolis, MN

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What does the FSP consist of?

- Quick overview of the Family Strengthening Project (FSP)
- Case advocacy, family/marriage counseling, education
 - Holistic FSP involvement vs. Class Participation
 - 139 Families fully enrolled in the FSP
 - Over 600 prison and community class graduates
 - Growing number of evaluations showing impact



Involving the Entire Family

- Our perspective on recruitment
 - Intervene early after incarceration
 - Include entire family
 - Create letter showing the prisoner's interest in family, change etc.
 - Innovative and eye-catching brochures and materials
 - Cold calls – not effective means of connecting



Lessons Learned Thus Far

- Some couples just are not healthy or “good” together
 - Rather than promoting healthy marriage, focus on co-parenting, safety planning, exiting the relationship safely
- What to do with information learned from one partner which could negatively affect the relationship
 - Example: Pregnancy while partner is incarcerated
- The importance of project Consent Forms



Initiating Interest in Marriage Counseling

- Rapport developed between Family Case Advocates and Participants prior to LMFT involvement is key
- Family Counseling without any other support mechanisms seemed inadequate
- The other components help families meet their basic needs, so they can focus on therapeutic needs as well as survival
- Utilize tool as a “dating game” to pique interest and get MFT’s foot in the door.



Goals of Relationship Counseling

- Examples of goals and benefits of MFT program:
 - Allows you to privately voice family concerns
 - Provides specific suggestions for good communication with your partner
 - Recognizes the burden of staying connected with family and provides an additional way to stay connected
 - Carries the message to all family members that you are stronger together
 - Identifies areas of personal characteristics and strengths that add to the whole family



How Family Counseling Works

- Both partners are met with separately during incarceration and together in a couples setting upon release
 - He is met in prison and she is met in the community
 - Allows opportunity to discuss issues without driving home together afterwards...
 - The hope is that prior to him returning home, many of their previous relationship issues have been addressed
- Our LMFT's (2) and MFT Interns (4) provide only family counseling – not individual counseling
 - Individual Mental Health issues are referred to other providers and/or the DOC
- Assess Relationship Dynamics using FACES (Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scales)

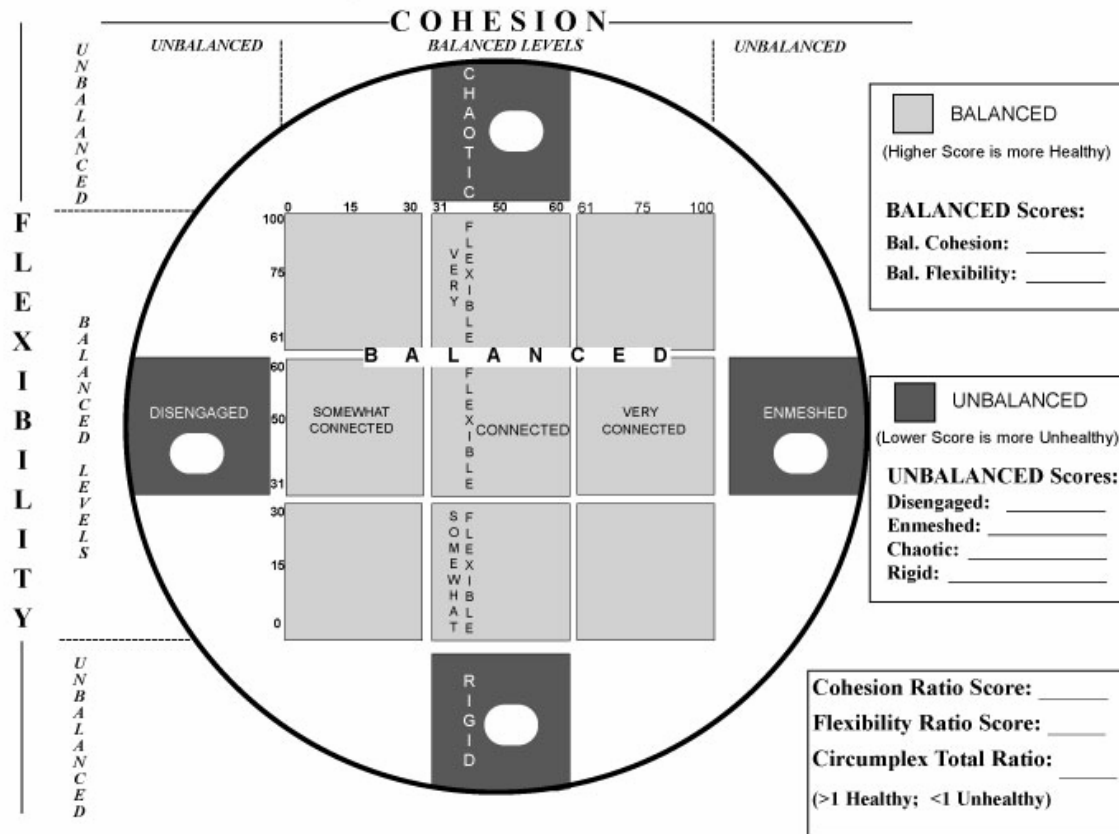


FACES

- Created by David H. Olson, Ph.D. (University of Minnesota)
- History of assessment tool: www.facesiv.com
- 6 scales: 2 balanced (balanced cohesion and balanced flexibility) and 4 unbalanced (disengaged, enmeshed, rigid, chaotic)
- 6 family types identified (ranged from happy to unhappy): balanced, rigidly cohesive, midrange, flexibly unbalanced, chaotically unbalanced and unbalanced
- Family communication and satisfaction scales

Picture of Circumplex Model

Circumplex Model & FACES IV Scores





FACES continued

- How FACES is presented to families (consent form, use of tool for family, confidentiality, risks and benefits)
- Limitations of FACES i.e. good indicator of intrafamily dynamics but not inclusive of larger systems



Relationship Classes: Structure

- We offer 10-week courses on healthy relationships to our participants
 - Offered in the prisons
 - Offered in the community
 - Same curriculum in both settings – good for the partners' communication
- Incentives?
 - In prison – none.
 - In the community – free childcare, transportation etc.



Adapting Curriculum to Prisons

- WMR designed to work with couples, but Participant workbooks are designed more for women.
- Continue revising to make them more suitable for men and for those incarcerated.
- Intake Form encourages openness (Prison)
 - “We hope the content of the materials provided and the class discussion will encourage participants to share personal information.”
 - “You are not required to share personal information in the class.”
 - “All that we ask is you do not share with others outside the class personal comments made by other participants in the class.”



Contact Information

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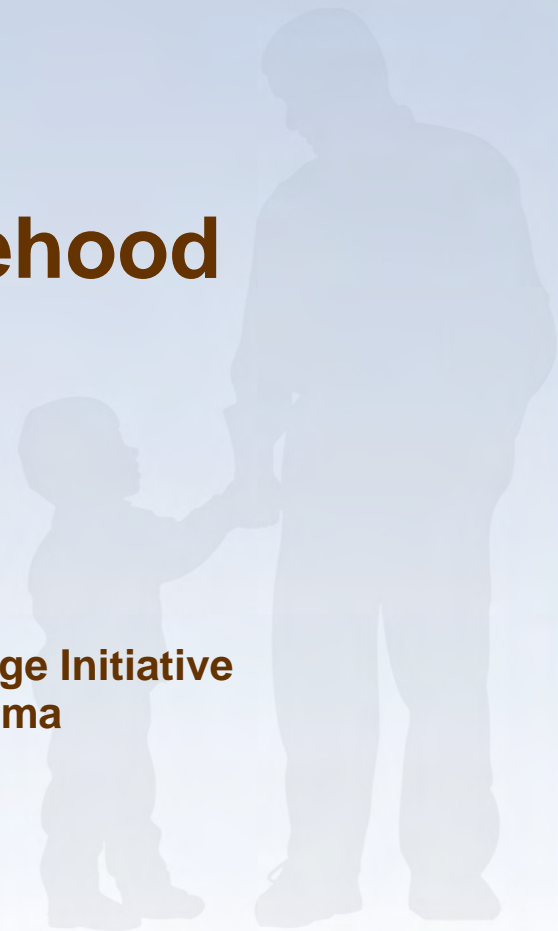
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Fatherhood to Couplehood

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What Was I Thinking?

- **Confusion:** Was I Fatherhood or Healthy Marriage?
- **The Process**
 - Fatherhood to Parenting
 - Parenting to Couple



Marketing

- **Who do we market to?**

Men?

Women?

Couple

- **Advertising**

- **Incentives**

Food

Childcare

Gas Cards

Wal-Mart Cards



The Workshop

Fatherhood focus begins with PAPERWORK

Ways to bring fatherhood focus to couples:

- Quick Tips
- Bookmark
- Video: *Children See, Children Do*
- Emphasis on fathers role throughout workshop
- His and Her expectations of fatherhood

Male & Female Presenters



Using the Curriculum to Explore Ideas of Fatherhood

Deciding vs. sliding

- We ask: What did your children learn from you this week?

- Having Fun
- Expectations
- Hidden Issues
- Road Mapping



Male Perspective

- **Male on Staff**
- **Poll Men**
 - Advertising
 - Curriculum
 - Ask “think” questions not “feel” questions



24/7 Dad

- Family of Origin
- Masculinity
- Understanding Your Self
- Handling and Expressing Emotions
- Physical and Mental Health
- Fathering and Family Roles
- Fathering and Culture
- Discipline, Rewards and Punishment
- Expectations and Children's Development
- Balancing Work and Family
- Getting Involved With Your Children



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Thank you!

If you have other comments or suggested topics
for future Webinars:

Email:

info@fatherhood.gov

Or Call:

1-877-4DAD411

Or provide your feedback to your Federal Project Officer.



Visit us online: www.fatherhood.gov

If you have questions that were not addressed during this Webinar, please submit them to your Federal Project Officer.

Thank you and have a great afternoon!