



Emerging Findings from the Office of Family Assistance
Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood Grant Programs:

A Review of Select Grantee Profiles and Promising Results

Promoting Responsible Fatherhood Grantee Profiles



While there is a broad societal consensus regarding the essential role of mothers in ensuring the well-being of their children, the importance of fathers is not as well appreciated. Research clearly indicates the tremendous benefits to children who live with their fathers. Such children are far less likely to live in poverty, use drugs, or experience educational, health, emotional, or behavioral problems. In addition, they are far less likely to be victims of abuse or engage in criminal behavior than children who live without their married biological or adoptive parents. The Responsible Fatherhood Program was developed by ACF and is administered by OFA as a compliment to other activities that promote responsible parenting.

The purpose of the Responsible Fatherhood Program is to promote responsible fatherhood by funding projects that support healthy marriage activities, encourage responsible parenting, and foster economic stability. The program is designed to help fathers overcome barriers that impede them from becoming effective and nurturing parents while helping them improve their relationships with their children. Projects funded under the program include services and supports in the following allowable activity areas:



- Activities to promote healthy marriage, such as:
 - Skill-based marriage education
 - Marriage preparation programs
 - Marital inventories
 - Premarital counseling
 - Relationship skill education
 - Dissemination of information about the benefits of marriage and two-parent involvement for children
 - Education regarding how to control aggressive behavior
 - Divorce education and reduction programs
- Responsible parenting activities such as:
 - Skills-based parenting education
 - Disseminating information about good parenting practices
 - Counseling, mentoring, and mediation
 - Disseminating information on the causes of domestic violence and child abuse
 - Encouraging child support payments

- Economic stability activities, such as:
 - Job searches and job training
 - Subsidized employment, job enhancement, and educational or career advancement services
 - Coordination with existing employment services
 - Dissemination of employment materials
 - Financial planning education and seminars

Eligible applicants could submit one or more applications for:

- Responsible Fatherhood Multiple Activity Grants
- Responsible Fatherhood Single Activity Grants
- Responsible Fatherhood, Marriage and Family Strengthening Grants for Incarcerated Fathers and their Partners

The following section provides examples of grantees that have shown promise in furthering the goals of ACF's Responsible Fatherhood Program based on initial evaluation findings.



The Council on Prevention Education: Substances, Inc.

Jefferson County Fatherhood Initiative

Promoting Responsible Fatherhood Grantee (single activity)

Organization Description

The Council on Prevention Education: Substances, Inc. (COPES) is a private, non-profit organization that provides consultation, education, and training services for youth and families to promote healthy personal and family development. COPES trains schools, churches, juvenile justice programs, civic organizations, neighborhood associations, recreation centers, and city and county governments in the implementation of family skill-building programs that seek to reduce negative behaviors such as substance abuse, domestic violence, delinquency, and criminal activity. COPES' services focus primarily on personal growth and the prevention of substance abuse, violence, HIV, and Hepatitis.

Project Description

- The Jefferson County Fatherhood Initiative is a collaborative project designed to strengthen the parenting and relationship skills of fathers reentering the Louisville, Kentucky community following release from prison, with a specific focus on men in substance abuse recovery.
- The project works with fathers to improve their family relationships, reconnect with their spouses (or intimate partners) and children, and overcome obstacles to being effective and nurturing parents.
- The program teaches effective communication, building refusal skills, setting boundaries, conflict resolution, positive parenting techniques, and development of healthy attitudes and behaviors regarding substance abuse and sexual activity.
- The program also includes outreach and counseling services for participating men's spouses/intimate partners and their minor children, particularly those between the ages of 12 and 17.
- Each year the program serves approximately 100 individuals, including re-entry fathers, their partners, and children.

Outcomes

Preliminary analysis of data from a series of pre-, post- and six-month follow-up

surveys found that participants reported and maintained statistically significant gains—as compared to a control group of demographically similar non-participants—in the domains of:

- Effective communication skills
- Intra-personal skills
- Relationship satisfaction

Key Participant Outcomes

- 90 percent of post-course survey respondents report improved skills in giving positive feedback, which includes validating and affirming their children.
- 90 percent of respondents indicate that they feel better about creating expectations and enforcing consequences for their children.
- 89 percent of respondents “strongly agree” or “agree” that their personal use of alcohol and/or drugs has decreased.

Success Stories

Participant Testimonials

“Creating Lasting Family Connections classes have helped me to deal with my feelings. It has also helped me to deal better with other people’s feelings. The classes have showed me how to care for my wife and kids and how to say no to them without hurting their feelings. I think anyone that is having trouble in their marriage should take this class because it really helps.”

-Leslie

“After I went to the Creating Lasting Family Connections class the first day, I knew I was in the right place. My inappropriate humor, intellectualizing and rationalizing was replaced with real honesty. The facilitators taught me good things about myself that I hope to share with my family and friends. I’m surprised these life skills aren’t taught in college. If this is not human growth and development, I don’t know what is. Thanks from my soul.”

-Jack

“As an ex-con and recovering alcoholic/addict, I was lucky to participate in this Creating Lasting Family Connections program. I felt really loved, cared for, and important because they took time to teach the skills I learned. I learned how to communicate with my wife and children in a calm and loving way and to not be harsh and inconsiderate. I learned how to be real and not passive in expressing my feelings.”

-Dwayne

“Before taking the COPES class I thought the only way to get others to listen to me was by showing force. But now I know I can get others to listen and understand me in a kind way and not having to feel bad about how I handled it. I have learned that to say yes all the time isn’t good for the ones I love or for me. When I let them know I mean what I am saying when saying no, even if it does make them upset, they actually feel more respect toward me for standing by my word. I have learned so much from the COPES program and I thank everyone who works for COPES for giving me a greater outlook towards my life.”

-Delmas

For more information on the COPES program, including a three-minute video of how the Creating Lasting Family Connections program impacted one man’s life, visit <http://www.copes.org>.



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